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CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 89

Summer, 1981

FACES OF REALISM/FACING REALITIES

Articles

BY T. D. MACLULICH, ELEANOR JOHNSTON, ILDIKO DE PAPP CARRINGTON, LORNA IRVINE, J. A. WAINWRIGHT, DONALD R. BARTLETT, E. L. BOBAK, W. J. KEITH

Poems

BY KIM MALTMAN, JIM JOYCE, ROO BORSON, CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON, ERIN MOURE, LYNDA REGNIER, RALPH GUSTAFSON

Reviews

BY JANET GILTROW, TOM MARSHALL, CATHERINE ROSS, DAVID L. JEFFREY, DAVID CARPENTER, CLARK BLAISE, PAT BARCLAY, MICHAEL DARLING, GEORGE WOODCOCK, PATRICIA MORLEY, LINDA ROGERS, ROBERT SWARD, JOHN FRANKLIN MCLEAN, DAVID F. ROGERS, KIERAN KEALEY, SUSAN BECKMANN, SHERRILL GRACE, DONALD R. BARTLETT, AVIVA RAVEL, LARRY SHOULDICE, MICHAEL HURLEY, GARY A. BOIRE, DAVID JACKEL

Opinions and Notes

BY DOUGLAS DAYMOND, S. E. READ, GEORGE WOODCOCK, T. D. MACLULICH, LORRAINE MCMULLEN, GERALDINE ANTHONY, APPOLONIA STEELE

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDAL FOR CANADIAN BIOGRAPHY

1980

Among the many books of distinctively high quality this year were R. C. Brown's sound second volume on Robert Borden, C. B. Koester's interesting biography of Nicholas Flood Davin, and Stephen Endicott's impartial account of his father, James G. Endicott. The appearance of two substantial biographies in the field of urban history broke important new ground: B. McKenna and S. Purcell treated the subject of Jean Drapeau, and T. M. Colton drew a balanced picture of Frederick G. Gardiner, first chairman of the Metropolitan Toronto Council.

Phyllis Grosskurth produced a splendid biography of Havelock Ellis, an instance of a second-rate figure being given a first-rate treatment — which is only slightly marred by some lengthy quotations that stand in need of distillation. Joy Esberey's fine study of W. L. M. King, *Knight of the Holy Spirit*, clearly demonstrates how psychobiography should be approached, and sets a fresh Canadian standard for works of this *genre*. It is a skilful presentation of the *whole* person; and its only problem, as the author herself admits, is that the reader must come to the book already possessing an adequate knowledge of King's career.

After acknowledging the undoubted merits of the foregoing volumes, it remains to be stated that the medal winner for 1980 is *The Northern Magus* by Richard and Sandra Gwyn. The book is a fascinating account of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, which makes him, if not necessarily a likeable figure, at least understandable. Demonstrating rare insights into the prime minister's complex character, this biography is a pleasure to read. Like its subject, the book has both style and substance.

C.H.

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER

CANADIAN LITERATURE

LITTERATURE CANADIENNE

NO. 89, SUMMER 1981

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

EDITOR: W. H. New
ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
H. J. Rosengarten
BUSINESS MANAGER:
Beverly Westbrook

PRINTED IN CANADA BY MORRISS PRINTING COMPANY LTD., VICTORIA

Second Class Mail registration number 1375

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by the University of B.C. and the S.S.H.R.C.C.

Canadian Literature is indexed in the *Canadian Periodical Index* and is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 35 Mobile Drive, Toronto M4A 1H6

Back issues prior to current year available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, addressed envelopes. Poems by invitation only.

Address subscriptions to Circulation Manager, *Canadian Literature*, 2021 West Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5

SUBSCRIPTION $18.00 A YEAR IN CANADA
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ISSN 0008-4360

contents

editorial

TAKE YOUR ORDER . . . ?

FORTUNATELY, even when one has to accept them, it is still not necessary to agree with all the decisions a committee makes. With this bromide, I swallowed the announcement of the Governor-General's English-language fiction finalists for 1980; and I put the information away in that corner one keeps for forgettable facts. I miscalculated. The information stewed. And I kept returning to that stubborn simple question: *why them?* One never, of course, knows exactly why any committee makes the judgments it does. But inevitably, in a literary contest, the judgments are comparative; and given the options the committee had for 1980, the decision seems a curious skew of critical attitude and (perhaps) public taste.

The three finalists were Susan Musgrave's *The Charcoal Burners*, George Bowering's *Burning Water* (which went on to win the award), and Leon Rooke's *Fat Woman*. The first of these is a disjointed fantasy about social inequality and sadism towards women. The second is another fantasy — of the sort that has lately been called "narcissistic fiction" — which reinvents one George Bowering, who in turn (as character and author) reinvents the history of Captain George Vancouver and his surgeon Menzies: all of which constitutes a clever idea in technique, all of which ends in ahistorical violence, all of which is marred by the crude anachronisms and deliberate contrivance, and none of which is therefore transformed beyond cleverness into literature. The third novel is a moderately successful and intelligent rendering of an unusual domestic life. All three writers have written better works. Musgrave is, by comparison, a better poet. Bowering's *A Short Sad Book*, a 1977 account of growing up with Canadian archetypes, is a witty satire that he has not surpassed, though it received all too little recognition when Talonbooks published it. And Rooke is an able and innovative short story writer. But the central point is that Rooke published some of these stories *also in 1980* — yet it is *Fat Woman*, rather than *Cry Evil*, his best collection so far, that is singled out for celebration. In the collection are to be found a range of styles, from the pseudo-autobiographical to the mock-analytic, and a range of voices and tonal attitudes, which show a wide command of language and cul-

minate in a fine satire of literary and social pretension called "Adolpho's Disappeared and We Haven't a Clue Where to Find Him." Perhaps the 1980 committee held a bias against the short story form — for accomplished volumes like Veronica Ross's *Goodbye Summer* or W. P. Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa* also went unacknowledged. But perhaps there was a more disturbing reason why the selection went the way it did, which has little to do with conscious bias and a good deal to do with the tenor of the age. Perhaps the public taste for titillation, the critical taste for formal experiment — and a general intolerance in society for satire, which is read as an intellectual's put-down of ordinary people — have grown towards each other, to the point where they begin to represent an arrogance of the average. Perhaps the taste for crude violence and the rejection of the intellectual subtleties of wit and argument alike reject the principle of difference and celebrate the mediocre and the extremes of human weakness as though they constituted heights of value. To follow these directions is to follow restriction by another name, to elevate reductive, private systems into "normal" public "order." From this to the next step — elevating "order" into mandatory pattern, the loss of options, the restriction of choices — takes very little time, and does not necessarily require the machinations of an evil genius. Bureaucracy can make it happen all by itself; all that is needed is passivity, which by inertia surrenders to the purveyors of order the validity and general authority they invariably claim.

By chance, three substantial 1980 novels which did not reach the 1980 Finalists List comment directly on problems of such dimension, and they make an instructive trio to place beside the other. I refer to Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, Mordecai Richler's *Joshua Then and Now*, and Jane Rule's *Contract with the World*. They are not without their weaknesses. MacLennan's novel begins slowly and ends flaccidly; Richler's chases too many one-liners for their own sake and builds too ineffectively on the parallels and contrasts it invites us to see between present and past; Rule's, the most sustained of the three and her finest accomplishment to date, explores the ordinariness of several urban lives, but runs the risk that any ironist of the ordinary runs, shaping sympathy so that it looks like disengagement. What concern me here are not these problems in structure or perspective, but the palpable strengths that each of these works nonetheless possesses, strengths of vision and of imagined character, which transform what could have been mere literary exercise into literary enterprise of an unusual order. It is this quality of literary vision, so elusive to critical methodologies yet so necessary to art, which gives a novel its sustaining vitality, and for this we always forgive much awkwardness. Why does a work of Margaret Laurence's or Ethel Wilson's, for example, for all its lapses of style or the frequent strains it places on verisimilitude, appeal more — *and matter more* — than scores of purely private narratives and empty trial forms? The answer has

to do with the core of public values in which it declares its faith, its passion for moral conscience and the possibility of individual choice — even when tired systems impose constraints. Style matters, too, naturally, for it is the process that shapes the vision into meaning and gives it concrete form. All of which takes us back to the novels of Richler, MacLennan, and Rule.

Many who try to distinguish values in literature distort values in the process, for they do so simplistically, separating works purely by vocabulary and external subject, locating morality absolutely in specific words and topics and arbitrarily declaring it to be absent from others. Sexuality, violence, and religious and political partisanship are usually the prime subjects for disagreement. And it is therefore too easy either to dismiss 1980's fiction as the aberrant product of a violent year or to claim violence, as Joyce Carol Oates does in a recent issue of the *New York Times Book Review*, as the current social denominator, the only authentic fictional metaphor for current social reality. Unquestionably we live in a violent age. But probably everyone's "contemporary world" (if they are not protected by class-rimmed glasses or Pollyanna shades) has seemed violent. A work like Sheila Watson's black retellings of the Greek myths in modern guise, *Four Stories*, reminds us forcibly of the degree to which the present repeats the past. Rather than make the idea of a Golden Age simply spurious, however, this conundrum renders a notion of the Ideal all the more relevant to any people that seeks to understand both its belief in shared values and its common failure to express or enact them. Violence may constitute an immorality, a negation of human values, but the fact of violence in a work of literature does not of itself render that work of literature immoral. The challenge is to connect the values with the perceived and violent realities, and achieve some kind of adequate balance.

Clearly Musgrave's work is laden with violence, as are other 1980 works, like Richard Wright's *Final Things*, a novel about juvenile prostitution, street drugs, and retribution outside the law. But it is not violence itself which distinguishes Musgrave, Wright, and Bowering from MacLennan and Rule, for violent events occur in their works and in Richler's also; the difference derives from the attitudes towards it. Many Governor-General's Award-winning books — including recent ones by Davies, Kroetsch, Godfrey, Findley, and Hodgins — acknowledge the irrationality of much human behaviour and the violence of much recent human experience. And as with them, there is a kind of fateful inevitability about the violence that occurs in the novels by Richler, MacLennan, and Rule. It is functional rather than "ornamental" in the book. When, for example, public notoriety claims Richler's character Joshua for itself, and reshapes his identity till he is in danger of losing his private life, he lashes out to attempt to solve in anger what he could not distance (or deny) by his defensive wit. Rule's artist-characters, working out their various private compatibilities and their equally various public compromises, run afoul of a middleclass mob which, because it

fears what it perceives as the idiosyncrasy (or "perversion") of artists, and because it mistakes the persons for the process, goes about destroying works of art as though that could halt change or change truth. For MacLennan's characters, in a futuristic history, the twentieth century has drifted inexorably towards fascist order, massive war, and bureaucratic reconstruction. But always for the authors the violence is the enemy, the weakness, the threat, never an entertainment or a diversion in which to luxuriate. Holocaust is one of the obvious forms such violence takes. More deceptively, uncontrollable order is another. And the characters in these novels ultimately try to resist both. Rule's artists survive the attack on their work to realize, somewhat laconically, that their "contract with the world" invites them to express themselves creatively, not in futile anger. Richler's Joshua survives the threats of ambition and envy to experience that rarest of discoveries in Richler's world: a gentle reconciliation with another generation. MacLennan's characters provide a more extended case study still.

The strengths of MacLennan's *Voices in Time* have to do not only with his faith in the persistence of human aspiration (which overrides his despairing observations of the present and past and even his most pessimistic prognosis for the immediate future), but also with the intelligence of his commentary and the degree to which he has flexibly shaped a literary form to his purpose. The book is cast in the futureworld of A.D. 2030, when the megalopolis "culture" of the years of the Great Fear is beginning to crumble. Young people are beginning to seek anew their history and (distinguishing dimly but accurately between order and stability) to reject the dictatorship that controls them. The conventions that mark this genre then carry the book along. Timothy Wellfleet, the one aged man who can recollect the past, goes on to retell history, recounting the rise of Nazi Germany, the reluctant compromises (for safety, power, love) that marked Germany during the early 1940's, the parallel rise of the technological dictatorships of North America during the 1970's and 1980's, and the parallel and perhaps unconscious compromises that also characterized the later decades. This long section constitutes the substance of the novel; it is a conventional realistic narrative, more inclined to the verbal flourish than the spare sentence, with little in the way of either sprightly direct conversation or experimental reflexivity. But it is the form that MacLennan has always handled best — the reflective narrative essay — which he has here, most successfully in his entire career, adapted to fiction. The novel goes on to dissipate its energies a little in sentimentalities; striving grandly for an eloquent phrase, MacLennan misses at the close the simple eloquence of the quiet end. But up to this point, he has ably avoided the direct didacticism to which the novel secretly aspires. The book is a warning — MacLennan clearly wants his readers to look around them and to worry about what they see — but he knows that to warn in advance of the inevitable con-

sequences of the present is to utter idle doomsdayisms and to act the role of a parental Cassandra. Latching loosely on to the structures of science fiction, he instead casts the inevitable future as the indubitable past. Bowering might have tried to render history as fantasy; MacLennan transforms what might have otherwise been dismissed as fantasy into history. His novel acquires a forceful reality this way, and becomes both a grim and a moving book.

But after recognizing the grim realities, what then? Rushing in circles did not help Joshua; Rule's artists realize that irrational anger will serve no purpose; and the sadism and vengeance of the worlds of Musgrave and Wright — which one is asked to read as event rather than as metaphor — instead of countering violence, appear to embrace it. Censorship is no answer to such pressures, for in the *name* of good things, it takes *choice* away, and one needs to be free to choose. Curiously it is the choice itself which is the pressure feared by many who espouse censorship. Opening options appears to raise for them only the possibility of insecurity, failure, uncertainty. They can trust only what they are told to trust; they dismiss those who question their "certainties" largely by hurling pejorative adjectives ("elitist," "escapist," "redneck," "red") at those who would make distinctions that implicitly challenge *them*. Hence the anti-intellectualism of our times (to which Robertson Davies makes a characteristic reply in "A Defense of Snobbery" — which is just as characteristically easy to dismiss as idiosyncrasy). For snobbery is not the issue; choice is. As MacLennan's young people of the future discover, the challenge of making choices and distinctions, for all the uncertainties it opens into their lives, is more rewarding than living in an ordered contract with fear. They learn to live to reject passivity and at the same time to reject violence. They learn to understand what in another context V. S. Naipaul means when he writes:

> All these literary rapes and tortures, this emphasis on the flesh alone: We do, deeply, reject this assessment of man. The time has come to say so, to deny this version of the mini-man's truth, or the truth which accommodates him.... We can do so by raising that cry of dissent: "I do not want to be like them."

They learn, I suppose, to understand that a committee has to make its own choices freely, charting its own territory calmly — and that at the same time, the freedom to disagree with the choices a committee makes, *and to say so*, is not a bromide after all, but a right to savour and to prize.

W.N.

COLLOQUIAL STYLE AND THE TORY MODE

T. D. MacLulich

The modern mind insists on having the process of standardization (in 'prestige forms' of speech) take the form of a democratic rather than an aristocratic process. — EDWARD SAPIR

IN CANADA, AS IN THE UNITED STATES, writers have had to reconcile the claims of inherited European tradition and North American experience. In both countries the earliest attempts at fiction imitated modes popular in the parent country, and either totally ignored the native setting or unsatisfactorily tried to fit North American materials within existing European literary conventions. Gradually, through successive stages of historical romance, local colour fiction, and fiction with a social purpose, the North American scene was rendered habitable for the literary artist. In the process, one of the most striking accomplishments of American fiction was the development of a tone, based on the rhythms of vernacular speech, which was recognizably different from the dominant tone of British fiction.

Until quite recently, this tone has appeared with relative infrequency in Canadian fiction. Instead of wholeheartedly following the American example, Canada has developed a linguistic split personality, which Stephen Leacock described in 1944 by saying that Canadians "use English for literature, Scots for sermons, and American for conversation."[1] Morley Callaghan, and the few other aggressively colloquial Canadian writers — Hugh Garner, for example, and more recently Mordecai Richler — have always been stylistic odd-men-out in Canadian letters. The stylistic norm in Canadian fiction has been closer to the manner which has been called the "Tory mode."[2] This term designates a style marked by a high incidence of slightly old-fashioned syntactic habits. Its tone is formal and dignified, touched occasionally by pedantry or stuffiness.

On strictly linguistic grounds, the stylistic conservatism of Canadian fiction is somewhat unexpected. A considerable body of linguistic research confirms the strong resemblance we would expect to find between the English spoken in Canada and that spoken in the northern United States. In *Speaking Canadian English*, Mark M. Orkin points out:

> the greater part of English-speaking Canada east of the Great Lakes was not in the first instance settled by Englishmen at all, but by Americans. The United Empire Loyalists were our Founding Fathers, and the language which they brought with them was that of the inhabitants of eighteenth-century New York and Pennsylvania, many of whose distinctive words may to this day be found embedded in our daily speech.[3]

Moreover, as Orkin adds: "The pronounced 'American' cast of much of the English spoken in Western Canada is attributable to the fact that the English-speaking West was settled almost entirely from Eastern Canada and the United States."[4]

However, Canadian literary style has not simply followed the country's prevalent speech pattern. Although at the popular level Canada is dominated by American influences, Canada's educated culture has often deliberately turned away from the United States and instead looked towards Britain. Through the deliberate policies of its educational institutions and through the example of the CBC, Canada has long resisted standardizing the "prestige forms" of speech in the direction of the language of the masses. Orkin is able to assert: "That part of Canadian education which concerns itself with syntax, grammar, and spelling has for a hundred years and more been based exclusively on British models."[5]

A story told by Morley Callaghan helps to illustrate the antagonism of the Canadian educational system to the colloquial style. The story dates from Callaghan's days as a student at the University of Toronto, when he was just starting his career as a writer:

> By this time I had become aware that the language in which I wanted to write, a North American language which I lived by, had rhythms and nuances and twists and turns quite alien to English speech. When I showed some of my first stories to academic men highly trained in English literature, I could see them turning up their noses. "A failure of language," one said to me; and feeling encouraged I said, "No, a failure on your part to understand the language." I had decided that language of feeling and perception, and even direct observation had to be the language of the people I wrote about, who did not belong in an English social structure at all.[6]

The professor equates literary language with a cultivated and genteel style; for him, literature proclaims its superiority to everyday life through its contrived style. On the other hand, in Callaghan's lexicon "literature" is used as a pejorative term; he insists, "I wanted to set it down so directly that it wouldn't feel or look like literature."[7] We might say that the professor has an aristocratic conception of style; whereas Callaghan sets himself the populist goal of transcribing the life around him in everyday language.

The rise of the colloquial style in American fiction is sensitively chronicled by Richard Bridgman in *The Colloquial Style in America*. Bridgman describes how the style of modern American fiction has been shaped by such varied influences

as dialect humour, newspaper style, and the experiments of Gertrude Stein. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, vernacular speech was confined to the periphery of literature, to the speech of lower class characters and juveniles. Starting from this limited power base, however, vernacular speech gradually took over the whole of the narrative, as it does in *Huckleberry Finn*. In the years immediately following World War One, many writers collaborated in the process which made the colloquial style a supple and precise instrument for literary expression. Bridgman particularly singles out the work of Ernest Hemingway as the culmination of this process:

> If one asks once more how Hemingway's prose and the prose of the twentieth century differs from that of Hawthorne and his century, the briefest answer would argue the greater verbal simplicity of the modern style. Long words are eliminated or infrequently used, and then as deliberate contrasts. The sentences themselves are shorter. What was hinged and stapled by semicolons in the earlier prose is broken up into a series of declarative sentences in the later. Fewer details are provided, and those offered are precise and concrete. References to a cultural and historical past are stripped away, and the haze of emotive words is dispelled. Primary colors are accented. The immediate material world claims all the reader's attention. The result is a sharp, hard focus. Hemingway's prose is not the ultimate prose by any means, but its lean, artful sufficiency based upon a vernacular diction and a colloquial manner had to be achieved before it could effloresce into more intricate structures.[8]

Bridgman's account of American fiction does not fit the development of fiction in Canada, where the conservative temperament has found an outlet even at the level of prose style. According to Bridgman, the three main factors shaping the colloquial style in American fiction were "romantic individualism, nationalistic pride, and practical necessity."[9] None of these forces has been a dominant influence in shaping Canadian literature. For much of its history, Canada was made up of very small settlements surrounded by very large tracts of wilderness. This situation encouraged a conservative, inward-looking attitude, which Northrop Frye has dubbed the "garrison mentality."[10] Moreover, the Canadian West was opened to settlement much later than the American West, and its development was to a considerable extent managed by the government. As a result, the mythic paradigm for Canadian westward expansion is the collective national enterprise celebrated in E. J. Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike*, not a version of the frontier individualism in, say, Cooper's Leatherstocking novels. Canada's ambiguous political status — although conceiving of itself as a nation, Canada was technically a colony until well into the twentieth century — did not encourage nationalistic boasting. Certainly Canadians have never been noted for the "ring-tailed roaring" found in so much of the American folk humour which forms one of the main tributary streams of the colloquial style. And American pragmatism has never received official sanction from most Canadian arbiters of intellectual

probity and artistic taste. Indeed, from time to time certain Canadians have even thought of themselves as custodians of a higher standard of political morality and cultural purity than that prevalent in the United States: a Tory leavening in the democratic lump of North American society.

TO ILLUSTRATE MY ARGUMENT I can adduce the work done by a group of writers who came to maturity during the period between the two Great Wars: Morley Callaghan, Hugh MacLennan, Ernest Buckler, Sinclair Ross, Robertson Davies, and W. O. Mitchell. This generation of Canadian authors grew up in a country that was more and more coming to be dominated by urban centres and their values. Increasing urbanization also meant greater Americanization, for the urban centres to which Canadians were attracted resembled American rather than European cities. We might well expect this generation of writers to be noticeably influenced by the colloquial style which was coming to dominate American writing. Actually, it is surprising how seldom the American influence took hold.

In the first place, by the time it became the dominant mode in American fiction, the colloquial style was basically an urban rather than a rural style. It reflected the ragged, speeded-up, materialistic life of the city. Its slang was no longer the creation of an advancing western frontier, but the expression of an urban ethos. This urban coloration may explain why Buckler, Ross, and Mitchell — who locate their stories primarily within rural settings — do not adopt the colloquial style as their primary vehicle. Instead they employ a controlled and cultured language, which conspicuously marks them as educated men. Thus, although Buckler, Ross, and Mitchell often create characters who speak in an uneducated manner, none of these writers habitually commits his own entirely to vernacular rhythms. Buckler's prose is noted — if not notorious — for its highly wrought syntax and imagery. Ross's *As for Me and My House* possesses a bleak eloquence; Mrs. Bentley's diary is filled with prose counterparts to the Wasteland imagery dominating much early Modernist poetry. In the humorous stories of *Jake and the Kid* W. O. Mitchell does give over the narration to a colloquial speaker. But *Jake and the Kid* falls within the special province of humour, where vernacular idiom has long been a recognized device. In his manifestly "serious" novels Mitchell embeds the informal speech of his characters in a matrix of his own more conventionally literary prose:

> Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply, of land and sky — Saskatchewan prairie. It lay wide around the town, stretching tan to the far line of the sky, shimmering under the June sun and waiting for the unfailing visitation of wind, gentle at first, barely stroking the

> long grasses and giving them life; later, a long hot gusting that would lift the black topsoil and pile it in barrow pits along the roads, or in deep banks against the fences.
>
> Over the prairie, cattle stood listless beside the dried-up slough beds which held no water for them. Where the snow-white of alkali edged the course of the river, a thin trickle of water made its way toward the town low upon the horizon. Silver willow, heavy with dust, grew along the riverbanks, perfuming the air with its honey smell.

Callaghan, MacLennan, and Davies are best-known as chroniclers of life in middle-sized or large urban centres. The colloquial style might therefore seem to be their natural medium. However, only in Callaghan's fiction does the colloquial style pervade the narration as well as the dialogue. In discussions of Callaghan's style, Ernest Hemingway is traditionally a central figure. This emphasis is somewhat misleading. Callaghan's debt to Hemingway has been stressed to such an extent that his indebtedness to other American writers, such as Sherwood Anderson, has never been adequately explored. Nonetheless, Hemingway is inevitably a touchstone in any discussion of modern prose style. In fact, it is useful to examine MacLennan's and Davies's conceptions of style in relation to the famous Hemingway manner. The key issue, however, is not the extent to which MacLennan and Davies have been influenced by the Hemingway style, but rather the reasons why they have both rejected Hemingway's idiom as a suitable model for their own fiction.

The pronounced resistance to the vernacular evident in the fiction of MacLennan and Davies is entirely consistent with attitudes these men have expressed elsewhere. In contrast to Callaghan, who has acknowledged the influence of American writers and American speech on his style, MacLennan and Davies have repeatedly announced their preference for British rather than American literary models. Both men were strongly marked by sojourns in England pursuing post-graduate education. Davies, especially, has shown himself to be much more familiar with, and sympathetic to, British writing than American writing. Thus, adherence to the Tory mode is part of a consistent literary ideology, a coherent set of ideas concerning the nature of the novel and the function of style in literature. In fact, the comments on style that have been offered by MacLennan and Davies constitute the most complete apology yet written for the Tory mode in Canadian fiction.

MacLennan's attitude to the Hemingway style is expressed in an essay titled "Homage to Hemingway."[11] MacLennan's central argument is that Hemingway's gifts were those of a stylist rather than a story-teller: "As a prose writer he is superb; as a novelist he must be regarded as little better than second-rate." Hemingway's prose has the "ability to move us and expand our perceptions." Yet the style also has severe limitations.

> [Hemingway] dare not use characters who are thoughtful men, for if he did they would ruin the bare perfection of his style by speaking in a dialogue full of abstract words and by abstaining from doing many of the things a Hemingway character must do in order to give the Hemingway style its full magical effect.

Therefore, MacLennan argues, Hemingway cannot create self-consciously reflective and introspective characters: he cannot cast an intellectual as a major protagonist:

> Rational men discuss their own neuroses, they are interested in science, they become involved in a multitude of activities for which the Hemingway style lacks an adequate vocabulary.... In short, their minds, their ambitions, their awareness of themselves as coherent, complex personalities involved in a mundane existence make them entirely unsuitable as catalysts for Hemingway.

And MacLennan adds, clearly intending to identify a serious omission in Hemingway's outlook: "Such men are even apt to wonder at times how they can save their souls."

This is not the place to discuss MacLennan's misreading of Hemingway, whose male protagonists are, almost to a man, seeking some form of personal salvation. For my purposes, what is important is MacLennan's attitude to the Hemingway style. MacLennan draws an analogy between the earlier overhauling of English prose style during the Restoration and Hemingway's stylistic revolution. Hemingway

> understood that between him and his reality lay a mountain-range of hackneyed words and phrases which had crushed the evocative powers of the English language. He sought by trial and error for a means of setting down with truth and vividness what his five senses told him, knowing that what they told him was much subtler than anything his predecessors had been able to communicate. And he found it.

However, Hemingway has applied his purified style to a purpose of which MacLennan cannot entirely approve:

> What Hemingway has done has been to restore order and clarity to our use of the English language. But unlike the followers of Dryden, who insisted on clarity as a means to accurate thinking, he has used this classic criterion of style to represent accurate feeling. The style of the eighteenth century produced intellectualism: the style of Hemingway has made sensationalism an end in itself.

MacLennan's objection to the Hemingway style is, in the last analysis, a moral one. The Hemingway style is exquisitely crafted, but socially irresponsible.

As a contrasting example of the responsible use of style, MacLennan cites the eighteenth century's creation of "a kind of universal prose style which almost any educated man could acquire." He explains:

> It was the clarity and order of this universal style that made possible the political documents of Locke and Jefferson, the literary ease with which Berkeley and Hume

> discussed metaphysics, the urbanity brought to journalism by Steele and Addison. ... This rational approach did more than produce clear writing; it also changed the history of the world, because for a time it eliminated misunderstandings between educated men. It is no accident that the development of stable government in England coincided with the period in which clarity of prose expression reached its apogee, just as it is also no accident that Germans in our century, whose prose is often as formless and confused as Milton's, were unable to protect their minds against the incantations of Adolph Hitler.

In MacLennan's eyes, then, prose style and politics are inseparable. The proper use of prose is as a means for communicating rational and responsible thought.

In presenting his theory of the novel MacLennan also stresses social responsibility. In an address titled "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form," MacLennan proposes psychological and sociological truth-to-life as the novel's primary virtues.[12] And he elsewhere makes a statement which implies that he puts aesthetic merit a distant second when it comes to judging the worth of a work of fiction:

> John Galsworthy is no longer popular with the critics and I suppose he is unfamiliar to most readers under forty. Yet I have never been able to believe that any Englishman in the past twenty years has written a novel as true and important as *The Forsyte Saga*. It may be old hat now, but it was good in its time, and if it is not valuable as a work of art, it is indispensable for anyone who wants to know what England was like at the end of the nineteenth century.[13]

MacLennan's praise for Galsworthy is very different from the attitude expressed by Callaghan:

> Back in 1929 [sic], just when I was coming out of college, the big name writers in English letters were Wells, Galsworthy, Shaw and Bennett. For Galsworthy I had a complete blind spot. He didn't mean anything to me.[14]

THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS STYLE held by Robertson Davies is similar in many respects to MacLennan's outlook. In *A Voice from the Attic* Davies has written at length on books and reading, and it is here that his conception of style can most readily be studied.[15] *A Voice from the Attic* offers a spirited apologia for the educated, genteel style that Davies favours, and himself employs. This style is very much a modern version of the eighteenth-century style MacLennan admires. It is a classical "middle" style, the style of the gifted personal essayist — and Davies and MacLennan both excel in this genre. In other words, stylistically both Davies and MacLennan are committed to an old-fashioned picture of the author as an educated gentleman. Both men want to lead their readers to the intellectual high ground of rational argument and timeless values.

Davies eschews the colloquial style because it is intrinsically modern, aggressively up-to-date. Using such a colloquial style would imply a commitment to

immediate experience in the ever-moving present. But in *A Voice from the Attic* — a book which is specifically intended to offer American readers an alternative perspective on the world of books — Davies imperiously warns against placing too great an emphasis on today's standards:

> to do that would be to commit ourselves to what is merely contemporaneous, which is a pitiful slavery, unworthy of anyone who pretends to taste in literature, however humble, or understanding of life, however small.

As this attempt to browbeat his readers shows, Davies is committed not only to traditional values but to explicitness and didacticism in his prose. He believes in a hierarchy of ideas, which it is his duty to promulgate. And there is a corresponding hierarchy of styles, which he likewise must endorse through both precept and practice.

Davies nowhere in *A Voice from the Attic* comments directly on the Hemingway style; but he does refer scathingly to other recent American writers. Paraphrasing the conclusions reached in Edmund Fuller's *Man in Modern Fiction*, Davies disparages

> a body of American novelists of whom James Jones and Norman Mailer are but two, who have exalted what he [Fuller] calls "the Yahoo-hero" — a coarse-fibred vulgarian, grotesque in his way of thinking, and immature in his attitude towards life, who lives for the kicks he can get out of it.

Davies decries the picture of the human condition which these writers present; they hold "a notion (concept is too definite a word) of man as a derelict and irresponsible creature existing in a world where no moral values apply." He comments with asperity on the sexual activities of their characters:

> It is significant that many of these books are war books, or books about groups of men under stress, in which we find that there is exaggerated sexual activity with women who are described in terms of the uttermost contempt, whereas true sentiment, the real love, is reserved for the "buddy," and is plainly homosexual.

These comments make it plain that the writers about whom Davies is talking belong in the Hemingway tradition.

With few exceptions, modern American fiction is not to Davies's taste. However, the worst sin which American writers have committed is not their treatment of sex but their anti-intellectualism:

> Their chief defect seems to be that they are desperately badly educated; potentially powerful intelligences have been given nothing to feed on, and they operate in a society where most people are as deprived as themselves. They and their readers have intellectual and spiritual rickets.

Where MacLennan rebukes Hemingway for mere sensualism, Davies rebukes Hemingway's followers for carrying romantic attitudes to excess: "well-educated

people could not think or write so sentimentally. Sentimentalism is the philosophy of books." Davies is much more approving towards modern British writing. Indeed, he draws the explicit comparison in favour of British fiction. In British fiction, he argues,

> there is a tradition of classicism . . . which has never been entirely submerged, and, perhaps more important and significant for the writing of fiction, a classical restraint in the expression of romantic feeling.

For "classicism" in this passage we could equally well read "education"; and Davies would have that education worn on the writer's sleeve.

The stylistic preferences I have examined are not simply theories held in isolation. These ideas find their most important expression in the fiction produced by both men. A close look at a few passages will illustrate the correspondence of theory and practice. For instance, here is how Robertson Davies opens *Fifth Business*:

> My lifelong involvement with Mrs Dempster began at 5.58 o'clock p.m. on 27 December 1908, at which time I was ten years and seven months old.
>
> I am able to date the occasion with complete certainty because that afternoon I had been sledding with my lifelong friend and enemy Percy Boy Staunton, and we had quarrelled, because his fine new Christmas sled would not go as fast as my old one. Snow was never heavy in our part of the world, but this Christmas it had been plentiful enough almost to cover the tallest spears of dried grass in the fields; in such snow his sled with its tall runners and foolish steering apparatus was clumsy and apt to stick, whereas my low-slung old affair would almost have slid on grass without snow.

Dunstan is a precise and confident speaker. His diction and syntax mark him as educated, as does the way he generalizes and uses abstractions. For example, he speaks of his "complete certainty" and talks about being "able to date the occasion," when a colloquial speaker would say something like: "I know for certain when it happened."

Just a few pages into the novel we find this account of Dunstan's home village, which is the setting for the early part of the story:

> Village life has been so extensively explored by movies and television during recent years that you may shrink from hearing more about it. I shall be as brief as I can, for it is not by piling up detail that I hope to achieve my picture, but by putting the emphasis where I think it belongs.
>
> Once it was the fashion to represent villages as places inhabited by laughable, lovable simpletons, unspotted by the worldliness of city life, though occasionally shrewd in rural concerns. Later it was the popular thing to show villages as rotten with vice, and especially such sexual vice as Krafft-Ebing might have been surprised to uncover in Vienna; incest, sodomy, bestiality, sadism, and masochism were supposed to rage behind the lace curtains and in haylofts, while a rigid piety was professed in the streets. Our village never seemed to me to be like that. It was more varied in what it offered to the observer than people from bigger and

> more sophisticated places generally think, and if it had sins and follies and roughnesses, it also had much to show of virtue, dignity, and even of nobility.

Dunstan's education is again evident, both through the reference to Krafft-Ebing and in the catalogue of abstractions which concludes the passage. Dunstan cannot resist generalizing his opinions into universal truths. He deliberately organizes the passage to highlight a thesis: his village offered a wide variety of experience. He is aware of writing on what traditional rhetoric terms a *topos*, a conventional topic previously treated by many other writers. Dunstan is aware of what is new and what is old in his account of village life. He also is open about his intention to instruct his readers. This is not language impersonating lived experience, but language as the medium for an informal lecture. Dunstan the schoolmaster is clearly evident.

A didactic purpose also animates George Stewart, as he introduces himself early in Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night*:

> I have never felt safe. Who of my age could, unless he was stupid? Quite a few people thought me successful, but in my own eyes I was no more successful than the old Greek who pushed boulders up the hill knowing they would tumble down the moment they reached the top. Some people thought me calm, but inside I knew I was not. I have often heard myself described as a "mature" commentator, but I have never seemed mature to myself. The young seem more so because they know nothing of the 1930s. The young have the necessary self-confidence and ignorance to feel mature, and that is why I like them so much better than I like my own generation. Was there ever a crowd like ours? Was there ever a time when so many tried, so pathetically, to feel responsible for all mankind? Was there ever a generation which yearned to belong, so unsuccessfully, to something larger than themselves?

George not only delivers generalizations about society, as Dunstan does; he also turns himself into a generalization: he presents himself as the embodiment of an entire generation. The diction of the passage stresses abstractions; there is a classical reference, which awkwardly tries to appear informal by avoiding the direct naming of Sisyphus. The passage is organized by the skillful management of antithesis. The first half of the paragraph contains three consecutive statements of the contrast between George's "mature" external appearance and his internal insecurity. Thus, George begins by giving us three antitheses which stress his own uncertainty; then he provides the antithesis to himself, when he contrasts his insecurity with the apparent self-assurance of the younger generation. The passage concludes with a series of three rhetorical questions; and throughout there is an effective use of parallel constructions.

Plainly, the colloquial style would be an inappropriate vehicle for the fiction of moral and intellectual instruction which Davies and MacLennan intend to write. The colloquial style is a no-nonsense, pragmatic manner, tending towards informality and even chattiness. It is suited to convey transitory emotions, imme-

diate physical sensations, and spontaneous thoughts. In contrast, the Tory mode is a vehicle for considered reflections. Its tone is formal, educated, and precise. It specializes in elaborated descriptions, rational synthesis, and qualified generalizations. The Tory mode does not capture the mind in motion, but presents the carefully arranged results of prolonged cogitation.

Davies does not feel that a writer should attempt to ingratiate himself with his readers by aping the bumbling verbal ineptitude of the common or the less-than-common man. He strongly disapproves of the efforts made by many well-educated American writers to keep their education from showing in their fiction. Users of the colloquial style frequently give us the mind in undress. Even protagonists with pretensions to the title "intellectual" — think of Bellow's Moses Herzog and Mailer's Stephen Rojack — present themselves as erratic and driven men, not as careful, analytical reasoners. On the other hand, *A Voice from the Attic* is devoted to urging educated readers to cease hiding their intellects under a basket. The intelligent readers whom Davies likes to call the "clerisy" should assert their right to determine standards of good taste. Davies surely believes that writers, too, should cease being ashamed of their intellectual propensities. As he puts it, borrowing a phrasing usually employed in quite another context: "If you are an intellectual, your best course is to relax and enjoy it."

For a writer to hide his intelligence and education leads to a style which is a needless act of linguistic desperation. Davies laments that "Virtuosity, so much admired in some of the other arts, is at present unfashionable in literature." In his most explicit comment on the colloquial style, he scornfully remarks:

> Many authors, on the North American continent, write as if they were apprentice blacksmiths making their first horseshoe; the clank of the anvil, the stench of the scorched leather apron, the sparks and the cursing are palpable, and this appeals to those who equate sincerity with sweating ineptitude.

Davies considers such deliberate bluntness a "fake sincerity which springs from clumsy craftsmanship and a shared loutishness between writer and reader."

YET THE COLLOQUIAL STYLE is far from being the limited medium Davies portrays. As a counter-example, here is the opening paragraph of Morley Callaghan's first published story, "A Girl with Ambition":

> After leaving public school when she was sixteen Mary Ross worked for two weeks with a cheap chorus at the old La Plaza, quitting when her stepmother heard the girls were a lot of toughs. Mary was a neat clean girl with short fair curls and blue eyes, looking more than her age because she had very good legs, and knew it. She got another job as cashier in the shoe department of Eaton's store, after a row with her father and a slap on the ear from her stepmother.

Certainly the passage is marked by colloquial diction: the chorus girls are "cheap" and are "a lot of toughs"; Mary has a "row" with her father rather than a quarrel; and by way of discipline she receives a distinctly unrefined "slap on the ear." But these phrases are crucial to the passage's effectiveness. In typical colloquial fashion, the passage works by implication. Readers are assumed to share the cultural and linguistic norms of the narrator and his society, so that much can be inferred from Mary's decision to leave school at the minimum age and from her dubious choice of employment. We also draw conclusions from the vulgar level on which family discussions are apparently conducted.

To further illustrate the subtlety of Callaghan's method, let me consider just one sentence:

> Mary was a neat clean girl with short fair curls and blue eyes, looking more than her age because she had very good legs, and knew it.

The first half of the sentence is primarily a vehicle for applying five monosyllabic adjectives to Mary. These words present Mary as she appears to others. Considered one at a time, the five adjectives simply describe Mary's physical appearance as conventionally pleasing. But collectively they carry a connotation of innocence. For example, the double adjective "neat clean" — either word alone might have carried the literal meaning — suggests an appearance of careful grooming. Mary is "fair" and has "blue" eyes, both details suggesting innocence. Her "short" hair implies practicality — not the sensual freedom which would be implied by long, loosely-flowing hair. "Girl" in the phrase "neat clean girl" is essentially redundant, for femininity is implicit in Mary's name. The word's function is not semantic but rhythmic; the phrases "neat clean girl" and "short fair curls" are rhythmically parallel, in deliberate contrast with the concluding member of the series, the shorter phrase "blue eyes."

The first half of Callaghan's sentence, then, seems to describe a sensible, wholesome, no-nonsense young lady. However, the second half of the sentence creates quite another impression. Mary's "very good legs" give her a sophistication and even sensuality which alters the reader's assessment. Moreover, the sentence's last three words make it clear that Mary is well aware of the impression she creates; and in all likelihood she deliberately exploits her appearance. The sentence starts with a physical description, dispassionately offered; but it concludes with the narrator quietly reproving Mary's vulgarity and hypocrisy. Mary starts as the girl next door, but she ends as a flirt or worse — perhaps as someone willing to exploit her body to influence men in her favour. The passage gives us a glimpse inside Mary's materialistic, calculating mind, but without describing her thoughts directly. As usual, the colloquial style does its work by indirection and implication.

As a further example of the colloquial style in operation, here is Mordecai Richler's narrator talking, early in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*:

> To a middle-class stranger, it's true, one street would have seemed as squalid as the next. On each corner a cigar store, a grocery, and a fruit man. Outside staircases everywhere. Winding ones, wooden ones, rusty and risky ones. Here a prized plot of grass splendidly barbered, there a spitefully weedy patch. An endless repetition of precious peeling balconies and waste lots making the occasional gap here and there. But, as the boys knew, each street between St Dominique and Park Avenue represented subtle differences in income. No two cold-water flats were alike. Here was the house where the fabulous Jerry Dingleman was born. A few doors away lived Duddy Ash, who ran for alderman each election on a one-plank platform: provincial speedcops were anti-semites. No two stores were the same, either. Best Fruit gypped on the scales, but Smiley's didn't give credit.

Some of the most obvious surface characteristics of colloquial style are prominent here: contractions and sentence fragments. But the passage's omissions are perhaps as significant as what is actually said. The narrator catalogues physical details of the neighbourhood, but offers a minimum of interpretive comment. The most important general statement is that each street "represented subtle differences in income." However, the narrator does not give a sociological explanation of the gradations in social status that these differences imply. Instead, the reader is left to make inferences for himself. Actually, the thesis underlying the passage is very similar to the thesis underlying Dunstan's account of his village: life in the Jewish ghetto offers more variety than a casual observer would expect. But this thesis is never explicitly stated. As in Callaghan's writing, great reliance is placed on the reader's ability to hear the proper tone and make the correct evaluations.

If the colloquial style can be a rich and subtle literary medium, why do Davies and MacLennan reject it? Part of the answer is implicit in the Richler passage just quoted. Strictly speaking, Richler's narrator is omniscient; but in practice he is not. His viewpoint is limited to the perspective of a ghetto resident. He is an authority on the facts he enumerates, but these facts fall within a limited range of experience. On the other hand, the Tory mode is authoritative and self-confident; it aspires to omniscience. The colloquial style implies a limited viewpoint. Often, the colloquial voice belongs to a first person narrator, speaking within the limitations imposed by human subjectivity. Even when the colloquial style is used in third person narration, the language of everyday life encourages a limitation of thought and experience to the commonplace. But Davies, in particular, does not agree with "the convention (so dear to one school of modern criticism) which demands that a writer should conceal himself, should pretend that he does not exist." The pedagogue in him does not wish to be misunderstood. He is unwilling to allow the scope for private interpretation which characterizes the colloquial style.

Davies and Callaghan are not the whole of Canadian fiction, as the very different practice of Callaghan and Richler demonstrates. But until recently the Tory mode epitomized by Davies and MacLennan has dominated Canadian

fiction. In consequence, modern Canadian fiction has exhibited a dearth of those protagonists Walker Gibson aptly terms "tough talkers."[16] Instead, at least until quite recently, the most memorable characters have been cultivated, reflective, and polished talkers like George Stewart and Dunstan Ramsay.

Today, the state of Canadian fiction has greatly altered from what it was only twenty years ago. A majority of younger writers have adopted some version of the colloquial style. In addition to Richler, obvious examples are Margaret Laurence, Robert Kroetsch, Alice Munro, and Margaret Atwood. Despite the critical industry which is growing up around Robertson Davies's Deptford trilogy, the Tory mode is on the wane. Perhaps, then, it is time to ask whether adherence to the Tory mode has helped or hindered the development of Canadian fiction. Have Canadian writers harmed their work by turning away from one of the primary sources of much of the best imaginative literature produced in North America: vernacular speech?

Certainly, to cavil at the specific accomplishments of the Tory mode would be churlish and illogical. In *Fifth Business* and *The Watch that Ends the Night* the Tory mode splendidly justifies itself. Yet a suspicion may linger that figures such as George Stewart and Dunstan Ramsay, however entertaining they may be, are anachronisms in twentieth-century North American writing. A literature which turns its back on the present is, in the long run, doomed to become overly introverted and precious; eventually, it must become irrelevant. Have Canadian writers barricaded themselves within a kind of garrison style, long after such a course of action was necessary?

Actually, this way of posing the question is too simple. Novels such as *Fifth Business* and *The Watch that Ends the Night* do not simply retreat from the present; rather, they offer critiques of the materialism prevailing in modern society. As used by MacLennan and Davies, the Tory mode is not merely an isolated stylistic quirk, but is a deliberately cultivated alternative to the colloquial style. The Tory mode is the stylistic reflection of a larger ideological commitment to conservative values. The persistence of the Tory mode, not only in MacLennan and Davies but in many other Canadian writers, is part of a continuing effort, on the part of many writers and thinkers, to keep alive in North America a way of life that differs from that pursued by our southern neighbours.

NOTES

[1] Stephen Leacock, *How to Write* (London: Bodley Head, 1951; first published 1944), p. 108.

[2] Robert Cluett, "Robertson Davies: The Tory Mode," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12, no. 1 (February 1977), 41-46.

[3] Mark M. Orkin, *Speaking Canadian English: An Informal Account of the English Language in Canada* (Toronto: General, 1970), p. 48.

[4] Orkin, p. 58.

[5] Orkin, p. 42.

[6] Morley Callaghan, "An Ocean Away," in Brandon Conron, ed., *Morley Callaghan* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), p. 17. Reprinted from *Times Literary Supplement*, June 4, 1964, 493.

[7] Morley Callaghan, *That Summer in Paris* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963), p. 16.

[8] Richard Bridgman, *The Colloquial Style in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 12-13.

[9] Bridgman, p. 41.

[10] Northrop Frye, "Conclusion" to Carl F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 830.

[11] Hugh MacLennan, "Homage to Hemingway," in *Thirty and Three* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 85-96. All quotations by MacLennan not otherwise identified are from this source.

[12] Hugh MacLennan, "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form," in *Scotchman's Return and Other Essays* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 142-58.

[13] Hugh MacLennan, "Youth and the Modern Literature," in *Scotchman's Return*, p. 244.

[14] Callaghan, "An Ocean Away," in Conron, p. 19. The date is surely an error. Callaghan graduated from St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, in 1925.

[15] Robertson Davies, *A Voice from the Attic* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960). All quotations by Davies not otherwise identified are from this source, chapters 1, 3, 6, and 8.

[16] Walker Gibson, *Tough, Sweet, and Stuffy* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1960).

PASTORALE

Kim Maltman

With a lurch as if from long disuse
the huge machinery of night starts up again.
Out of the ground, between the thick black rows of
shadow soil, the shadow plants
crawl and beneath their shade the shadow animals,
the shadow seige of ruts and holes
overflowing, swarming through the fields
like great soft beetles.
What could move the branches of that willow so?
The wind,
only the wind.

A lantern on a fencepost,
falling.
Shadows.
Now the owl is awake,
the grass a labyrinth of small sounds.
The shadow moon is high.
The owl flaps once and vanishes,
its feathers soft and soundless
(Far off: farm lights.)
Small shivering sounds.
The blood-coloured wind that ripples through the shadow rye.

POLTERGEIST

Jim Joyce

On a humid summer night
the door from the stairs
to the unused second-floor room
opened, not
with the push of visible hand.

A wash of cold air
swished into the kitchen,
sidled along her arm,
as she sat talking to friends.

The front room
had grown refrigerated.
She had to pull on a sweater
after answering the phone.

Fifty years ago
an old lonely woman
boarded in the upstairs room.
She also paid enough
to sit in the front room,
and rock away her spinsterhood.

She debates all this with me.
I asked her why she did not like
cats. She thinks them vampires
of her warm hands.

TELLING AND SELLING DIVERSIONS

The Novels of Richard B. Wright

Eleanor Johnston

A SUBJECT CENTRAL TO Richard B. Wright's novels is man's need for the diversions of memories, fantasies, entertainment, advertisements and, in his most recent novel, drugs and news stories. He introduces this thematic concern rather blatantly in the first chapter of *The Weekend Man* (1970) when the narrator, Wes Wakeham, both describes his need for imaginative escape from the tedium of everyday life and analyzes this need as one characteristic of modern man:

> What is a weekend man you ask? A weekend man is a person who has abandoned the present in favour of the past or the future.... If the truth were known nothing much happens to most of us during the course of our daily passage.... we must cast about for a diversion. A diversion is anything that removes us from the ordinary present.

Wes tells us of his own and others' daydreams, memories, and imaginative involvement with entertainment and advertisements because he enjoys his vicarious participation in the diversions as he describes them. He also assumes that "you," a person "like most of us," are a "weekend man" as well. This implication of the reader in the psychological state of the protagonist is reinforced by the act of reading *The Weekend Man*: Wes's narrative of the diversions he experiences is the story written by Wright for sale as a *novel*ty for the reader, as a diversion in other words, from the reader's own "ordinary present." Wright's perception of the appeal of his art is repeatedly suggested by his frequent and explicit analyses, in both *The Weekend Man* and *In the Middle of a Life*, of the weekend man's need for diversions. In *Farthing's Fortunes* this subject is not so readily apparent. But while this novel is less theoretical than the earlier two, in its protagonist's referring to the need for imaginative escape and in its being itself eminently entertaining, *Farthing's Fortunes* can be seen to deal with the same subject but with a greater degree of integration of the subject matter with the narrative of the fiction. In *Final Things*, the subject of diversions is given an even broader, and more artistically successful, presentation. Before under-

taking an interpretation of *Farthing's Fortunes* and *Final Things* in terms of their treatment of diversions, however, an examination of the theory, as presented in *The Weekend Man* and *In the Middle of a Life*, of the weekend man's need for diversions, provides a necessary groundwork.

Wes, the weekend man, frequently analyses his own need for imaginative escape. For him, "the greatest diversion of them all" is his memory of the Cuban missile crisis. He recalls the end, on October 24, 1962, of his affair with a silver blonde named Karen. He had immersed himself in her fantasies of their future:

> Karen was pleased that I was taking up astronomy. It seemed to her like a fine hobby for an advertising man.
>
> And so I would fill my allotted time on this planet with a few harmless diversions; plan me a little future with ... my platinum-helmeted partner by my side. With my Tudor cottage on the leafy street and my two small well-behaved children in the private school.

At the height of the Cuban crisis Wes stayed home from work, entranced and exhilarated by the events unfolding on his television. Karen refused to join him in this diversion and her demand that he return to the office to work for their future plans led him to end their relationship. Bored with her diversion, her plans, as she was unimpressed by his, the Cuban crisis, they parted; for both the need for diversions is more compelling than the need for relationships.

Like all the other weekend people Wright portrays, Wes enjoys the essentially passive pastime of watching television shows full of action and excitement: "television," Wes explains, "is a good diversion." On Wednesday evening, depressed by the "famine" of his sexual life, he immerses himself in the activity of a television show: "I sat in my apartment watching Matt Dillon's peaceful horseface as he stepped into a tense saloon and cooled things out." Wes has entered the fictional world: from his description he seems almost to be in the same room as Dillon. This diversion commands Wes's attention despite the interruption of a "real" person. When his father-in-law, Bert Sinclair, phones, Wes muses: "In the background I could hear Bert's television; little explosions of canned laughter. He wasn't watching *Gunsmoke* for at that moment Matt was drilling two cowboys on the main street of Dodge." Wes is involved in the show to the extent that he identifies with Dillon, and imagines the lawman's thoughts: "I watched him as he walked over to where they lay, that hang-dog expression on his face. Oh shoot, why must there be all this senseless violence in my town." The pun in his exclamation, "Oh shoot," suggests that Wes laughs at his own immersion in the show. Certainly he is aware that he is a weekend man. But even as he defines and gently mocks his need for diversions he remains unchanged, dependent on television for escape from the problems of his family life and career, his "ordinary present."

A reader unfamiliar with the *Gunsmoke* series would be confused by sentences such as the one beginning, "I sat in my apartment watching Matt Dillon's peaceful horse-face." Wright expects his audience to be sufficiently familiar with television programmes to recognize Hollywood allusions. When he describes people for us in terms of their resemblance to movie stars, he again does so in the confidence that these stars are known to us. Wes's wife Molly looks like Joanne Woodward, his boss "slightly resembles" Rod Steiger and Bert is "a dead ringer for Jack Oakie." From our experience of the diversions of television and movies, we complete the characterization of Wright's diversion, *The Weekend Man.* And when we realize that, like Wes, we are familiar with the escapist world of television programmes, what I take to be Wright's point has been made: we, the readers, like all the characters in the novel, are weekend people.

Wright's second novel shares with *The Weekend Man* many elements of plot, characterization and, most obviously, subject matter. The protagonist of *In the Middle of a Life* (1973), Fred Landon, is like Wes Wakeham, a Toronto salesman whose company has been bought up by a larger, more aggressive American firm. Because they are not successful, not pushy enough, both men have been deserted by their wives. And, like Wes, Fred has the weaknesses of a weekend man. Talking to his lover, Margaret Beauchamp, he says that in his early years "he was a fat, indolent child, . . . listening to the great brown Marconi console . . . to Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy; Duffy's Tavern; Jack Armstrong, All-American boy." In the middle of his life he still uses, in his imagination, "old comic-book slang." "His head was filled with old movies and songs" when he is half-heartedly trying to find a job. But while Wes accepts himself as a weekend man, Fred considers his need for diversions a weakness. He is unlike the detached and somewhat cynical Wes, moreover, in his compassion for other people who share his need for imaginative escape. Fred's generalizations about the human condition represent what seems to be the novel's theme: "The modern soul! How starved for authentic experience!" Thus while the two novels portray and analyze the same psychological state, *A Weekend Man,* like its narrator, is ironic in tone while *In the Middle of a Life* and its protagonist express compassion for the plight of modern man.

The sympathetic understanding Fred has for what he perceives to be man's prevalent weakness is most evident in his extended description to Margaret of his mother's susceptibility to the American media. Joanna Landon's passion was Hollywood movies. She spoke "in the slightly fruity voice of a Barbara Stanwyck. Or whoever she had seen the night before at the Royale Theatre. . . . It was just that unconsciously she played out her life in other guises." She finally escaped her prosaic life in the small town with Charley Ames, an American who had once had "some bit parts in a few [Hollywood] pictures." Fred tells Margaret of the pity he felt for these "two great children" when he visited them in their

mobile home in Anaheim, California, where Charley was the projectionist in a drive-in theatre. The urban California landscape was "fractured," an "alien land" with "artificial trees" and air which "seemed electric." Charley and Joanna had become fat, drunk, and bored, sustained only by the fantasies offered by nearby Disneyland, afternoon television, and the evening films at the Star-Burst Theatre. Fred "was utterly depressed by it all." As he tells Margaret of Joanna's pathetic delusions, she too feels sadness and sympathy. "Margaret was listening closely, watching his face." As he continues, she interjects, "How sad" and "I want to hear." Because the narrator consistently presents Margaret as kind and intelligent, her response to Fred's story can be taken as that of a good audience. We are given no alternative model of response to the need for diversions than that of compassion.

In the world of *In the Middle of a Life*, everyone is involved in diverting or being diverted and the novel's thematic concern centres on this consumer situation. Fred had tried to find a place in the entertainment industry as a Hollywood script writer. His "glamorous daydreams of riches and fame" were frustrated because he did not promote his television scripts aggressively enough. Entertainment, then, is a commodity as well as a diversion. Wright examines a great range of consumer diversions by making his unsuccessful entertainer an unsuccessful salesman as well. Butcher in the employment agency tells Fred, "You don't strike me as being quite — well, aggressive enough. I really wonder if you're sales-oriented." Fred watches with disapproval the advertisements he finds on billboards, in subway cars and on window posters. His response to them is rueful; he knows that they appeal to people's need for a more exciting, more glamorous life:

> Landon's eyes scanned the advertising posters above the windows. These printed appeals for your dollar: correspondence schools, charcoal burgers, investment analysis and advice, sanitary napkins, tango lessons. Something for everyone; a democratic plentitude. His gaze settled on the picture of a young girl modeling panty hose. . . . Those advertising types knew what they were doing.

Wright, then, has his protagonist, a failure at both writing and selling diversions, comment on their pervasiveness in popular culture.

A phrase Wes uses repeatedly in his narrative to describe modern man's predicament is "the thundering ironies." Another is "the mystery and the wonder of it." The element of hyperbole in these phrases ensures that the reader does not take too seriously the ultimately unresolved problems of the human condition. *The Weekend Man* ends with Wes going to sleep on Christmas Eve; watching the stars, he sees no new meaning in his future. In contrast to the highly ambiguous and desolate conclusion to Wes's story, Fred's ends with an answer, a promise of a better way of life. His lover, Margaret Beauchamp, is the only major character in either novel not described in terms of her Hollywood fantasies:

her clothes, her car and her mannerisms all retain an old-fashioned Polish flavour. She lives in a world of "authentic experience" which Fred, walking with her through Toronto's European Kensington Market, realizes most North Americans have lost: "Here he felt something like the generating pulse of life, felt its rhythms traveling along his blood." And Margaret becomes pregnant by him, forcing him out of his self-indulgent fantasies into new responsibilities; *In the Middle of a Life* ends with the protagonist determining to take definite steps towards control of this new life. There is hope he can break out of the passivity induced by the diversions which so pervade modern consumer society.

IN HIS NEXT WORK, *Farthing's Fortunes* (1976), Wright reverts from his sentimental optimism to the ironic and cynical perspective of *The Weekend Man*. The reader is detached and amused as the characters of *Farthing's Fortunes* attempt to realize their fantasies of love and money. It is as if Wright decided that he would write a best-seller for his readers by offering them an exciting escape from their "ordinary present." *Farthing's Fortunes* is a tall tale and, of Wright's novels, certainly the most diverting. Whereas the events of the first two novels take place in contemporary Canadian apartments and business offices and the characters' actions are unremarkable, the next novel ranges over several countries and many years and is peopled by wildly eccentric characters whose speech is flamboyant and whose behaviour is improbable. In the two earlier novels Wright inserts extensive and barely disguised authorial theories about man's need for diversions. In *Farthing's Fortunes* he restricts blatant commentary on the meaning and structure of the book to a "Foreword" and an "Epilogue." But if handled more subtly, the subject of diversions is kept at the forefront throughout the novel by the thoughts and behaviour of the narrator, Bill Farthing, and his friend, the salesman Cass Findlater.

Bill Farthing, according to the "Publisher's Foreword," begins his writing career with the confidence that his memoirs are "interesting": "I've been places and seen things that I'll bet most people haven't. . . . If you want a story, I can give you a good one." He is amazed that the "publisher" is putting out the autobiography of the quiet and respectable Hector McCoy: "he hasn't been anywhere to speak of. He hasn't done anything. I doubt if he's ever met one interesting person in his life." Farthing appeals to the "publisher," a seller of stories, confident that his memoirs have the quality which will make them attractive to the reading audience: "I've got the first chapter of my memoirs here and you can give them a look. It's a helluva lot more interesting than that stuff by McCoy." These chapters appeal to the "publisher's instinct" and Farthing's story is completed for subsequent sale.

The other claim, this one ironic, that Farthing makes for his story is that of realism. Referring to the story's "note of authenticity" and "verisimilitude," the "publisher" pretends to take seriously such frequent protestations, during the course of Farthing's narrative, as "To tell you the truth," "damn me for a liar if I didn't," and "I'll tell you something I remember clearly." But no story which includes so many wildly improbable chance meetings can claim verisimilitude. Farthing's claims are really rhetorical gestures which function primarily to establish a sense of complicity with his readers. When he says "damn me for a liar if I didn't see Sally" as he watches the passenger car of a passing train, we, having witnessed many other equally improbable chance meetings, recognize the irony in his protestations. Farthing is inviting us to mock the pieties and the *realism* of the *McCoy* world. His story is "more interesting" because it is so improbable, so unlike our "ordinary present." Farthing tells a tale of exaggerated incidents, of an onion roast in Dawson, of the luxury of an enormous English estate and of terrible poverty in Toronto. His friends include such comic exaggerations as Martin Rooney the braggart poet, Mary Jane Fletcher the lascivious wife of an undertaker, and the irrepressible hustler Cass Findlater. The people interested in truth, church-goers such as Miss Boswell and Merle Pickett, are ridiculed for their small and tedious orthodoxy. Farthing's tale is anything but "the truth." Whereas in *The Weekend Man* and *In the Middle of a Life* the need for diversions is more or less deplored, here Farthing and Wright gratify their worldly-wise audience with an "interesting," a diverting story. Not bound by conventional truths, we are able to recognize and enjoy a clever hoax. Farthing involves us in figuring out, with him, the identity of a woman he meets outside Craven Falls: "Then it came to me in a flash. Maybe it's already come to you, if you're sharp." And he mocks the expectations generated by his tall tale. After telling of their unexpected encounter, when he and Findlater were destitute vagrants, with the rich and kind Esther Easterbrook, Farthing admonishes us: "Now, if you think I went up and introduced myself and that out of all that she offered Findlater and me a job, then you've been reading too many fairy tales." But we expect just such a change in Farthing's hitherto mercurial fortunes. Only forty pages earlier in his story his chance collision with Percy Finchwhistle had resulted in a vacation of incredibly luxurious leisure. Farthing invites us to laugh with him at his claim of verisimilitude and at our own tendency to expect traditional conventions in his story.

Farthing frequently alludes to the similarities between his story and escapist fiction such as the fairy tales he accuses his readers of indulging in. He records his reaction when, as a young man, he finds his former lover, Mrs. Fletcher, in a whorehouse: "I was aflame with desire, as they used to say in those trashy romances." He comments on the suitability of exaggerated clichés in the telling of his tale: "to say that the bottom fell out of my world at that moment would

be just about right." But while he adopts the conventions of "those trashy romances," he at the same time mocks people who read them. On a train he meets a woman who leaves her children to his care: "what she did was get out this trashy novel and start to read the damn thing." He tolerates Mrs. Fletcher's passion for "those trashy novels" because his reading of them aloud to her is frequently the prelude to their love-making. He also reads to Esther, the crippled girl, from the more sophisticated novels of Scott, Dickens, and Hardy:

> All this stuff seemed several degrees better than the trashy romances I'd read to Mrs. Fletcher, but the funny thing was that the effect was remarkably the same. As soon as I'd get into one of these stories Esther would sit there trapped and dazed just like Mrs. Fletcher.

Thus Farthing has a double standard; he criticizes "trashy" books but uses many of their conventions in the story he writes himself.

The career of another writer offers further opportunity for Wright's indirect treatment of man's need for diversions. Martin Rooney is an Irishman convinced of the greatness of his poems which are inspired by his mother and the object of his infatuation, Alice Fry. Farthing recognizes Rooney's delusions; Alice is anything but a shy and loving maiden and as for Rooney's poetry, "the only worse lines I've ever heard were recited by a man named Jake Snipes on the night his mother died." While Farthing tries to avoid this misguided fool, Cass Findlater has a more profitable reaction:

> "What you need, Martin," says Findlater, "is somebody to promote your pomes." He turned to me. "Have you read this man's work, Bill? Listen here now.
>
> *Few things in life are so precious and fine*
> *As the thought of you dear old Mother of mine.*
>
> I mean damn it, that's beauty pure and simple."

Rooney's poems, like "trashy romances," are good diversions in that they create fantasies of ideal love and use clichés to which readers can respond. Findlater realizes the business potential of the poems: "The market for that beautiful sentiment is the kitchen wall of every home in America." Together this salesman and writer make enormous profits. Through his description of the career of such a terrible poet Farthing encourages us to share the scepticism he feels for the readers and writers of popular diversions.

IF FARTHING TEACHES US, by his scorn of "trashy" writing, the nature of our enjoyment of his tall tale, his primary role in the novel is nevertheless not this one of ironic commentator. He is a story-teller, a creator of diversions. And his friend Cass Findlater is his counterpart, the salesman of diversions.

Findlater has all the qualities Wes and Fred lack as salesmen; aggressive, talkative and optimistic, he sells bootleg whiskey in the United States during Prohibition, onions in Dawson during winter shortages, and rubber during World War I to anyone who can pay for it. If Farthing somewhat ironically uses the clichés of popular entertainment, Findlater wholeheartedly speaks, reads, and thinks in such terms as "I thought it would be a good way to break the ice at parties and generally win friends and influence people." Farthing describes his friend's daily reading habits:

> Findlater paid attention to ... the stories and theories of successful men in business. He spent a lot of time painfully working his way through twenty-five-cent books with titles like "Ten Steps to Successful Living" or "How I Made My First Million."

For Wes whose father-in-law sends him a *Reader's Digest* article about the career of the sales director of a petroleum company, or Fred who is instructed to read "the reprint of a *Reader's Digest* article which described how Wilbur P. Wade had sold an entire subdivision in one week," self-improvement manuals represent unattainable fantasies of business success. Findlater, however, follows such examples seriously and successfully. His whole-hearted acceptance of the Horatio Alger Jr. model of social climbing is exhilarating to Wright's readers because he actually acquires riches most people only dream of. At the end of Farthing's story, Findlater is living in Castle Eldorado, "a reproduction of an old-time castle such as you might find in a kid's book of fairy tales." He tells Farthing about his memoirs:

> I'm riting on the benefits of positive thinkin and of how if you keep your sunny side up and believe in God, you'll come out on top of the other feller. I rote a man in New York City and he told me his company would put it out for ten thousand dollars.

The story of Findlater as both he and Farthing tell it is a great diversion; it will be a best-seller because it describes the kind of life weekend people like to imagine.

Wright, like his writers Farthing and Findlater, has created a "helluva ... interesting" diversion. His novel contains one adventurous, amusing, and exaggerated incident after another. He removes the reader from "the ordinary present" by humour, pathos, sex and violence. *Farthing's Fortunes* is both a story about weekend men, those escapists who hope to "find later" a "far thing," and a "trashy novel" for weekend men, the readers of Wright's tall tale. This paradox is introduced by the elaborate and obvious fabrication of the pretence, in the "Publisher's Foreword" and the "Epilogue," that neither Farthing nor this story is fictional: the reader, recognizing *Farthing's Fortunes* as fiction, thus expects, from the start, narrative ironies rather than consistent thematic state-

ments. These ironic comments tend, in the main, to concern the telling and selling of diversions. Again in *Farthing's Fortunes*, as in *The Weekend Man* and *In the Middle of a Life*, Wright has constructed a novel around the tension between his form, the diversion, and his content, the discussion of man's need for diversion.

If *Farthing's Fortunes* contains fewer and less obvious theoretical intrusions than the earlier novels, *Final Things* (1980) continues this movement to step beyond even indirect discussion, within the fiction, of the nature of diversions. This most recent novel portrays the reactions of a man to his son's rape and murder. As the police search for his son begins, Charlie Farris "felt his own life pulled in the direction of larger, darker things," and through his fear and loss "A feeling of immense pity arose within him. Man was a suffering animal. . . . Farris felt somehow united with his fellow creatures in a terrible destiny." As Farris pursues the murderers to their and his own deaths, he becomes typical of man trapped, even despite his innate kindliness, by his own destructive compulsions. But instead of using authorial intrusions or narrative ironies, Wright presents this novel's thematic content through Farris' tendency to generalize from his own experience to comment, usually pessimistically, on the human condition; the reader is drawn into Farris' depression as, for example, "the idea of the impermanence of all things filled him with a peculiar sense of regret." As well as being more self-contained, *Final Things* is distinguished from the sentimental hope and cynical humour of the earlier novels. Its title, which refers to the destruction by a wrathful God of sinful man, suggests the novel's consistently bleak perspective as well as its universal scope.

The diversions in *Final Things*, as well as the characters, resemble those of the earlier novels. Charlie Farris is a middle-aged Torontonian, a writer painfully aware and ashamed of his failed career and broken marriage. Farris and a variety of minor characters are alcoholics; his beautiful, estranged wife is dependent on Valium; their son, Jonathan, and his murderers, use and sell marijuana and pornographic pictures. The apparently universal need for consuming and, less importantly in this book, selling diversions, is presented, without narrative intrusion, as the means of escape from, as well as the cause of, violence. Diversions, then, are not discussed but rather they function as the symptoms and activators of the underlying emotions which are the raw material of the plot. The murder of Jonathan and the final massacre are not planned; elemental fears and rage, unleashed by drugs, determine behaviour. This world is too grim to face without drugs but they merely accentuate the "larger, darker things," and speed up the destruction, the "final things."

Final Things can be seen from another, wider perspective to deal with the subject of diversions to the extent that the novel analyses the role in society of a specific kind of diversion, the news story. Murchison, the newsman pursuing

Farris' version of his son's disappearance, states the case bluntly: "Child murders are headlines. People are definitely interested." If Murchison wants the story for the sales it will give his newspaper, it might also be said that Wright chose, for the sake of his novel's sale, his subject on the basis of the established reader interest in the famous rape and murder of Emmanuel Jacques in downtown Toronto. That this charge sorely misses the point of the novel is seen in the thoroughness with which Wright both explores the feeling of horror and fascination that Jacques's story raised and analyses the kind of society in which such an outrage could happen. He explores the fantasy most of the newspaper readers would have had, "What would I have done if this had happened to my son?" by taking the reader through the emotions of a fictionalized father. *Final Things*, then, attracts sales by its subject, but also moves beyond mere exploitation of a diversion to examine the compulsions surrounding such an event. Wright has successfully left behind the comments, direct in *The Weekend Man* and *In the Middle of a Life*, and indirect in *Farthing's Fortunes*, on the nature and effects of diversions and has stepped, in *Final Things*, into the more comprehensive and artistically coherent framework of analysis of one representative father in an escapist society.

THE WIND, GROWING UP

Roo Borson

The wind. It comes at night,
trying to claw the house apart.
It goes at all the windows.
The windows shudder in their frames.
The wind wants you to come out and be blown
forever through a world moving too fast
for you to see it. The way the wind sees it.
So what if you lie under the covers and shiver?
That same wind goes through your lungs, through and through,
through and through.

FROM "HUNKY" TO DON JUAN

The Changing Hungarian Identity in Canadian Fiction

Ildikó de Papp Carrington

CANADA'S MULTICULTURALISM is vividly reflected in Canadian immigrant novels, many of which are about the characters' difficulties in a new country. These difficulties, according to the sociologist John Kosa, can be divided into two major stages, adjustment and assimilation. The first stage, adjustment, is economic; it includes all the necessary external changes involved in getting a job and making not only a living but a life. The second stage, though not always chronologically distinct, is much more difficult; assimilation demands internal, psychological change as the immigrant tries to identify with the new culture.[1]

Tracing the twofold process of adjustment and assimilation in *Under the Ribs of Death*, John Marlyn's novel about pre-World War I Hungarian immigrants in Winnipeg, both Margaret Atwood[2] and Eli Mandel emphasize the hero's striving for economic success and his "yearning for identity and acceptance."[3] They disagree on how completely Sándor Hunyadi, the hero, fails when he rejects his Hungarian identity, changes his name, and tries to turn himself into "Alex Hunter," a ruthless Canadian businessman. The novel ends with the Depression and Alex Hunter's bankruptcy. Whatever his degree of personal failure, his economic failure is part of the general disaster. But, although they do not agree in their evaluation of his fate, neither Atwood nor Mandel ever questions the basic premise that this pattern of painful change is, by definition, what the immigrant novel must always be about.

However, if we look at later fiction by and about Hungarian immigrants in Canada, we see that this premise is not applicable. In this later fiction we find characters radically different from Hunyadi-Hunter, who do not feel inferior to native Canadians and unsure of their own cultural values. They do not feel compelled to shed their Hungarian identities. They adjust, but they do not assimilate, and they criticize fellow-Hungarians who do. Although *Under the Ribs of Death* came out in 1957, its story begins in 1913 and ends in the early Depression years; thus its hero's attitudes mark him as characteristic of the Hun-

garian immigrants of that time. But fiction about post-World War II Hungarian immigrants reflects quite another set of attitudes. Such fiction has been written by both immigrants and native Canadians and in both English and Hungarian. Marika Robert's *A Stranger and Afraid* (1964)[4] and Stephen Vizinczey's *In Praise of Older Women* (1965)[5] are two novels by recent Hungarian immigrants. Vizinczey and his protagonist both fought in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Robert Fulford's short story "The Good Wife" satirizes another "graduate of the class of '56."[6] The Canadian hero of Robert Kroetsch's novel *But We Are Exiles* (1965) is obsessed with the dead Mike Hornyak, "that crazy bohunk," who may or may not be a Hungarian.[7] These works are all in English. An *Anthology of the Canadian Hungarian Authors' Association*, published in Hungarian in 1969, contains short stories by and about recent Hungarian immigrants.[8] Comparing these works to *Under the Ribs of Death* means tracing a road from self-loathing to self-confidence.

Setting out on this road, let us consider three of the early scenes in *Under the Ribs of Death*. Sándor, a Winnipeg schoolboy, is "chased . . . home from school every day" by "the English gang," a group of English-speaking classmates. They chant, "Ya, Ya, Hunky, Hunky, Humpy Ya Ya." But their mockery does not mean that he can't write English. When he writes a prize-winning essay on the ironic topic of "Victoria Day — What It Means to Me," he is taken on a "triumphal tour of every class-room in the school to recite his composition." In reprisal the gang threatens "him with a beating . . . for daring . . . even to show his hunky face in their class-room."

But the greatest humiliation of being a "Hunky," Sándor feels, is the result of his difficulties with his Hungarian name. Describing his reaction to a Canadian woman who forgets his name, he is surprised that she doesn't "ask him to pronounce it; people he met for the first time nearly always did. But to tell her now was suddenly impossible. She would smile and there would begin again the feeling that he was exposing something naked and ugly to the world's gaze." Tormented by this physical, almost sexual, sense of self-loathing, he tells her his name is Alex Humphrey, but when he grows up, he changes it to Alex Hunter, and also persuades his father to change his name, although the elder Hunyadi insists that his son is "ashamed of the wrong things. . . ." It is wrong "to be ashamed of your name because you are Hungarian and . . . poor!" But Alex needs this name, not only because it is easy to pronounce, but also because it seems "to absolve him of all he had done in his previous existence." Reading his new signature, he feels "as though he could see the tattered husk of his former self. He felt he had left behind all that was worthless and had been born anew. . . ."

Quoting this passage from the novel, Atwood analyzes the connotations of the new name: Alex Hunter, she says, suggests "Alexander the Great, conqueror of

the world, and . . . the predatory hunting-and-killing stance Sándor feels success requires. . . ." "Alex," however, is merely a translation of "Sándor," the Hungarian "Alexander." So it is not a new name. But giving up the surname of Hunyadi is deeply ironic because Hunyadi was the name of two Hungarian heroes, father and son. János Hunyadi was the leader of the Christian forces that defeated the Turks in the Battle of Belgrade in 1456. His younger son, Mátyás, was elected King of Hungary in 1458. As Matthias Corvinus he became an embodiment of the Renaissance ruler, protecting learning and science and establishing "the Corvina," one of the finest libraries in Europe. So Sándor's own surname is rich in heroic and royal connotations which are his by right.

But of course it isn't the legacy of a distant and glorious past that matters to Sándor. It is the terrible pressure of a daily struggle to dissociate his present and especially his future from a very recent past he rejects as shameful. When he and his father go to the Winnipeg railroad station to welcome his uncle, just arrived from Hungary with a large group of pre-World War I immigrants, Sándor is horrified by the possibility of being identified with them.

> Sándor turned pale at the sight of them. They stood there, awkward and begrimed, the men in tight-fitting wrinkled clothes . . . unshaven and foreign-looking, the women in kerchiefs and voluminous skirts . . . exactly the way his grandmother looked in that picture in the front room. And it was this that was frightening. They were so close to him. Only a few months or years — a few words and recently acquired habits — separated his parents from them. The kinship was odious. He knew how hard it was for his parents to change their ways. But they were changing. They used tinned goods sometimes . . . now, and store-bought bread when they had enough money. English food was appearing on their table, the English language in their home. Slowly, very slowly, they were changing, . . . becoming Canadians. And now here it stood. Here was the nightmare survival of themselves, mocking and dragging them back to their shameful past.

The costumes of the women described in this passage, the kerchiefs and the layered skirts, clearly identify these immigrants as people from rural Hungary, as peasants.

In vivid contrast to this pre-World War I arrival scene is a scene describing the arrival of a group of 1956 Hungarian immigrants in yet another railroad station, this time in Rome. This episode is seen through the eyes of the first-person narrator of Stephen Vizinczey's novel, *In Praise of Older Women*. Three hundred Hungarian refugees pour off the train, then fight their way into a hotel lobby filled with donations of expensive clothes from fashionable Roman department stores. András Vajda, the narrator, crams a suitcase with shirts, ties, shoes, suits, "six black pullovers and a smart overcoat." So when he

arrives in Toronto in 1957, he looks so fashionably attractive that a Canadian woman immediately tries to pick him up.

But the difference is far more than a matter of international fashion. Vajda, a 23-year-old Freedom Fighter, is the son of an assassinated intellectual, has "*cum laude* degrees from the University of Budapest," is multilingual, and spends his time in Italy writing a dissertation on Sartre. Three years later he not only gets a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto but also has his dissertation published. In short, he is a professional intellectual, not a peasant. As Kosa points out, post-World War II Hungarian immigrants included large numbers of middle-class, educated, professional people who, in sharp contrast to the earlier immigrants, possessed intangible assets that soon helped them to fit into "a status comparable to the Canadian middle class." Large groups of students and professors were especially prominent among the refugees who fled Hungary after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. As a member of this educated class, Vajda has little trouble achieving success. Soon he is a philosophy professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

In addition to being a professional intellectual, he is also a professional Don Juan, a "philandering internationalist." His autobiographical novel, subtitled "the amorous recollections of András Vajda," is dedicated "To Young Men Without Lovers." The veteran of many exciting love affairs, all fully described, he makes himself the sexual mentor of provincial young Canadians humiliated by their inexperience and frustration. His main advice to all such young men is to steer clear of hysterical young virgins and, as Benjamin Franklin urged long ago, enrich themselves instead with the experience and gratitude so amply to be acquired from older women. Thus Vajda hopes to "stimulate a broader intercourse between the generations." But such broadly punning philosophy does not endear him to stuffy provincial professors. When one of his students proclaims in the college paper that "he couldn't care less whether a girl was a virgin," Vajda is suspected of corrupting him, and is indignantly denounced at "an emergency faculty meeting" for wearing "Italian pullovers" to class and flouting "morality" in an "atrocious accent." To keep his job, Vajda fires off a letter to the editor, sternly condemning the seduction of virgins. His book also satirizes sexually frustrated faculty wives, whom he finds just as ridiculous as their husbands. But soon he is pleasantly surprised by "the North American Sexual Revolution" and has "several love affairs concurrently." At the end of the novel he enjoys himself in "a newly opened Hungarian coffee house" in Toronto and takes "full credit" for all "the changes European immigrants were bringing" to "stuffy old Toronto." So instead of shedding his Hungarian identity and trying to become a Canadian, like Sándor Hunyadi, András Vajda, whose economic problems are swiftly solved, amuses himself by teaching Canadians how to be like him, and makes lighthearted fun of them when they finally start running to catch up.

In Praise of Older Women, therefore, is a funny, picaresque, erotic novel with an immigrant hero.

But perhaps Vizinczey felt that it was not taken seriously enough, because in 1969 he added a "Postscript to an Erotic Novel" in *The Rules of Chaos*. Here he defines Vajda the philanderer as an example of the absurd and alienated modern hero, a Don Juan *because* he is an immigrant. "Migration" and "historical dislocations," he argues, "have made millions lonelier as well as freer," because the uprooted man must make an "emotional adaptation to the age of discontinuity," and this adaptation takes the form of "multiplying rather than deepening experience." Labelling such multiplication the "episodic sensibility," he concludes that "the libertine has become . . . the representative hero of our time."[9]

But this argument sounds spurious as well as absurd. Although Vajda's amorous encounters occur in a variety of settings — Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Canada — most of his love affairs bloom in Budapest during his years at the university, and there, far from being alien or dislocated, he is very much an integral part of the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the upper middle class. Until 1956 the Communist regime remains only a dark shadow in the background. In the foreground Vajda hops merrily from bed to bed, and it is these erotic adventures that he contrasts so gleefully to the squareness and stuffiness of life in Toronto and Saskatoon.

A Stranger and Afraid, by Marika Robert, is another post-World War II novel in which the Hungarian protagonist is very different from Sándor Hunyadi. Although Kristina, the novel's heroine and first-person narrator, arrives in Canada six years before Vajda, she comes from an upper middle class background very similar to his. When she leaves this background and flees from Communist Budapest to Paris, she feels uprooted. "I had lost my place in a familiar society, because I had become a stranger who didn't belong anywhere." The 18-year-old Kristina goes to work for André Duval, a wealthy blackmarketeer who soon becomes her sadistic lover: he beats her and she adores it. Like Vajda, Kristina is erotically experienced; she is not promiscuous, but she understands her own strange sexuality. However, when André is accidentally killed, she and a friend, another young Hungarian woman, begin to think about emigrating to Canada. At first they are both very dubious. "Whoever heard of anyone going to Canada?" her friend asks. "I thought only farmers and lumberjacks went there and men who got girls pregnant and wanted to escape the responsibilities. Where is this Canada anyway, are you sure it exists?" Kristina considers the idea of Canada "rather repulsive" because "the mere word made me shiver. I could see endless snow-covered mountains and ten million people skiing up and down on wild slopes, summer and winter. It was a dreadful thought."

In Toronto she finds that it is immigrants who are considered dreadful. A woman who helps her find a room tells her that "immigrants shouldn't be . . . fussy, you should be happy to be allowed in, though if they asked me, we wouldn't let you. Who needs all these foreigners? They're only taking away the jobs from Canadians." When Kristina gets a job, a female superior complains that Toronto "is becoming a babel of languages; wherever I go I can hear those dreadful yappings. Why can't they learn English?" Even worse are "sidewalk cafés in Toronto, what will come next? Open Sundays, I bet. That's what these foreigners would like to have, drinking parties, Sunday movies. . . . They're trying to change our way of life instead of assimilating. Toronto will never be the same again. Why didn't they all stay at home?"

But Kristina's male superior, Neil Albright, does not feel this way. The first time he kisses her, he is so excited by her expertise that he proposes. Her marriage to a young executive takes care of Kristina's economic problems but creates others. She feels culturally superior to "a Canadian husband whose great-grandfather fought Indians and slept on animal skins at the time when my great-grandfather fought duels over perfumed ladies and arranged lavish soirées for them." She is astonished that Neil not only cooks well but shares all the chores, hands over his paycheck, always tells her where he is going, and defers to her on every decision. He certainly *is* "all-bright," but since neither Hungarian husbands nor French lovers behave like this, Kristina finds him slightly ludicrous. In bed he is worse than that. Making love to him, his kinky wife feels, means "changing the wavelength from pagan rituals to silent calisthenics." Because he considers intercourse merely "a natural function," Neil makes love "in . . . pitch-black silence." After a frightening affair with a sadistic lover and a whirl at psychotherapy, Kristina decides to accept her masochism instead of fighting it. This decision helps her to feel, rather improbably, that she is no longer "a stranger and afraid" in Canada. Caustically funny about this novel, Atwood dismisses it because of Kristina's masochism. But it is important to reiterate that here again the protagonist does not try to change, because she does not feel inferior to Canadians; rather, she is convinced that she is both culturally and sexually superior to them.

So is Alex Hradas, the Hungarian husband of Sylvia, "The Good Wife" in Robert Fulford's short story. But his name is not convincing: it is not an *echt* Hungarian name. Although the Austro-Hungarian Empire was an uneasy, polyglot mixture of many nationalities, whose diversity continues to be reflected in Hungarian surnames, art is not life. So an author wishing to create an unmistakably Hungarian character ought to give him a Magyar name. To clarify by analogy, an unmistakably English character should not be named

Emlyn Lloyd-Thomas, for the English reader would inevitably think of him as Welsh. The fact that Fulford gives Hradas a Czech name instead of a Magyar name points to the most important difference between this story and the preceding three novels: the author is a Canadian, not a Hungarian. Therefore, we see the immigrant not from the inside, but from the outside, and the picture is sharply critical.

Like Vajda, Hradas is a young Freedom Fighter who immigrates to Canada and earns a graduate degree at a Toronto university. Sylvia, a Canadian coed, meets him when he delivers a lecture "on the aesthetics of George Lukács." Impressed — *she* doesn't even understand Northrop Frye — Sylvia surrenders her virginity to Hradas because he makes love in a "curt way, . . . the way a European intellectual should make love." Although not charming like Vajda, since he isn't describing himself, he is obviously an expert seducer, and they soon marry. Kosa notes that another important difference between earlier Hungarian immigrants and post-World War II immigrants is that the latter, instead of marrying Hungarians, "show a tendency to marry into the Anglo-Canadian stock." As the Canadian half of a Canadian-Hungarian couple, Sylvia becomes the female counterpart of the good husband, Neil Albright, but also something of a masochist. She longs for children, but for ten years she loyally supports Hradas while he dabbles at writing. Unlike Vajda, he does not achieve success. Although he publishes "three slim volumes" of poetry, "sharing the costs . . . with his publishers," gradually Sylvia begins to feel that the image she fell in love with, "that of a serious, arrogant and confident European intellectual," is a sham. Hradas likes calling himself "*un homme des lettres*," but his enemies consider him "a poseur and an egomaniac," patronizing and condescending to established authors with major reputations. One of these authors is Michael Turner, an English professor who, Sylvia senses, treats her husband as "a kind of pet," because "Alex was, after all, an immigrant, never really to be accepted in the world Michael was born to. Alex was part of multi-culturalism, an idea Canadians like Michael admired without exactly embracing." But in spite of Alex's lack of real acceptance in the world, Sylvia feels that both she and Michael are "intimidated by Alex's sense of European superiority, his unspoken but clear belief that a tragic accident of history had placed him in a community of barbarians." If the story stopped here, it would show a sympathetic perception of at least one reason why "pet" immigrants become egomaniacs. But the two Canadian characters' ambivalence toward Hradas is dramatically resolved in a climactic scene demonstrating how completely wrong they are to feel intimidated: the *Hungarian* is the barbarian.

Turned down three times by the Canada Council, to which he applies for grants, Hradas rages, "My God, why did I ever come to this country? I'd have been better off in Budapest." On the evening of Hradas' third rejection by the

Council, Michael Turner and his wife come to dinner. Hradas makes fun of Michael's "gentlemanly little essays . . . deploring censorship. . . ." What does *he* know about censorship? When Sylvia tries to defend Michael, her husband accuses her of considering him "paranoid," of "secretly" believing he is "nothing," and of being barren. Humiliated, she reminds him of his insistence on contraception, but he shouts, "We would have had children if you'd been the kind of woman I deserved. I could have had *sons*!" Then he shouts at their guests, "Remember what drove you away: an honest man speaking the truth at last." The Turners gone, Hradas looks smug, like "a man who had done a hard piece of work exceptionally well."

FULFORD'S STORY OBVIOUSLY expresses the native Canadians' resentment of the real-life counterparts of confident characters like Vajda, Kristina, and Hradas. Another Canadian writer who creates a Hungarian husband married to a Canadian wife also resents him — or makes his protagonist resent him — but in a much more complicated way. Mike Hornyak, the dead man who dominates Robert Kroetsch's first novel, *But We Are Exiles*, is a very mysterious and charismatic figure. Fraser, Hornyak's father-in-law, is not sure of Hornyak's nationality. He refers to him as "that crazy bohunk or Polack or whatever he is. . . ." "Bohunk" is another term for "Hunky," but includes people of Bohemian as well as Magyar extraction; either way, Hornyak, like Hradas, *could* be a Hungarian name. But there is a difference: here the uncertainty about Hornyak's name adds to his aura of mystery. Kettle Fraser, Hornyak's widow, has no idea where he comes from or even what his middle name is. His great wealth is also mysterious: he is "the young baron" of the frozen fish trade. In addition, like Vajda, he radiates sexual charisma. Here the Hunky and the Don Juan are the same person, and Hornyak's name very obviously suggests the latter role.[10] Peter Guy, on his way west to see his girl, is picked up by Hornyak, and watches in admiration as Hornyak gets out of his Rolls Royce and strides into small town "beer-parlour" like "some great bloody redeemer. . . ." He redeems "lonely women in dry prairie towns, dreaming of an adventure with a stranger who blazes like a comet out of the short luminous night. . . ." But Guy's admiration for this Hunky Don Juan quickly turns into resentment when Hornyak beds Guy's girl, Kettle Fraser, and eight days later marries her. His resentment is partially responsible for the accidental riverboat explosion which kills Hornyak: Guy, subconsciously desiring Hornyak's death, fails to warn him in time.

But his death is only the beginning of the two men's complicated relationship. In the opening scene of the novel, which is narrated largely in flashbacks, Guy is dragging the Mackenzie River for Hornyak's corpse. He doesn't find it; he sees only his own reflection in the water, which he studies "as if not sure whom

he might see. . . ." The reflection of his own face where he expected Hornyak's face to float up to him links the two characters closely. And the reader has already been alerted to the symbolic significance of this scene by the novel's epigraph, a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describing Narcissus gazing at his watery reflection. The prophecy uttered at Narcissus' birth, that he will live a long life if he does not know himself, equates seeing oneself with knowing oneself. But it is soon clear that it is Hornyak that is not destined to live long: he is supremely sure of his own identity. He tells Guy, "My trouble is that I know my own mind. And that's a terrible thing. . . ." It is Guy, the young Canadian, who does not know who he is, and the novel he narrates is his journey to the realization that he must assume Hornyak's identity. On the last page he recalls discovering Hornyak in bed with Kettle. Just as Guy sees his own face reflected in the river in the opening scene, in this last scene he remembers seeing the lovers' bodies reflected in a mirror. He sees himself where he expects to see Hornyak; he sees Hornyak where he expected to see himself. By this time, however, Guy has not only become the widowed Kettle's lover but has also taken Hornyak's place in death. After recovering his corpse and putting it in a canoe, Guy remembers Hornyak's betrayal of their friendship and throws the corpse overboard. Then Guy crawls into the tarp-covered canoe, his only shelter in a storm, and figuratively dies, "slammed . . . into darkness" and "silence." W. F. H. Nicolaisen says that Guy "can substitute for . . . Hornyak," but Guy does more than that.[11] He *must* assume Hornyak's identity; he becomes Hornyak. This switch is especially significant in ethnic terms. Poor Sándor Hunyadi is so humiliated by Canadians that he feels compelled to shed his Hungarian identity, to die, and be "born anew" as the Canadian Alex Hunter, ruthlessly determined to be rich. In dramatic contrast, here it is Peter Guy, the young Canadian, who feels so humiliated by Hornyak, the rich and ruthless "bohunk" who casually steals his sweetheart, that he must abet Hornyak's accidental death, lie down and die in Hornyak's canoe-coffin, and even then fear that he will only "be playing puppet to a dead king" if he marries the woman who originally belonged to him.

TURNING FROM FICTION by Canadian authors writing about Hungarians to fiction by Hungarian-Canadians writing for and about themselves in their native language, we find that the Don Juan doesn't appear. But because the audience is clearly defined, the insistence upon retaining a Hungarian identity becomes even more emphatic than in Vizinczey's and Marika Robert's novels. This insistence, the major theme in several short stories in the *Anthology of the Canadian Hungarian Authors' Association*, is obviously addressed to readers who, in the writers' opinion, are assimilating too rapidly.

In László Szilvássy's story, "I Write Letters," the narrator, the editor of a Hungarian literary newspaper, satirizes a letter from a second-generation Hungarian girl. In an atrocious mixture of stilted business English and misspelled, unidiomatic Hungarian, she inquires about the meaning of her father's furious Hungarian curses. Where does he keep telling her to go? The editor doesn't enlighten her, but wonders why her father hasn't cursed the wretched girl even more. What makes her a wretch to the editor is her inability to write decent Hungarian. She also sounds ignorant of English grammar and Canadian geography, but he doesn't care about that.

A similar satiric story, "In the Bookstore," is set in a Hungarian bookstore in a Canadian resort. János Miska's narrator, a university librarian, discusses the bookstore customers with the proprietor, who admits to not being very well read, but is all the more disgusted with the pretensions of the local Hungarians. Somewhat like the poseur Hradas, they assume aristocratic and professional titles and sprinkle their conversation with highbrow allusions, but secretly they read only trash. Even worse, they are rapidly turning into Canadians: they have good jobs, so they spend money on homes, furniture, cars, and motorboats, but they no longer buy Hungarian books. His *raison d'être*, to supply them with Hungarian culture in Canada, becomes ironic.

The protagonist of "Cleaner," another story by Miska, also acquires a good job, but with different results. Outwardly his life improves; inwardly it remains unchanged. The personality of Béla Telegdi has been "ineradicably marked" by four years in an AVO prison. (AVO is the acronym of the Hungarian Secret Police.) Telegdi is presented in two brief scenes: in 1959 he is a cleaner scraping soil marks off the wall of an Ontario hospital; in 1969 he is lunching in the dining room of "the Soil Institute." His economic success seems assured: he has just submitted his doctoral dissertation on permafrost to the University of Toronto. His superior now addresses him as "Bill," but in spite of his new status and new first name, his psychological identity has not been altered. Ironically, his life is still shaped by soil and seems "permanently frozen"; thus he is incapable of assimilation.

The most explicitly anti-assimilation story is István Nagy's "Meeting." Its narrator is not identified as a professional intellectual but only as a Hungarian immigrant in Winnipeg, Sándor Hunyadi's town. At a bus stop he meets a Canadian soldier who, although raised in China by a Hungarian father and a Russian mother, considers himself a Hungarian! He can't speak the language and has a Canadian wife, but he has not changed his triple-barreled Hungarian name. Neither will he let his wife work, for only by staying home with their children can she teach them the meaning of a Hungarian home. This chance encounter evokes the narrator's denunciation of Hungarians who *have* changed their names. He is angriest with the ex-Freedom Fighters who have "denied"

their Hungarian heritage by taking more easily pronounced names. He also criticizes Hungarian husbands who allow their wives to work. Unlike the egocentric, unemployed Hradas, he feels such men have misled the Canadians who welcomed them, but it is not a question of intellectual pretensions. The Canadians believe that the Hungarians gave up their native homes with aching hearts. But the Hungarians cannot maintain the credibility of that story if they do not value their new homes enough to make their wives stay there. The narrator concludes with a rhetorical question: "What can we expect from the world if even we ourselves forget that we are Hungarians?" The message of this hortatory tale is clear but paradoxical: only by retaining their own language, their own names, their own cultural values, in short, only by remaining Hungarian can the immigrants be good Canadians. By these new, intellectual, intensely self-conscious immigrant-writers, Sándor Hunyadi's painful, ironic metamorphosis is condemned and rejected.

Waiting for his son's birth, Sándor dreads the child's contamination by books and music. The namesake of the king who treasured books is afraid of their power. "Books are even worse than music," Sándor thinks. "They'll fill his head with crazy ways of living and make him wonder if things couldn't be different. They'll ask questions they can't answer and confuse him and make him dissatisfied. But he's got to believe in himself and in the way things are, and be happy in his work. It's not such a crime to be ignorant. It's worse to be a failure." But failure can be defined in many ways. In Sándor's definition, deliberately anti-intellectual, failure is snyonymous with being a poor and despised "Hunky." Paul Jonás, a 1956 refugee who is now a professor at the University of New Mexico, defines the term another way. He notes that the economic positions that took earlier immigrants two or three generations to achieve, the 1956 refugees have arrived at in twenty years. But he argues that "history will not remember us as successful immigrants but as exiles, miserable, unhappy, and failed," with no "real friends," no "strong and emotional relationships," and "children who do not know what the revolution was" and who do not speak Hungarian.[12] It is this sense of exile and emotional failure among Hungarian immigrants in America that these Hungarian writers in Canada seem to be struggling to avert: *they* will not sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.

NOTES

[1] *Land of Choice* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 93.

[2] *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), pp. 152-54.

[3] "Introduction," *Under the Ribs of Death* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964), p. 9.

[4] (Garden City, New York: Doubleday).

[5] (New York: Trident Press, 1966). A Canadian edition appeared in 1965.

[6] *Toronto Short Stories*, ed. Morris Wolfe and Douglas Daymond (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1977), p. 204.

[7] (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 44.

[8] János Miska, ed., No. 1 (Ottawa: Canadian Hungarian Authors' Association). All translations are my own.

[9] (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 214-15.

[10] W. F. H. Nicolaisen, "Ordering the Chaos: Name Strategies in Robert Kroetsch's Novels," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 11 (Summer 1978), 55-65, discusses many of the characters' names in *But We Are Exiles*, but does not comment on Hornyak's name.

[11] Ibid., p. 61.

[12] "Home Thoughts from Abroad," *Harper's*, April 1977, p. 21.

THIS IS THE LAST NIGHT

Roo Borson

Night drips tar into the grass.
Lamps fall onto the pond, making
accordions of light, but no sound
ever comes of that. Hills
are like the cool brows of dead soldiers;
they don't look back.
Trees are offered up out of the ground, helpless bouquets.
The light of each star comes hurtling,
but the earth never breaks, there's no way
to kill what you most want. All around
the small towns are lighting up or going dead,
whatever they do best, and the frogs begin creaking.
The soft flash of a fish
makes pilgrims of us. It takes so little.
It is the last night, the moon hails on the pond
with no sound, the canoe navigates
through ruins of trees. How am I to tell you
the only thing I know? On the bank
a wild violet opens. A small purple cavern
that no one walks out of.

ASSEMBLY LINE STORIES

Pastiche in Sylvia Fraser's The Candy Factory

Lorna Irvine

IN HIS STUDY OF FORMULAIC FICTION, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, John Cawelti suggests that "literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in value to traditional imaginative constructs."[1] The peculiar, often repulsive stories that comprise Sylvia Fraser's novel, *The Candy Factory* (1975), illustrate Cawelti's suggestion. A pastiche of traditional popular formulas, these stories slightly alter established codes in order to incorporate contemporary fashions in sexual roles. In toto, the novel is a ghost story, replete with gothic overtones; its chief ghost, Mary Moone, is presented as the author of each story. However, this format seems but a convenient artifice for allowing Mary Moone freedom to interfere with the endings of the seven central stories and to elucidate, in the two framing stories, her reasons for changing the anticipated endings. Yet in spite of certain alterations, she assimilates change without revoking the basic formulas she uses. The novel does not cancel formulaic myths, as it would if its aim were chiefly parodic, but rather reshapes them.

What reshaping occurs? The novel offers as *topos* a contemporary urban world, commercial, mass-producing, faceless. Like the candy produced in the factory of the novel, the characters (all in some way connected with the factory) do fit into confined moulds. On one level, these moulds are their stories, on another their representation as characters within these stories. Essentially, the character moulds, or codes, divide into masculine and feminine; thus, the sexual dynamics of each story are crucial to its development. By no means is this focussing on sexual roles arbitrary but signifies a major assumption in popular fiction: that is, pornography, hard-boiled detective fiction, love story, melodrama (all of which are present in *The Candy Factory*) commonly describe a sexually divided world in which the term 'masculine' denotes activity, aggressiveness, sadism; the term 'feminine' passivity, introversion, masochism. Because these antithetical terms frequently function as nouns instead of adjectives (masculine = man; feminine = woman), the battle between the sexes becomes a major ingredient in formulaic plots. With varying degrees of success, Mary Moone endeavours to reshape this

battle both by diminishing the gender specificity of the terms masculine and feminine, and by minimizing their opposition. Thus, although *The Candy Factory* uses and even exaggerates popular fictional roles for its male and female characters, it does so in order to dramatize their frequent absurdities and to suggest their inadequacies in reflecting today's world.

Before they are altered, the seven central stories read like a compilation of contemporary popular fiction. The first, the story of the tramp, is pornography, a revelation of historical and individual acts of sadism. The tramp emerges from the bowels of the candy factory, the basement of its hierarchical structure, to comment on various struggles for power. But in this story, the power struggle becomes increasingly limited; we are told of the tramp's attacking a woman, an attack that culminates in sexual violation and possible murder. The language directs our reading: "He sniggered, squiggling his fingers inside the silky lining, thinking of the silky little woman who owned it, thinking of her creamy-pink cunt"; "The tramp fell panting, voracious, upon the shuddering woman, feeling his cock, swollen and hot-headed like a boil pumping to burst." Here is Henry Miller's world, the battleground between cock and cunt, masculine sadism given absolute physical expression. The opposition between the sexes is total. As the female character in this story, Mary Moone figuratively presents herself without a face, the necessary prop for fantasized seduction and rape; she waits, lights candles, stares into a mirror, is "swaddled in a flimsy white gown of antique lineage, slashed low to reveal milky white shoulders and a slender neck." Her masochism invites the tramp's brutality. Images of female helplessness and entrapment increase the sexual tension: "The woman, her hands over her face, began to pray"; she is "like a frightened moth caught in a storm." Thus, the codes of pornography reinforce the dichotomy between men and women that underlies those of the following stories.

The tone of the next story abruptly changes. Conscientiously saccharine, the love story of Danny and Daphne depicts the age-old struggle between man's yearning for independence and woman's for protection, the stuff of countless jokes. The plot fulfills our expectations: boy and girl meet, fall in love, quarrel, then reunite. The characters are stereotyped, advertisements for the bourgeois myth of courtship: Daphne like "that goddess the suntan people used to splash across two billboards"; Danny "spreading a glossy smile over his sensibilities — the beer commercial again." Their actions seem unreal; Danny performs as if he were "in one of those schmaltzy slow-motion commercials." Significantly, their rigidity results from their efforts to comply with established sexual roles, Danny's that of assertive masculinity, Daphne's of affiliative femininity. An essential conflict is thus programmed into their roles. Represented here as elsewhere in the novel by actual battle imagery, this conflict, this battle between the sexes, dominates the plot. Daphne describes the tension: "Without her knowing how,

or why, she had become the enemy, someone to be outfoxed and discredited." Controlled by the omnipresent advertising of sexual codes, these characters unwittingly expend their energy in protecting themselves from attack rather than in loving each other.

In the next story, Mary Moone shifts to the world of the hard-boiled detective, Sam Ryan, a loner "like Mike Hammer, like Sam Spade." The phallic connotations of these last two names stress the sexual specificity in this genre. For, confined in his behaviour by a limited definition of masculinity (aggressive, tough), the Op has a correspondingly limited understanding of femininity. Like the detectives with whom he associates himself, Sam fluctuates between defining women as sexually frigid or sexually promiscuous. His two ex-wives illustrate this sexual categorizing, the first a woman "ice cream clear through . . . from the frosted strawberry smile to the frozen cherry at the bottom," the second a woman who would "screw anything that came up the front walk." His dehumanization of women is further emphasized in his use of the slang characteristic of this genre — "cool babes," "dames," "whores," "pussycats," "broads" — and in the macho image he attempts to create by plastering his walls with *Playboy* cartoons and photographs. Because his relationships with women are struggles for proof of his masculinity, sexuality again becomes a battle.[2] To exaggerate the constrictions of the plot of the hard-boiled detective story and to illustrate graphically the Op's fundamental fear of women, Mary introduces into this story the sexually suggestive image of the trap. Sam reads Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* and, at the end, is himself caught in a trap. Thus this story, too, threatens to end in a disaster needlessly inculcated by a rigid adherence to sexual codes.

UP TO THIS POINT IN *The Candy Factory*, Mary Moone has used three fictional genres in which antagonism between male and female characters is a traditionally accepted necessity of plot development. She turns now to two stories that illustrate more ambiguous kinds of sexual stereotyping. The first, the story of Beau and Morgan, although less formulaic than the previous stories, nonetheless makes use of popular clichés about relationships between men. Its major clichés address homosexuality. Beau is presented as ethereal, sensitive, masochistic; Morgan as physical, tough, sadistic. Both men have had neurotic relationships with their mothers. On one side of the Freudian dilemma, Beau's mother attempts to compensate for an unhappy marriage by enslaving her son. The result is that Beau has spent his adult years attempting to escape from "the sexual feelings" that his mother has aroused in him. In his office, he keeps a replica of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, an image that symbolizes both his passivity and his attitude to women; he can empathize only with the virgin/mother. On the other side, Morgan's black Mama actually commits incest with her son. And this

union dominates Morgan's life: "he was going to jump into the swamp with her, and do for her as he used to after Pa died, as Pa used to do, just letting her flesh roll over him, sucking him up into the pit he had sprung from." From this Faulknerian background, his present violence erupts. Apart from being actors in a suggested formula for gay fiction, the white Beau and the black Morgan illustrate from a different perspective the preserved dichotomy between masculinity and femininity that inevitably results in struggle.

If the story of Beau and Morgan is based on the codes of gay fiction, that of Eve and Brigitte is based on the popularized codes of women's liberation. It too is filled with clichés about women's relationships with each other. Eve, "surer of her shorthand than of her femininity," certainly despises men: "She had had quite enough, this last year, of lovers with burnt-out fuses crawling to her in their tattered Superman suits." Masculine and tough, she is presented as a threatening bitch. But, if she cannot form close relationships with men, neither can she with women. Thus, her struggle with the feminine, passive Brigitte demonstrates yet again a stereotyped sexual antagonism. Although the story presents other hackneyed examples of women's liberation — the factory's misspelled and illogical weekly circulars denouncing the suppressive male hierarchy; the battle between the beauty contestants and the Nellie McClungers — what it predominantly illustrates is the inability of individual women to cooperate with each other. When Eve and Brigitte come to blows, their physical struggle makes concrete the often abstract tensions that initiate conflict between women in much popular literature.

The sixth and seventh stories are melodramas, the first told from the perspective of the wife, Celeste, the second from that of her husband, Charles. Celeste's character is an amalgam of fantasy (the fairy-tale princess) and middle-class ethics (the self-denying wife and mother). Like Ibsen's Nora, she seems a puppet, manipulated originally by her father and now by her husband. Her doll-filled room with its obsessively frilly decorations stresses her immaturity. In this story, too, jealousy between women seems a necessary cliché of the plot: "Celeste deftly manipulated Brigitte so that both were reflected in the same antique mirror, and Celeste could enjoy, along with her guests, Brigitte's gaucherie framed in her own good taste." Narcissistic and masochistic, Celeste suffers the fate of the passive woman; she has no identity and therefore cannot maintain a mature relationship with her husband. Furthermore, her passivity forces her husband to assume a dictatorial control of the family. Once again, traditionally feminine qualities are pitted against masculine ones so that the battle between the sexes necessarily becomes the major conflict of the plot.

Celeste's melodrama prepares us for Charles'. As the president of the candy factory, he has power and wealth. Both represent his masculinity. But like Celeste, he too has been manipulated; the sexual mores of his ancestral past hang heavily

over the present. In his office, a grandfather clock that has belonged to his grandfather, his father, and now himself loudly reminds him of the patriarchal family with its stress on masculine dominance. But from the wall, his mother's portrait reminds him only of "how she used to call him twenty times a day to see if she should put on her rubbers." Inevitably, the roles are repeated in his own marriage. As it does in each of the stories, the evocation of the past therefore emphasizes the conservative tradition that dominates definitions of sexual roles. The specifics may slightly change. In contemporary melodramas, as Charles does here, the characters may search for extra-marital proof of their sexual potency. But the ideology of the patriarchal family remains; battleground that it is, it must nonetheless be preserved. These domestic stereotypes, Celeste and Charles, thus play out a drama that has been written long before they were born, a drama of discordant family life, a drama in which women and men cannot coexist.

THESE ARE THE OBVIOUS FORMULAS of the central stories. If *The Candy Factory* were merely a compilation of typical popular fictions, the sexual roles of its various characters would now be reasonably clear. But, when we return to the opening story, "The Legend of Mary Moone," we discover directives that encourage us to criticize and reformulate with Mary Moone the conflicts of the characters. Here, she explains to us that all the stories arise from "the mistakes and disappointments of her own life." Moreover, they are "in a spooky way a whole book of characters in a timeless dance with lost possibilities of her own life." Apparently she has written these stories to fulfil certain of her wishes. But how do they do so? As she observes the lives of the people around her, she sees the same sexual conflicts that have dominated her life — formulaic stories with formulaic endings. The material in her Special Accounts Book reveals only her own mistakes and disappointments; the characters always fall short of what she can see to be their potential. Thus, she interferes. Instead of preserving the impasse arrived at in each story, an impasse that results from role playing, Mary Moone chooses to alter the endings. By forcing the characters to confront their pasts, she offers to each the possibility of exorcising that past. And thus, to the hand moulds "dating from the time old Xavier presided over the Production Line," she attempts to give new shapes.[3]

Although the plots remain formulaic, her proposed endings alter the conflict. What she attempts to make manifest is a latent content not dominated by a character's gender. For, as she observes "the small gestures that indicate what a person really thinks and feels apart from what he says he thinks and feels," she realizes that stock sexist responses and gestures are only superficial signs of more profound conflicts. The genres she uses certainly require struggle; but they do

not require that struggle to be a sexist one. Thus, she shows that both male and female characters need to be released from the outmoded battle between the sexes. Instead of their measuring each character against a sexual opposite, she suggests that writers should find alternative ways of dramatizing destruction and growth. For that struggle discussed by Beau between the Death Wish and the Life Wish is common to male and female characters alike and need not be typified by sex.[4] By thus shifting her focus, Mary undertakes to assimilate changes in value to popular fictional constructs. Contemporary social awareness of sexism necessitates a changed presentation of fictional characters.

Not surprisingly, the endings that Mary offers extend character codes. Before she interferes, her stories demonstrate traditional conflicts; trapped by their fictional roles, the masculine characters disavow gentleness, the feminine characters aggression. Each story threatens to end with a stalemate. But her experiences with the tramp have shown Mary how to break the stalemates. The tramp's story is therefore a catalyst for the following stories, and for this reason, Mary herself is the female character in it. Her past has typed her as a woman, just as the pasts of each of her characters have sexually typed them. If she is to show that characters need not be so typed, she must undergo an experience that extends her own character. Thus, she turns to that other artist, the tramp. In this story, she seeks to combine the brutality of the tramp's limited sight (he has only one eye) with her own equally limited vision of benevolence. By allowing the tramp to pierce her anonymity, to give her a face, she accepts a changed role in her own story. Furthermore, along with her alter-ego, the tramp, she acknowledges that "nature seldom needs to be altered *or* interpreted . . . *except, of course, human nature.*" In the following stories, the alterations result from her desire to cancel the sexual division between activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity.

Thus she is able to reformulate the codes of the love story. As long as Danny experiences "his vulnerability . . . as loss of power. His tenderness . . . as loss of control," he remains trapped — the man of steel. Until Daphne can enact her realization that "she should have established herself from the start as a person with tastes and needs of her own," she remains faceless. In order to make them realize how arbitrary are the boundaries within which they believe they can act, Mary creates a situation that forces both of them to change their typical responses. Danny's plunge into the water to save Daphne from her apparent imminent drowning corrodes his steel-like armour. This baptism, a symbol Mary uses in various ways in each story, gives Danny a new perspective on his life. Because he can now acknowledge his need of affiliation, Daphne can respond to the change in his character by acknowledging hers for independence. Able to concentrate on the sharing of gentleness and assertiveness, they can begin to use creatively the energy they have wasted in barricading themselves from each other.

Read in terms of its ending, the portrait of Sam Ryan reveals the self-destructiveness of the hard-boiled detective's macho image. Throughout, Mary emphasizes his sexual conflicts; plagued by doubts about his masculinity, he encounters repeated situations that exacerbate his anxiety. Looking around the boardroom of the candy factory, "heavy with cigar smoke and male aggression," he watches a former football player, hired for his macho image, now fat and out of shape. He remembers the rampant homosexuality at the boy's camp he had attended and during his life in the army. When he goes to his favourite bar, The Jungle, transvestites and homosexuals keep appearing, and talk about them pervades the conversation. His response to his memories and experiences is both comic and desperate: "What was happening to the raunchy old world Sam the Pecker knew and loved?" Unable to fit human beings into the sexual moulds he thinks that he understands, Sam feels as if he were disappearing. This feeling is astute; the Op traditionally defines himself in opposition to women. But why should he have to define himself in this way? In order to exaggerate the archaism of restrictive sexual stereotyping in this genre, Mary translates Sam's latent fears into actual situations. At the end of the story, she allows him to copulate with a faceless dummy — surely a symbol of the woman's role in the hard-boiled detective story — and to be caught "right inside her goddam twat." With his sexual anxieties thus graphically realized, Sam must passively listen as the ghostly voice constructs for him a different role: "Why do you think you have to steal love? . . . Why not just a man who's sometimes mean, sometimes meek and often lonely?" If he can learn to define himself by humane values rather than specifically sexist ones, he may also learn how to solve the crimes he has so badly misconstrued.

In each of these stories, the pervasive images of facelessness seem to suggest not only the absence of idiosyncratic features in stereotyped characters but also the dehumanizing effects of our sexist mythologies. Male and female characters waste their energy in battling against each other; their roles are antagonistic. In the story of Beau and Morgan, Mary illustrates the profound psychic split experienced by the individual because of the established dichotomy between masculine and feminine characteristics. Beau recognizes the problem: "I am becoming a man without a body, incapable of rational action, while you are becoming a man without a mind, incapable of rational thought." Here is the disastrous splitting of what should be a unified personality. At the conclusion of this story, Mary thus offers her vision of the male character: a blend of activity and passivity, of aggression and gentleness. Beau must act to save Morgan from dying while Morgan must accept his intervention: "Morgan lay his head against the edge of the chocolate vat, feeling the bite of steel into his

forehead, smelling the sweetness of the chocolate, feeling its gentle warmth as it bubbled up out of the earth, hearing the kind voice telling him to be still. . . . Morgan wept." Morgan's tears and Beau's physical interference unite the two men. Symbolically, their union verifies the feminine and masculine polarities of the personality, and emphasizes bisexuality. Without recognition of both poles, the human personality cannot be complete.

The complementary story of Eve and Brigitte dramatizes a similar splitting, presented here from the perspective of women. Eve's aggressiveness and Brigitte's passivity are polarized. Furthemore, stereotyped role playing occurs throughout, underlined by the frequent use of game imagery. But with Mary Moone's help, both women are forced to analyze the destructive rules by which they have played their lives. Brigitte recognizes that Charles' "game had been to break down her game . . . his defense was to destroy her defenses." And Eve finally acknowledges that, while apparently denying her femininity, she too has played by established rules: "There was little doubt that it [her position as Charles' secretary] had served her as the type of low-key marriage she despised, syphoning off her masochistic 'housewifely' need to be slavishly loyal." The psychic split and the playing of set roles are further dramatized in the Amazon-like battle between the Nellie McClungers and the beauty contestants: "blue jeans" oppose "red-satin costumes"; "leather boots" oppose "spike heels." Although, "in an orgasm of fantasies fulfilled," the crowd encourages antagonism between women, Mary Moone makes it clear that such antagonism defeats all women. Rather, they must join in friendship. Mary thus alters the ending of this story by allowing Eve and Brigitte to become friends. Removed from the stultifying sexist competition, they can now pursue their individual growth.[5]

Nonetheless, Mary does not imply that new definitions of male and female characters will be easily developed, nor new roles easily assumed. Speaking succinctly to Celeste Hunter, the ghostly voice informs her that "the old games have broken down . . . and you don't know what the new ones are." This observation applies not only to melodrama but to each of the stories in *The Candy Factory.* The novel seems, then, to make two major assertions: the old sexual codes are now inadequate; new codes exist but have not yet been satisfactorily incorporated into popular fiction. Its focus is primarily on the destruction of the old — thus, the various representations of death — although it tentatively offers directions for the new. While suggesting that popular culture is a mirror, it implies that the present mirror is not spacious enough.[6] Consequently, Celeste's melodrama emphasizes the necessary breaking of conventional characterizations: Celeste "saw her vanity mirror and plunged through it in a splatter of splintered quicksilver." Again, references to facelessness evoke stereotyping. After breaking her doll's face, Celeste finds herself the defendant in an absurd trial "to save face," a trial that concludes by having her own face replaced with that of a donkey. In

the melodrama of her life, her role has established and limited her character: "You were the longest, wettest soap-opera in town. That was your *theatre*, and how you *gloried* in it . . . you always took your parts from the scripts your husband brought home." But Celeste's story, too, has a hopeful ending. Mary shows her that the battle she has waged with Charles — the battle between the sexes — is in fact a sham battle. She should have been fighting for her "own life and dignity." Thus, although a new script for her life has not yet been clearly printed, it will be determined by her ability rather than her sex.

Faceless portraits, traps, games, mirrors — all suggest the limitations of the characters and imply sexual determinism. So too do the images of machines and robots that dominate Charles' story. In an earlier description of Charles, Sam Ryan imagines him "not human! He was humanoid! *a robot.*" Throughout most of his story, Charles does perform like a robot, spewing out memorized speeches, divorced from his emotions, trapped in a predetermined, masculine role. But Mary's interference with the ending of Celeste's story correspondingly affects the ending of Charles'. When, with her eyes open, Celeste leaves home in "that silly melodramatic way," Charles no longer has a rationale for his actions. Now he has to look at the "bloody human problems" he has always avoided. Furthermore, because Celeste establishes a new role for herself by replacing him as the chairperson of the board of directors of the candy factory, Charles need maintain no longer the equation between masculinity and power. Mary presents his release positively. He escapes from the industrial hierarchy that he has always hated and from the battle with his wife that has sapped his energy. His epiphany is perhaps the most striking of all. Catapulting himself through his window (another example of breaking glass), Charles at last takes his feet off the ground and becomes for a moment a space traveller. He has been freed from his "corporate identity" and from his conventional masculine role.[7]

In the final chapter of the novel, Mary makes some effort to tie up loose ends; yet she fittingly allows it to conclude with an ellipsis. She does not attempt to develop her altered formulas perhaps because she cannot rid herself completely of the old ones. We recall the endless struggle of her parents who relive "every mortification of their married life" while they watch the wrestling matches on television. Parental images are not easy to erase. Nonetheless, Mary understands that elucidation of the past must precede the assimilation of new values. In each story, the characters recall their parents and analyze their relationships with them. Mary thus encourages them to exorcise the past so that their futures will be more various. Charles' vision of the future seems also Mary's: "Soon, with the blindfold of daylight removed, he would be able to see Infinite Time and Infinite Space . . . light beamed forth billions of years ago; galaxies hurtling through the universe — the discus game of the gods." Here is an old/new topos, borrowed from science fiction and applicable to all the stories she has written. With the

removal of sexist blindfolds, each character's space will be extended. Games will continue, but the battle between the sexes will not be one of them.

Near the end of *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes writes: "Man is stopped by myths, referred by them to this motionless prototype which lives in his place, stifles him in the manner of a huge internal parasite and assigns to his activity the narrow limits within which he is allowed to suffer without upsetting the world."[8] Up to a point, the stories of *The Candy Factory* use static formulaic structures. At the same time, however, they offer wider limits and suggest certain upsettings of established fictional worlds. The novel therefore seems kinetic; even without complex character development and with the ghostly, artificial interferences of their creator, the stories attempt to reactivate prototypes. Perhaps, as John Moss suggests, the factory of the novel has "no higher meaning — it is simply a representative family-run capitalist monolith, emblematic of our society in general."[9] But if not a higher meaning, the workers in that factory do have an alternative one. Both emblem and potential, they portray the dangers of preserving the dichotomy between masculine and feminine and of encouraging the struggle between men and women. Through her narrator, Mary Moone, Sylvia Fraser seems therefore to imply that sexist stereotypes no longer mirror our society. Popular culture must reflect the changes.[10]

NOTES

[1] John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 36.

[2] "The intense masculinity of the hard-boiled detective is in part a symbolic denial and protective coloration against complex sexual and status anxieties focusing on women." Cawelti, p. 154.

[3] Such altering of stereotyped characters is of course problematic. Robert Warshaw suggests that "one goes to any individual example of the type with very definite expectations, and originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience without fundamentally altering it." *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 130.

[4] This conflict is articulated in the story of Beau and Morgan when Beau offers his theory of struggle. He begins: "It is my belief that much seemingly erratic, bizarre and 'illogical' human behaviour can be attributed to the workings of the Death Wish in opposition to the Life Wish."

[5] In an interview with Marjorie Earl, Sylvia Fraser comments: "When I had more time for my women friends it came as a revelation to me to see that women are capable of real friendship.... They are not rivals, as is widely and popularly supposed. They really like each other and enjoy each other's company." *The Tribune*, 21 March 1978, p. 24, col. 2.

[6] David Manning White writes in his essay, "Popular Culture: The Multifaceted Mirror": "Popular culture is a multifaceted, pervasive process by which most people decide what they buy, what style of clothes they wear, how they spend their leisure hours and otherwise acculturate themselves in a mass society. It is a 'spa-

cious mirror' which we enter in some ineluctable way." *Popular Culture*, ed. David Manning White and John Pendleton (California: Publisher's, 1977), p. 8.

[7] "The world is full of great ladies who can't find their mates.... This is because women have changed so much, leaving men far behind. Men haven't caught up yet. They are still super-achievers living for their work at the expense of their personalities and their psyches. Women have been through an orgy of self-examination and it's given them new energy and new directions. This has to come yet for men. The light of analysis is now on them." Sylvia Fraser, interview with Marjorie Earl, p. 24, col. 2.

[8] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 155.

[9] John Moss, *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), p. 154.

[10] "But the short story market is changing.... Popular magazines cut out fiction some years ago but now they are moving back and buying fiction again. But today they are not buying the old-fashioned formula fiction. Women no longer want to read it. They are interested in themselves and in their own situations and they want to read the truth. This opens the door of popular magazines." Sylvia Fraser, interview with Marjorie Earl, p. 24, col. 1.

PIT PONIES, SYDNEY, N.S.

Christopher Levenson

Born underground and grown
used to the dark,
they are well-cared for,
have all they need to survive
and haul coal ten hours a day.
It is ready to hand — warm straw,
food, a clean barn. Pit ponies,
oblivious of season,
stay there all winter long
half a mile out,
under the Atlantic.
One day each year
they are brought to the surface, stand
sniffing the unpumped air,
discover fresh grass and feel
on jaded flanks
if the day is fine
unmediated sun.

NEITHER JEKYLL NOR HYDE

In Defence of Duddy Kravitz

J. A. Wainwright

In 1969, a Canadian critic wrote about Duddy Kravitz in his apprenticeship years, "His decisions have been made on the wrong terms, have been based on nothing at all. He has destroyed himself and others for a piece of land that means nothing to those who have loved him."[1] In 1979, another Canadian critic wrote of the adolescent Duddy, "he is a grating amoral force who is all undirected drive and aggression."[2] This latter critic, insisting that we should recognize Duddy's withered humanity and destructive personality, asks that we consider the inevitable answer to Duddy's own question of Jake Hersh in *St. Urbain's Horseman*: " 'How the hell could anyone love Duddy Kravitz?' "

It seems obvious that, a decade apart (and perhaps for the last twenty years since *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* was first published), there are those who have shared the same negative response to Duddy and who interpret Richler's fourth novel as a solicitation of that response.[3] However, attention must be paid to Richler's vision of Duddy in constant relation to those around him. In this relative vision, Richler has much sympathy for his "Jew-boy on the make." Despite his ignorance and crassness, Duddy is presented as a character it is possible to care about. This is so because Duddy's abilities and vulnerability are given unequivocal consideration while his destruction of self and others is not so conclusive. If it is not possible to love young Duddy Kravitz, it is possible to like, understand, and, perhaps, even forgive him.

What is very different and, therefore, somewhat disturbing, is the portrait of the young and adult Duddy in *St. Urbain's Horseman*. It is obvious in this novel that Richler himself no longer likes Duddy; in fact, he views Duddy as a character without redeeming qualities, and he would seem to sympathize with the views of the critics I have referred to. But, for the careful reader of *The Apprenticeship*, the Duddy in Jake Hersh's life is a distortion. It is difficult, if not impossible, for me to accept the apparent evolution of young Duddy into the vulgar, sex-obsessed Kravitz of *Horseman* (*apparent* because the evolution is unexplained). It can be said that Richler owes us no apologies or explanations; Duddy, after all, is his creation to do with as he pleases. However, despite his freedom in this regard, there does seem to be a missing novel about Duddy in

his twenties; without it an injustice has been done to a fictional character. There is no mysterious potion that Duddy drinks to be transformed; it is the writer's ink that is his lifeblood. In the portrait of Duddy that lifeblood is strong but palatable in *The Apprenticeship* and rather like the liquid in Irwin Shubert's scotch bottle in *Horseman*. If he was never only Dr. Jekyll, neither does Duddy deserve to be so entirely Mr. Hyde.

Richler's relative vision in *The Apprenticeship* begins with the confrontation between fifteen-year-old Duddy and his high-school teacher, Mr. MacPherson. We are not meant to admire Mr. MacPherson. He is a pathetic creature who evokes our pity because of his failure as a teacher and as a man. Nowhere is this dual failure better summarized than in the following passage that reveals MacPherson's attitude towards strapping:

> Long ago Mr. MacPherson had vowed never to strap a boy. The principle itself, like the dream of taking Jenny on a trip to Europe, keeping up with the latest educational books, or saving to buy a house, was dead. But his refusal to strap was still of the greatest consequence.... That he no longer believed in strapping was beside the point. As long as he refused to do it Mr. MacPherson felt he would always land safely. There would be no crack-up. He would survive.

Duddy senses Mr. MacPherson's weakness and takes advantage of it: " 'Mac'll be a breeze.... He believes in *per*-suasion.' " However, Richler does not seem to want the reader to have much pity for Mr. MacPherson as far as his attitude towards Duddy is concerned. When MacPherson confronts Duddy in the schoolyard and orders him to put out his cigarette, Duddy replies that Max, his father, knows that he smokes. This is, perhaps, a lie, but what matters more is MacPherson's parental slur: " 'Then he's not fit to bring up a boy.' " Richler presents the ensuing snowball scene in a humorous light, with MacPherson, hit in the back of the neck by Duddy's snowball, "knitting his eyebrows in an attempt at ferocity." Similarly, Duddy is not revealed as a malicious boy intent on hurting MacPherson. Duddy means to hit Hersh, as is emphasized not only by Hersh's derogatory remark about Duddy's aim but also by Samuel's " 'Mighty neat, anyway.' " Duddy's James Cagney-like boast that " 'Nobody gets away with insulting my old man' " is funny, and Mr. MacPherson, with his subsequent "vile" response and "distaste," is over-reacting.

Duddy, of course, is no intellectual match for Mr. MacPherson. He cannot spar and win with words. MacPherson defeats him easily on this level, too easily, and Duddy's insistence on staying in the ring and on his feet can be admired:

> 'Are you telling me what's fair?'
> 'No, Sir. But why am I different from everybody else?'
> 'I don't know, Kravitz. You tell me.'
> Mr. MacPherson smiled thinly. Everybody laughed.
> 'Aw, Sir. Gee whiz.'

'This class may do anything it likes for the next period. I absolutely refuse to teach the likes of you.'

'Anything, Sir?'

. . . .

'I'm not afraid to strap you, Kravitz. I don't believe in corporal punishment.'

'Sure.'

'*Sir.*'

'Sure, Sir.'

Duddy, no doubt, has *chutzpa*, but his iconoclastic role against authority and convention that hide bad teaching, social and cultural poverty, and anti-Semitism, is emphasized. Duddy and the boys have to survive not only MacPherson's limitations but "an endless repetition of precious peeling balconies and waste lots," as well as Mr. Feeney's crass comments about the Jews. Without Duddy, one feels, authority and convention would never be tested. That Duddy is not just a Jewish boy against a *goy* world is evident when he leads attacks on the Christian mission *and* the rabbinical students.

Before he describes Duddy's part in the death of Mrs. MacPherson, Richler provides some insight into Duddy's emotional condition. His romantic stories of his fictitious brother Bradley disguise the inadequacies of his home life:

His father was out, but he found his brother Lennie in the bedroom.

'Hi.'

'Duddy,' Lennie said, 'how many times have I asked you not to barge in here when I'm studying?'

Duddy's face flushed.

When Lennie refuses to respond to Duddy's obvious need for communication, Duddy can only awkwardly spill out his feelings for his brother: " 'You don't have to worry about your fees next year. I'm going to get a job as a waiter up north for the summer and you can have all my tips.' Embarrassed, he fled." His father, Max, thinks of Duddy as a dope like himself, and offers him no support. When Duddy is proud of his father for being a pimp all Max can do is strike him. Unable to get any emotional sustenance from his immediate family, Duddy is afraid to be open with the rest of the world. The inhabitants of that world he sees, with much justification, as "carp-artists." But his insight and his vulnerability are never equal; as he cries to the teasing Jane Cox, " 'Oh, will you leave me alone? Will you please leave me alone?' "

This, then, is the boy, a survivor in a harsh world, who gives Mr. MacPherson "the treatment." Duddy does make the phone call that seems to result in Mrs. MacPherson's death, *seems to* because Richler does not ever explain the exact cause of her demise. Richler does emphasize two things — Mr. MacPherson's responsibility in the matter and Duddy's subsequent guilt. MacPherson's drunken self-pity results in his wife having to answer the phone; his inadequacy as a

teacher and as a man result in the phone call in the first place. Duddy is not blameless, certainly; perhaps in a legal sense, were he not a minor, he could be considered guilty of manslaughter. But the point is that Duddy *is* a minor and, therefore, more of a victim than a perpetrator of events. When MacPherson, in the middle of his breakdown, accuses Duddy of killing his wife, Duddy's response to his buddies — " 'We're all in this together, you understand' " — includes, in Richler's scheme, MacPherson, the other teachers, Max and Lennie, indeed the whole St. Urbain Street milieu. We see Duddy as affected by what has happened and greatly in need of some emotional contact in the last meeting between Duddy and his adversary:

> Mr. MacPherson stopped short when he noticed Kravitz and the others idling outside Felder's store. *The boys seemed subdued and unsure of themselves. Duddy started to walk towards him*, but then he apparently changed his mind, for he turned around to rejoin the boys.
>
> 'Kravitz.'
>
> Duddy stopped.
>
> 'You'll go far, Kravitz. You're going to go very far.'
>
> (Italics mine)

Duddy's walk towards Mr. MacPherson is an emotional gesture. That he can't complete it is not because he doesn't want to but because he is afraid of rebuff. It is a small thing, perhaps, but to Duddy's credit that he does not reply to MacPherson's final taunt.

Soon after we meet Simcha and Uncle Benjy. Simcha is the man whom Duddy will supposedly betray (at the end of the novel) along with Virgil and Yvette. Richler emphasizes from the beginning that wise, old grandfather Kravitz "was not loved" even though he is respected. Simcha's pride is also evident, and his inflexibility when his son produces no offspring. Simcha does show Duddy some kindness, but it is at the expense of Benjy and Max. The advice Simcha offers to his grandson — " 'A man without land is a nobody' " — has its matrix in the same narrow perception of life that causes Duddy to accept it as a truth. Later, when the Boy Wonder tells Duddy that Simcha never wanted any land, that he only wanted to dream about having it, Dingleman's words hurt Duddy because, for a moment, he sees his credo as the platitude it really is. How much, we might well ask, does Simcha betray Duddy?

Benjy, in his emotional deprivation, is like his nephew; he is also an iconoclast of sorts. Yet, in Richler's world, these two with the greatest potential for a relationship cannot help each other. As with MacPherson, and with his grandfather, Duddy cannot really be expected to assist his uncle. He tries to make contact with the adult world when he reports to Benjy about the stealing in the cutting-room. But Benjy is incapable of explaining anything; it is Duddy, even in his aggressiveness and ignorance, who taps the emotional vein:

> 'You're some kid, Duddy, some kid, but this much you ought to know. If you ever do anything to hurt your grandfather I'll break every bone in your body.'
> 'How come you care so much? You never even go to visit him anymore.'

Richler allows Duddy to judge those around him, those who are eventually hurt by Duddy. The judgements count as much as the pain. Meanwhile, Uncle Benjy protects himself through business, and Duddy will do the same.

CLEARLY, DUDDY IS SUPERIOR to Irwin Shubert. The leader of the St. Urbain Street pack has moved, at Rubin's hotel, beyond his familiar territory. Duddy is, as Mr. MacPherson was in the classroom, an outsider; but our sympathies lie with Duddy because his crudities are preferable to Irwin's nastiness and snobbery. Richler emphasizes that Duddy is not consciously out to hurt anyone when Duddy catches Irwin masturbating late one night:

> Irwin looked up, startled and pale. Duddy grinned, he winked, and gesturing enthusiastically he said, 'Atta boy, Irwin. Whew! Pull!'

Duddy is neither condemning Irwin nor laughing at him; rather he is sharing in Irwin's pleasure "enthusiastically." Irwin's guilt and social shame at being caught by Kravitz prompt him to conscious retaliation. In contrast to Duddy, Irwin is malicious — the scotch bottle full of urine and the dirty talk about Yvette (" 'She's got gonorrhea' ") prove it. While Irwin plots to cheat Duddy out of his hard-earned money, Duddy befriends another outsider, Cuckoo Caplan. He helps Cuckoo out of his depressions, encourages him in his professional ambitions, and does trust Cuckoo; it is a trust that is later betrayed.

Of course, despite his vulnerability and undeserved rebuffs, Duddy is becoming an unattractive hustler and money-grubber. He wants the other half of the one-hundred dollar bill that Mr. Farber offers him for good service. Also, "He [has] his heroes," and they are firmly rooted in the American success story, commercial wizards all. But the men behind Coca-Cola, Toni Home Permanent, and Reader's Digest are Richler's satirical targets as much as is Duddy's attraction to the questionable business ethic. Despite the power of the almighty dollar, Duddy cannot entirely reject his own roots. He says that " 'Yvette's a dime a dozen,' " but he does seek her out at the back of the hotel because this run-down area reminds him of home.

In Duddy's relationship with Yvette, Richler is primarily concerned with Duddy's need for the girl, a need that is abused and denied yet, in Duddy's own way, accepted. Although Duddy, from the beginning, does not seem to deserve Yvette, she obviously, like his Uncle Benjy later, sees something worth saving and loving in this boy who never stands still. Duddy does go out with Linda Rubin; he is so oblivious to the set-up that his preference for the rich hotel-owner's

daughter is mitigated by the reader's detestation of the Irwin-Linda arrangement. Duddy is a fool to risk his summer's earnings at the roulette wheel, but he is so much the underdog that it is difficult not to cheer him on. Duddy may be a hustler, but Richler makes it plain that he is operating in a hustling world that deserves everything it gets. To reject Duddy when he doubles his money at the expense of the generous guests is to miss Richler's relative perception of the apprentice in the masters' arena. No better illustration of such perception is offered than Duddy's justified, inner speech to Linda Rubin after he has lost at roulette:

> Look at me, he thought, take a good look because maybe I'm dirt now. Maybe I've never been to Paris and I don't know a painter from a horse's ass. I can't play tennis like the other guys here, but I don't go around spilling ketchup in other guy's beds either. I don't trick guys into crazy promises when they're drunk. I don't speak dirty like you either. You make fun of your father. You don't like him. Tough shit. But he sends you to Europe and Mexico.... You're sorry for making a fool out of me. Gee whiz, my heart bleeds. Take a good look you dirty bitch. Maybe I'm dirt today. That bastard of a black marketeer Cohen can give me twenty bucks and a lecture about gambling and feel good for a whole week. But you listen here, kiddo. It's not always going to be like this. If you want to bet on something then bet on me.

Later on, Richler will allow Duddy to articulate similar feelings to his dying Uncle Benjy, and there, too, his accusations and perceptions will stand up. The reader should realize that Richler's arena is filled with blind masters and that Duddy is, in contrast, the one-eyed apprentice. This does not excuse his selfish use of Yvette when she takes him to the lake for the first time. Again, though, Richler draws an important distinction between the conscious and unconscious act of deception. Duddy watches the lake over Yvette's shoulder as he makes love to her, but "He had come to think he was alone." While this may seem like blindness, especially considering Duddy's lack of awareness of the woman beneath him, Duddy has one eye open on other, *human* matters: "On the far side there was a farm reserved for his grandfather." Duddy may not love Yvette at this time, but he does love Simcha.

Duddy is always presented, along with his values, in the company of others whose values demand judgment as well. " 'You can't run before you learn how to walk,' " an American television man tells him, so Duddy learns how to walk by looking about him and from contacts like Mr. Cohen. Cohen, in their haggling about Duddy's first *bar-mitzvah* film, teaches Duddy the give-and-take (but mostly 'take') of hard business bargaining. Then he advises Duddy on how to con another prospective customer: "'Tell him I'm paying you two thousand.... Don't trust him. Get five hundred down and the rest in writing....' Duddy drove for fifteen minutes before he figured out he had no advance and nothing in writing from Mr. Cohen." While Duddy continues to underestimate Yvette in

his life, his *chutzpa* and his success with Dudley Kane Enterprises cannot be denied. Richler has not yet begun to question the price of Duddy's success in human terms. The reader should be careful when the questioning does begin since, like so much else in this novel, it is not orthodox.

Duddy also has the Boy Wonder as an example. Jerry Dingleman should not be anyone's hero; he is a spiritual as well as a physical cripple, and the reader certainly does not want Duddy to become like him. But, again, Richler points to the difference between a moral innocent, an unconscious hustler, on the one hand, and an immoral, if minor godfather-figure on the other. Duddy is cynically used by Dingleman as a drug carrier and, on a lesser level, as an entertaining diversion in New York City. The boy who risks jail unknowingly for a fifty dollar fee and a five hundred dollar loan, who can see no connection between his own life and that portrayed in *Death of A Salesman*, definitely lacks the withered humanity of the Boy Wonder.

DUDDY MEETS VIRGIL and the events begin to unfold that lead to Duddy's supposed self-destruction and the destruction of others. While the Duddy-Yvette-Virgil triangle can be looked at independently, Duddy's two trips on behalf of his family do occur while he seems to be most using and betraying his lover and friend.

Although Duddy is at the height of his material success, the *bar-mitzvah* film propelling him forward as an "indie," he does not hesitate when it comes to family trouble. Blood ties are extremely significant to Duddy; the sacrifices he makes because of these ties, the care and unabashed love he has for his family emphasize once more that it is ignorance rather than intent that rules in his relationship with Yvette and his exchanges with others such as Virgil and Mr. Friar. Lennie, a brother, needs help, so Duddy acts. As with the Irwin-Linda partnership, Duddy takes on power and money when he invades Hugh Thomas Calder's Westmount home. His innocence when he is out of his depth is not only funny but appealing: " 'Jeez,' Duddy said aloud, getting out of his car. He had been in Westmount before . . . but never this high up. . . . Duddy thought of slipping the butler a fin. That, he thought, is what Falcon would have done." Of course, Irwin is involved in Lennie's troubles, and Irwin's nastiness is pernicious as he uses Lennie's medical expertise to further his own social standing. *Nothing* Duddy does compares with Irwin's conscious manipulation of human lives — Sandra's literally and Lennie's as far as his career is concerned. Duddy as an outsider in Westmount comes off well compared to the bored, cynical Mr. Calder who is also an experimenter with the lives of others. There is some moral force in Duddy's outburst to Mr. Calder, a moral force crudely expressed perhaps, but as

potent as it was in the earlier, inner speech to Linda Rubin and as it will be in the later speech, spoken aloud, to his Uncle Benjy:

> 'I'm trying to be fair.'
> 'Sure. Sure you are. Sandra's expelled and she comes home to this Yankee Stadium here and for all I know she can sleep in a different bedroom every night. That Andy Simpson goes home and sits on his ass until his father croaks and he inherits enough money to choke two horses. But what about my brother . . . ?'

Lennie has received all the breaks in the Kravitz family because he is Uncle Benjy's favourite, and it is plain he gets another break by having Duddy as his brother. Although Lennie has the college education, Duddy has another education — that of the streets. He is much sharper than his older brother, getting Lennie to tell him what he wants to know and advising Lennie as if it is he, Duddy, who has the extra years: " 'You're twenty-four years old. Don't you know better than to go bareback?' " People are always accusing Duddy of something — of aggressiveness, selfishness, dishonesty — and Lennie, in Toronto, is no different. But his accusation that Duddy has "no code of honour," however valid, rings hollow beside Duddy's more insightful and accurate remark, " 'You're the Number I Sucker of All Time.' " Although Lennie shouts about Duddy's greed, cannot see Duddy's own need for emotional comfort (with his questions about their mother), and laments his lost summer in Maine — in short, does not deserve Duddy — Duddy does, as he says to his father, " 'bring 'em back alive.' " The reader cannot like Duddy's treatment of Yvette on his return to Montreal (" 'People fall in love,' Yvette said. . . . 'Planes crash too,' Duddy said"); but the reader can applaud, or should, Duddy's justice for Irwin and his loyalty to his family.

Duddy, in going to New York to fetch Aunt Ida home for dying Uncle Benjy, travels far past the call of duty. At this point the complexity of Duddy's own condition is evident as Friar runs off and as Duddy continues to underestimate his need for Yvette, risking her loss as a result. He does reveal something of his inner fears and turmoil when he says about Benjy, "'He's going to die, Yvette. Isn't that terrible?' " Although Duddy abuses and taunts Yvette, this statement about death demands attention and, significantly, Richler offers no record of Yvette or anyone else solacing Duddy.

Duddy does show an amazing ability to get to the heart of the matter in a few words. First he urges his *zeyda* to "forgive and forget" his differences with Benjy; then, when Duddy arrives in New York and finds the fragile Ida balking at the thought of return to Montreal, he says to her, " 'He's your husband and he's dying.' " His insight into himself and others on an emotional and spiritual level is limited, but someone else might not give the pathetic Ida the treatment she deserves as a human being; Duddy tries to talk to her on the train and he does offer solace.

In Duddy's final meeting with his uncle, Richler once more grants Duddy his simple but valid perception of the way things are. It is a perception that is, as usual, bound up with an emotional vulnerability:

> 'I'll be generous. Max is not very bright. I can't change that with my talk one way or another.
>
> 'You're very bright and nobody likes you. I'm sorry, Uncle Benjy. I say things I don't mean. It's just you make me so sore sometimes. . . .'

Sadly, Benjy and his nephew continue to joust verbally and they will never be able to embrace, despite their extreme and mutual need, in Benjy's lifetime. In the following exchange, Richler presents a succinct view of Duddy held by Benjy and perhaps by the majority of readers. However. Duddy, in reply, is allowed to articulate his world-view. It is an articulation that expands the dying Benjy's vision of the boy he has previously rejected, and it should expand the reader's vision as well:

> 'Why didn't you ever have time for me?'
>
> 'Because you're a *pusherke*. A little Jew-boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed.'
>
> 'You lousy intelligent people. You lying sons of bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers. You give me one long pain in the ass. . . . *Pusherkes.* What a bunch you are! What a pack of crap-artists! Writing and reading books that make fun of people like me. Guys who want to get somewhere. If you're so concerned, how come in real life you never had time for me? It's easy for you to sit here and ridicule and make superior little jokes because you know more than me, but what about a helping hand? When did you ever put yourself out one inch for me? Never. It's the same with all you intelligent people. . . . You never take your hands out of your pockets to a guy like me except when it's got a knife in it. You think I should be running after something else besides money? Good. Tell me what. Tell me you bastard. I want some land, Uncle Benjy. I'm going to own my own place one day. King of the castle, that's me. And there won't be any superior *drecks* there to laugh at me or run me off. That's just about the size of it.

That is just about the size of it. Duddy is allowed to speak with some authority and justification, to answer back a world that has formed and cheated him, that has given him his crass values. The amazing thing is that, as Uncle Benjy realizes, there are still some qualities in Duddy that are admirable:

> 'You're such a nervy kid. My God, Duddel, you're even touchier than Lennie. . . . You don't want anything from me. Come to think of it, you're the only one in the family who never came here to ask for something. My God, it never occurred to me before. You're the only one, Duddel. I've been unfair to you.'

If the reader has been paying attention, he has recognized Duddy's worth for quite a while, especially in comparison to others. The point is not, as Uncle Benjy emphasizes in his last letter to Duddy, that Duddy has "to choose" between being "a scheming little bastard . . . and the fine, intelligent boy underneath. . . ."

The point is, surely, that "the fine, intelligent boy" has endured while the "scheming little bastard" has struggled to survive. Duddy is alone in this world, especially before death: " 'Don't let him die. . . . He's my uncle.' And then embarrassed he fled the house." Uncle Benjy can ask for morphine when the pain starts; there is no drug for Duddy's pain. The "grating amoral force" is not Duddy but life itself.

DUDDY AND VIRGIL ARE SIMILAR in some ways. Virgil responds to Duddy's cliché about business, "'Necessity is the mother of all invention.' " Although Duddy never tells Virgil that "A man without land is a nobody," it is obvious that Virgil would accept such words as gospel; he is fond of his own platitudes: " 'You know, Mr. Kravitz, life is no bowl of cherries for a guy like me.' " Richler does seem, however, to insist on Virgil's true moral innocence and to place Duddy in some opposition to this. As they prepare to go to sleep on Virgil's first night in Ste. Agathe, Virgil says, " 'Look, everything's covered with snow outside. . . . I want to be the first person to walk in it. The first in the world.' " There is a child-like ingenuousness about Virgil that Duddy, for all his ignorance, lacks. Almost immediately after Virgil's response to the snow, Duddy drives to the lake and his land, and the winter is his enemy:

> It's lovely, he thought, and lots of those pine trees I can peddle at Christmas time. . . . It's my land, he thought. But the wind began to cut quicker across the fields, suddenly the sun went out like a light . . . and Duddy began to shiver. . . . Duddy was able to trace his footsteps until the snow began to fall again, and then he was in bad trouble. . . . He ran and ran to no purpose until he collapsed panting in the snow.

Despite this contrast and Duddy's ability to manipulate Virgil over the job and truck, Duddy is innocent of any real knowledge of epilepsy and certainly less informed than Virgil in this regard:

> 'Do you . . . em . . . have these fits in your sleep very often?'
> 'A couple of times a week. They're not very severe.'

Virgil tells Duddy not to worry about his fits, and Yvette, when she discovers Virgil is an epileptic, protests the truck-driving job but seems to want to pass off the responsibility: " 'I'll never forgive you if anything happens to him. I swear it.' " All of Yvette's energy goes into making sure that Virgil gets a fair deal for the truck; the reader is left to wonder why *she* doesn't question Virgil about his attacks. Obviously Virgil has driven before; he is also very sensitive about his condition and never tries to deny it. Certainly Duddy takes advantage of Virgil in business terms, but Yvette seems to think that is settled when Duddy returns the extra truck money.

When Duddy asks Yvette, at the end of Part II of the novel, having acquired half the land in six months, " 'What's your opinion of Duddy Kravitz now?' " the *chutzpa* and the business sense are still worthy of applause. So, too, are Duddy's actions on behalf of his family. If his continued insensitivity to Yvette and his newer callousness about Virgil do grate, such behaviour is only part of a complex whole.

Virgil's accident occurs on the heels of Duddy's final words to his dying uncle. Ironically, Duddy's lashing out grants Benjy some insight, a new perception in his last days. In similar terms, although Virgil is paralysed, his life is changed, as Virgil insists, for the better. Duddy is not insensitive to another's dying — we have seen his pain and confusion with Benjy; but perhaps he has to shut down, for self-protection, the emotional response to what has happened to Virgil. In the exchange at the hospital between Duddy and Yvette, her fixing the blame *entirely* on Duddy is not justified. He cannot be blamed for Virgil's accident, at least not any more than Yvette and, really, Virgil himself. Yvette's martyr-like assumption of responsibility for the care of the paralysed Virgil suggests that she does perceive the blame as shared. She presumes to judge Duddy; however, Richler undermines the validity of her righteous vision. Duddy's defense is impersonal, but it contains as much truth as Yvette's accusations:

> 'I want to know all the details. You're not going to get off easy.'
>
> ....
>
> 'He was happy on the job. I didn't force it on him.'
> 'You knew it was dangerous. I warned you.'
> 'Crossing the street is dangerous. You've got to live. A guy takes chances.'
> 'There's no getting around it. You're to blame.'

Although Duddy is trying to avoid responsibility, his words about 'crossing the street' are not tossed off lightly. The street is St. Urbain, and a guy must take chances to cross it and to escape it. A good part of Duddy's philosophy and experience of life is contained in this seemingly callous series of statements. Can Duddy be blamed for Virgil's emotional insecurity that certainly played a part in the accident?

> Virgil's fits had begun again when Duddy asked him to move downstairs into Yvette's apartment. He had understood, he said, that Duddy and Yvette wanted to be together.... but the fits began again.

That Duddy's tough-guy philosophy about taking chances is not seamless, that he does suffer from his own emotional and spiritual insecurities, for which he receives no succour, is emphasized by his breakdown. The accident and Yvette's subsequent departure with Virgil are the direct causes, but his terrible loneliness during the breakdown, his pathetic yet very funny attempts at self-mythologizing, his search for the past through Hersh, and his admittance of guilt over Mr. and

Mrs. MacPherson reveal an inner void in Duddy that transcends the immediate situation. Duddy is primarily a victim rather than a manipulator of life. That he is sensitive enough not only to remember MacPherson but also to carry around within him his part in MacPherson's downfall indicates that Duddy is much more than "undirected drive and aggression." Indeed, when one recognizes how much emotional energy Duddy expends in his search for his mother, his need for love from Max and Benjy, and his guilt about the past, Duddy's distancing of Virgil can be better understood. In Duddy's disturbed and dark vision "A leering Mr. MacPherson waited around every corner. . . . He tried to run, he wept for trying so hard, but his legs wouldn't work." It is nonsense to suggest that a leering Virgil isn't somewhere just below the surface. When Duddy meets Hersh and accepts responsibility for Mrs. MacPherson's death, he is doing what Yvette implies that he is incapable ever of doing — Duddy is saying *mea culpa* for it all: "Duddy began to cry. . . . He rested his head against the steering wheel and stared at the clutch."

Duddy is at rock-bottom, dangerously close to snapping completely. We cannot expect him to survive for long in this *mea culpa* position. Like Virgil, Duddy must start over. It is ironic but inevitable that he learns to walk again from Mr. Cohen. Cohen understands the rules of the game as Yvette does not. " 'Make yourself hard,' " he advises Duddy and insists that if he had to he would cut the throat of his nearest and dearest customer. In order to pick up the pieces of his dream, Duddy does make himself hard, but not easily. Richler's main question seems to be this: In a world of throat-cutters does Duddy Kravitz pick up and use the knife?

DUDDY IS ONLY $4500 AWAY from having all the land. Previously, Yvette has asked one or two questions about his remarkable ability to come up with necessary payments, but she has never queried Duddy very closely on this. In fact, she has been his ally in the acquisition of the land, lending her name to the deeds and providing him with the vital information about the sellers. She is concerned about his health, not so much about his methods: " '. . . I don't want you to start running again. I couldn't stand it.' " When Duddy is slowing down and resting with Yvette and Virgil at Ste. Agathe, when he has virtually given up his dream of owning the entire property, it is Yvette who informs him the final parcel of land is up for sale. It is Yvette who tells him why Dingleman has not yet bought the last piece of property, and it is Yvette who saves Duddy's chances by warning him " 'There's something else . . . we have to put up three hundred dollars option money tomorrow morning. Have you got it?' " She is encouraging Duddy to hope; she is telling him to start running again.

It is important to realize how Duddy goes about acquiring the money he needs. A moral distinction exists between those who help him and those who do not. The corrupt Boy Wonder reduces Duddy to begging but won't deliver, and Hugh Thomas Calder, in his spiritual malaise, cannot see beyond his ground rules for a relationship with the slum-boy. Mr. Cohen does help Duddy, Mr. Cohen the throat-cutter, a man who will lend money only if he can make money in return; but he is also the man who saved Duddy from Irwin's plotting at Rubin's and, like his methods or not, he is the one who gave Duddy the necessary boost upwards and out of his self-pity and emotional crisis. With his Yiddish expressions and ability to see something in Duddy beyond his own need for him, Mr. Cohen ranks higher on the moral scale than either Calder or Dingleman. Meanwhile, Duddy's quality is emphasized in his exchange with Lennie. Lennie does rightfully praise Duddy as "some brother," but it is Duddy's own comment that should cause us to consider how he is much more than a *pusherke*: " 'It's hard to be a gentleman — a Jew, I mean — it's hard to be. Period.' " Little Jew-boys solely on the make don't think such things, let alone say them.

Although it is money that finally brings Duddy and his father together, the tentative and disguised emotional give-and-take between father and son outweighs the value of the dollar sign:

> 'Duddy would like to borrow some money, Daddy.'
>
> 'Who wouldn't? Max reached into the kitchen drawer for his backscratcher. 'Money,' he said, 'is the root of all evil. In olden times they used the barter system. I favour it.'
>
> Duddy grinned in spite of himself. Standing behind his father he reached out to touch him. Gently, however, almost surreptitiously, just in case he moved away.

Max lends Duddy a thousand dollars and Duddy is only $2200 away from achieving his dream. Time is running out, however, especially as Dingleman is after the remaining parcel of land. It is the decision of Yvette that pushes Duddy to his one consciously dishonest act.

Virgil has been paralysed for life that he might find his life. He has never been happier than when he is editing his newspaper for epileptics, something that would not have come about without the accident. Virgil does not blame Duddy for his paralysis, and his continuing love for Duddy is certain. Furthermore, Virgil, on his own, would lend Duddy the $2200:

> 'Does Duddy need more money?' Virgil asked.
>
> 'Don't say a word,' Yvette said.
>
> 'But — '
>
> 'You heard me, Virgil.'

Yvette does control Virgil as is evident when Duddy tries to cajole him into lending the money. Virgil does not break down and sob just because Duddy is

pressuring him; he does so because his loyalty is torn between Duddy and Yvette. It is at this point that Yvette's position must be questioned.

Yvette has worked with Duddy a long time to get the land. She knows the fanatical devotion he has to his dream; she has been privy to how hard he has pushed himself and others in his quest for the lake property. Does she set Duddy up for a test by leaving him alone in the house with Virgil's easily-accessible cheque-book? Perhaps it can be said quickly in her defense that she never expects Duddy to stoop to forgery. Why? The answer can be only that Yvette, who does possess a moral integrity of her own, senses the same thing somewhere in Duddy; she realizes that for all his hustle he has never been overtly dishonest. On the other hand, Yvette, who still holds a grudge against Duddy for his treatment of Virgil, should recognize that Duddy cannot afford to stop so short of his goal. She should recognize that she has encouraged him, with her news about the last section of land, not to stop. She does not look at Virgil's cheque-book when Duddy announces that he has the money, but she is an accomplice in the forgery whether she admits it or not.

Duddy knows what he does is wrong. He rationalizes and delays, but he does finally steal from Virgil. His guilt is obvious when Virgil, the forged cheque made known, has his worst fit; it is a guilt that includes more than Virgil:

> Virgil lay twisted on the floor beside his overturned wheelchair.... Above him the telephone receiver dangled loosely.... Duddy ran, he ran, he ran.

The link with Mrs. MacPherson's death is obvious. Just as others, besides Duddy, played a part in her demise, Duddy is not alone as far as the responsibility for Virgil's decline is concerned. The forgery is the one act for which he will not be forgiven by the two people who mean the most to him — Yvette and Simcha. Richler has already caused the reader to question Yvette's righteous stance; neither is the *zeyda* meant to be the final moral judge of his grandson.

The price that Duddy pays for owning his land is high. He is allowed his sweet victory over the Boy Wonder, but he loses his grandfather's love. Yet, if Duddy is guilty of various misdeeds, no one is innocent in Richler's world. If what Simcha says to Duddy is true — " 'You'll settle your conscience and go out and swindle others' " — then Duddy's retort is also valid:

> 'You don't twist either. You don't want to farm. You never have.... You couldn't even go to see Uncle Benjy before he died. Naw, not you. You're just too goddam proud to live.'

Duddy is, as he says, "all alone"; he has been isolated as well as having isolated himself. In the final exchange between Duddy and Yvette, Duddy's rationalizations and explanations don't wash; but he is allowed one statement of conviction in the midst of his defensive ravings. This statement is vital in our ultimate assessment of Duddy:

He gave her an anguished look, started to say something, swallowed, shook his fist and said, his voice filled with wrath, 'I have to do everything alone. I can see that now. I can trust nobody.'

'We betrayed you, I suppose.'

'*Yes. You did.*'

He had spoken with such quiet conviction and certainty that she began to doubt herself. (Italics mine)

This doubt should affect the reader-judge as well. It is as important, if not more so, as Duddy's subsequent glee at being able to mark his bill.

According to Max, the Boy Wonder is dead, long live the Boy Wonder! Duddy is broke and alone, the legend Max builds about him is shoddy, and Duddy's last words in the novel — " 'You see' " — emphasize his limitations. But he is now, as he has always been, a survivor whose energy and vulnerability remain attractive and whose essential lack of pessimism and malice remains unsullied. Richler has attempted to make the reader care about Duddy. Until 1966, at least, it is a good bet that readers of Canadian fiction wondered what became of Duddy Kravitz more than they did about any other character.

DUDDY'S ROLE IN THE FIRST THIRD of *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1972) is as a contemporary of Jake Hersh at Fletcher's Field High School. He is the Duddy of the Mr. MacPherson era (although MacPherson is never mentioned), the kid with *chutzpa*, the iconoclast. This is Jake's story, but Jake, in some ways, reminds us of the appealing Duddy we once knew. His need to romanticize Cousin Joey recalls Duddy's need to create the romance of his 'older brother' Bradley. Jake's self-aggrandizement is hilarious, as are his day-dreams about his death and the pain it would cause others. Duddy had the same kind of fantasies. Jake's exchange with a Montreal waiter brings Duddy to mind, the ingenuous Duddy who asserted himself through platitude:

Back in Montreal Jake made straight for the bar in Central Station, ordered a double whiskey and paid for it with American money.

'Montreal is the Paris of North America,' the waiter said. 'I trust you will enjoy your stay, sir.'

Jake stared at his change. 'What's this,' he asked, 'monopoly money?'

'It's Canadian.'

Jake laughed, pleased.

'Canada's no joke. We're the world's leading producer of uranium. Walter Pidgeon was born in this country.'

This Duddy, however, is no more. Seen through the eyes of Jake, Duddy is never vulnerable, only crude. Where in his apprenticeship does Duddy sound like this? " 'Everybody's doin' it, doin' it ... pickin' their nose and chewin' it, chewin' it.' " Jake's cousin Herky manufactures liquid soap and other toiletries;

the young Duddy once sold such articles to raise money for Dudley Kane Productions. Whatever happened to Duddy Kravitz? Herky, in his interests and ignorance might sound like Duddy, but his fervent speeches about urinals and toilets are a parody of the St. Urbain Street hustler: "'It's from the Stone Ages here. You know what they got in the urinals? Ice cubes.' The roadhouse was not one of Herky's clients. 'This isn't a toilet, it's a storage tank for last week's farts. Take a deep breath, kid.' " In case this comparison between Herky and Duddy be considered too tenuous, the other brief portraits of the young Kravitz can be seen to support it. Let Duddy speak for himself:

> 'Hey, syphhead,' he shouted up at Joey, 'make you a deal. You burp up my ass and I'll fart in your mouth.'
>
> * * *
>
> When the boys whirled around, Duddy, clutching his genitals, shouted, '*Votre soeur, combien*?' . . . Duddy bent over, pulled down his trousers, and wiggled his pale narrow white ass in the air. 'For Pope Pius,' he hollered.

The kid who remained so loyal to his family despite emotional deprivation, the street-wise kid who learned to survive and who was easy to root for when in conflict with an Irwin Shubert, the boy who was allowed to articulate his vision against those of Linda Rubin and Uncle Benjy — this Duddy is gone forever. "The fine, intelligent boy" that Uncle Benjy glimpsed is dead; he has become more than a "scheming little bastard." Duddy paid a price at the end of his apprenticeship, but such was Richler's relative vision that there still seemed to be some hope for Duddy. Not any more. Richler, in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, seems to be determined to destroy Duddy in the reader's eyes. The character Duddy most resembles in this novel is the pathetic, even despicable Harry Stein.

Jake meets the adult Duddy in Toronto at the apartment of his cousin Jenny; it is twenty years after Yvette and Virgil. There is no explanation as to why Jenny is with Duddy, and their sexual exchange seems to be used by Richler to portray the absence of *any* Kravitz sensitivity or feelings: "They lunched together once a week and then retired to his apartment on Avenue Road, where he mounted her absently, eliciting an orgasm in time to shower before his next appointment." Duddy's old hustle is still good for a story or two. He puts the touch on Jake for a few dollars and he dreams up the *Canadian Jewish Who's Who*, a project that will launch him on his millionaire path. The mad groundwork of the "*Jew's Who*" and its eventual success remind one of the *bar-mitzvah* films, the first Dudley Kane efforts; however, there is no land at the end of the rainbow, no loyalty to a grandfather's advice, just the greedy man's pot of gold. The relative vision is absent in this mini-portrait of Duddy; so when he cheats his Wate-Loss partner into buying out his shares of a pill that contains tape-

worm, there are no excuses. Duddy is empty and without attraction; the reader cannot care about a *pusherke* without a soul.

Sometime later, Duddy, who is now married, finds Jake in London and Richler sets up the reader for a question that was never asked during the apprenticeship but which must, apparently, be asked now.

> 'Duddy, what are you doing in London?'
> 'Launching a star. I've got to speak to you.'
> 'All right, then. What are you doing right now?'
> 'Masturbating. And you?'
>
> * * *
>
> 'Oh I've had a hundred and ninety-two girls, not counting Marlene, and more than one has pleaded for me to stop. Big Dick one of the girls used to call me. Nice, huh? I liked that. Big Dick Kravitz. The girls tell me I'm a very virile guy and I don't come quick as a sneeze, like a lot of *shmecks* today.'

Duddy is preoccupied with sex and money; he can talk about little else. He is uninteresting and does little to advance the story of Jake. This treatment of Duddy is, of course, deliberate on Richler's part and far removed from the comparatively complex portrait of the younger days. When Duddy asks Jake, " 'Who in hell could love Duddy Kravitz?' " readers unite in chorus and shout, as they are supposed to, "No one!" Not *this* Duddy Kravitz, at least.

Our last glimpse of Duddy comes right at the end of the novel, though his presence is gratuitous. Good old Duddy lends his pal Hersh $10,000, but such a loan is emotion-free. There is more crude Kravitz talk about sex, so much and in such a way that one can only pity this limited perception of the world. It is as if the Duddy of the apprenticeship days has had a lobotomy; that part of his mind that once contained such positive human qualities as loyalty, sensitivity, vulnerability, and joy has been cut away. What is left is a slimy piece of gray matter that perceives the world in terms of dollar signs and fucking.

Early on in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, Jake reads from the diary of Reb Shmul Johnson. Jake applies the following words to himself; but the reader who has discovered what *did* happen to Duddy Kravitz might well speak these words on behalf of Duddy, offering them as a prayer, acting as a *Kaddish* for a lost soul, lost after the apprenticeship, not during:

> 'When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of the body and disturbances of the mind very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults and exercise many deficiencies.'

Duddy is not mentioned in any of Richler's subsequent fiction, including the latest novel, *Joshua Then And Now*. But, from Richler's point of view, after *St. Urbain's Horseman* what remained to be said about him? Having chosen

not to write a novel, between 1959 and 1966, that would reveal Duddy moving and changing from adolescence to adulthood, Richler leaves such movement and change up to the reader. And this is where the conflict arises. If Dr. Jekyll never existed, Mr. Hyde emerges from a vacuum. The reader of *The Apprenticeship* cannot, based on the relative vision of that novel, jump to the repellant portrait of Duddy in *Horseman*. Duddy is forced to drink a potion (Richler's ink his life-blood) that most readers would never ask him to swallow and on which they gag themselves.

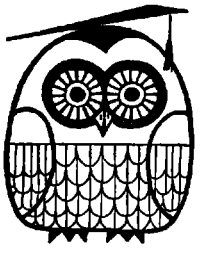
The final view of Duddy Kravitz is of an offensive and foul-mouthed millionaire. The lasting vision is of a boy confused and unrefined, but certainly appealing and with a potential for growth. Duddy Kravitz is alive and well and living on St. Urbain Street still.

NOTES

[1] A. R. Bevan, "Introduction," *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969).

[2] Kerry McSweeney, "Revaluing Mordecai Richler," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 5, No. 4 (Summer 1979), 131.

[3] Warren Tallman, on the other hand, praises Duddy's "direct intelligence and colloquial exuberance." In "Wolf in the Snow," *Canadian Literature*, 6 (Autumn 1960), Tallman writes: "D. H. Lawrence contended that in the visions of art a relatively finer vision is substituted for the relatively cruder visions extant. But in North America ... finer is relatively crude, because frequently untrue, and crude can be relatively fine. All too often, in fiction as in life, those pretensions which we seek out because they make us fine provide the false furnishings for the actual house in which we live. This fine is crude. Duddy, who would not know a pretension if he met one, wanders for this reason by accident and mostly unaware into the actual house. His crude is relatively fine."



MACLENNAN AND YEATS

Donald R. Bartlett

HUGH MACLENNAN'S SPHINX evokes images of bewilderment, anarchy, and terror associated with its Classical archetype. It's more recent predecessor is, of course, the "rough beast" of W. B Yeats's "The Second Coming." MacLennan criticism has explored the Oedipal and ignored the Yeatsian overtones in *Return of the Sphinx*, despite the fact that Gabriel Fleury, an 'oracular' character, quite early in the novel compares Alan Ainslie, MacLennan's protagonist, to the great Irish nationalist. " 'Political nationalism is the last thing he'd ever go out for. He has a curious mystique about the country. He really loves it. If this makes any sense to you, he reminds me of William Butler Yeats.' "

The values espoused by Alan Ainslie, Gabriel Fleury, and to a lesser extent Marielle Jeanotte, Joe Lacombe, and a sadder but wiser Herbert Tarnley — all various *personae* for the author himself — are in fact the very values upon which Yeats based his nationalism. Not only is MacLennan's nationalism very similar to Yeats's, but his articulation of it depends significantly upon his presentation of a socio-political *milieu* roughly similar to that which Yeats knew, and upon his manipulation of 'types' and myths and antitheses that are remarkably Yeatsian.

Despite his flirtation with political agitators and fanatics, Yeats's nationalism was a sane one. It derived from the pithy sayings of and the courage and dignity exemplified in the old Fenian leader, John O'Leary.[1] Its basis was the traditional values of leadership, good breeding, and good sense — all symbolized for Yeats in the aristocracy — and his convictions were intensified by the tragic events of Irish politics over more than half a century. *Return of the Sphinx* makes it quite clear that responsible leadership, good breeding, and good sense are central to MacLennan's nationalism, too; and that he in our own time, as was Yeats in his, is fearful of the anarchy and horror which result when, in a direct echo of Yeats, "the centre cannot hold." MacLennan's motives and methods are likewise similar to Yeats's; a conversation between Tarnley and Fleury illustrates this.

> [F:] "If you want the real reason why Alan Ainslie's in politics, I can tell you. He's terrified that unless English Canada wakes up pretty soon, things in this country will drift into civil war."
>
> . . . . . .

[T:] "Tell me — am I right in believing that he's trying to use French-Canadian nationalism as a lever to make English Canada do something before it's too late?"

[F:] "Yes, I think that's about right."

MacLennan had, of course, treated national unity and the problem of two cultures before, most notably in *Two Solitudes*, of which he was later to write:

> Its genesis came in a dream in which I saw a tall, angular blond man arguing noisily with a stocky, darker man. They were shouting at each other in fury and a voice in the dream said to me, "Don't you see it? They're both deaf."[2]

The symbolism in a Canadian context is obvious. And so is the problem: how to make both sides act sensibly to effect political unity without civil war and without sacrificing the dignity of minority groups? The answer is that national unity is possible only when two peoples put aside their prejudices (or "race-legends" as MacLennan calls them in *Two Solitudes*) and cherish and promote the best of each culture; when, symbolically, they are distinct individuals while at the same time members of the same family who "protect and touch and greet each other."[3] This is the message of *Two Solitudes*, and this is the message that MacLennan would have us hear amidst the darkness of his later novels.

MacLennan attempts to objectify this message in various debates in the novel. For example, Joe Lacombe, R.C.M.P. officer and a representative of what may well be the majority of French Canadians — the "psychological" separatists who genuinely yearn for greater self-determination but within the federation[4] — puts the issue squarely before his long-time friend, Alan Ainslie:

> "suppose we want to work in our own *milieu* — what then? . . . Why can't we be free and clean and proud of ourselves? *Why can't we succeed as French Canadians* and not as imitations of the English and Americans? Why should they be the ones to judge whether we're any good or not? Why can't we judge that ourselves?"

and,

> "We want a *patrie*, and for most of us Canada will do fine if the rest of you will ever get around to letting it become a *patrie* for all of us and not just for *les Anglais*. What have we got now? Is it a *patrie* when we can't speak our own language and be understood in it even by the boss?"

As Federal Minister of Cultural Affairs, Ainslie attempts to get Moses Bulstrode, acting Prime Minister, to take remedial and exemplary measures. "If we insist on bilingualism on the recruitment level of the federal civil service, it will be taken as a touchstone in Quebec and everywhere else that we accept that Canada is the home of two cultures and that the majority wishes the minority culture to survive and prosper. If this happens, we will have one of the happiest and most stable nations in the world. It's that, or disintegration." Ainslie reasserts this conviction in a Parliamentary debate: "[Canada] is, and must remain, a single

country . . . it can remain a single country only on this condition — that it be universally accepted that this single country is the home of two different cultures." MacLennan may have had Yeats's Senate speeches in mind, or the similarity might be a case of coincidental good sense. In any event, Yeats, speaking in the Irish Senate, on October 17, 1924, had stressed the necessity of tolerance and justice in the effecting of national unity.

> "I have no hope of seeing Ireland united in my time, or of seeing Ulster won in my time; but I believe it will be won in the end, and not because we fight it, but because we govern this country well. We can do that . . . by creating a system of culture which will represent the whole of this country and will draw the imagination of the young towards it."[5]

On June 11 of the next year, during a debate on divorce, Yeats again cautioned:

> "If you show that this country, Southern Ireland, is going to be governed by Catholic ideas and by Catholic ideas alone, you will never get the North. . . . You will not get the North if you impose on the minority what the minority considers to be oppressive legislation."[6]

And for both Yeats and MacLennan the local is but a symptom of the universal. Yeats wrote to John Quin that the Easter Rising "has been a great grief. We have lost the ablest and most fine-natured of our young men. A world seems to have been swept away."[7] And in 1936 he confided to Ethel Mannin that he had intended "The Second Coming" to be a warning, and that "every nerve trembles with horror at what is happening in Europe, 'the ceremony of innocence is drowned.' "[8] In *Return of the Sphinx*, Ainslie regards Canada as "the psychic centre of the world"; Fleury senses that events in Quebec are a result of "the mysterious emotion" which is "sweeping the world"; and the riot which young Daniel Ainslie participated in is described by Tarnley as "an explosion of mass emotion." Fleury's metaphor is akin to Yeats's' more powerful images of anarchy: "the blood-dimmed tide" of "The Second Coming" and "the irrational streams of blood [that] are staining earth" in "The Gyres." The hysteria Tarnley refers to appears to be the mass mania or collective *hysterica passio*[9] which Yeats so dreaded. Both the images of violence and the frustrations behind the violence meet in Daniel Ainslie, Alan's son. His methods are not condonable, but his desire to image what he sees in the streets of Montreal at night comes closest perhaps to epitomizing the universal oppression and political injustice behind the impending anarchy. "The people speaking in broken sentences. Their expressions when you catch them with the truth on their faces."

HIS AWARENESS OF THE NEED for good government, tolerance, and justice notwithstanding, Alan Ainslie seems curiously naive in his beliefs that the problem in Quebec is not economic but psychological, that

Quebec nationalism can be explained as "a surrogate religion," and "that all revolutions have neurotic roots." These apparent over-simplications gain in merit if we keep in mind two things: first, that they refer to spiritual dissatisfaction and unrest of the kind that Joe Lacombe had mentioned and which engender what Ronald Sutherland terms "psychological Separatism" or "the fourth Separatism"; second, that by "revolutions" MacLennan has in mind disruptions in the evolution of the human psyche. "The only revolutions that matter," MacLennan has said, "are psychic, somewhere in the human soul," and that what happened in the 1960's was "a fantastic break in the human psyche."[10]

During the Parliamentary debate, Ainslie claims that the "world crisis," of which events in Quebec are but local symptoms, "came when humanity lost faith in man's ability to improve his own nature. . . ." He continues: "When people no longer can believe in personal immortality, when society at large has abandoned philosophy, many grow mad without knowing why. They crack up. . . ." He maintains that people crave recognition and immortality and that when they no longer believe in good they seek these things in evil. "A senseless crime can be one way of passing into the only kind of immortality this sick epoch understands, and so can the leadership of a senseless revolt — it can go into the records and into the archives."

Yeats likewise believed that the problem of modern times began with a retreat of humanism. "The mischief began at the end of the seventeenth century when man became passive before a mechanized nature. . . ."[11] MacLennan, however, gives a later date: the modern world, he has said, began "at the end of 1914."[12] In *Return of the Sphinx*, Herbert Tarnley claims "it *all* started" with World War I; and Gabriel Fleury, reflecting upon the suffering of his wounded father and the impact which that suffering had upon his own psyche, comments: "That was when it all started." He muses that "What had started then was surely the rebirth of a kind of man who had perished two thousand years ago, a man who knew there was no escape from his own nature into religion or politics or science or even into his own skill." Fleury's reference to an epoch which ended "two thousand years ago" points to the end of the Pre-Christian era which Yeats characterized by coldness and objectivity and symbolized by the Sphinx. Fleury's musing about an unfortunate "rebirth" is clearly reminiscent of Yeats's prophecy in "The Second Coming" that the "twenty centuries of stony sleep" which had been "vex'd to nightmare by a rocking cradle" were about to come round again.

MacLennan symbolizes this dehumanized, mechanized world in various ways: in Daniel's affectionate patting of the hood of his powerful car, and in his reckless driving; and in the senseless killing of Alan's wife, Constance, by a runaway truck. Events in his family, his province, his country, cause Alan to despair:

> The time he was living in was too fantastic for anyone to look at squarely in the eye. . . . All the ideas that had guided and inspired [his] life — socialism, educa-

> tion, the faith that science and prosperity would improve man's life, even the new psychology which everyone so glibly talked — the best he could say now of any of these hopes was that they had foundered in the ancient ocean of human nature.

In another context MacLennan has written: "For me the Sixties were exhausting, because every cause I valued seemed in retreat."[13] Yeats, too, had known despair:

> this much at any rate is certain — the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false; though it may be we can achieve it for some small circle of men and women, and there leave it till the moon bring round its century.[14]

But total and permanent despair is alien to Yeats's vision — and to MacLennan's. Like Yeats, MacLennan puts his trust in traditional institutions to preserve and nurture those humanistic instincts which will repel the Beast. For Yeats there was Coole Park, the Swedish court, and Urbino; Alan Ainslie believes in good government; and a chastened Tarnley puts his trust in liberal education. Near the end of the novel we learn that Tarnley's son has committed suicide. In a letter that is distinctly Yeatsian in its comments on modern education and political democracy, Tarnley attributes his son's death to the youth's inability to cope with modern mechanized society. He offers to make Alan warden of a liberal arts college which he hopes to establish as "a refuge [for] dedicated men" who will preserve "at least the seeds of cultivation."

THE SIMILARITIES ARE NOT exclusively conceptual. Parallels with Yeats's mythology are evident in the symbolic patterns of MacLennan's novel. George Woodcock has noted that "*Return of the Sphinx* is almost obsessively involved, not merely in the fathers-and-sons pattern of antagonisms, but also in a cross-generational pattern of sexual conjunctions," and has suggested that, in Daniel, these patterns symbolize national and generational revolt.[15] Alec Lucas, speculating on the *raison d'être* of MacLennan's love-scenes, states that the Daniel-Marielle affair "sums up on a psychological basis a plot in which a son, measuring swords with his father politically, asserts his deeper and Oedipal antagonism towards him through what both accept as symbolically incestuous when he, Daniel, sleeps with Marielle, a mother surrogate, in his father's bed."[16] Robert Cockburn notes that these "romantic interludes . . . are helpful . . . in giving weight to the thematic context of the novel" even though they do impede the narrative flow. He continues, following Woodcock's lead, to point out Gabriel's role in bridging "with Chantal, through love, the generation gap," and symbolizing "an uprooted and perishing civilization of culture and manners."[17]

Accurate as these statements are within their respective contexts, they do not adequately account for the contrasts that exist between the Daniel-Marielle affair

and the love of Chantal and Gabriel. Yet it is precisely in the contrasts which attend these relationships that MacLennan dramatizes and emphasizes a myth which he has repeatedly objectified through the diversity in age, experience, and ethnic origins of his fictional families: namely, that youth and vigour and desire must be tempered with wisdom and discipline and love. This myth figures in all of MacLennan's novels, and a remark by Marcia, in *The Precipice* —

> "Father was crude, but ... I guess his energy was no more use to the Massachusetts blood of Mother's family than a truck running downhill with no brakes"[18]

— is clearly seminal to symbols of uncontrolled power in *Return of the Sphinx.* In yet another instance MacLennan has written: "As there is power, so must there be love. Unless civilization achieves this union, there will be no civilization. Unless art is able to record it, there will be no art."[19] Yeats, too, knew that power without wisdom is bound to be destructive. He objectified this knowledge in "Leda and the Swan," and issued an emphatic warning in the poem's rhetorical conclusion: "Did she put on his knowledge with his power?"

Contrasts in age, ethnic origin, experience, and emotional response are significant in the "sexual conjunctions" of this novel. Constance, later Ainslie's wife, had given herself at the age of fourteen to a man considerably older than herself. But this did not adversely affect her either psychologically or morally. In fact, she later became "the governor of [Ainslie's] life's engine," and he, the impulsive, cultured man,[20] had been "perfectly safe so long as she was alive." Constance's youthful experience provides a precedent for the more thematically and dramatically important relationship of Chantal and Gabriel. And the quietude, tenderness, and affection which they share after their love-making, together with Alan's blessing of their impending marriage, suggests a love-relationship which symbolizes energy directed into constructive ways, and which stands in marked contrast to the Daniel-Marielle affair.

Marielle, like Gabriel, represents Old World experience and knowledge. She had been "'a carefully-reared girl in a cultivated family.'" Her wartime experiences had taught her that there are no moral absolutes. In her, passion is balanced by compassion; and her abhorrence of " 'self-willed ignorance' " is akin to Yeats's abhorrence of "intellectual hatred" in "A Prayer for My Daughter."

Marielle's seduction of Daniel is no facile escapism sanctioned by some make-love-not-war cliché. Rather, it is her earnest attempt to rid him of his Jansenist inhibitions and to direct his youthful energy and vitality into constructive ways: " 'you are afraid of loving a woman, and if a man fears that, then it is very natural for him to talk and dream about bombs and war.' " She points out to him that in every century there have been those who ruin their lives for political ideas; and, through the story of her father's death and the 'liberation' of her countrymen to "candy bars and Coca-Cola," she cautions him of what Yeats knew only

too well: that political autonomy without culture is valueless, and often vicious.

They make love, and she seems temporarily to have checked his violent impulses. But in a few paragraphs, made the more effective by their juxtaposition with Chantal's tender after-thoughts, Daniel reflects with guilt and horror upon his affair with Marielle. He soon reverts to his "self-willed ignorance," to his belief that revolution is a modern phenomenon and that problems can be solved by violent methods. He had not "put on [her] knowledge with [her] power."

The lessons which Marielle had hoped to teach Daniel confront him again when he searches through old newspapers for information about middle-weight boxer Archie MacNeil, his real grandfather. So fascinated is Daniel with the glimpses of an earlier age which these papers provide that he forgets his original purpose.

> There were stories about strikes and lockouts, about Irish Home Rule, about anarchists' bombs, about gun-running into Ulster, and the impact of all this gave him a very strange sensation. It was all dead news and the people looked ridiculous in the clothes they wore, but what was going on then seemed just the same as what was going on now. They all seemed crazy and most of them seemed wicked, and he thought of French Canada during those years when his father was a child, French Canada living quiet and eternal with her faith and her land exiled from all this insanity that had led to the war. . . .

At last he turns to the sports pages. He sees a close resemblance of himself in the photographs of his grandfather, and reads of the tragic failure of that man who had tried to overcome socio-economic disadvantages by physical violence.

The tragedy of his grandfather's life together with the political fanaticism and foolish martyrdom — "all [the] insanity" — of half a century ago fills him with a sense of *déjà vu*. Daniel is shaken. Marielle might have been his salvation:

> Marielle — suddenly he craved her. More, he needed to be with her because she would understand how he felt now. She understood how everyone felt. She knew what he needed and incredulously he said aloud, "I think I've fallen in love with her. I don't think I can live without her. She will love me and that will save me."

But before he can go to her, the telephone rings: he lifts the receiver and hears his father's voice rebuking him for his association with Latendresse, a fanatical separatist. The old antagonism flares again: desperate fear gives place to anger, and tenderness towards Marielle gives place to Daniel's need for 'conquest': "I want a woman. I've got to have a woman" — Marielle, Sandra, any woman. It is in this mood of guilt and violence and self-indulgence that he accuses Chantal of indecency with Gabriel. Not even Joe Lacombe's faith in Daniel, whom he arrests, can lessen the antithesis which MacLennan has created and symbolized in Alan Ainslie's children. It is a dramatization of the human condition which parallels, consciously or unconsciously, Yeats's comment on the brood of Leda: "from one of her eggs came Love and from the other War."[21]

ANOTHER MYTH WHICH Yeats and MacLennan seem to share is the belief in cyclical history. Yeats believed, or pretended to believe, that history comes round in two-thousand-year cycles, and that each historical reversal is accompanied by violence. In "The Second Coming" he anticipates a reversal of the "gyres" and records his horror at the prospect. "While Yeats is not fond of Christianity, and regards its suppression of individual personality as having led to the present anarchy, yet at the end of the poem he envisions something far worse."[22]

In the first two pages of *Return of the Sphinx*, Gabriel Fleury alludes to "another cold cycle," and to "violent changes." It may well be that MacLennan is merely establishing meteorological conditions as symbolic of the political unrest and explosiveness of Montreal in the Sixties. But references elsewhere in the novel, and indeed in other MacLennan novels, suggest that he does subscribe to the largely deterministic view of cyclical history. Gabriel's references to "a rebirth of a kind of man who had perished two thousand years ago" has been mentioned above; and, at another point, Alan Ainslie reflects that "some, like himself, had been driven to do irrevocable things not out of any fate created by their characters . . . but because such things had come with the rations of the epoch into which they had been born." However, against such apparent determinism, each author has his own peculiar faith: Yeats in the Irish peasantry, the aristocracy, art, and, ostensibly, in the *Mask* and the enigmatic Thirteenth Cone; MacLennan, in "the evolution of the human soul," in the land and its people. "The country existed didn't it? The rain of contributions made to it by millions of people for so long a time were infinitely more important than the gossamer ideas the clever ones invented to understand the meanings of countries."

But dreams or myths, or "shadows," as Gabriel calls them, sometimes betray us, and near the end of the novel Alan's dejection seems complete: his political career has been ruined, his son is in prison, and Canada is still on the brink. The cause of this collapse is implicit in a repudiation MacLennan had earlier made of political "isms":

> Nationalism, Fascism and Communism . . . are aberrations because their dogmas are founded on hatred not on love, and it is this quality of hatred which makes their hideous creations so destructive and dangerous that they will bring about the extermination of the human race unless their growth is stopped.[23]

Yeats, despairing of his "fool-driven land," and of the inability of political systems to cope with events in Europe, had written: "Communist, Fascist, nationalist, clerical, anti-clerical, are all responsible according to the number of their victims."[24]

But man, thoughtful and sensitive man especially, needs the dream if only to

make bearable the reality. So it is that Yeats advises metaphorically, "When the rivers are poisoned, take to the mountain well."[25] Similarly, in the Epilogue, MacLennan has his protagonist journey across this vast land — "Too vast even for fools to ruin all of it" — observe unspoiled nature, and meet with simple, ordinary people "who knew all about one another and liked each other in spite of this." Gradually Alan's faith is restored: "One step more would have freed us all, but the sphinx returned,"[26] he muses. And then: "The sphinx has returned to the world before, after all."

Such a faith in Canadian unity may not be consistent with the tone of the novel or with those actions which take place in its urban environs, but it is thematically consistent with other MacLennan novels. And it is quite characteristic of a man who admits that his feelings in this respect are more important than his deliberations.[27] It is all a part of the MacLennan mythology. His belief in cyclical history, and his myth of the land combine in the Epilogue as he asserts once again his cautious faith that Canadian unity — and civilization itself — though threatened, will endure. This faith is implicit in the final paragraph of *Two Solitudes*:

> even as the two race-legends woke again remembering ancient enmities, there woke this time also the *felt* knowledge that together [Canadians] had fought and survived one great war they had never made and that now they had entered another . . . that even if the legends were like oil and alcohol in the same bottle the bottle had not been broken yet. (Italics mine.)

and in the special interpretation which the Rev. Martell used to give to his text in *The Watch That Ends the Night*: "It comes — to pass."

Through his choice of title, MacLennan clearly alludes to ancient anarchy and to Oedipus's answer to the riddle of the Sphinx. But the real immediacy of MacLennan's message comes from his concept of nationalism, and from a horror that the prophecy of "The Second Coming" might indeed become the reality. *Return of the Sphinx* is a political and social novel where, despite its occasional lapses from psychological realism and some impediments to the narrative flow, "life is greater than the cause"[28]; or, as both Yeats and MacLennan might rephrase it, "life *is* the cause." Fiction, MacLennan maintains, depends in no small way "on its power to use the symbols of its trade to mediate between men and the corrosive forces of their undefined emotions."[29] Through his symbols, in both title and text, MacLennan is desperately cautioning mankind against impending tragedy. It is in no way reductive of his genius that he reshapes Classical and Yeatsian mythic structures to articulate the nature of these "forces" and the dimensions of the tragedy.

NOTES

[1] Yeats quotes O'Leary as saying "There are things a man must not do to save a nation," and "There was never cause so bad that it has not been defended by good

men for what seemed to them good reasons" ("Poetry and Tradition," *Essays and Introductions*, London: Macmillan, 1961, p. 247).

[2] "Two Solitudes that Meet and Greet in Hope and Hate," *Maclean's*, 84, no. 8 (August 1971), 20.

[3] The lines from Rainer Maria Rilke, which MacLennan used as an epigram to *Two Solitudes*, he later described as "Surely the best practical definition of love ever uttered, whether applied to individuals or to two nations sharing a single state" (ibid.).

[4] Ronald Sutherland, "The Fourth Separatism," *Canadian Literature*, no. 45 (Summer 1970). See especially pp. 7-9 and 15-22.

[5] *The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Donald R. Pearse (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1960), p. 87.

[6] Ibid., p. 92.

[7] *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 614.

[8] Ibid., p. 851.

[9] *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley*, ed. Dorothy Wellesley (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), p. 94.

[10] "Hugh MacLennan: The Tennis Racket Is an Antelope Bone," in Donald Cameron, *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part One, pp. 135, 132.

[11] *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, ed. W. B. Yeats (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), Intro., p. xxvii.

[12] *Conversations*, p. 134.

[13] *Maclean's*, 84, August 1971, 50.

[14] *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 295.

[15] *Hugh MacLennan* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969), p. 115.

[16] *Hugh MacLennan* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p. 24.

[17] *The Novels of Hugh MacLennan* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969), pp. 128, 130.

[18] *The Precipice* (Toronto: Collins, 1948), p. 214.

[19] "The Present World as Seen in Its Literature," Founders' Day Address, Univ. of New Brunswick, February 18, 1952, p. 12.

[20] Impulsiveness, intensity, and accomplishment are epitomized in the recurring airman-figure in MacLennan's fiction. They seem to represent a twentieth-century counterpart of the Renaissance man. (Cf. Yeats's poems about Major Robert Gregory, also an airman.)

[21] *A Vision* (1925; London: Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1937), p. 268.

[22] Richard Ellman, *The Identity of Yeats* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 260.

[23] "Help Thou Mine Unbelief," *Cross-Country* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), p. 141. This article was first published as "Are We a Godless People?", *Maclean's*, March 15, 1949.

[24] *Letters*, p. 850.

[25] Ibid., p. 881.

[26] MacLennan aparently had Expo '67 in mind here as proof of Canadian unity.

"When Expo '67 was such a success, I almost thought we had won through and that Canada's future was safe." *Maclean's*, 84, no. 8 (August 1971), 50.

[27] Ibid., p. 19.

[28] W. B. Yeats, "Poetry and Tradition," *Essays and Introductions*, p. 260.

[29] "The Present World . . . ," p. 5.

LAMENT

Kim Maltman

I turn the corner. Under the blue sky, under the white glare
of light caught in the oaks, under the buildings
suddenly awkward at the sight of such trees,
under the clouds which are like huge stars in the day sky,
I see the girl, who has come early (the girl
who comes at night to sit by the well).
Why so early, girl? I want to say,
the sun is still high, the wind is asleep,
sometimes it stretches out in the leaves,
but it is asleep nonetheless, what do you want here?
But instead I duck into a doorway.
From my hiding place I watch and try to think.
The light turns away and in the shadows
she is dark and beautiful, the oaks stand guard,
they keep the light away,
but it stays nearby, like a fragrance
you might come across and recognize
but not identify. Such sadness in her face.
She leans against the stone, the water of the well is cool
and sweet, but she will have none of it,
the bucket is drowning there.
Why is she sad? I want to know. I touch the door
and it is soft as wax.
Nothing holds together, nothing,
there are two parts of me and I want to know
Which can I give her?
Which might she take?
I want to go to the well, to sit beside her, drink from it,
but how, when the centre is nowhere,
or comfort, and what is left to say?
If I love her.
If her eyes will not see.

SEEKING "DIRECT, HONEST REALISM"

The Canadian Novel of the 1920's

E. L. Bobak

THE PERIOD BETWEEN the close of World War I and the crash of the stock market in 1929 was a time of far-reaching political and social change in Canadian life. The government was forced to respond to the problems of the returned soldiers, and many believed its response inadequate. Rural disenchantment with post-war political leadership caused a major shift in the traditional centres of power from east to west and from industry to agriculture. Nonetheless, industries and cities continued to grow, fed by cheap immigrant labour, and the industrial labour force demanded higher wages and better working conditions. Nineteenth-century reform movements reached a height in the "social passion" of the twenties, and a Communist party was formed in Canada. Moreover, Canadian political autonomy was established firmly during the decade and British control over Canadian legislation effectively ended in 1931. Despite these dramatic social changes the dominant form of fiction during the twenties continued to be the rural romance, escapist literature which ignored the contemporary social situation. Realism, an ideal medium for the objective reporting of social phenomena, had still not made its way into Canadian fiction in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Continental literary realists had rebelled in the nineteenth century against the notion that the essence of experience was unknowable because it existed in a reality closed to sense perception. They had chosen to make the commonplace and the ordinary respectable subject matter for the novel. Describing a universe governed by material cause-and-effect required a technique which involved close observation of the details of everyday life, and the resulting record had not only to give the impression of mass social behaviour but also to explain the interplay between society and the individual. Flaubert, Zola, the Russian realists and others evoked middle-class settings and objectively revealed the folly of romantic passion, and naturalism explained the "lower depths" of life by a negative determinism. Grove's *The Master Mason's House* (published in 1906 as *Mauermeister Ihles Haus*) indicates an awareness of naturalistic developments in the French novel.

In the United States, William Dean Howells was championing the cause of realism in the pages of *Harper's Magazine* in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but American realists did not gain public acceptance until the first quarter of this century. Though *Sister Carrie* appeared initially in 1900, it had to be withdrawn. Ironically, only two years later Zola died and French realism *did* collapse. By the time the Canadian novel turned to realism in response to the dramatic changes in the social life of the twenties, Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927) was more characteristic of the French novel and American realism finally had been accepted. Even today in Canada, the nineteenth-century realists are exerting fresh influences. The New Brunswick novelist David Adams Richards is heavily indebted to writers like Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky.

As a latecomer on the literary scene, Canadian realism managed to avoid the excesses of Zola's naturalism, to retain some sense of the unknowable, and to use concrete physical detail to suggest mental states. For example, Callaghan's urban realism included a religious dimension which ruled out determinism. Though his technique was based on the objective description of concrete reality, he had absorbed the lessons of his predecessors and his exterior world also depicts the interior world of his characters. Moreover, Callaghan's concentration on the city forced a re-examination of the romantic nationalism which connected the "real" Canada with the wilderness and the land. His "realism" is Canadian, as is MacLennan's, and Canadian realism has developed independently to the present time.

However, the first steps of the shift from the rural romance of the twenties to the realistic novel were awkward and difficult, often only imperfectly achieved by writers and imperfectly understood by readers and critics. For example, Nellie McClung's *Painted Fires* (1925) shows a recognition that the turmoil of the post-war decade required expression. A Communist maid is included in the plot, but she is a flutterbrain mouthing slogans she does not understand. McClung shows little comprehension of the genuine social issues behind the slogans.

Opposition to realism often was extreme. Watson Griffin, an economist who wrote *Canada: the Country of the Twentieth Century* (1915) for the Department of Trade and Commerce, also wrote a novel called *The Gulf Years* (1927). Griffin's heroine, Nancy, receives a contemporary realistic novel from her suitor Jack, whose character is questionable. Her opinion of it follows:

> "A rank weed is real, Jack, but no more real than a violet or a rose, and when I am decorating my room I prefer to fill my vases with lovely flowers rather than with noxious weeds. . . . I am not denying that there are such people as that book describes, Jack, but I don't want to know them any more intimately than necessary. . . . As I know myself, my character is full of weeds — thoughts, feelings, impulses that I frequently have to suppress. Suppose that instead of trying to root

> out these weeds as fast as they spring up, I cultivated them, dwelt upon them morbidly, studied them with a microscope, magnifying them so that they appeared to be the dominating influence in all human nature, and then wrote an autobiography or a novel describing them; that would be psychoanalysis according to the latest fashions, and many reviewers would praise me for my realism; but would anyone in all the world be better for the reading of such a book? I think not, and I am sure many would be worse."[1]

There is a reference in the conversation to Zola and "the modern novels of England and America," and likely it was one of these that Jack had given Nancy, not a Canadian realistic novel (by this time *Settlers of the Marsh* and *Wild Geese* had appeared). However, the point of view is clear. Nancy, acting as a mouthpiece for Griffin, does not believe that social discontent and human distress are suitable subject matter for the novel. The passage is a clear defence of sunshine novels of any nationality.

The situation in Canada at the beginning of the decade may be understood by glancing at a McClelland & Stewart advertisement for its current list, placed in the January 1920 issue of the *Canadian Bookman*. The list included Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Rainbow Valley*; Marshall Saunders' *Golden Dickey*, described as "the story of a valiant little canary"; Grace McLeod Rogers' *Joan at Halfway*, "a charming romance of a sunshine girl"; W. A. Fraser's *Bulldog Carney*, whose title speaks for itself; and Ralph Connor's version of muscular Christianity on the battlefield, *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*. The McClelland & Stewart advertisement described Robert Watson's *The Girl of O.K. Valley* in some detail:

> Here is a simon-pure romance of charm of atmosphere and vigor of action, by an author whose stories of Canadian life are distinguished by refinement of style and sentiment and touched by warm humanity.[2]

"Refinement of style and sentiment" and "warm humanity" were traits that characterized most Canadian fiction of the decade, but in accord with nationalist sentiments of the time, some critics looked chiefly for books that would establish that elusive concept — the Canadian identity. Donald G. French who, with J. D. Logan, published *Highways of Canadian Literature: a synoptic introduction to the literary history of Canada* (1924), addressed the Canadian Literature Club of Toronto (which he had founded in 1915) the year after his book appeared. His topic was "A Discussion of the Significance of Canadian Fiction as a Factor in the Evolution of Canadian Nationality." French suggested that the "foundations" of "a real Canadian literature" could be built only by the writing of books promoting knowledge and understanding between "the various racial elements of Canada":

> Here is a great work for our Canadian novelists. Whether or not the novels which help to accomplish this are acclaimed great by the critics of Great Britain or the United States does not much concern us.... What they must do is vivify the

> struggles and the achievements, the aspirations and the attainments of many diverse factors in the making of Canada. They must build up an adequate Canadian background and overlay it with a feeling of historical atmosphere that will suffuse all Canadians with a sense of reciprocal ownership, without which we can have no true realization of our Canadian citizenship — Canada is ours: we are Canada's. . . .[3]

French was prepared to throw over literary standards in the service of what he saw as a greater goal. Out of thirty works of fiction published in 1924, French chose as the most "significant" *Chez Nous*, which showed French Canada in its "persevering endurance and patient toil"; *Hansen*, which presented a picture of an immigrant "who becomes a truer Canadian citizen than many of the native-born"; *The Trail of the Conestoga*, another record of "high courage and perseverance, of endurance and toil"; and *The Gentleman Adventurer*, based on an account of the Hudson's Bay Company acquired "from the lips of an old gentleman who worked his way from a clerkship to the position of a high officer of the great company." Refinement of style and sentiment, not to mention warm humanity, appear to be at least as important as nationalism in French's short list.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR N. de Bertrand Lugrin argued directly against the new realism in current English novels.[4] He regretted the "general weakening of faith throughout the whole of Christendom" and the disappearance of the "fine ideals" of novels of the past. He pleaded with Canada to "take upon herself the responsibility" of being the "new Peter Pan" of world literature. He visualized Canada as "young, beautiful, uncontaminated by the evils of effete civilizations," with a literature and art still in "swaddling clothes," but about to take her place in the "front rank of nations." Therefore, he thought the attention of a "jaded world" would be brought to bear on her. Thus, he argued, the future of Canadian writing and the future of the country lay in standing apart from the new realism, and he saw no need to delineate in literature what he called "ultra modern twentieth century men and women."

A characteristically orthodox view of the literature of the period was also held by Louis Arthur Cunningham. In the same year that he published a romance about the Acadians called *Yvon Tremblay* (1927), Cunningham wrote an article called "Traits of Canadian Literature" for the *Canadian Bookman* (November 1927). He listed strength, beauty, people, and romance as the main features of the country's literature. "Strength" is linked exclusively with a romantic view of the wilderness, that is, literature that dealt with the "steel and iron of Nature's ruggedness" and the "weird Aeolian music of pine forests." The "romance" Cunningham had in mind referred to "the days of the French regime when the blue and white uniforms of Gascon troopers were seen on the high-flung battle-

ments of Quebec. . . ." Cunningham's views left little room for new types of fiction. Only a few rural dwellers were pioneering in the bush in the twenties, a situation implied by Cunningham's use of "strength," and Canada was far from the days of the French regime. Jessie G. Sime's *Our Little Life* (1921), a bleak picture of Canadian slum dwellers in Montreal, probably presented a more accurate picture of a large part of the population, that is, the urban poor. But Cunningham does not mention the city in his list, and though he refers to "industry," he sees it in terms of the "boundless resources" of "rocks," "forests" and "rivers." Though the realistic novel is emerging during the period, neither critics nor readers betray much sympathy for it.

However, the literary-critical milieu represented by French, de Bertrand Lugrin, and Cunningham had some intelligent opposition. Three years before Watson Griffin had published *The Gulf of Years*, Archibald MacMechan had published one of the most important early studies of Canadian literature, *Headwaters of Canadian Literature*. In it he had sent out the following *cri de coeur*:

> Regarded as a whole, Canadian fiction is tame. It bears everywhere the stamp of the amateur. Nowhere can be traced that fiery conviction which alone brings forth a masterpiece. Modern problems are as yet untouched, unapproached. Direct, honest realism is also sadly to seek, though subjects are crying aloud for treatment on every side. . . . So far Canadian fiction is conventional, decent, unambitious, *bourgeois*. It has nowhere risen to the heights or plumbed the depths of life in Canada.[5]

Unlike other critics, MacMechan was not deceived by "refinement of style and sentiment" into believing that masterpieces of fiction had been written in Canada. One can imagine what he would have thought of *The Gulf of Years* with its "stamp of the amateur" on every page. One wonders also whether he had noticed Sime's *Our Little Life*, which does plumb "the depths of life in Canada."

In 1928 A. J. M. Smith joined the battle with "Wanted — Canadian Criticism," the essay where he deplored the lack of intelligent reviewing of books, which he saw as particularly unfortunate as the country was becoming so "Canada-conscious." However, he saw Canada-consciousness as "a mixture of blind optimism and materialistic patriotism, a kind of my-mother-drunk-or-sober complex," in which a writer was forced to write "in the prevailing spirit of pep and optimism" or lose his readers:

> Of realism we are afraid — apparently because there is an impression that it wishes to discredit the picture of our great dominion as a country where all the women are chaste and the men too pure to touch them if they weren't. Irony is not understood. Cynicism is felt to be disrespectful, unmanly. The idea that any subject whatever is susceptible of artistic treatment and that praise or blame is to be conferred after a consideration, not of its moral, but of its aesthetic harmony is a proposition that will take years to knock into the heads of our people.[6]

By 1928 Smith was in a position to praise Morley Callaghan, Raymond Knister, and Mazo de la Roche as writers of fiction on the right side of the struggle with commerce.

Smith rightly sensed that opposition to the realistic novel was linked to some extent with a puritan fear of frank discussions of sex. Mrs. Hilda Glynn-Ward, a British Columbia writer who published a lurid novel about Oriental immigration to the province called *The Writing on the Wall* (1921), wrote an angry "Plea for Purity" in the *Canadian Bookman* in March, 1924. Her views were representative of much thinking that saw literary realism solely in terms of sex:

> There has come over the literature of the day the foetid breath of decadence. They call it Realism. They call it Truth. They call it anything but what it is: a pandering to the morbidly unwholesome in human nature.... Just that same section of the public who will tip the police to gain them entrance into an overcrowded divorce court will buy the dopish ravings of the modern sex-writers who describe the scenes in a brothel, who describe with horrible detail some exaggerated aspect of human perversion and wrap it all up in the cover of a novel, or, still more subtly, under the cover of "lessons in sex-hygiene."

Mrs. Glynn-Ward ends her article by chortling at the four months in prison spent by a London editor who published Sherwood Anderson's *Many Marriages*.

In reaction to Mrs. Glynn-Ward's "Plea for Purity," a "Plea for Tolerance" written by Francis Dickie appeared in the May 1924 issue of the *Canadian Bookman*. Dickie chided the *Bookman* for encouraging intolerance by printing Mrs. Glynn-Ward's "Plea for Purity," though the *Bookman* appears to have been practising the very tolerance Dickie was arguing for. Dickie pleaded for the new realism:

> As for realism: If there arises in Canada now or in the near future, a writer who can picture the sordidness, the emptiness of the life of some Barnardo or other orphan home boy on the farm of some mean, unsentimental Canadian farmer; if there arises a writer who can picture the life of brothels in Calgary in the wide open days, show the women's sadness, their tragedy, and too their humour ... then I for one will gladly read his book, and give him praise for a work well done.
>
> For the good of Canadian literature, I say, let us be tolerant, let us strive sincerely to curb that bitter, proselytizing urge so deeply imbedded in the hearts of all men....

There was little use in asking for a novel about Calgary brothels in the Canada of the twenties. The following year (1925) Grove's oblique treatment of sex in *Settlers of the Marsh* created enough disturbance so that the book was banned from some public libraries.[7] Grove himself could not be described as excessively tolerant. He dismissed *Wild Geese* in the following offhand way:

> The petty 'sexiness' of many passages makes a mature person smile. One cannot avoid the suspicion that that sort of thing was sprinkled in as a spice or with an

> eye on the 'movies.' In fact, how could a young girl know anything of the fierce antagonisms that discharge themselves in sex? Nobody will accuse me of prudishness. What I object to is the incompetence, psychologic and artistic, in dealing with these things. . . .[8]

Elsewhere, Grove describes the book as "trash."[9] Over fifty years later, the "young girl's" direct treatment of sex in *Wild Geese* seems more "artistic" than the prudish smokescreen Grove generates about Clara in *Settlers of the Marsh.* Grove makes clear in his essay "Realism in Literature" (published 1929) that he believes it is erroneous to define realism as "frankness in matters of sex."[10] He states clearly that realism is a matter of "literary procedure," not of "choice of subject," and makes a distinction between what he calls Zola's "pseudo-realism" and Flaubert's genuine realism. Eventually he concludes that the greatest realists in all literature are "Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe." In a letter to Raymond Knister,[11] Grove offers a substantive criticism of *White Narcissus* (1929) using the criteria set out in his essay. However, "Realism in Literature" never refers to Canadian literature (one reference to the view held of Zola in "America" suggests he means both Canada and the United States), an odd omission in view of his audience. Grove as writer seems to have found realism about sex in literature as awkward a subject as other Canadian writers did. Grove was not the writer who might have responded to Francis Dickie's "Plea for Tolerance." The "bitter, proselytizing urge" that Dickie disliked is more characteristic of Grove than tolerance and humour are.

THE SHRILLNESS OF Mrs. Glynn-Ward's "Plea for Purity" may offend the modern reader, but others were proffering identical sentiments. In 1927 the English Club at Queen's University was addressed by P. G. C. Campbell on the subject of "Sex in Fiction."[12] Campbell argued that "Fiction to-day is overwhelmingly about sex," and that "it is not love, but lust that is portrayed." He suggested that young people were being corrupted by exposure to this type of literature. Unlike Mrs. Glynn-Ward, Campbell is balanced in tone and supports his argument by references to Plato, who argued for censorship on the grounds that art was an instrument of education. In the absence of an official Canadian censorship for works of fiction, Campbell advised the English Club to practise self-censorship. The desperate tone of A. J. M. Smith's "Wanted — Canadian Criticism" appears totally logical in such a literary climate.

Smith and MacMechan were not alone in deploring the fear of realism evidenced by writers and readers of Canadian literature. Lionel Stevenson's "The Outlook for Canadian Fiction," published in 1924,[13] divided fiction into three categories: historical romance, the "Ralph Connor" school, and the "L. M. Montgomery" school. He characterized the last two as follows:

> From H. A. Cody in the east to Robert Allison Hood in the west, the Connorites have peopled the land with handsome youths absorbed in their chivalrous concerns. Nor is there absolute uniformity among the writers whom I am grouping for convenience around L. M. Montgomery.... But in this category, as in the other, there is a basic similarity in the scope of the books — a whimsical, sympathetic portrayal of naive characters in everyday surroundings.

Stevenson's essay concludes that "The novel, civilisation's most complex literary expression, is not yet fully acclimatized in Canada," though he held out hope for the future. Stevenson felt able to identify a number of books as realistic and thought he could give the term "realism" a definite meaning in terms of the Canadian novel: "In revulsion from egregious heroes and insipid heroines there is a distinct cult of unpleasant characters and an assumption of the harshness that is loosely termed realism."[14] Stevenson traced the beginnings of realism to Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine*, Merrill Denison's "unsparingly realistic plays," and Marjorie Pickthall's *The Bridge*.

Though many of Stevenson's judgments hold today, his tracing of the "beginnings" of realism to *The Bridge* strikes the modern reader as a misinterpretation. Even sympathetic critics were not always able to distinguish clearly between the old and the new techniques:

> It is admitted that [Pickthall's] handling of the plot suffered by comparison with her haunting pictures of natural phenomena; but for several reasons — as an effort to depict deep and terrible spiritual experience, as a representation of the supreme importance which nature assumes in this country — "The Bridge" is a landmark in Canadian fiction.

Though the hero of *The Bridge* is not "egregious" and the heroine is not "insipid," neither are they realistically presented. In this passage from the book, Sombra (heroine) renounces Maclear (hero) because Salvator (brother of the heroine) has killed a man:

> She uncovered her face; it was colourless, her eyes were sunken in dark rings, but they looked at him with steadiness; her whole being was keyed to this passion of suffering and sacrifice; having seen this agony, she embraced it.... She — pure child, pure wife, pure mother that was to be — called herself a murderer's sister; she was resolute to keep Maclear aloof from that stain. Looking forward, she thought it would be well if she died and released him from an inconceivable wrong.
>
> If she could have ceased to be his wife she would have: if she could have blotted from his mind every memory of her she would have; if she could have charmed him so that he would have passed her and thought her a stranger, it had been done. The height of her love alone could now plumb the depths of her abnegation. She had shut a door between them. She would not defile him to admit him.[15]

Is this the rhetoric of "terrible spiritual experience" or of melodrama? The parallel structures which are intended to raise the narrative to a high level of

intensity only succeed in creating bathos. One must continue to bear in mind that Stevenson was comparing Pickthall to Montgomery-Connor, and that the seriousness of intent that Pickthall exhibited would have been deceptive to a critic sympathetic to the new realism. Here is Pickthall's dialogue (the speakers are Maclear and Sombra):

"Speak to me, dear love."
"Dear love," she echoed him out of her passing dream.
"Give me your hands, your poor cold hands, Sombra.
Let me warm them for you this way, against my heart."
"My heart," she said.
"I've found you, my poor girl."
"Poor girl," sighed the little wandering voice.[16]

The dialogue has the same lyric quality found in the librettos of Puccini operas, and confirms Pickthall more as a lyric poet. MacMechan pointed out that in spite of "excellent passages," *The Bridge* could not be considered a successful novel: "The Canadian setting seemed to make the tale unreal; and it is doubtful if she would have ever succeeded as a novelist."[17] It is clear, too, that she cannot be categorized as a realist.

In estimating Stevenson's judgments, one should also look at *Maria Chapdelaine*, which appeared in English translation in Canada in 1921, though it had been published in French in 1916 in Canada and in Paris in 1914. In a curious review of the book in the December 1921 issue of *The Canadian Bookman*, the anonymous reviewer (possibly B. K. Sandwell) praises Hémon for being totally unaware "that there was in Canada any such thing as a 'clash,' or a bi-lingual question, or Imperialism, or immigrants, or rich and noisy cities, or the British North America Act." The reviewer argues that this ignorance has enabled Hémon to write about "the hard life of the northern frontier parishes as in itself a poem of beauty and heroism." He states that a Quebec habitant equipped with the power of self-expression would not have been able to write the book in the same way, because his mind would have been filled "with many other preoccupations, the preoccupations of politics, of religion, of wealth, of social advancement, of power — to say nothing of the preoccupation of self-defence." The reviewer understands that the book is a romance, but sees the romantic version of the life of the habitant as realistic because politics, religion, wealth, social advancement and self-defence do not figure in the narrative. Presumably, a concern with such topics would turn the novel into an unrealistic one, whereas now it is realistic because it is a romance. The reviewer's description of the contents of the book includes the phrase, "the mystery and the tragedy of youth and love and death under the brief but burning northern sun and the long and terrible northern snow."

This review should be weighed against Stevenson's assessment of the book as one containing the "beginnings" of realism, and there are indeed "realistic" elements which are not concerned with politics or social advancement. These include the death of François Paradis in the snow, the painful death of Mme. Chapdelaine, the numerous references to the country being rough and the work hard, and the descriptions of the bitter cold. Nonetheless, the last word is with the "voice of Quebec" which comes to Maria in the night as she makes her decision to remain in the wilderness:

> Then it was that a third voice, mightier than the others, lifted itself up in the silence: the voice of Quebec — now the song of a woman, now the exhortation of a great priest. It came to her with the sound of a church bell, with the majesty of an organ's tones, like a plaintive love-song, like the long high call of woodsmen in the forest. For verily there was in it all that makes the soul of the province: the loved solemnities of the ancestral faith; the lilt of that old speech guarded with jealous care; the grandeur and the barbaric strength of this new land where an ancient race has again found its youth.[18]

The voice brings the message that "In this land of Quebec naught shall die and naught shall suffer change. . . ." And it is indeed a romantic, timeless world that is contained in the novel. The atmosphere of *Maria Chapdelaine* is close to that of a fairytale. Maria is noble in her purity and beauty, and the dark forest, though menacing, can be conquered through strength and love. The anonymous reviewer thinks the book realistic because it is a romance, and Stevenson includes the book in his list because of a few passages, but by no modern standards would the book be considered realistic.

A third contemporary view of the book argued for its realism on the grounds that setting, characterization and plot were authentic. Professor Frank Oliver Call published "The Country of Maria Chapdelaine," in the December 1924 issue of *The Canadian Magazine*. He had spent a day travelling along the northern and eastern shores of Lake St. John in Quebec, the setting for the book, and he had photographed the area and located a man, Louis Gagnon, who could have been the model for Samuel Chapdelaine. The editor's introduction to the article closed with the following statement: ". . . no one now can challenge the authenticity of 'Maria Chapdelaine,' which is a most remarkable study of frontier life." Hémon's intent may have been to write a realistic novel (he was a journalist who had already written a novel of manners about English society called *Lizzie Blakeston*), but Hémon was French, not French Canadian, and was therefore looking at this pocket of French culture in the new world with a certain romantic curiosity. Hémon may have got his facts about the life right, but he looked at its spirit with romantic eyes, and on this disparity hinges the problem of assessing the book.

REALISM IS A SLIPPERY CONCEPT at best, and in the context of the Canadian novel of the twenties, it is especially hard to define. A look at another contemporary critic might be useful. Francis Dickie, whose "Plea for Tolerance" I have already discussed, published an article called "Realism in Canadian Fiction" in the October 1925 issue of *The Canadian Bookman.* He stated that as he understood the term "realism," it did not exist in Canadian fiction. He divided realism into two categories. In the first he placed Zola, Flaubert, the brothers Goncourt, George Moore, Dreiser, Anderson, and Upton Sinclair. In the second category, "kindlier realism," Dickie placed Daudet, Frank Norris, and Walpole, and four Canadian writers who had "something of an approach towards realism": Frederick Niven, J. Murray Gibbon, Bertrand Sinclair, and Arthur Stringer. All four candidates fall short for him, and he concludes that "Canadian fiction as yet has not enough artistic balance, without which no great literature is possible. That artistic balance will come with the advent of realism." However, a look at J. Murray Gibbon's *Pagan Love* helps explain why confusion existed about realism in a Canadian context.

Pagan Love (1922) had been described by an anonymous reviewer in *The Canadian Bookman*[19] as "written throughout with that extraordinary and realistic wealth of detail that has always distinguished Mr. Gibbon's novels, and that makes him look like a sociological investigator *when he has least desire to be one*" (italics mine). It is precisely this wealth of detail that gives the appearance of realism, but the novel is total fantasy. It deals with the business methods of a self-made American millionaire named Frank Neruda who turns out to be a woman in disguise. She is saved from accidental death by an impoverished Scot named Walter Oliphant whom she grooms to be her lover while maintaining her male disguise. The surprise revelation of her sex is designed to titillate the reader as he reviews all the encounters between the couple. Most of the book takes place in New York City, but as a concession to Canadian readers, Gibbon introduces a group of Canadian expatriates living there, one of whom remarks that she was "born for the open air, for the woods and for the mountains. . . ." She emphasizes that she is not a "New Yorker," but a "Canadian" and "shall live and die" as one.[20] The "sociological detail," especially about Neruda's business methods, must have been confusing to some critics, including Dickie, who otherwise had shown himself fairly astute. Donald French, in his address to the Canadian Literature Club of Toronto in 1923, had called *Pagan Love* a "novel of current problems."[21]

However, one can identify a number of novels that are not as dubious in their realism as *The Bridge, Maria Chapdelaine,* and *Pagan Love.* If we take a second look at Lionel Stevenson's 1924 list of realistic novels, we find that he cites a

number of books that followed through on the "beginnings" of the realistic novel: for example, Beaumont Cornell's *Lantern Marsh* and Douglas Durkin's *The Magpie*, both published in 1923. The former book depicts Ontario farm life negatively, is cynical about the power structure of the history department of the University of Toronto, and attacks the snobbery that characterizes upper-class social life in Kingston. *The Magpie*, set in Winnipeg, presents an unromantic picture of the grain exchange and the 1919 strike. The book describes the collapse of the idealism that had kept patriotism high during the war. Mazo de la Roche's *Possession* (1923) also is included on Stevenson's list, probably because of what was for the period a certain frankness about sex. However, the book romanticizes its heroine, an Indian girl, and its landscape, southern Ontario, to a point where they are barely identifiable. Stevenson also mentions *The Viking Heart*, which includes precise descriptions of the everyday life of Icelanders settled in Manitoba. We are confronted with a problem similar to that in judging *Possession*. In the context of the period, the realistic sections of *The Viking Heart* set it apart from the bulk of the literature being published, but at this distance in time, the book clearly is a romance. In fact, Edward McCourt has compared it with *Maria Chapdelaine*. Stevenson also mentions Arthur Stringer's *Prairie* trilogy (*The Prairie Wife*, 1915; *The Prairie Mother*, 1920; *The Prairie Child*, 1922). These books offer even less in the way of realism than *The Viking Heart*, whose overall tone is more consistent and more honest (Stringer's "inconsistency" is calculated to create a flashy effect).

Bertrand Sinclair appeared on the lists of both Dickie and Stevenson, who specifically referred to *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924). Though Sinclair had been writing since 1908 (*Raw Gold*), it was not until *Burned Bridges* (1919) and *Poor Man's Rock* (1920) that his narratives began to contain realistic elements. In the former book he takes a critical attitude towards the Great War, and in the latter book he exposes injustices in the salmon fishing industry in British Columbia. As was the case with Douglas Durkin, the war pushed Sinclair into confronting the problems of everyday life in his writing. Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid* is based on the collapse of the Dominion Trust Company in British Columbia in 1914. Sinclair's purpose in the book is to make clear the link between the building of shaky financial empires and the war, so he adjusts the facts and has the Dominion Trust (the Norquay Trust in the novel) fail in 1919. As one character states, "Armies are the policemen of trade."

Stevenson's reference to Robert Stead must be to *The Smoking Flax* (1924). (Stead's *Grain*, perhaps the major novel of rural realism of the decade, did not appear until 1926.) Stevenson probably noted Stead's inclusion of a character named Cal Beach, a sociologist who is gathering material for a series of articles and a book on a subject connected with his thesis: "The Reaction of Industrialism Upon Rural Social Atmosphere." However, Cal's theorizing about agrarian life

is less realistic than Stead's direct presentation of, for example, the physical disorder of the Stake farm. Gander Stake, who appears in *The Smoking Flax* as a comic figure, is transformed in *Grain* into a pragmatist as efficient at tilling the soil as he is at handling machinery. The "romance" of the soil is less evident in *Grain* than it is in *Settlers of the Marsh*, frequently held up as a model of early realism.

Like MacMechan, Stevenson did not seem to be aware of Jessie G. Sime's *Our Little Life* (1921), set in the Montreal slums in 1917-18.[22] Sime's book probably is the only genuinely realistic novel written between the end of the war and the date of Stevenson's article, July 1924. Her book was reviewed in the *Canadian Bookman* by B. K. Sandwell in September, 1921 under the title "A Good Novel About Your Dressmaker," and was available in Canadian bookstores. Of course, Stevenson's list was intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, but because Sime's novel was so extreme for its time, its omission is puzzling in a list which was so specific. *Our Little Life* depicts the life of a middle-aged seamstress who works by the day. Miss McGee is a second generation Canadian who survives poverty and failure through her courage and endurance. She is contrasted with Robert Fulton, an Englishman who has lost his money through bad investments. Fulton's frailty makes it impossible for him to survive the harshness of his life in the slums, and his death in the influenza epidemic of 1918 is inevitable. The relationship between the two people, love on her side, friendship on his, is delicately delineated, and the inevitability of its development under the conditions of their lives is what makes the novel "realistic." The "sociological detail," and there is a great deal of it, is an essential part of the relationship. For example, the two view Christmas differently. Robert always had found it boring and tiresome in England and had not thought much more about it. In Canada he is required to work at his job at the dairy counter of Arundel's Market until ten at night during Christmas week. He receives no extra compensation for this work and his boredom with the holiday becomes outrage at his exploitation. Miss McGee regards Christmas as the "poor man's treat," as a breathing space in the toil of the year, though her income usually falls off and she is short of money at a crucial time. On the Christmas Eve in question, Robert leaves work at eleven at night and, despite his exhaustion, thinks of Miss McGee's pleasure in the holiday and spends what is for him an extravagant amount of money on roses for her. Thus, we are offered a picture of a busy food store on Christmas Eve in 1917, the social attitudes of one of the store clerks, and a scene in a flower shop, but the precision of the detail is working towards the moment when Robert lays his offering of flowers across the threshold of Miss McGee's door. It is not until the publication of Morley Callaghan's *Strange Fugitive* (1928) seven years later that we have such a smooth combination of realistic detail and realistic inner conflict.

Jessie Sime was born in Scotland in 1880, brought up in London, and she lived in Canada from 1907 until World War II. She was the niece of Sir Daniel Wilson, Principal of Toronto University. The bulk of her writing was done in Canada, though after her return to Great Britain, she published several books in collaboration with Frank Carr Nicholson, Librarian of the University of Edinburgh from 1910 to 1939. Sime was an early feminist (*The Mistress of All Work*, 1916; *Sister Woman*, 1919), but her principal importance for Canadian literature is as a pioneer realist in *Our Little Life*. In 1953 she published, with Frank Nicholson, *A Tale of Two Worlds*, a long realistic novel that traces the fortunes of a Viennese family, some of whose members move to Canada. Sime herself appears in the novel under the thin disguise of a family friend who, because she is free to travel back and forth from Canada to Austria, is able to keep the two branches of the family in touch with each other. This plot device gives Sime the opportunity to comment extensively on the immigrant experience in Canada, a theme which makes up a significant section of *Our Little Life*. Sime even presents Robert in *Our Little Life* as the author of a volume of impressions of his experiences in Canada.

The bulk of the important realistic writing of the twenties appears after Stevenson's article, in the second half of the decade. *Settlers of the Marsh* and *Wild Geese* are both published in 1925. Grove's novel inventories pioneer farming in northern Manitoba, but its characterization is melodramatic (for example, the polarization of his female characters into virgin and harlot), and its dialogue is stilted and unnatural. The value of *Our Daily Bread* (1928) and *The Yoke of Life* (1930) as realistic novels also is vitiated by their unintentional melodrama, though both books offer careful observation of the day-to-day drudgery of farming. As a realist, Grove is most successful in *Over Prairie Trails* (1922), whose accumulation of data helps persuade the reader of the strength of the narrator's emotions. Indeed, this volume probably contains his finest writing. There are also strong realistic passages in *A Search for America* (1927), such as the scenes in the cheap Toronto restaurant.

Wild Geese also offers a combination of clearly observed detail about the struggles of farming and some suspect characterization. Though Judith's internal life is believable, Caleb Gare seems better suited to a Gothic novel. Peter E. Rider, who wrote the introduction to the 1974 reprint of Douglas Durkin's *The Magpie* (1923), points out that *Wild Geese* was the result of a collaboration between Durkin and Ostenso who had "compatible talents."[23] The contest which Ostenso won with *Wild Geese* was open only to first novels, and Durkin's collaboration could not be acknowledged. If this is true, Durkin simply was following through on realistic techniques he had developed in *The Magpie*. Like *Settlers of the Marsh*, *Wild Geese* was thought to be sexually frank, and that certainly contributed to any assessment of it as realistic. But the accuracy of Ostenso's (and

Durkin's) presentation of prairie life, more than the ostensible sexual frankness of the book, is more significant to the modern reader looking for the beginnings of realism.

A few other novels written from the middle of the decade on deserve mention as pioneer attempts at realism. Madge Macbeth's *The Land of Afternoon* (1924) depicts social and political life in Ottawa with some fidelity to fact. Macbeth wrote this book under the pseudonym "Gilbert Knox," and in collaboration with another writer who may have provided the details about parliamentary and cabinet activity. In a personal letter to me, Wilfred Eggleston, a friend of Macbeth's, speculated that the collaborator may have been A. B. Conway, a pen name for Major General E. L. M. Burns, who served in both World Wars and has published a number of books on military strategy and history.

The drama critic, Fred Jacob, wrote two novels, *Day Before Yesterday* (1925) and *Peevee* (1928), the former set before the turn of the century in southern Ontario and the latter set before the war, partly in Toronto and partly in two Ontario towns. Jacob's stated purpose in writing the books was to "preserve an impression of the Canadian scene" by picturing "several phases in the development of Anglo-Canada. . . ."[24] Thus Jacob carefully recorded social customs such as the provision of fine French merino to the mourners at a funeral in order that the dead man be honoured appropriately. Jacob had planned a group of four novels but died before the third and fourth could be written.

Hubert Evans' *The New Front Line* (1927) contrasts busy Vancouver with the peace and silence of the British Columbia wilderness. Though its close is sentimental, the book offers precise details of pioneering in the north of the province and depicts Indian life in an unromantic way for its time. Evans recently published *O Time in Your Flight* (1979), an autobiographical fiction about his youth in Ontario at the turn of the century. The book depends so heavily on realistic detail for its effect that it is sure to be consulted in future by social historians for information about the period.

Thus, the significance of the publication of *Strange Fugitive* in 1928 cannot be over-estimated. When the book is viewed against the background of the sunshine novels, the romances, and the imperfectly realized realistic works of the period, Callaghan's innovativeness is startling. Despite flaws (for example, clumsily introduced Freudianism and Marxism), Callaghan's book is consistent, clear, and direct in its use of what was for the Canadian novel a new literary technique. (One wonders how Sime's *Our Little Life* would have been received if it had appeared at the end of the decade rather than at the beginning.) In 1929 Callaghan went on to publish an excellent collection of short stories called *A Native Argosy*, confirming his position as the major realist in Canadian fiction and establishing himself as an important figure in Canadian letters generally.

Raymond Knister emerges at the end of the decade as well. Though Knister

had been publishing good realistic short stories with rural settings from 1922 on, *White Narcissus* does not appear until 1929. The novel is a curious combination of fairy tale and rural realism. Though the southern Ontario farm scenes are undeniably accurate, an improbable and romantic superstructure is awkwardly imposed on them. The short form was better suited to Knister's talents, and that probably is the case with Callaghan as well. Thus, two of the best practitioners of the realistic short story in Canada came on the literary scene at approximately the same time.

Nonetheless, the realistic novel had established its legitimacy by the end of the decade, and in the thirties Callaghan consolidated his position with *It's Never Over* (1930), *No Man's Meat* (1931), *A Broken Journey* (1932), *Such Is My Beloved* (1934), *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1935), *Now That April's Here* (1936), and *More Joy in Heaven* (1937). Grove also published *Fruits of the Earth* in 1933. In response to the Depression, the novel of social propaganda appeared and helped to move the vital centre of Canadian fiction away from the Montgomery-Connor school of writing and away from what McClelland & Stewart had called "refinement of style and sentiment" and "warm humanity." Ralph Connor's last Glengarry novel, *Torches through the Bush: A Tale of Glengarry* appeared in 1934, and with its publication the type of fiction that had dominated the early part of the century passed out of the literary picture.

NOTES

[1] Watson Griffin, *The Gulf of Years* (Toronto: The Point Publishers, 1927), pp. 167-70.

[2] Advertisement headed "Famous Canadian Novels by Famous Canadian Novelists," *Canadian Bookman*, 2 (January 1920), 78.

[3] *Canadian Bookman*, 7 (February 1925), 26. An anonymous reviewer is summarizing and quoting from French's address.

[4] "A Peter Pan of Literature," *Canadian Bookman*, 8 (April 1926), 116-17.

[5] (1924; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 215.

[6] Rpt. in *Towards a View of Canadian Letters: Selected Critical Essays 1928-1971* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 169.

[7] It is not clear how many Canadian public libraries actually banned *Settlers of the Marsh*. Thomas Saunders in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *Settlers* makes the following remark: "Reviewers attacked its alleged indecency; it was banned from most public libraries; a university professor branded it as 'filthy.' " Saunders gives no source for his comments. In Desmond Pacey's edition of Grove's *Letters*, Pacey includes the following remark in a note (p. 29): "About the banning of the book by public libraries, J. F. B. Livesay, father of the poet Dorothy Livesay, wrote to Grove, 'I am glad to note that "Settlers in the Marsh" [*sic*] has been banned from the Winnipeg Public Library — the best kind of advertisement for a young author. Toronto Public Library lets it out only to mature people of good character.' " What is clear is that access to the book was not total.

[8] "To Austin M. Bothwell," in *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 26.

[9] "Letter to H. C. Miller," *Letters*, p. 41.

[10] In *It Needs To Be Said* . . . (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 51.

[11] Grove, *Letters*, pp. 275-76.

[12] "Sex in Fiction," *Queen's Quarterly*, 35 (August 1927), 92.

[13] *Canadian Bookman*, 6 (July 1924), 157-58. Rpt. in his *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), pp. 124-37.

[14] Stevenson, *Bookman*, p. 158.

[15] M. L. C. Pickthall, *The Bridge: A Story of the Great Lakes* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), pp. 204-05.

[16] Ibid., pp. 293-94.

[17] MacMechan, *Headwaters*, p. 229.

[18] Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, tr. W. H. Blake (Toronto: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 258-59.

[19] "A Surprising Surprise," *Canadian Bookman*, 4 (December 1922), 329. See also another contemporary review which describes *Pagan Love* as "realistic": Florence Deacon Black, "The Literary Table," *The Canadian Magazine*, 60 (March 1923), 484.

[20] John Murray Gibbon, *Pagan Love* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1922), pp. 217-18.

[21] Anonymous report of an address given by Donald G. French before the Canadian Literature Club of Toronto on January 25th, 1923, "Canadian Novels of 1922," *Canadian Bookman*, 5 (February 1923), 29-30.

[22] Jessie Georgina Sime, *Our Little Life* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1921).

[23] "An Introduction" to *The Magpie* by Douglas Durkin (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), p. xvii.

[24] "Foreword," *Peevee* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), p. vii.

CARDIAC GRIZZLIES

Erin Mouré

At Banff this summer, the river lunged steeply at us,
ungainly beings picking our bodies across the rocks,
balanced incredibly on the cliff above.
Or alone
the three of us hulked over coffee in the Praha
working our way thru the mood
of each other, the speeches.

Sooner or later the rain falls out of its cupboards
& cries.
Ratty wet sparrows in their summer clothes
pick the earth up in their beaks;
when they shake it out
their heads tremble wildly among the cards.
We sit on the furniture in the rented rooms, three
cardiac grizzlies with our huge heads,
the hair painstakingly combed,
the human well-learned, tho
our talk sounds like leaves that talk
to leaves, on the dark side of the tree.

Our own wildness by the river, outpouring our own banks too,
the feeling of this tangled getting-together
twice a year, not enough
by a long shot but
better than staying alone, in the rough den of our cardiac lives
on two sides of the Rockies.
It's us, the crazy silent pawing ones, the ones
that crash thru underbrush to keep myths alive, capable of
finding each other when we need to,
in incertain territory
Capable of sustenance & love

APOCALYPSE, FOR SPENCER

for Stanley Spencer, R.A.

Erin Mouré

There is no memory but
what has fled,
                scaling the fences.
The angels of the apocalypse are housewives
after all, well-printed, dusting chairs

There are forms that begin &
begin again, houses that lift their curtains
skyward
Heads that pull up slowly into apples

Muscles gripping arms
Cowls that call to Christ out of the silent beam of sky
mended with wood, his sighs

An ordinary fact of the street, like
the saint in his dressing gown, head tipping the roof-tiles
between houses, preaching to hens/

White as the garments they wear,
a wall against not-existing,
the Resurrected climb out of thin graves in Cookham
onto grass so green, kissing between their hands
The astonished stigmata
that the artist gave them, a shy passion touching
their arms & washed bodies:
Their embrace coloured gently & made
Entire, a family

HOW WE PARTED

Lynda Regnier

not by severance, sharp
lines defining, all sparkle
and crackle.
in sputters of annoyance; not
us.

distance drifted in,
too easily we came and went,
never quite aligning. the
elastic of return just
wore down, never breaking,
but weakening, like the way we said
"i love you."

how we parted
means nothing to the final form.
like quick flickering of
belly-up undersides of leaves we
came alive in the wind,
cooled down and just
faded with the dusk.

GROVE'S "MAGNIFICENT FAILURE"

The Yoke of Life *Reconsidered*

W. J. Keith

ALTHOUGH *The Yoke of Life* has had its champions — W. A. Deacon hailed it on its first publication as "a great novel which, beyond any question, will stand the test of time," and W. J. Alexander is reported by Grove as saying that only the great Shakespearean tragedies could compare with it[1] — the novel has not received the kind of critical attention that has been accorded *Settlers of the Marsh* or *Fruits of the Earth* or *The Master of the Mill.* In general, commentators have praised individual scenes but have shown themselves reluctant to respond very positively to the novel as a whole. As enthusiastic a Grovian as Desmond Pacey was content to call it "a magnificent failure," while Margaret Stobie, complaining that its main weakness lay in "the plethora of themes," implied that it lacked artistic unity.[2] Moreover, because it has not been reprinted since the early 1930's, the book is comparatively unfamiliar to the Canadian reading public.

A careful study of the novel suggests that this neglect is closely related to its unique fictional qualities. Few novels, I suggest, are more difficult to appreciate on a single reading. Only when we become accustomed to the curious shift in the narrative from a basically "realistic" to an unabashedly "symbolic" level will the novel yield up its more satisfying effects. I remember carrying away from my first reading of *The Yoke of Life* a sense of irritatingly uneven quality, of a confusingly inconsistent literary tone. Subsequent readings have not only made me more aware of the novel's strengths and less disturbed by its weaknesses, but have convinced me that Grove has taken pains to prepare the reader for the unusual direction that the book eventually takes. In the following pages an attempt will be made to justify this claim.

The all-important first chapter may be considered representative in containing within itself intimations of both the strengths and the weaknesses. Superficially realistic, it is in fact so constructed as to communicate to the careful reader a symbolic digest of the book's major emphases. Len Sterner, a small thinly-built boy dwarfed by "an enormous plow-horse" on which he is sitting, waits by the door of a cottage (itself "diminutive" in comparison with the vastness of the

bush) from which is to be heard "a strangely melodious and cultivated voice."[3] This voice belongs to Mr. Crawford, schoolteacher, but he is representative of what, for Len, is a mysterious and attractive world (beyond the prairie horizon) in which the boy dreams of one day finding a place. Their conversation arises from Len's report that he has seen a strange bird, which Crawford identifies as an American magpie sixty miles outside the boundaries of its normal territory. Palpably but inconspicuously, the bird serves two functions within the scene. To Len it is, like Crawford, an interesting visitor from the beckoning world outside, but to the reader, who is more likely to notice the fact that it is strangely out of place on the Manitoba prairie, it can serve as a suggestive analogue for Len himself.

This is an impressive opening, but the effect is dissipated as soon as Len and Crawford begin to talk of other things. Their conversation is stiff, unconvincing, and somewhat pretentious:

> "What is a great man?"
> "One who has thought and known more and more deeply than others."
> "So that he can make inventions?"
> "That, too. Though the greatest hardly do that."
> "What do they do?"
> "They explore the human heart and mind and help other men to understand themselves."

A Socratic dialogue seems incongruous in this setting. Even if we take into account the farm-boy's awkwardness and embarrassment in the presence of an educated teacher whom he admires but does not understand, the falsity of this — its notable lack of colloquial rhythms, for example — is disturbing. Even when we realize that it connects with Len's determined but inevitably frustrated efforts to become "a great man," it still fails to convince.

Yet the rest of the chapter, in which Len tracks down the strayed cattle and brings them back to the homestead, is masterly in its presentation not only of the external scene but of Len Sterner as a carefully-realized figure within it. Grove achieves this by means of a shrewd balance between his own narrator's stance and Len's response as a dreamy imaginative child. It so happens that Len's journey takes him into the countryside of *Settlers of the Marsh*, and it is worthwhile juxtaposing Grove's account of Niels Lindstedt's arrival at Lund's place and the equivalent description here. The passage in *Settlers of the Marsh* reads as follows:

> After four miles or so they emerged from the bush on to a vast, low slough which, from the character of the tops of weeds and sedges rising above the snow, must be a swamp in summer. It was a mile or so wide; in the north it seemed to stretch to the very horizon. To the east, in the rising margin of the enveloping bush, Niels espied a single, solitary giant spruce tree, outtopping the poplar forest and heralding the straggling cluster of low buildings which go to make up a pioneer homestead.

That was Lund's place.

Slowly they approached it across the frozen slough. Taller and taller the spruce tree loomed, dwarfing the poplars about the place. . . .

They drove up on a dam; and the view to the yard opened up.

There were a number of low buildings, stable, smokehouse, smithy — none of them more than eight feet high in the front, and all sloping down in the rear. The dwelling at the southern end of the yard was a huge, shack-like affair, built of lumber, twelve feet high in front and also sloping down behind.[4]

Grove is content here to reproduce the viewpoint of his hero, new to the country, who notices what most observant visitors would notice. Niels Lindstedt's vision is domestic rather than imaginative, and attention is therefore focussed on external features. The whole passage is spare, objective — good, solid description without frills.

When we turn to the complementary scene in *The Yoke of Life*, however, we encounter a different, more complex effect:

At last Len saw a huge spruce tree ahead, outtopping the poplars all around. It stood close to the road, guarding like a sentinel a homestead in the margin of the forest where once a family of Swedes had tried to wrest a home from the bush. Mr. Lund, half lame and half blind, had one day, many years ago, gone into the bush or swamp and never been seen again. The rest of the family had moved away. Now, a Ukrainian settler lived there, doing well because he profited from the labour the Lunds had wasted on the place.

The landscape which, a few minutes ago, had still been a sombre green began to be redrawn by the rising dusk in grey and black. Len hurried his mount on: in him was the dread of the dark which is common to all such children as people the landscape with the creatures of their brain.

When he reached the clearing of the yard, however, just beyond the great spruce tree, he pulled the horse in. His heart was in his throat: the scene looked so bewitched in its utter stillness. Over the whole of the open space which lay like a niche in the woods, and reaching out into the swampy slough to his right, there was spread, like a ceiling, a thin layer of smoke, snow-white, but quite opaque and marvellously level. It arose from a smudge in the cow-lot over which a straight pillar of smoke stood in the air, motionless like a pillar of stone; it was only two or three inches in diameter and reached up to a height of twenty or thirty feet above the ground, eight or ten above the dam, and from that point spread out in a level sheet which floated like a lid over all the landscape.

The boy on the horse was sorely tempted to turn back and to flee. This was a witch's habitation in an enchanted forest!

An increased richness of language is immediately evident here, but I do not compare the passages in order to claim one as stylistically superior to the other; the point is, rather, that both are thoroughly appropriate to their respective novels. Grove's own narrative stance in this passage contains within it the bald details of landscape, but in addition we find an eye more sensitive to the natural effects of light and weather and a cogent awareness of the economic realities implied by

natural conditions. These can be introduced aptly enough, since Len has lived all his life in this area, and the narrator is therefore at liberty to present a broader perspective; he gives us more details because Len would notice more than Niels. A basic theme in the novel is the contrast between Len's dreams and the realities of his situation, and in this passage the two are clearly juxtaposed. Far from being an unnecessary digression, the history of Lund's place comes to be recognized as the narrator's carefully-pointed account of the nature of the world in which Len must struggle. Later, we learn that Len's father had succumbed to the harsh pioneering conditions, and in the course of the novel his stepfather will be forced out. Against all this, we have Len's imaginative response. The huge tree "like a sentinel" is, we may be sure, his simile as distinct from the narrator's, and the scene "bewitched in its utter solitude" also conveys the viewpoint of the dreaming boy. His conversion of the prosaic burning of waste in the cow-lot to "a witch's habitation in an enchanted forest" may at first seem rather too "cute" for our taste (more characteristic of one aspect of W. O. Mitchell than of Grove), but it admirably communicates not only Len's imaginative naiveté but his vulnerability in the world in which he finds himself. It is evident that in these two passages, with their differing versions of the same landscape, Grove is reaping the harvest of his experiment with varied descriptions and differing conditions in *Over Prairie Trails.*

At the end of the chapter we see Len in the immediate context of his home; and the tension between mother and stepfather, and the unending routine and hard work of the homesteading life (how impressive Grove always is when work is being described — not eloquently but absorbingly!), all help to set Len in an environment with which, sooner or later, he must inevitably clash. Even the apparently arbitrary game of "tag" played by Len and his younger brother Charlie ultimately falls into place as an active, make-believe revolt from the humdrum. The whole chapter forms a skilfully-created microcosm of the tensions and struggles which dominate the whole book.

I HOPE TO HAVE DEMONSTRATED that the opening of *The Yoke of Life* is both very ambitious and a distinct artistic success. It would be impossible, for reasons of space, to continue an elaborate literary analysis chapter by chapter; in any case, one has to admit that the promise is not consistently maintained. Although the first chapter was obviously planned with great care, there is elsewhere room for the suspicion that Grove's effects are to some extent hit-or-miss. One would like to be able to show, for instance, that the carefully-controlled relationship between narrator and sensitive hero was carried on through the novel, but unfortunately this isn't so. The narrative is not, as one might expect, limited to Len's viewpoint; Grove inserts several scenes in which he is not present.

There is, too, a basic difficulty in the presentation of Len. When we are shown his thought-processes "from the inside," he just does not convince us of the intellectual promise which Crawford sees in him. We are asked to believe that, after only two months' intensive study, Len passes first in the province in his examinations, but we are sceptical because Grove has never shown us the prodigy who could perform this remarkable feat. Len the "genius" rubs shoulders awkwardly with Len the confused and immature youthful lover. The terms in which his intellectual ambitions are expressed hardly change: "One day he was going to master all human knowledge in all its branches. Whatever any great thinker or poet or scientist had thought and discovered, he was going to make his own." This is the dreaming schoolboy, and the naiveté is endearing. But some years later, immediately after he hears of his examination success, we get this: "When he took leave of Mr. Crawford, he said exultantly, 'I shall be a university professor yet!' " The remark fits the youth who is incapable of recognizing the incompatibility between his own attitudes and Lydia's, but it hardly bodes well for his intellectual future. And I find it difficult to believe that this is the conclusion Grove expects us to draw.

Len's initiation into the world of love and sex also invites comparison with Grove's treatment of the subject in *Settlers of the Marsh*; the rather crudely-presented scene between Kolm and the mother, together with Len's reaction on overhearing it, virtually repeats that involving Ellen and her parents in the earlier novel. The common theme is easily recognizable, but it is the difference in treatment that is important. It is typical of Grove's practice (since he is continually repeating situations from novel to novel with subtle changes of circumstance and significance) that this time the incident should be experienced by the hero rather than the heroine, and that its effect upon his hero's actions should be different in detail but equally far-reaching. In this novel, however, the implications of the scene are more complex. While we know that Len is profoundly shocked, we are not told exactly what he is shocked by. It may be the very idea of sex, but it may also be Kolm's blundering vulgarity, the embarrassment of overhearing what is intimate and private, or the presumption that his mother is being forced against her will. To assume the first (and to judge from the assumption) is over-simple. On the other hand, Grove's vagueness here may be said to blur as well as complicate the effect.

Since Len's relations with Lydia are so central to the novel, this seems an appropriate place to consider Grove's attitude to love and sex in some detail. There was, I believe, a basic tension in Grove caused by two conflicting responses to human sexuality. One was the realization that sexuality is central to human experience, and that no novelist who attempts anything aproaching a comprehensive view of human behaviour can honorably ignore or avoid it; the other was a deep-set belief, sometimes but not always recognized by the intellect as

false, that sexuality is invariably shameful. It is to Grove's credit that he did not shirk the subject, but, given the conflict within himself (to say nothing of the touchiness of the contemporary reading public on the issue, especially in Canada), the reader is not surprised to discover that his treatments of sexual themes vary radically in quality. Particularly noticeable is a distinct self-consciousness that can be felt within the prose. A crucial example occurs in Book I, Chapter IV, entitled (somewhat gauchely) "New Stirrings":

> A longing was in [Len], unrecognized as such: a first adumbration that a human being is, in mind and soul, imperfect by itself; that somewhere in this world it must find its complement. A half is seeking the other half which will complete it into a self-contained whole. The first wing-reaches of this awaking are always painful: they are never understood by the one who suffers from them. If they were, the purpose of life would be thwarted. They are the most delicate thing there is in human growth: more delicate in a boy than in a girl; and the most disastrous thing that can happen to the young, emerging soul is to have its mysterious stirrings coarsely explained.

The subject is faced doggedly, but adequate words are not found in which to discuss it. The image of half seeking complement, a solemn version of the not-so-solemn fable in Plato's *Symposium*,[5] avoids a direct confrontation of the problem, and is itself confusing since the complementary half can imply either flesh (as against spirit) or the opposite sex. More significantly, while the process is seen as "awaking" and "emerging" (we are imagistically close here to Len's speech about the pupa and the butterfly, to be discussed below), the phrase "one who suffers from them" suggests a disease. The closing remarks are cogent, but the fact that the author has to step forward to lecture his readers is a token of his failure to integrate the material into his novel.

By comparison with *Settlers of the Marsh*, however, I think we can discern here a more deliberate attempt to dissociate the narrator from Len's fumbling attitude in sexual matters. When we are told that "he seemed half aware that he had obeyed a shameful impulse" or that "he must redeem himself from what he now called the curse of sex," we feel that the sentiments are Len's, though the words "aware" in the first quotation and "redeem" in the second teeter on the very edge of implicating the narrator.[6] Unfortunately, Grove's embarrassment in the matter of physical attraction becomes only too evident in the decline in quality of his prose at intimate moments. None the less, when a scene is realized in sufficient depth, this proves to be only a temporary blemish on the over-all effect.

THE MAIN SECTION IN BOOK II, Chapter III ("Return and Decision") is, I believe, one of the finest passages Grove ever wrote. It has certainly not received the attention it deserves. Here he succeeds in communicating

a crucial scene in all its underlying complexity — psychological, political, social and sexual. It is also remarkable for its drastic yet curiously discreet shifts of tone. Len has just returned from his winter at the lumber-camp. Thinking himself older and knowledgeable in the ways of the world, he plans to propose formally to Lydia. We see him buying his first Sunday suit for the purpose, and Grove views him externally, humorously, and with detachment:

> To town or city people he would have looked grotesque. His suit, of a heather grey mixture of cotton and wool, ill-fitting and stiff with newness, was too ostensibly worn as a symbol of budding prosperity; his striped shirt and the stiff celluloid collar about his neck, with a plaid-pattern and sateen tie, were too unmistakably causing him acute discomfort.... He was self-conscious and appeared to advantage to no eye except his mother's.

On arrival at the Hausman homestead, he is received with formal courtesy by Lydia's parents, who clearly recognize the significance of the occasion. We are then given a detailed account of Len's circumstances — a potted history, as it were, of his prospective ownership of half of the Sterner farm — and as a result see the social implication of the expected engagement from the parents' point of view. It would be quite easy to read this as a clumsy digression (one of the problems with Grove's frequent artistic awkwardness is that readers can underestimate and misinterpret a subtle effect), but in locating Len's romantic aspirations in a bluntly realistic context, Grove is in fact adding a complicating and "placing" dimension to the whole Len-Lydia story.

Lydia herself is not deceived by Len's appearance: "He divined that, in Lydia's eyes, he played a slightly ridiculous part. The village boys at Odensee could outdo him in this business of 'dressing-up.' " But ironically Lydia is also specially dressed — she has, indeed, carefully prepared her parents for the visit — and the description of her, through Len's eyes, indicates not merely the quality of his attraction to her but, only too clearly, the fact that she does not deserve his devotion. The genuineness of Len's feelings is contrasted, in a situation which is both moving and pathetic, with the artificiality of the circumstances in which he tries to reveal them.

In a deftly humorous scene of a kind relatively uncommon in Grove (though not, I believe, as rare as is sometimes assumed), the parents leave Len and Lydia alone in so pointed a fashion as to increase Len's self-consciousness to the maximum. At last he begins his proposal speech about the pupa and the butterfly:

> "Under the eaves of our sheep shed," he said, "there hangs a pupa, attached to the boards by a fine, thin stalk. It is greyish brown and quite plain. It looks like the wood and has been there since last fall. Inside of it something is growing; and soon it will burst its shell. It will be a butterfly, checkered in gold and black.
> ...

> "That is you," he said. "While you were at home, you were the pupa. You have burst your shell and become a butterfly."

The passage has often been cited as an extreme instance of Grove's conversational awkwardness,[7] but this, I am convinced, is a misreading. There can be no doubt that Len's metaphoric parable is painfully laborious, but it is clearly an earnestly rehearsed speech, and desperately true to character. We properly experience a sense of embarrassment, but it is (or should be) embarrassment for Len, not for Grove. We are intended to realize the inadequacy of the speech, recognizing that Len does not know what to say in the circumstances, that this is pathetic, but also that in a strange way his inarticulateness is in some respects in his favour. Lydia's response is both comprehensible and revealing: "Had she felt critical, she would probably have laughed. This was so ponderous, far-fetched, roundabout." Recognizing it at once as a sign of Len's emotional immaturity, she feels "frightened" both for Len and for herself — for Len because it indicates the pathetic vulnerability of his idealism, for herself because it reveals, behind its clumsiness, a sincerity and loyalty which she has already exchanged for a promiscuous sophistication and which she no longer has the right to claim.

Len blunders on, his reference to "the beast in man" revealing in its simplistic moralism, while Lydia's desire for "lots of money" betrays an equally simplistic materialism. Her "cool and ironical" insistence is as characteristic as Len's looking "into a dreamy distance." As Lydia begins to assert her purely physical attraction over him, the language begins to relapse into cliché ("Her eyes were swimming"; "prickling currents were sweeping through him"; as usual, Grove can only assert, not convey, "a paroxysm of passion," and the relation between narrator and protagonist is again blurred. But because the earlier part of the scene has built up a masterly effect of assumed awkwardness, the real awkwardness here only weakens and does not wholly dissipate the artistic and emotional tension. It leads, indeed, to a momentary revelation that is crucial to their relationship (and to the whole novel) — a realization which, because it is an analysis of the experience of passion rather than a presentation of passion itself, Grove can bring off crisply and successfully:

> Len was conscious of a feeling of shame and guilt. Yes, his feelings suffered almost a revulsion as he looked at her and saw her half triumphant, half terrified smile. In that smile there was something which called him. It was not discovery; it was recognition. Had there not been that shade of superiority and knowledge in her smile, he would have spoken and claimed her as his very own; but, though he could not have expressed what had dawned upon him, he was dimly aware that she who stood before him was Eve indeed, but after the fall.

At this point narrator and protagonist are properly distinct once more. The discriminations are clear and just. Grove displays here a remarkable understanding — a major novelist's understanding — of human motive, behaviour and reaction.

That Len can experience this revelation and yet still hold to the dream which bears no relation to Lydia's reality is a prime factor in his make-up and leads on to the catastrophic outcome of his story. This is a moment only surpassed by Grove's masterly conclusion to the chapter by which, with dry humour and controlled verbal economy, he forces Len back once more into a shabby, prosaic reality: "A few minutes later, the clattering of things on the stove having been agreed upon as a signal, Lydia's mother burst into the room, followed shortly by the yawning father." And so a scene verging upon tragedy ends on a note of human comedy that paradoxically accentuates the underlying poignancy in Len's whole relation with Lydia — a poignancy that contains within it the hints of an oppressively bleak future.

GROVE'S CHOSEN METHOD in *The Yoke of Life* involves continuing studies in contrast — scenes of harsh reality juxtaposed with those of dream and aspiration. The idea behind the method is sound enough; in practice, however, it tends to be blurred by the fact that Grove's "touch" is invariably sure in the former scenes but decidedly erratic in the latter. In Book I, Chapter IV, for example, the account of the hail-storm is in Grove's best manner. The one-sentence paragraph after the storm — "Man ventured out to look at his losses" — is supreme in its economy and impersonality. But the scene is followed closely by Len's embarrassingly unconvincing vision of the unicorn with its ponderous and insistent symbolism (and, in our post-Freudian world, its crassly obvious sexual vocabulary) seriously interfering with the narrative tone.

A similar contrast is to be found at the opening of Book III, and here we notice in particular how a breakdown in style coincides with — and therefore draws attention to — a breakdown in artistic rigour. The first chapter, "The Slough," is one of Grove's obvious triumphs, an unforgettable vignette of farming disaster. Although in a sense self-sufficient (with a minimum of adaptation it would fit as a short story into *Tales from the Margin*) it none the less performs an imagistic function within the novel. As Desmond Pacey remarks, "the effectiveness of the scene is enhanced by its symbolic overtones: to Grove the world is a kind of slough from which we vainly struggle to escape, often at the expense of another's agony."[8] This is followed by the bitter dialogue, "To Farm or Not to Farm," which is one of Grove's more successful examples of extended conversation. But when one turns the page, and the focus is once more upon Len's thoughts concerning Lydia, we can actually see the prose collapsing:

> Lydia! Whenever the name emerged, it coupled itself with fragments of visions. These caused a tightening of the heart or a releasing of its valves so that the blood, in a sudden burst, rushed more freely and fully through the sluices of his

> veins, according as they showed him the heaving edge of a simple dress which heaved with her bosom . . . — or, in her later phases, the bold, challenging look of her violet eyes, . . . the sensuous yet cool abandonment to his caresses in the kitchen of her parental home.

How to present immaturity without seeming immature, how to capture the earnestness of young love without sounding either pompous or ridiculous — these are challenges requiring, unfortunately, a particular kind of literary tact in which Grove was notoriously deficient.

Contrasts, as we have seen, are integral to *The Yoke of Life*, and the contrast in settings — homestead, lumber-camp, city, lake — plays a central part in the total effect. The homestead is the microcosm, a world of limited but comprehensible horizons: "This was a self-contained world, closed off from the rest of the universe." Len's horizons expand somewhat when he spends the winter in the lumber-camp, but he realizes later that it was an incomplete world: "A camp in the bush is as truly an epitome of the whole as anything else. Is it? Woman was omitted from it." The city, for Len a "plunge into the abyss," is an alien world in which the conditions, norms and values of the pioneering life have been discounted. The moving scene in which Kolm seems almost physically diminished by the hostile atmosphere of McDougall ("He was out of place in town: he needed the bush and the fields for his background") is repeated on a larger scale when Len finds himself dwarfed and out of his depth in Winnipeg, while Lydia's descent into prostitution is an example of narrative likelihood having to take second place to symbolic aptness. And finally, the journey up the Lake is a break with all previous communities and associations towards a world more primitive and elemental than that of the Big Marsh. As a boy Len had considered the Lake "as distant and wonderful as fairyland," and the same point is made when he regretfully turns in the opposite direction on his first journey to the city. But the Lake is reserved for the final chapters of the novel where the Gordian knot of Len's entangled destiny is to be either unravelled or cut through.

IN THESE CHAPTERS Grove is concerned to isolate Len and Lydia from the complicating distractions not only of city life but of communal life of any description. Len's is a personal problem and a personal destiny, and must be worked out in the company of no one but Lydia. At the same time, the Lake is no escapist retreat. Len and Lydia here evade the normal categories, whether geographical (the direction is towards "absolute wilderness"), moral (the judgments of human societies no longer matter, though Len's effort is to evolve his own moral criteria as a basis for living) or philosophical (Grove himself tells us that the novel is "beyond pessimism and optimism"[9]). They have only

themselves, and must come to terms with each other. Similarly, the literary conventions that have governed the novel up to this point have to be transcended.

It is surely clear to anyone reading the novel with attention that a sort of stylistic gear-change takes place as soon as Len and Lydia move out on to the Lake. Grove's writing has been flexible enough before — it had to be to encompass the varieties of tone that I have already discussed — but here we encounter a more drastic change. In the following paragraph we catch the transformation in process:

> The evening was the typical, quiet summer evening of the northern prairie. Through the day a sharp south wind had been blowing. Now it stood *with folded wings of haze* above the landscape, *poised*. The sun, in the west, was a crimson ball, heatless, rayless, scarcely distinguished in *incandescence*, though in colour, from the surrounding *wall of glowing vapour*. The forest which, from a slight ridge a few miles inland, swept right down to the water's edge, stood *breathless in an intoxication of rest*, after the *feverish swaying and tossing* of the day. Here and there, a swampy meadow *stretched lazily* between the higher reaches of the bush.

The paragraph opens straightforwardly enough, but the phrases I have italicized guarantee that by its end the "typical" northern evening has changed into something very different. This is a prose that we have not met in Grove since the central chapters of *Over Prairie Trails*, one in which pathetic fallacy is deliberately — and ironically — employed to communicate a heightened response to an awesome but essentially alien environment. As omniscient narrator, Grove injects a surrealistic intensity into his description. Though generous and precise in his detail concerning geological formations and weather effects, he reduces the landscape to its basic constituents of rock and water. Specific geographical details are sloughed off: "They seemed to be sitting on the shores of the sea of life and looking out over its dimly gleaming waters." As they go further north, "the landscape had the grandeur of death," and although Grove assured Desmond Pacey that "the end was suggested by the actual sight of the chattering rocks on Lake Winnepegosis,"[10] the effect seems remote from actuality — a setting of dream or, rather, nightmare.

The whole landscape seems transformed into a world of art and myth. The pointed references to Eden have strong thematic but no topographical relevance, but the allusions to the poets, particularly Shelley, are suggestive. Shelley's influence, indeed, explains the preoccupation with boats, water and islands, nourishes the high-flown idealism overlying Len's strongly passionate nature, and summons up the imposing spectre of Death. This is the world of "Alastor," the alluring but ultimately destructive spirit of solitude. We even recognize an unspecified but none the less definite sense of Wagnerism behind the elemental vastness of these closing scenes as they work up to a ponderous but overpowering crescendo.

Yet although, stylistically, the final scenes represent a dramatic departure from the tone of the rest of the novel, there are connecting factors that prevent a complete split. Len and Lydia may be moving towards untouched wilderness where there is "no one to give help or to interfere," but even here the temporary camp they set up on the shore "had built a smaller, narrower world into the immensity." Grove is quite specific about its being an "artificial microcosm" — a "small world . . . surrounded by another huge world of unknown or at least unseen things." In one sense this is but another version of Len's "self-contained world, closed off from the rest of the universe" of the first chapter. Throughout the novel — and, indeed, throughout Grove — the individual is dwarfed by his landscape. The "fairyland" Lake provides a suitably impressive background for Len and Lydia to consummate their love, but it cannot blot out their past or alter their destiny. Ironically, Lydia's explanation that her last attempt at street-walking was undertaken for Len's sake ("You were ill. There was no money. I . . .") makes their union possible, yet by the same token Len's image of her as sometime prostitute is fatal to any permanency in their love, and leads directly to their suicide-pact. And the final image of their two bodies lashed together in death is itself, as Margaret Stobie has noted, a symbolic and material equivalent of Len's earlier meditation on the separated halves seeking union.[11] The novel that began within the realist-naturalist tradition draws to its close in a fictive world of myth and emblem. Grove allows Len to move into a landscape which is itself the psychologically appropriate emblem of his thinking. Len's original imaginative vision, which converted the environs of the Lund place into an enchanted forest, finds a context which is also a nemesis.

Grove has attempted a major effect here, and there can be no doubt that it was wholly deliberate. He tried, clearly, to extend the boundaries and enlarge the scope of the traditional novel, to probe levels of intensity and trace patterns of psychological experience not previously attempted in Canadian fiction and rarely achieved elsewhere. It recalls, in some respects, the Stonehenge scene at the end of Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, though Grove claims (for what it's worth) that he had read no Hardy before writing the novel.[12] But the effect is closer to the shift at the end of some of D. H. Lawrence's novellas, notably *St. Mawr* and *The Woman Who Rode Away*, which were being written at approximately the same time. More to the point, perhaps, it suggests the progression in the later plays of Ibsen — *John Gabriel Borkman* is a convenient instance — from conventional realism in the first act to symbolic action in the last.

I make these analogies not to detract from Grove's particular achievement but to demonstrate how, in coming to terms with it, we need to consider it within a broad literary context. We must, of course, learn to read each serious and original work of art in its own terms, but the experience of reading other literature can often help us. In the present context, Hardy again comes to mind. In *Jude the*

Obscure — a novel frequently alluded to in a discussion of *The Yoke of Life* — the section involving Little Father Time is experienced at first reading as a shock to our sensibilities, and this shock takes precedence over any detached artistic response. On later readings, however, the episode can never have the same effect, and we can the more easily adjust to it and appreciate its implications. The same is true, I believe, of *The Yoke of Life.* We are at first caught off-balance by what I have called the stylistic gear-change in the final chapters, but, once we are prepared for it, it proves less startling and we recognize earlier references which anticipate it and render it more acceptable. No longer distracted by wondering what is going to happen, we can concentrate on the more important issue, why (within the established logic of the novel) there should be no other possible way out.

But Grove has one further surprise, one last gear-change, in reserve. The novel does not end in the symbolic wilderness, "the gorge of the Narrows," but at a homestead in the bush. The last page, I would argue, is more than a loose-end-tying epilogue. News of the deaths of Len and Lydia coincides with the birth of a step-brother, duly christened Leonard. A "happy ending"? Not, certainly, in the conventional sense. The child receives its name "in commemoration of one who was dead and as a promise, perhaps, that he should have the opportunities which his older namesake had lacked." A careful reader will not miss that "perhaps." The new Leonard may or may not achieve the success which, Grove would have us believe, the older Leonard deserved, but if he does it will be a success gained not in a heightened symbolic landscape — Len's world of enchantment — but in the real world of life and labour. Thematically and stylistically the novel at last comes full circle.

NOTES

[1] W. A. Deacon in Desmond Pacey, ed., *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 145; Desmond Pacey, ed., *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 247.

[2] Desmond Pacey, *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1945), p. 63; Margaret R. Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 87.

[3] Frederick Philip Grove, *The Yoke of Life* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930).

[4] Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), pp. 27-28.

[5] For a detailed discussion of Grove's debt to Plato in this novel, see Henry Makow, "Grove's Treatment of Sex: Platonic Love in *The Yoke of Life,*" *Dalhousie Review,* 58 (Autumn 1978), 528-40.

[6] For a discussion of this problem in *Settlers of the Marsh,* see my "The Art of Frederick Philip Grove: *Settlers of the Marsh* as an Example," *Journal of Canadian Studies,* 9 (August 1974), 32.

[7] See, for instance, E. A. McCourt, quoted in Pacey, ed., *Frederick Philip Grove* (1970), p. 71.

[8] Pacey, *Frederick Philip Grove* (1945), p. 61.

[9] Frederick Philip Grove, *In Search of Myself* (1946; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 357.

[10] *Letters*, p. 433.

[11] Stobie, p. 88.

[12] See Deacon in Pacey, ed., *Frederick Philip Grove* (1970), p. 145 and compare *Letters*, p. 316.

POSTSCRIPT

Ralph Gustafson

Buffy and Art,
I don't know, I don't know if
They will come again,
Art with his glass of martini
Wandering, getting the news,
His poems chiselled till they shone,
Like Brancusi,
And Buffy we stayed off to meet,
Art driving the car two-wheels
To somewhere else but we had to meet Buffy
Horseman among the farmers,
Polished, his verse, too, formal as a
Four-in-hand, a glass of Beaujolais,
Whips and something odd,
The bathroom done in black,
Grace, and the silent chuckle —
Chewing gum stuck on the Parthenon —
Moccasins on Montparnasse — mortality
And news of the phoenix,
The outboard tearing up off Drummond Point —
I don't know if they will come again,
Or when or how,
Classic shade and a point of sky
Over Memphramagog, Brome,
Both hating death.

books in review

FAST-FORWARD MAN

GEORGE BOWERING, *Burning Water*. Musson, $14.95.

IN THIS BOOK ABOUT George Vancouver in the Pacific Northwest, George Bowering asks his readers to take an interest not only in the travels of the great eighteenth-century navigator and surveyor, but also in how the twentieth-century novelist and poet came up with the story. Casting himself in the third person, Bowering tells about his own creative venture: imagination, he says, implies "a travelling, or a trip," and Vancouver's itinerary is punctuated with reports of the author's physical and imaginative comings and goings. Bowering uses this auxiliary narrative to explain the relations between subject and author, or "art and life.... Or at least life and literature."

The explanation hinges on certain coincidences connecting these Georges and their journeys. Some of the connections precede the text, and become in effect pretexts for the novel: Bowering shares a first name with the navigator; and he lives in Vancouver, the other George's name-place. Another class of connection is more complicated. To begin his work on this man who travelled west, the author goes east, to Europe. During later parts of the book, when Vancouver presses north, Bowering goes south, in an inverse mimicry of his hero. With these European and southern journeys, Bowering makes more connections. In the main narrative, for example, we learn that the fourteen-year-old Vancouver, sailing with Cook towards the south pole, ran to the bow of the H.M.S. *Resolution* just before the ship turned back, north; for that moment, facing the Antarctic extreme, he held a position further south than any man. Some chapters later, the twentieth-century traveller imitates the boy-sailor: "A few days later he went to Venice and rode a vaporetto from one end of the line to the other. He sat in the bow exposed to the cold sea wind." Passages like these minimize the modern traveller, making him only a tourist with a theme, and, rather than bring Vancouver closer, they put him farther out of reach. Fortunately, some of these connections which Bowering would fetch from faraway places fail to materialize, even under pressure: at Limón, he strains "for a comparison, or even a connection with Nootka," but nothing turns up.

Conveying some very ordinary details of the writer's life, the interpolated narrative embarrasses the text, lingering like an unnecessary excuse. The interpolations are formally unmarked, and this, combined with the author's presence in the third person, creates pronominal confusion. Chapters beginning "He . . ." are no doubt deliberately ambiguous in reference; but when the antecedent George turns out to be Bowering rather than Vancouver, the reader is disappointed, for this version of the life of Vancouver is interesting, and the delays in advancing the story are exasperating. Happily, the interpolations diminish in conspicuousness if not in frequency even as the story gets under way. This fancy part of a plain narrative withers and falls like a superfluous ornament.

Much more convincing is Bowering's fundamental sympathy with his hero, and his pride in Vancouver's accomplishment and even in his high-minded devotion to Empire. Nothing shows this pride more than Bowering's contemptuous view of the Americans who pass in and out of the scene. With their obtuse mercantile attitude, the Yankee traders offend and brutalize the natives, and show their own meagre spirit: "They crawled all over the

trading post like flies on pastry, trading in liquor and arms, gathering in furs and gold coin, and looking for an opportunity to scoop up some real estate."

Bowering respects Vancouver's office as surveyor of the coast, and in describing the navigator's honourable work he sticks closest to plain truth — the kind of hard facts his sceptical hero revered. For three seasons, Vancouver sailed methodically up and down the intricate shore, measuring and plotting its devious design. So complex was the coast that it seemed to promise *somewhere* a concealed, fog-cloaked corridor to a Northwest Passage. But Vancouver penetrated every sound and inlet, discovering the finitude of each. In doing so, he repudiated the longstanding notion of easy passage through a marvellous strait.

When he comes to reconstructing his protagonist's character, Bowering must depart from this plain truth. The more obvious tasks in exploring Vancouver's uncharted personality — accounting for his strict attitude of command and for his devotion to accuracy and exactitude — are accomplished rather superficially. Vancouver, Bowering tells us, felt himself "special," even as a boy. Fanatically devoted to Cook, loyal to his sovereign, he embraced his duty wherever it fell. More daring, and more interesting, are Bowering's speculations on Vancouver's love-life, here unexpectedly explained in terms of Vancouver's relations with Quadra, the Spanish commander who relinquished Nootka to the British in 1792. Bowering postulates that, with Quadra, the nearly virginal Vancouver found love at last. Urbane and attractive, Quadra is a token of the south, introducing into Vancouver's life exotic news of sensual indulgence and voluptuous sympathy. Quadra adores the younger man, the Norfolk sailor who has come to administer the expansion of the British Empire and the retraction of Spanish influence. On the way home, Vancouver learns of Quadra's death and retires to his bed. When he emerges on deck, days and miles later, he behaves in a harsh and skewed way. After nearly four years at sea, aboard a 99-foot ship, and burdened with his inflexible sense of responsibility, Vancouver is wearing out.

Archibald Menzies, surgeon and naturalist on the *Discovery* and delegate of the Royal Society, had seen this coming. Menzies, as Bowering portrays him, was a paragon of competence: a brilliant scientist, a skilled sailor, an exquisite marksman, a judicious and virile man. Vancouver hated him, and obsessively harassed him. Bowering explains this antipathy: temperate and responsible nearly to the end, Menzies could make Vancouver feel like a fool; and Vancouver could not suffer Menzies' competence, so nearly parallel to his own, at such close quarters. Menzies, for his part, admired Vancouver and would have been his friend. But Menzies knew too much about Vancouver. He possessed an intimate scientific knowledge about his captain's mind and failing body that Vancouver found intolerable. Finally, Vancouver's behaviour towards him outrages the botanist beyond forbearance and Bowering's version of the journey comes to a violent conclusion.

There are weaknesses in this book. The interpolated narrative is a nuisance. Some of the anachronisms in the main narrative are too trivial: a local chief answers Vancouver's inquiries about the climate by remarking that, in winter, "it rains all the time, but we always say that at least you don't have to shovel it." But these weaknesses are attributable to the ambitiousness of Bowering's intentions. He wants to write in his own, modern way about something that has all along commanded its own prose form: voyage narrative is conventionally linear and forthright. It sets one thing after another,

locating events consecutively in time and space. Bowering overthrows this linear orientation to make room for his record of the imaginative origins of the text, and to make plausible characters out of the eighteenth-century travellers who came all this way. Certainly, Vancouver, Quadra, and Menzies are substantial creations, and worth the trouble. Yet an old subject can get the better of a new form, and some of the best parts of the book are the accounts of where the *Discovery* goes and why. The structural commotion of flashbacks and fast-forward leaps pesters this plain-speaking with stops and starts and recursiveness, making the narrative spasmodic just where the logic of travel demands that the story be advanced. Bowering may see this as a contest between traditional and modern fiction (he envies the simpler task of the old-fashioned "realist novelist"), but this is not really the issue. Voyage narrative is neither realistic nor novelistic: it is documentary and compellingly linear. Against this serious straightforwardness Bowering works, interrupting itinerary with his interpolations and fictional inferences. Some of these interruptions are unwelcome, but others are worthwhile.

JANET GILTROW

SOCIAL MARGINS

LEON ROOKE, *Fat Woman*. Oberon, $6.95.
KENT THOMPSON, *Shacking Up*. Oberon, $6.95.

BOTH LEON ROOKE AND Kent Thompson are accomplished short story writers. It is perhaps not surprising then that *Fat Woman* and *Shacking Up* are essentially short stories blown up into short novels. Each is an enjoyable and absorbing read, and each has as a central aim an exploration of the dignity and even complexity of the lives of quite ordinary or socially marginal people. *Shacking Up* makes this explicit in its epigraph:

> The Count was off on one of his hobby-horses. "There is no such thing as a plain and simple person," he said. "Even the girl who delivers bread" — here he glanced out the window — "is as complicated as the history of one of your papal states. And if you would understand her you must apply the analogies of political science to her; you must apply your theology, and see wherein she wrestles with free will."
>
> But the papal nuncio was not impressed. "No more complicated than a cow," said the nuncio — and thereby revealed that he did not know much about cows either — T. E. Wallace, *An English Valet's Account of His Travels With a Foreign Nobleman* (1888).

Unfortunately, this is more amusing than anything that follows, though Thompson's blow-by-blow account — from the woman's point of view — of a couple shacking up in a motel room for several days is interesting enough to keep one reading to the last page. But there is no larger resonance to the tale that is recounted, nor is there the excitement and intensity found in Thompson's finest stories (e.g., "Because I Am Drunk"). It is *Fat Woman* that is rather more successful in demonstrating the Count's insight into women and cows, partly because Rooke's characters are more eccentric and vivid than Thompson's rather bland pair of adulterous lovers.

Both Ella Mae, the melancholy fat woman, and her thin and jocular husband Edward are vividly present in all their individual quirkiness and idiosyncrasy. Ella Mae's compulsive eating has made her more and more obese until her man feels obliged to resort to drastic measures. In the events of one day her fears, her joys and her sadness are movingly revealed. One comes to know these people in a way one doesn't get to know Thompson's characters — a bored young wife with a good figure and a laid-back local baseball-hero.

Fat Woman is a tour de force that could not be sustained at greater length.

And though Ella Mae and Edward are utterly convincing as well as likeable, Rooke has (I feel) written *around* Ella Mae's relationship with her exceedingly bratty sons; he manages this evasive action skilfully, but something is felt to be lacking. Still, this is a minor flaw in a piece of writing that presents with considerable style and sensitivity a vulnerable and valuable human being trapped in the flesh and in a marginal rural existence. *Fat Woman* is a highly successful novel or novella of character; such plot as there is is best not revealed ahead of time to the reader.

Shacking Up has its virtues too. Thompson is skilful in depicting each of the stages of a casual affair that never had anywhere to go, despite the fact that Ellen is able for a day or two to persuade herself that she "loves" her "hero," Dennis. Each is trapped by outside obligations, and their fling, though unashamedly physical, is curiously without emotional intensity (such as that found in the film *Last Tango in Paris*) in spite of their avowals of love. On returning to her husband Ellen decides that she will get him to beat her up so that they will be "even." She seems to crave pain as much as she did pleasure as an escape from her humdrum life.

Both *Fat Woman* and *Shacking Up* offer slices of life; each is interesting and insightful, but the life in *Fat Woman* is a good deal more intense and colourful.

TOM MARSHALL

ANGRY MOURNER

JANE RULE, *Contract With the World.* Academic Press, $16.95.

CONTRACT WITH THE WORLD, Jane Rule's fifth novel, begins where the education novel usually leaves off, with its characters newly launched into their various careers and relationships. It is tempting to think of the six main characters in this novel, like the six characters in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, as complementary parts of a composite human figure. They are all the same age. They are all, in one way or another, artists. And they are all intimately bound up in each other's lives as doubles, opposites, rivals, and lovers, both heterosexual and homosexual. The events of the novel, which extend over ten years and bring the characters to the age of thirty-five, involve them all in death and some at least in birth and rebirth.

The narrative of these ten years unfolds in a straightforward chronological way. But each of the book's six parts, as their titles indicate, puts a different character at the centre of that portion of the events that it narrates: "Joseph Walking," "Mike Hanging," "Alma Writing," "Roxanne Recording," "Allen Mourning," and "Carlotta Painting." Joseph's walking is the device that initially brings together the book's rather disparate characters, just as Ruth Wheeler's house is the common meeting ground for the mixed bag of human types in Jane Rule's previous novel, *The Young in One Another's Arms* (1977). Advised by a doctor to "walk ten miles a day to prevent manic breakdown," Joseph Rabinowitz travels the Vancouver streets. On a chilly fall walk along the beach, he nearly trips over a tripod belonging to "a man of about his age, dressed in a London fog raincoat, standing beside a car entirely wrapped in plastic."

> "Is it for an ad?" Joseph asked.
> "Heavens, no!" the man replied. "It's Art."
> . . . . . .
> "The only problem is . . . I need a swimmer."
> "A swimmer?"
> "Just off in the background, in his trunks, at the edge of the sea."
> "On a day like this?"

> "Yes . . . I wonder, would you mind . . . that is, if you've got on decent shorts?"
>
> It seemed far too outrageous a request to be anything but innocent.

This is how Joseph both makes a friend of photographer Allen Dent and gets his own shivering image on the cover of *Arts Canada.*

Subsequently, characters are brought into the novel with skill, in a manner resembling additions in a cumulative rhyme such as "The Farmer in the Dell." Allen introduces Joseph to his "boy wife," the French Canadian Pierre. The *Arts Canada* cover photograph brings about the renewal of friendship between Joseph and a school acquaintance Mike Trasco, a Polish night club bouncer, who seems to be patterning himself on Stanley Kowalski from *A Streetcar Named Desire* but is also an aspiring sculptor in wood who says things like "*Form* has to be rescued from usefulness" and "Soft sculpture is a pile of crap." Joseph meets Mike's Nordic wife, "tall ample-bodied" Alma, whose serenity and calm superiority have the effect of turning Mike into a male chauvinist bully. We are told, "Alma watched her husband as if she might be attending an ethnic movie." In the course of things, Alma introduces Joseph to her friend Carlotta, a painter who lives resolutely alone, often fasts, keeps her apartment so cold that she needs to refrigerate her food only in the summer, and paints pictures of her own broken skeleton. The final addition to this complement of characters is Roxanne, whom Allen finds working in a record store and brings home to amuse Pierre. Roxanne is flat-chested, small, and "frail-bodied as Pierre," and she and Pierre entertain themselves by trying on each other's shirts.

On his walks, Joseph continues to drop in on these friends who are his "craziness under control." But he doesn't let them know about his wife Ann and her two daughters, his family representing for him a sanctuary of cherished ordinariness which he must "protect from the extraordinary as long as he could." Ann resembles those calm, serene, infinitely resourceful women who appear in other Rule novels. But in this book she remains a background figure, while yet performing an important function as a source of stability and calm in the midst of the agitation in the lives of the other characters.

Within the first thirty pages Jane Rule succeeds in establishing these agitated eccentrics as characters that the reader cares about. Each one is given a signature characteristic — Joseph, a one-note laugh of desperation; Allen, a self-mocking ironic tone; Alma, a deference to money and convention, and so on. Between them these friends represent a range of ethnic backgrounds (Jewish, Polish, French Canadian, Scandinavian), a range of political parties ("Alma was a Liberal to maintain social superiority and annoy Mike. . . . Allen voted Conservative out of affected cynicism to serve his own vices"), and a range of conversational specialties (Carlotta specializes in suicide, Mike in Art, Pierre in homosexuality, etc.). As the narrator puts it, "All Joseph's friends seemed to wear attitudes like name tags, means of identity rather than principle."

The characters form symmetrical relationships of attraction and repulsion: *like* sometimes attracting, sometimes repelling *like.* Pierre, the abandoned child and street orphan, and Roxanne, the foster child with a police record, are gentle people who know that "everyone is dying of cancer" and that there is "a point to being careful and loving." Allen and Alma — again the names suggest affinity — are independent and dominant, with a strength of personality based on *not* knowing. In a pairing of another kind, the stormy marriage of Mike and Alma contrasts with the homosexual menage of Allen and Pierre. The polarities repre-

sented by the characters include the "ample-bodied" and the "frail-bodied," the crude and refined, violent and gentle, selfish and self-sacrificing, dependent and independent, and ordinary and bizarre.

In each section there is a crisis, usually of an exotic and sensational kind, which provides the energy for the regrouping of characters that occurs in the next section. In section one, for example, on the thirtieth birthdays of Mike and Joseph, respectively, Mike (actually, as it turns out, a soft sculpture replica of Mike) is found hung, and Joseph is committed to hospital, raving literary quotations: " 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I' . . . 'I am a part of all that I have met.' " A lot happens in this book and happens at a brisk pace, both in the external action and in the inner lives of the characters: new pairings occur, attitudes change, and characters make exhilarating and alarming recognitions. For example, Alma discovers herself as a lesbian and writes with frankness of her love for Roxanne in "Alma Writing," the only part of the book narrated in the first person; Roxanne makes a documentary sound map of Vancouver; the *Vancouver Sun*, under the headline "Pederasts' Party Over," names Allen Dent as one of the guests arrested by the Vice Squad; Pierre commits suicide; Alma becomes pregnant; the opening of Carlotta's show of paintings of her friends is disrupted by red paint-throwers in Surrey, "British Columbia's Orange County, without the money." A lot for one novel to contain, but all is held successfully in place within a very firm design.

Within this elaborately worked out pattern, the author explores different styles of accommodation to the world and different ways of loving. Readers familiar with Jane Rule's other work will anticipate correctly that one concern will be lesbianism, the private dimensions of which are represented in the relation between Alma and Roxanne. The public and political context of homosexuality in Canada is also suggested by references to actual events such as the police raid on *The Body Politic* as well as to the fictional incident of violence in Surrey. When in the final scene the Surrey community attacks Carlotta's show, the book takes on the tone of the "angry mourner" that Jane Rules describes herself as being in *Lesbian Images* (1975). "They came. They always will," says Roxanne, to which Ann responds, "No, that's unjust."

CATHERINE ROSS

ARTIST AS MIDDLE-AGED MAN

MORDECAI RICHLER, *Joshua Then and Now.* McClelland & Stewart, $16.95.

MORDECAI RICHLER SEEMS to have a taste for epigraphs. His long awaited novel, *Joshua Then and Now,* nine years in the gestation, takes its epigraph from W. H. Auden. So also does *St. Urbain's Horseman.* The earlier epigraph comes from Auden's poem "September 1, 1939," and sums up Auden's terse reflection on the unpreparedness of his generation for the spiritual crisis forced upon them by World War II. The impending crisis, as the poem, serves to galvanize in Auden a sense of his own duty, his artist's hope for a creditable vocation. Richler quotes only the last stanza as epigraph, but the penultimate verse as context may help to illuminate the affirmation:

All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
On the sensual man-in-the-street
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky;
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

St. Urbain's Horseman, despite this slightly presumptuous and melodramatic citation, deserves to be regarded as one of Canada's finest novels. And it proves consistent with its epigraph to this degree: its own prophetic voice is a warning against the "romantic lie in the brain" as much as against the inevitable falling bombs, and its concluding vision is hopeful, despite "frailty" and "dust."

The epigraph to *Joshua Then and Now*, by contrast, comes from the first stanza of an earlier poem by Auden, "Lullaby" (1936).

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm;
Time and fevers burn away
Individual beauty from
Thoughtful children, and the grave
Proves the child ephemeral:
But in my arms till break of day
Let the living creature lie,
Mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Subsequent verses go on to make of a night's illusion life's only light, its "ordinary swoon" anaesthetic against the fear of a darker daylight. For Auden, the "Lullaby" came early; his wartime call to vision heralded a later, stronger mood and voice. But for the Richler of *Joshua Then and Now* these same two "resolutions" seem to have evolved the other way round.

All the hallmark moods of Mordecai Richler, to be sure, are found in Joshua: alienation, expressed with poignancy — or as paranoia; cynicism, ranging from a jaded self-sufficiency to unbridled bitterness; cultural disaffection, illuminated with topical ironies or shadowed with topical farce. But his readers would want to believe that the centre of Richler's artistry, then and now, has always been more than the projection of mood.

Richler's capacity to portray character has always been one of his chief strengths. In this book, Reuben, Joshua's father, is reminiscent of the strength. A hard-time boxer-cum-enforcer authority figure, street-wise and toughened by defeat as much as by victory, Reuben might tempt a comparison with Isaac Babel's "Benya Krik from Odessa." But Richler's character is kinder, his novel's chief expression of humane wisdom, a gentle standard against which other characters are implicitly measured. If Reuben becomes Joshua's most convincing psychological authority, it is partly because his wisdom (garnered from pulp novels, racing forms, and a dog-eared copy of the King James Bible) seems to juggle together past identity and present life more convincingly than any other counsel his life affords. And this is important to the novel, for in it son Joshua's life as a writer unfolds as a continuous but unfulfilled quest for a higher wisdom, cause or authority.

Much other characterization in the book is less well delineated; even where some of the shading is colourful, the effect is curiously pastiche. Richler's general cynicism too often overcomes his sense of control and proportion; in character clichés or general denigrations he shows here less of the fine tuning that we had come to expect from him after *St. Urbain's Horseman*. Surely negative definition is not without its peculiar advantage. Richler's best characters are often defined negatively, and they usually serve his satiric and ironic purpose very well. But in this novel even Joshua's most intensive declamations against critics, publishers and other writers are far less a satire than they purport to be — where

the Jake of *St. Urbain's Horseman* could (with economy) strike to the heart of foible with a laser beam, Joshua's rhetoric, like his rage, seems lightless.

His readers know that Richler's social satire can be wonderfully entertaining. In the present book, the William Lyon MacKenzie Society (of which Joshua is Secretary and charter member) is in fact a fair index to Richler's reach. For Richler, King is the apotheosis of a mindless and formless spirituality. He is an operator like Reuben, but without any earthy authenticity wherewith to salvage his contribution to the human comedy. (Or perhaps Richler would say, the human farce.) When Joshua's friends decide to open their annual William Lyon MacKenzie King Award to an NHL hockey player, it occasions a bitter attack on Canadian institutional identity, symbolized for the group not so much by the hockey player as by King himself. To wit:

> Obviously, the player we have in mind would not be a high scorer, a natural star, but rather a plodder who overcomes with effort and cunning a conspicuous lack of talent, intelligence, or grace. In the nature of things, he would have to be a player who has been in the league for at least ten years, unnoticed, unheralded, but persevering. The fellow we have in mind spears when the referee has his back turned, trips an opposing player if he can get away with it, but unfailingly backs down from a fight. Preferably, he would be a man who respects his mother even more than the coach, and has a firm faith in the world-to-come. If he is on the ice when a goal is scored for his side, he argues for an assist on the play. If he is on the ice when a goal is scored by the opposition, he promptly disowns responsibility. Above all, he is a vengeful winner and sore loser. He has no close relationships with any of his teammates. Loyalty is unknown to him. Forced into a quick decision on ice, in the heat of play, he neither opts for the possibly inspired but risky choice nor stands tall and resolute on the blue line. He avoids making any decision whatsoever, heading for the safety of the bench. All the same, when many a more talented player has retired, legs gone, or has been removed from the fray in his prime through injury, our MacKenzie King Memorial Trophy winner will still be out there skating. Skating away from trouble. Persevering.

If all the dead-pan social satire in *Joshua* were thus evenly controlled, even as farce, the book would be better than it is. But because the overall quality is too variable (and the tone and the focus too diffuse) the protagonist's protested contempt for Canadian cultural establishmentarianism, and the novel's trendy incorporation of current events (such as René Lévesque's notorious motor accident) seem finally facile or flat-footed.

Part of this loss of novelistic definition, or forgetfulness of the necessary subservience of a joke en passant to the tenor and structure of the whole story, arises from Richler's refusal to maintain a sufficient distance between himself as novelist and his protagonist — also, of course, a novelist. Joshua is made to be so explicitly analogous to his immediate author that we are scarcely able to determine where it is one voice leaves off and the other begins. Finally, the presumably intended fusion is actual confusion, acquiring in *Joshua* the character of a basic weakness rather than any central strength. It gets harder and harder to make much of Narcissus.

Perhaps it is not accidental that the sharpest characterization in this book derives from the "Then" and not the "Now" of the persona's self-perception. The remembered dialogue between young Joshua and his father-in-law Senator Hornby — biting, zesty, perceptive and precise — is perhaps the best single passage in the novel. In it we watch perception *change* — initial prejudice yield to insight, then to respect and delineation of character, as father-in-law Hornby acquires a stature sufficient that, when he is slipped in at the "end" of the book, he can 'second' father Reuben as a palpable

'authority' in Joshua's ambiguous cosmos.

Joshua is presented to us as a man who clearly *needs* authority — or at least covets the assurance it might afford — yet who, of course, incessantly rejects any authority other than his own wilfulness, whether in family, marriage, culture or politics. Authority-less, he is identity-obsessed, charged with the urge to define and redefine his own character in almost purely negative terms. Like so many writers of the "period" just before him, he idolizes the opportunity for identity and the authority of righteous cause seemingly afforded by the Spanish Civil War; yet born too late to participate, he finds himself, as a pilgrim to Ibiza and Cordoba, even more clearly than his predecessors searching for identity in the wrong place. For the real object of Joshua's quest is a shared identity such as might transcend the soiled and tawdry cultural language he knows, something which could take him out from under the weight of his own fragmented life with its ambiguous patrimony of Canadian nationality and Jewish heritage. He yearns "for an inheritance, any inheritance, weightier than the construction of a transcontinental railway, a reputation for honest trading, good skiing conditions."

Joshua is a man bitterly disappointed by secular history, yet frightened of his spiritual history. The tribal history which fills his memory is not a history with any hope for the future: Joshua's is not the history of his people's Covenant, but of their exile and diaspora. And this more acute memory is what drives his quest for a comfort which allows that only in faded recollections will any light for his cultural imagination still flicker. The tutelage at Reuben's hands shadows a reality not quite grasped; the synagogue is always just beyond the reach of pride and habit. In Ibiza Joshua tells us plainly by his actions that he longs for a home, a commitment, a promised land — yet he is unable by language to apprehend the cause of his own "unbidden tears" when a sephardic Jew he does not even wish to meet proclaims his own secret, his identity: "Shema Yisrael ..." ('Hear O Israel, the Lord Thy God is One God').

It is the drive for identity and authority in Joshua which most clearly bids the reader to accept the invitation in Richler's epigraphs: to search for the illumination of texts behind his text, for the subtexts which condition his understanding. Auden's poems, I have suggested, serve to undergird our perception that *Joshua Then and Now* describes a movement away from hope — even that hope intuited merely in 'ironic points of light' — toward negation and a despair which can be mitigated only by the transient negotiations of dark hours.

But lest we make too much of small matters: it is clear that the Auden epigraphs are merely sub-textual beacons, and not by any means either novel's most important textual signal. For that, from the title to the conclusion, Richler requires us to conjure with no less imposing an authority than Reuben's dog-eared King James Bible.

In Reuben's catechesis, in his exegesis of Biblical story and the prudential ethic he garners from it, the reader discovers several remarkable ironies. One of these involves Joshua encountering (but not quite discovering) Reuben's teaching as a kind of proleptic exegesis of his own life dilemma concerning authority and identity. The God of Reuben's reading is "a gambler born"; he takes his chances with free will in a cosmos where human voice is crucial to any story's ending or meaning. Reuben sees the Bible as a series of "deals" between God and men, and as such a repository of "wisdom" (in the Hebrew sense, *hokma*), spiritual wisdom for the physical world, and perhaps especially wisdom for interpretation:

> "Let me tell you something," his father said, brandishing his Bible with enthusiasm, "this thing here is just filled with book titles and savvy sayings. I mean, I used to think, you were a writer you had to make things up out of your own head, but you'd be surprised how many of their titles and sayings were swiped out of this one here, and there's plenty left, so you could do worse than — "

Coming from an enforcer for gambling debts, Reuben's exegesis is only partially eccentric: "A covenant is a contract," he says, launching into a circuitous explication of the ten commandments, rivalled for attractive originality and utter heterodoxy only by his preference of Esau for Jacob in the Covenant story. Though "... the Hebes are only signed up until page eleven hundred and eighty," Reuben extends his lecture series to the New Testament, to "the guy on the stick." Part of his rationale is pre-emptive: the *goyim* usually sweet-quote from the New Testament just before they do something nasty; part also creates a foil: Reuben admires the Jesus who "didn't like the way the temple was being run," and he admires the continuing authority and shared identity of his "bunch" which "didn't fly apart like they did here after Galento was shot down." In this way Reuben, as wisdom figure, comes to stand (ironically) for a broadly-based Judaic *logos*, the subtext of an old and virtually timeless culture from which pinpoints of light still flicker onto the darker surface of present and local fictions. One senses that Reuben's mock-exegesis is not a simple parody of explication, but in fact a story-teller's mock-disclaimer, part of a web of self-negating ironies which are not always specific to this book, or its protagonist, as distinct from the author's own extended self-reflection.

The Purim exegesis Reuben gives to the book of Esther may be, in this context, only reflexively intended as one of the novel's central ironies. The Biblical book is not really so much about Esther as it is about Mordechai. Mordechai, as Reuben sees him, is par excellence a trickster-gambler, an 'operator' who manipulates his protégé and the King's lust into a contract (of marriage) for his own advantage. In the biblical story, of course, Mordechai's hustling canny is ultimately redeemed — in that the Jews at last get a hearing. It is less evident, Richler inadvertently suggests, that this same redemption will extend to his Montreal namesake.

The feast of Purim, for which Reuben reads the story, was originally known as the "Feast of Mordechai," and it echoes Richler's own typology: it is called the "feast of lots." Joshua's has been a gambler's world, a world in which God gambles too, in which Father Reuben's authority — not only as Rabbi, but also as an enforcer of gambling debts — is a simulacrum of higher authority. Reuben's mulilation of loser Orbach's right hand may prefigure Joshua's own apprehension of his writer's exhausted luck and impending nemesis, or climacteric. Yet Purim, Richler knows, is also supposed to be a "feast of joy and gladness," a "symbol of the victory of light over darkness." In this book the feast is thus, with deliberate irony, inversely celebrated — it is finally the ambiguous "beauty" of a faithless darkness which is clung to, with no risk so bravely taken as to face the light of day with a clear and self-defining choice. Even the wisdom of Moses Maimonides superimposed upon the Spanish pilgrimage, cannot counter the tide of self-pity which sweeps over the persona's self-consciousness.

That such a general and unsettled ambiguity could prove a serious novelistic problem (outside as well as inside the book) is suggested in Joshua's perception of his alter-ego, his loved/hated correspondent-friend, fellow novelist Murdoch. There is a scene in which the disconcerted Murdoch tells Joshua about his

own son coming to him for advice. Murdoch reveals himself as having had thus to confront the question of his own identity and "authority," not merely as a novelist, but also as a man. His inability to imagine the encounter is a measure of his failure to have chosen, to have in fact achieved an identity. Whether Richler intends to use Murdoch to critique his fellow Canadian writers, or whether Murdoch constitutes for Richler a kind of ironic confession, his words could easily enough serve as another epigraph to *Joshua*:

> "God Lord, I'm still a child myself. I like nothing better than to suck a girl's titties and have her read *Winnie the Pooh* aloud to me before I go tuckybyes. Do you give your children advice? I expect you do. The years have made you pompous, my dear. Ah well, I suppose nothing compensates for the loss of talent. Both our brains have been addled by alcohol and the young have no mercy."

The life aide, Joshua sees clearly enough in Murdoch's work that personal inability to deal with authority and choose identity can be most unhappily betrayed in a writer's public proclamations: "Murdoch's seventh novel, its contents sour, its jacket elegant, sat before him on his desk. It was a mechanical book, shallow, written with a fine writer's remembered skills."

In the tradition of Fellini's film *8½*, *Joshua Then and Now* is a book about an artist's failure — but it remains in most artistic respects enough less conclusive than the film that each of Joshua's reflections on Murdoch's waning achievement comes perilously close to providing another epigraph. Thus the loss of distance between creator and creature portends, it seems to me, an almost tragically self-indulgent self-destructiveness in the actual, not just the fictive novelist.

All of this, after *St. Urbain's Horseman*, is a real loss. An inescapable difficulty with Richler is that he continuously invites remembrance of and comparison with his earlier novels in each work that he pens — setting, character, "history," point of view and even incident all contribute to this. What one comes to feel in *Joshua* is that he has been looking at an extended series of vanity mirrors held far too close to a man's most intimate self-doubt, and that the accrued result is less the 'honesty' it might seem to be than a kind of protracted self-indulgence (or exhibitionistic narcissism) in which, after nine years of getting ready for it, Richler has placed in our hands at last not much more than a tawdry 'Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Man.'

How much less is Joshua than the characterization Richler is capable of — how much less is Richler, now, than his own imagination of Joshua, then? At the end of the novel one still wants to ask the novelist: "Who *was* Joshua anyway?" And in the answering we could come, perhaps, to the most difficult irony of all, irony which rises from that which is deliberately left unsaid. Joshua, the volunteer who fearlessly reconnoitered a land of strangers; Joshua, the imaginative survivor who took refuge in a house of harlots, but even there kept fast to his purpose; *Joshua* — at the sound of whose trumpets the walls of the city shook and crumbled; here presumably is a figure from Judaic history who is best known for drawing a line between two options, firmly, for the sake of defining both authority and identity. It was Joshua who said

> . . . choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods your fathers served . . . or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: *but as for me and my house*, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)

Here, surely, are accessible footnotes for readers of Canadian fiction. Yet in this novel the invocation exists not, as in Sinclair Ross, to herald a negative choice, but by the irony of opposites indicates

that there has been really no choice taken at all. If the truth of the citation of the William Lyon MacKenzie King Society is intended to mirror the imagination of Richler's Canadian readers, in this book the image actually reflected is the artist's own. It is a split image, finally unable to be faithful to either species of ironic discourse — those celebrated points of light, or his own too-much-protested wish for the soul's dark night.

In the last analysis *Joshua Then and Now* is a book about the character of a novelist. As portrayed it remains an undefined character, double minded, pulled between two poles, neither of which can command sufficient allegiance for a full identity to emerge. To say, however, that these two poles are secular Canadian culture and Jewish heritage would be to beg the real question — which has far less to do with cultural than with personal motivation — with love and hatred. The one side of this novelist's impulse is complex vengeance, a compulsive urge to define, characterize and dismiss false "authorities" according to what he hates; the other impulse is simple grace, an irresistable desire to know and receive a father's love. It is this last irony for which the reader must retain any abiding appreciation, and wish, perhaps, that Joshua Now had been able more freely to make his choice.

DAVID L. JEFFREY

PRIMITIVE PRESENT

RUDY WIEBE, *The Mad Trapper*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

IN *The Temptations of Big Bear* Wiebe's white men were almost all obsessed with their moment in history; indeed several thought and explained so much history and geography that some of the "white" sections of his novel read disconcertingly like history lessons. His Indians in that novel were, fortunately, innocent of history. They inhabited a different time scheme. The Indian sections were written in a richly sensual and rhythmic prose. The sometimes boring prolixity of his white sections contrasted dramatically with the poetic prolixity of his Indian sections. Out of this contrast came an eloquent argument for Big Bear's superiority and for his people's plight.

In *The Mad Trapper* Albert Johnson (or whatever his name was) is like Wiebe's Indians and Métis rebels in one important sense: he has broken from the detritus of Canadian history, from his own memories of people, indeed from any civilized laws or the words that describe these laws. He inhabits an eternal primitive present. His concerns are lighting fires, feeding himself, getting to his cabin site before freeze-up, building a cabin, escaping men who pursue him with guns and words. Like Wiebe's primitives in *Big Bear*, he occupies the centre of interest. In fact, he is skilfully drawn. Some of his actions seem unmotivated (springing Nersyoo's trap, for instance), but such enigmas come with the territory. Wiebe is, after all, attempting to give shape to an historical enigma, a murderer whose name and identity we still don't know. One is reminded of the maxim from Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John*:

> . . . to tell a story is to leave most of it untold. You mine it as you take ore from the mountain. You carry the compass around it. You dig down — and when you have finished, the story remains, something beyond your touch, resistant to your siege; unfathomable, like the heart of the mountain. You have the feeling that you have not reached the heart of the story itself, but have merely assaulted the surrounding solitude.

The more Wiebe's characters attempt to pin down the mad trapper with words, the more elusive he becomes. And the more elusive Wiebe allows him to remain, the more powerful he emerges as a fictive

structure. As long as Wiebe's mad trapper remains wordless, his tenacity, rage, animal courage and strength, fastidious camping habits, fierce brooding presence, remain powerful and convincing, as in the following passage:

> Albert Johnson crouched under the river bank. His frostravaged face looked like a stripped, blackened skull. He held a chunk of caribou calf meat in his bloodied hands and he was chewing on it. He warmed his hands by placing them alternately in the torn-open body of the calf beside him while he gnawed at the raw, tough meat, hacking chunks off with his skinning knife close to his teeth and chewing voraciously. He did not stop chewing, or even hesitate as the roar of the plane thundered over him. Only his eyes followed the circle of its sound above him, the terrified snorting of the caribou as they fled before this impossible horror hammering out of the sky. And the clicking of their numberless hooves continued as steadily as ever long after the sound of the plane faded into silence.

But when Wiebe permits his character to become even slightly accommodated to civilized ways, his mythic wendigo stature recedes. Here, for instance, he turns away from the scene of a savage battle between a sow grizzly and the old bull caribou she has just killed. " 'Never smile at a woman,' Johnson half sang under his breath. 'Call no man your friend. If you trust anybody, you'll be sorry ... you'll be sorry ... you'll be sorry, in the end.' "

When we ask the question, where does Wiebe stand in this confrontation between the civilized community of men and the lawless primitive, we come up against a kind of moral neutrality. We have a narrator that hops like Wop May's Bellanca from character to character, and though the characters judge, Wiebe's narrator does not. In spite of this sort of unjudging omniscience, however, Wiebe has loaded his deck rather heavily in favour of his so-called mad trapper. His policemen, reporters, Wop May, Indians and Métis are foolishly human by comparison. They often speak in lifeless dialogue, explaining their jobs, their locations, their lives, their place at that moment in history.

Johnson makes them all seem foolish. Wop May (contrary to accounts I've come across) is obsessed with his image as a failed hero. Corporal Millen suffers from a self-inflicted Ahab complex over the pursuit of Johnson. Reporters Callaghan and Snarden are fops. Constable King is a disapproving prig; we are glad he leaves the book as early as he does. Most of the Indians are circumscribed by their limited vision and their superstitions.

In fact, there isn't a single articulate defence for social order or community in this entire adventure story. Millen does his best, preferring words to bullets, but he is no wordsmith. Challenged by Johnson to explain why Millen is interrogating him, Millen seizes up: " 'Well,' Millen tried to keep his voice easy, as if considering a challenging philosophical question, 'there's order. Community order depends on ... a certain knowledge, a ... certain common acceptance of ... personal information.' "

Perhaps we are accustomed to getting from Wiebe's fictions a highly moral sense of cause, but this time he seems to be siding with a wendigo who shrugs off human society, denies community, would sooner avoid (and ultimately shoot) people than relate to them in any way. In fact, much like the writer of the Grettir saga does, Wiebe makes his wendigo into a compelling character, a kind of argument for taciturnity. And the rest of the characters become a group statement about the follies of human co-operation and communication. With their radios, airplanes, dynamite and newspapers, they're a pretty foolish lot.

In spite of some heavy-handed exposition, the same strong narrative hand is at work here. The northern terrain comes alive in some chillingly drawn descrip-

tions. The same fascination with the process of converting history into mythic narrative is also at work. But something is different. This is not the usual gripping saga (in the sense of a folk epic) which pleads the cause of minority Canadians, but an adventure story without a cause, alternately compelling in the Johnson sections and wooden in places where people must talk to one another.

DAVID CARPENTER

RELEARNING FREEDOM

KEITH MAILLARD, *Alex Driving South.* Dial Press, $11.50.

KEITH MAILLARD is one of the young Americans who came to Canada in the Vietnam era, stayed, and became a part of the West Coast writing scene. Give *Alex Driving South* credit for beginning to address an interesting and undeveloped aspect of recent Canadian cultural life — the whole uneasy relationship that has always existed between the two cultures, and the Worm of Doubt that has begun to stir in the bosom of the twice-born immigrant. If he can't go home again, can he still be at ease in the New Zion? Compared with the literature of Anglo-Canadian adjustment, in which Canada nearly always suffers, Americans have been less grudging in their appreciation of Canadian achievements; at least they have not traded in easy insult or smug superiority. There is evidence, given Edgar Z. Friedenberg and now Keith Maillard, that the era of unexamined gratitude is coming to a close.

Canada, or at least the thirteen-year Canadian residence of Evan Carlyle, is the cold rim around the molten core of Evan's and Alex Warner's West Virginia adolescence. Eventually we come to understand the meaning of events in Evan's senior year of high school; we learn why he left "Raysburg" and went

to college and eventually told Uncle Sam to "kiss [his] ass" — and we learn why Alex stayed. Implicitly, we must judge Evan's Vancouver "success" (as a CBC morning show producer), and his hip, know-it-all girlfriend and his English suits and access to a Doctor Feelgood, with Alex's stay-at-home "failure" — sixty pounds over his championship track-form, incipient alcoholism, a wife who nips at his heels, a son who disappoints, a garage that is failing.

It's clear by the end that Evan is a moral failure; Alex, for his conventional decay, is a man of loyalties, strength, and moral decency. Alex conforms to most "Deer Hunter" notions of the steel-town redneck (I passed those same high school years near Pittsburgh, in the town mentioned here as "Little Washington" — it's a jolt, of sorts, to encounter the first fictional reference to that town, in reading for a review in *Canadian Literature*. On the other hand, is there anyplace *more* likely to yield such a coincidence?) — violent, hard-drinking, inarticulate — but he's also the man most likely to pick up hitch-hikers, pull your car from a ditch, and buy a round of drinks for old time's sake. Evan is shamed by such generosities. He has corrected all of Alex's flaws, but retained none of his virtues.

This strikes me as the subterranean, binational allegory of the book. Alex is still potent (gone disastrously soft); Evan is the grown-up track-team manager (grown undeservedly prosperous). Evan must learn there is more to life than "being noticed by Toronto" and perhaps going full-time "on staff" and moving East. It's a lesson he couldn't learn in Vancouver. Alex is Evan's teacher, using beer and reminiscence and a fearsome all-night ride through a blizzard to return him to a kind of existential openness and a truth he never suspected. He arrives in town thinking his old girl-friend had betrayed him with Alex; he leaves learning that she had been carrying his baby. In other words, whatever freedom he's managed to preserve for himself is rooted in a lie.

This being said, the book's virtues are quickly exhausted. Maillard has a good ear for Alex's speech (an essentially one-note, profane monologue). He's created a few memorable set-pieces around the luscious girl-friend, Elly (who seems to be moulded from heroic clay), and that's just about all. He has not solved the essentially static quality of the book, in which all the significant action happened *after* Evan's stay in Raysburg. The mature Elly, now a local nurse, is not introduced. Evan himself — most disastrously — has no real role in his own book except to ask Alex "*then what?*" questions. In one two-page sequence, Evan is mercilessly reduced to the essence of his role: asking ten questions about Elly. Alex swings into his familiar response ("Shit, she can't be a pound heavier ... Oh, fuck, I don't remember ... Oh, shit, Carlyle, he was an asshole ...") — it all *sounds* believable, but it's nothing more than elicited dialogue; it fuels the plot and destroys the characters.

The fault is not in Maillard's intention, but in his craft. As a novel about high school seniors in 1960, "American Graffiti" style — in which adult divergences are only hinted at — Evan, Elly, and Alex would all have vital roles. Elly, who models herself on Marilyn Monroe, might get away with lines from the young Judy Garland such as, "I'm just a dumb kid from Carreysburg ... Who the hell am I to think I'm going to be an actress? But wouldn't it be incredible if I turned out to be rich and famous?" Alex, then an all-State track star, caught between low-life car-boosting friends and college possibilities, is, frankly, more interesting than the grease-pit sage he becomes. And Evan, as the familiar portrait-of-the-artist-as-callow-youth, is never closer to

commanding a bit of respect than he is in planning to leave West Virginia (for Ohio State) and never coming back. I don't think anyone can care about the drip he's become.

The "other" story that Maillard has tried to tell is a much bigger one, and one that has thus far eluded all the New Canadians from the American class of c. 1966. It is nothing less than an account of the transformations wrought by Canada, the hostilities and regrets and attachments still felt towards the States. To tell that story, we will all need characters with more substance than Evan Carlyle, and less sentimental slobbiness than Alex Warner. And we will need a plot that justifies its length, not just a couple of short stories inflated to fill a novel's covers.

CLARK BLAISE

FAMILIAR WORTHIES

SILVER DONALD CAMERON, *Dragon Lady*. McClelland & Stewart, $13.95.

HUBERT EVANS, *O Time In Your Flight*. Harbour Publishing, $7.95.

HELEN LEVI, *Honour Your Partner*. Queenston House, $12.95.

ROY MACGREGOR, *Shore Lines*. McClelland & Stewart, $13.95.

JAMES HOUSTON, *Spirit Wrestler*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

THIS IS A MIXED BAG of novels indeed. *Dragon Lady* is a lively thriller with a U.S. draft dodger hero and a locale that shifts between downtown Manhattan and the coast of Nova Scotia. *O Time In Your Flight* is a meticulous account of "one crucial year from [a] small town childhood in 19th century Ontario," and was completed during author Hubert Evans' 87th year. *Honour Your Partner* describes a few months in the lives of a retired Anglican bishop and his wife and owes a sizeable debt to Jane Austen. *Shore Lines* is a fictionalized version of the mystery surrounding the death of Tom Thomson in Algonquin Park. *Spirit Wrestler* is a lyrical tale of magic and survival among the Inuit of Baffin Island. Obviously there is much variety here. Yet reading all five novels in sequence one is struck by their united allegiance to one common theme: the virtues of small community life.

Silver Donald Cameron expresses this view most openly. "I think that's what human beings are naturally like," says his hero Peter Landry, commenting on the neighbourliness of some new acquaintances. "But when they get jammed up in cities.... something happens to people. They don't help each other, they don't know each other, They get arrogant. They forget they're animals that have to share the world with other animals. They get to be like a cancer."

Cameron suits the action to the word by having Peter's brother Wally, who's remained in business in New York, "sell out" to an international thug and die horribly following a deep dive to salvage uranium from a sunken ship. Clean-living Peter, on the other hand, who fled to the quiet life in Nova Scotia, manages to solve the mystery, stay alive and win first prize (his brother's wife) into the bargain. The moral is somewhat diluted, however, by the plain fact that it is Peter's street wisdom and army training which save his life on two accasions.

Dragon Lady is distinguished by some fine descriptive writing when Peter sails his small schooner in search of Wally and finds a storm, and Cameron's wit and controversial opinions are a welcome bonus in a novel of this sort. His ear for Maritime speech also enriches the novel, which is a better than average thriller with one main flaw: the action is not fast enough to keep the reader from asking awkward questions about the mechanics of the plot. As a first novel, though, it's a promising debut.

Hubert Evans' *O Time In Your Flight* is an extraordinary story by an extraordinary man who is gifted with what appears to be total recall. Evans' protagonist is nine-year-old Gilbert Egan, who sees all, knows some, and tells all in a relentless, no-details-spared, faintly pouting style.

Gilbert's chief trial is his school-teacher father, who's strict, undemonstrative, absorbed in his studies and waxes his moustache like a "dude." Gilbert's portrait of his father is one of the attractions of this novel, for its depth of understanding grows with Gilbert. And who could forget Gilbert's mother in rubbers and a bathing cap, huddled on his bed during a thunderstorm because her own brass bed "attracted electricity"?

O Time In Your Flight contains a wealth of historic household and community detail surrounding life in small-town Ontario at the time of the Boer War. Gilbert's world is ordered, self-sufficient, close to God and nature and sometimes confining. Though he longs to run away from home to join the Indians, Gilbert's place in his community is already established at the age of nine. No wonder one of his favourite Bible stories is the story of the Prodigal Son: "His father spotted him coming over the hill, ran to meet him, fell on his neck, got right up and kissed him."

Honour Your Partner is the third volume in the Plum Bluff trilogy by Helen Levi of Glenboro, Manitoba. Slightly darker in tone than either *A Small Informal Dance* or *Tangle Your Web and Dosey-Do* (the first two volumes), *Honour Your Partner* centres on the relationships of retired Anglican bishop William Giss and his wife Marion with their two daughters, Catherine and Shirley.

Author Levi follows the Jane Austen pattern by reuniting one daughter with her husband and marrying off the other, all the while viewing the proceedings through the filtering lens of irony. (" 'I don't think you heard a word I was saying'," complains Catherine. "Marion felt ashamed of herself. She had no right to concentrate her attention upon her absent daughter while her present one was also trying to drive her crazy.")

Marion Giss's situation bears a fleeting resemblance to that of the long-suffering heroine of Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*, for "she knew that while William Giss would always be loyal and loving, he would never be exciting or amusing, and she was condemned to boredom and annoyance for the rest of her life." However, there is none of the grinding poverty that imprisoned the Bentleys and Marion is too busy to brood for long. In Helen Levi's prairie community of Plum Bluff, as in Hubert Evans' small-town Ontario, there is a place for everyone. "Country people are the last democrats," observes Marion. "It doesn't matter whether or not you have money; what matters is whether or not you are a good person."

Helen Levi is quick to balance this rose-coloured view with the observation that "what does matter is what family you belong to," but there's no doubt that her own sympathies, like Austen's, are solidly middle-class. Because of this, and because her style is charming, Levi's novels are in danger of being dismissed as trivial. Rather, they should be classed with the Salterton novels of Robertson Davies as the entertaining products of a keen mind, a sharp eye and a ready wit.

Shore Lines, a first novel by magazine journalist Roy MacGregor, is that familiar worthy, a good try that tries too hard. MacGregor's research for the novel began in 1973. His attempts to unravel the mystery of Tom Thomson's death are mirrored in the actions of his protagonist, Eleanor Philpott. Eleanor is a 43-year-old divorcee who works at Eaton's. She goes to a psychiatrist, cries a lot and regards

Marilyn Monroe as a kindred spirit. On learning that she was an adopted baby, Eleanor traces enough of her origins to suspect that her father may have been Tom Thomson. She drives to Vernon, the small town where the woman who was Thomson's fiancée at the time of his death (and is, presumably, Eleanor's mother) still resides. She asks questions and burrows through newspaper files until enough evidence is accumulated to satisfy her. Freed at last, she drops the psychiatrist, renounces Eaton's and presumably finds a happier actress to regard as a kindred spirit.

The central question, however, remains unanswered, which may explain why the author chose to write this awkward novel instead of a documentary work more suited to his talents. MacGregor is most successful in his characterization of Russell Pemberton, an elderly bachelor who resents Eleanor's intrusions and typical city ways: "Russell had come to the opinion over the last ten years that city people were empty inside." So, ultimately, is this novel.

James Houston's *Spirit Wrestler* is a decided change of pace, though it, too, seeks to explain a mystery that approaches myth. "The unresolved seed of this story has haunted me for almost 30 years" writes Houston in an afterword, adding cryptically, "The true meaning . . . I leave to my readers, and wish them God's good help in their solution."

Spirit Wrestler is an autobiographical narrative as told by Shoona, a shaman who becomes an outcast when too many disasters are imputed to his presence. His path crosses that of Kayaker, a strange and obsessed white man whose actions spring from Houston's contemplation of that "unresolved seed."

The strength of this novel lies in Houston's intimate knowledge of the people of Baffin Island and their environment. *Spirit Wrestler* contains descriptions of a caribou hunt, of kayak construction and lore, of shamanism and of the north that are worthy in themselves, and he has peopled his story with an engaging collection of characters. Like Silver Donald Cameron, he is so enamoured of his story's setting that he occasionally allows the drama to idle in neutral while he investigates some cultural *cul de sac* on foot, but overall *Spirit Wrestler* leaves the impression of a well-oiled machine that is destined to arrive. Even the inconclusive ending does not remove this impression, for Houston has created such a convincing *milieu* that the reader should have little difficulty in imagining an appropriate solution.

Nowhere is the sense of community more evident than in this last of the five novels, for the closer men are to their land the more they appear to appreciate the kind of sustenance which only membership in a human community can provide. Shoona the outcast knows full well what he has lost, just as Peter Landry the draft dodger understands what, in his new home in a Nova Scotia backwater, he has found.

PAT BARCLAY

POETIC GIFTS

FRANCIS SPARSHOTT, *The Rainy Hills: verses after a Japanese fashion.* Privately printed, $5.95.

DOUGLAS LOCHHEAD, *High Marsh Road.* Anson-Cartwright Editions, $8.95.

I DOUBT THAT THE HAIKU was ever intended to be the vehicle for an entire book of poems, and yet that is more or less what Francis Sparshott offers in *The Rainy Hills: verses after a Japanese fashion.* A clever haiku (and here I'm talking about haiku originally written in English) stands out in a crowd of longer poems like the petals on a wet, black bough. But a proliferation of haiku strikes me as sheer laziness: the poet doesn't

want to be bothered developing an idea beyond 17 syllables.

Sparshott's six-page preface offers a rationale for his writing of haiku (3 lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables), tanka (5 lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 and 7 syllables), and renga ("a chain of haiku alternating with heptasyllabic couplets such as complete a tanka"). Ideally, says Sparshott, the haiku should be "almost a syllogism of feeling." The first line presents a situation, the second line modifies that situation by the introduction of a new character or event, and the third line expresses the consequences of this modification. What results may be a particularly vivid image, a striking metaphor, or even a highly-compressed worldview. My favourite in this regard is a haiku by Ryota, translated by Harold G. Henderson:

> Oh, the wide world's ways!
> Cherry blossoms left unwatched
> even for three days!

It is this kind of metaphoric impact that haiku strives for, and despite the great detail that Sparshott goes into in distinguishing between English and Japanese metrics, it is unlikely that the average reader will be more concerned with metrical regularity than with the overall meaning or experience of the poem. Sparshott seems to be aware that his poems lack vitality, but he tries to blame this fault on his audience and his religion rather than on his poetic debility: "Lacking a community of like-minded persons and a relevant religious tradition to steady my mind, I have let my verses sometimes deviate from the right path into generality, unanchored reflection, obiter dicta and jests." Or, put plainly, the weak:

> Seven syllables
> takes five syllables to write
> five syllables four

the trivial:

> Unlike men elsewhere
> Canadians remember
> John A. Macdonald

and the banal:

> Trains run in tunnels
> standing or seated we wait
> all look straight ahead

On the whole, the tanka are better than the haiku, and occasionally approach, if they don't actually cross, the borders of wit:

> Fragrance you tell me
> resides not in the blossom
> but in the nostril
> Well then I will smell flowers
> you are free to smell noses

As might be expected, there are many poems here that explore the beauty of nature, but the contrast between nature's spontaneity and man's repressive influence is not handled with any insight or originality:

> The Falls carve their track
> backward through crumbling limestone
> men shut off the flow

At one point, Sparshott avers that the strength of haiku is demonstrated by the fact that "a driver can write one down / while waiting for a stoplight." No doubt many people compose poems at equally mundane moments, but they have the good sense not to publish them.

By contrast, Douglas Lochhead's *High Marsh Road* is a book that I read — and re-read — with pleasure. In diary form, the work records Lochhead's experience of New Brunswick's Tantramar Marshes from September 1 to December 31. Though he does not shrink from celebrating the beauty of the landscape made famous by Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, Lochhead's real concern is with the ambivalent relationship of man and nature, and the poet's role in mediating between them:

> I move with the harrier. the mole
> is my nestling lover. roots I trace
> and cover myself with the green

and brown rot. what face to see,
to write down? each feature a
mockery. a saint unfolds. there
is a wild marriage of detail. who
will arrange it? it is my doing

The world offers ciphers, and the poet strives to decode them as best he can:

the real round of the saying never forms,
but the poet is constantly working, moulding
it closer and closer to the truth

The order and pattern of life on the marsh is so pervasively felt that the more personal parts of the diary seem oddly out of place. Many of the entries are weighed down by the burden of fears, doubts and frustrations in the author's relationships with other people, and the reader has no little difficulty in making sense of what's going on:

the continual measuring. wishing for
otherwise. the great game of 'if'. no,
it could not be me but Harry. the hands
of the world close on all of us into
fists and we are nut shells

Much more precise is Lochhead's grasp of the continuity of experience — historical and geographical — that he shares with other writers and artists inspired by the marsh:

the total glimpse of it as Roberts
took to Tantramar. using his telescope
his eye revisited. now I search the
same dykes for details of shore-birds.
the weirs hold straggler ducks. it is
good to have such footsteps

Lochhead has two poetic gifts: the ability to describe nature with great precision and the insight to discern the human meaning in that description. When he attempts to explore psychological problems, he becomes wordy and diffuse, wasting words to explain silence, but when he gives us the vehicle of the poem without its emotional training-wheels, we travel the High Marsh Road with the best of guides.

MICHAEL DARLING

TWICE AS NATURAL

MATT COHEN, *Flowers of Darkness*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

THERE ARE TIMES IN THE HISTORY of the arts when the preoccupations of writers and painters seem far apart and it is difficult to make any comparisons between them. But at other times one can find analogies and resemblances which point to a unity of consciousness among arts that, in terms of the senses through which they work, are entirely different. For literature, though the eyes read it on the page, is really codified sound, and visual only in so far as it sets out to evoke images in the mind's eye.

Yet the matter of the mind's eye is important, for, to go a little further, the times when one senses a unity embracing the pictorial and the literary arts of a period are those when literature is especially visual in its creation of images and therefore little inclined to resort to abstract verbalization, while the visual arts have also turned away from abstraction and extreme formalism to assume a role of quasi-poetic suggestiveness linked to a high degree of figurative representation.

Such times are often interesting and vital culturally: consider the great period in France, between the revolution of 1848 and the Commune of 1870, when the poet Baudelaire wrote so understandingly on the melodramatic paintings of Delacroix. His understanding mirrored a pattern of *correspondences* — to use his own word — that linked the more exotic poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal* with the multichromatic orientalist visions of Delacroix's paintings and, one step removed, with the illuminated realism of Flaubert's rendering of a half-known past, *Salammbo*. Tonally, these works echo one to the other; the harmony is rarely false.

It seems to me that in Canada today we are going through a similar period. Many of our most interesting painters —

Alex Colville, Christopher Pratt, Ivan Eyre, Tom Forrestal, the late Jack Chambers — have been working through various forms of high realism, in which the technique is mimetic — a quasi-photographic representation of actuality — but the tone is heightened to that of magic illumination and the images are arranged in combinations impossible in real life. Since few — if any — of these artists depend on dreams to provide their subject matter, one cannot identify their work with Surrealism, which was a historic movement with limited aims. But certainly Herbert Read's wider term of superrealism, suggesting a magnified awareness of reality, could be used to describe them.

At the same time, many of our novelists have been combining a heightened verisimilitude in description, which presents the physical world with preternatural clarity, with a tendency to create larger-than-life figures caught in situations that resemble those of myth rather than of real life. One finds such larger-than-life figures appearing as early as Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John* in 1939, and repeated later in the characters of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, in the grotesques of Mordecai Richler's *Cocksure*, in the synthetic beings of *Beautiful Losers*, in the exuberant hollow men of Robert Kroetsch's novels. But the placing of this kind of figure in a setting of high realism has perhaps best been done by Matt Cohen in his novels and stories of the rural hinterland of Kingston, centred largely on the little stone town of Salem, which is the scene of his latest fiction, now reviewed, *Flowers of Darkness*. (*Flowers of Darkness: Les Fleurs du Mal*; the inheritance is surely not accidental.)

Salem first appeared, a place down the road, in early Cohen stories about the drunken Frank brothers that are included in Cohen's collection, *Nightflights*. As a stone town built by Spaniards distantly linked with Columbus (and thus laterally linked with Cohen's *Columbus and the Fat Lady*) it was the destination and refuge for Theodore Beam at the end of his alarming journey in Cohen's futurist novel of civil strife in Canada, *The Colours of War*. It was the background to the Bacchic idyll of Upper Canadian rural life, *The Sweet Second Summer of Kitty Malone*.

Now, in *Flowers of Darkness*, Salem moves into full centre, with its perfect stone façades providing the theatrical backdrop for the characters to move around, large as life and twice as natural. Essentially what is acted out is a drama of sin and retribution, with destiny arranged as inexorably as it ever was in the plays of Aeschlylus or Sophocles.

Flowers of Darkness picks up from *The Colours of War* in the sense that the old stone church outside Salem where Theodore Beam took refuge in the earlier novel is the place where the fatal action of *Flowers* begins, where the grocer George Mandowski looks through the window and witnesses the seduction of jailbait Nellie Tillson by the Reverend Gordon Finch of the Church of the New Age. From this incident both the dark comedy and the eventual Gothic tragedy of the novel, which are almost interchangeable, take their courses.

This is not really the disorderly war-shadowed Salem of the Beams, though Theodore's father Jacob appears as a walkon character, as does Pat Frank from *The Sweet Second Summer of Kitty Malone*. A new cast is dominant: the amorous Reverend Finch and his beautiful arthritis-crippled wife Maureen; George Mandowski; and Annabelle and Allen Jamieson, a young lawyer and his ceramicist wife who have gone to earth in Salem until the memory of his legal improprieties can fade in Ottawa.

The images of Salem in *Flowers of Darkness* are dual, and reflect the divi-

sion in the hearts of the people. The Jamiesons see it as a place of order where one can slow into a surer rhythm of life. But behind its neat stone façades Salem seethes with hatred and intrigue. It seems to be divided between God's realm, represented by Finch's church, and the devil's realm, represented by the raffish hotel, but the appearance is deceptive, for the same forces of desire impel both realms, and from such roots the flowers of darkness spring.

Similarly the orders which the characters try to create are undermined by their own natures. Annabelle, thinking of God who "made Adam out of clay," starts to create a great ceramic mosaic filled with figures representing Salem people, and claims that it will depict "the human condition, the agony and the ecstacy ... of mankind," while Finch's wife Maureen muses that her husband "in his own twisted way" has "taken the world around it and squeezed it until it fitted the shape of his soul."

But in each case the attempt to dominate leads to an enslavement. Finch sees his amorous life as something he is condemned to, and Annabelle, for all her urban self-assurance, seems to be serving a sentence when she becomes Finch's lover. Yet the real tragedy of the novel evades this central passionate relationship, which in the end is revealed as almost an irrelevance, an intrusion of the city world into Salem's own turbid existence.

Made pregnant in the old church, meek Nellie Tillson becomes the centre of the catastrophe. Mandowski and Finch's other enemies seek to destroy him by persuading her to bring a paternity suit against him. Finch thinks he has turned the tables on them when he preaches a passionate sermon confessing his sins and the congregation hysterically shouts forgiveness. But Maureen — the white-skinned, red-haired beauty who once loved horses — has a pride which cannot endure such public humiliation. She borrows a revolver from Mandowski, kills Finch, then Mandowski, then herself. Annabelle, the survivor, is left to discover that the only refuges are private ones, deep in the individual consciousness.

In one way all this is very melodramatic, and doubtless meant to be so. The characters, and the chiaroscuro of high lights and deep shadows, remind one often of Faulkner, Caldwell and other Southern novelists, but Cohen is indulging in high parody rather than imitation. And of the two things that strike one most about *Flowers of Darkness,* the first is the luminous clarity of description; one sees Salem and its people with the vivid and detailed sharpness of pre-Raphaelite art. But just as in pre-Raphaelite painting one gets the sense that the people represented are entranced in some strange vision world, so in *Flowers of Darkness* the characters seem to move, like the figures in an Aeschylus tragedy, along some dark road of the inevitable. They are not really free beings. They are shaped to their fates like Annabelle's clay puppets. And they destroy themselves because they remain the same. As characters they do not grow; at most they are progressively revealed to us as the novel proceeds. And so they are larger than life yet in some pathetic way less than human.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

A SEEKING VOICE

MICHAEL CARIN, *Five Hundred Keys.* Deneau and Greenberg.

ROGER MITTON, *Master and Son.* Robert Hale.

IN LIFE AS IN FICTION, the sea exerts a powerful spell over our imaginations. It offers, perennially, the opportunity to combine adventure yarns with reflective and philosophic statements about the human condition. Roger Mitton and

Michael Carin, at the beginning of their writing careers, are fully aware of the possibilities in an ocean setting. Both novels are better than "promising." Carin's is the better of the two.

Michael Carin, age twenty-two, is a graduate of McGill University, a Montrealer now working on his second novel. His age has exercised a major influence on his material. His generation's character and style becomes the "second cargo" of the Newfoundland fishing boat which three young men attempt to take from Casablanca to Happy Adventure, Newfoundland, loaded with five hundred pounds of Moroccan hashish.

Set primarily in the summer of 1972, in Montreal and the Atlantic ocean, the novel spans 1968 to 1972, years when the protagonists were undergraduates at McGill. Its early chapters depict the radical Left of the late sixties, the retrenchment and political apathy of the early seventies, and the drug scene of the times. The sea chapters place personalities and philosophies in a vise of fate, under a relentless searchlight. Carin attempts more than he is yet capable of fulfilling. His vision is still immature, but his craftsmanship is extremely competent and his narrative flow admirable.

Part of the fascination of *Five Hundred Keys* lies in the triumvirate of central characters, an Irishman and two Jews. Most flamboyant of the three is Abraham David, captain of the illegal venture and acknowledged political leader of the student radicals. The thirty-year-old American draft-dodger plays Ahab to the narrator's Ishmael. Abraham David has flaming red hair, a hawk nose, and two religions: politics and Orthodox Judaism. He believes that life is ultimately a mental experience; that everything happens for the best; and that "the endurance of certain kinds of hardship and struggle are conducive to the highest and richest and most joyful consciousness."

The sceptical, relatively conservative voice of Richard Kaplyn provides a framework of normalcy. Richard is a reluctant conscript to the scheme to smuggle several million dollars' worth of hashish into Canada. Carin's tale is fast-paced and well structured. Half-page, italicized inserts between the regular chapters effect a double time scheme. In the inserts, the boat is out of control, drifting helplessly. In the main narrative, Richard pursues his life in Montreal and receives letters from the adventurers with whom he has invested his money but not yet his life. The two time schemes slowly converge, while the italicized portions become more philosophic: "Three stranded souls getting lower on internal fuel.... Let me now, while my strength is flowing, look back and try to understand the events that brought me here." He writes to a Montreal friend to fill time and "bequeath" it meaning.

That meaning remains evasive. Clearly, David's personal and political faiths are rejected as obsessions. Clearly, endurance is valuable, as is normalcy. The parameters of the latter are vague, even hedonistic. Yet Carin writes with suspense, and superb command of detail. His characters in their thirty-eight-foot "floating coffin" (a phrase Carin takes from Melville) are believable, and evocative.

Master and Son, Roger Mitton's second novel, is a more commercial work. Born in Cumbria and educated in Liverpool, Mitton has travelled extensively and now lives in Vancouver.

Set on a Norwegian freighter sailing from Ecuador through Jakarta and the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, *Master and Son* is an adventure story with psychological underpinnings. The narrator, messman Joey Paulsen, is a man afraid of standing out, of breaking the pattern: "it's no fun being different." His vocation as artist and his distaste for brothels set him apart. Interest centres on the

narrator and the captain, who befriends him. Hostilities between different crewmen build to a dramatic climax, a fight between the captain and the repairman, in which the captain is accidentally killed with his own knife.

Most of the characters harbour bitter memories: the captain, of a beloved first wife who committed suicide; Joey, of his wife's adultery, glimpsed through a window; and Ralf, son of the captain's first wife, of his father's neglect. Various mysterious happenings include the defacing of Joey's portrait of the captain, the locking of Ralf in the cold-storage room, and ambiguous references to trouble on Joey's last ship.

A homosexual affair between Joey and Ralf precipitates the tragic fight. Joey perceives the novel's theme, that "people who are close, who love each other, can also be distant, can be ignorant of each other's soul thoughts. . . ." After this epiphany, Joey lapses back into a narcissism which Mitton shapes ironically: hang onto yourself and your freedom, "give only what you needed to give and what you know you could get back."

The larger irony, and the book's strength, lies in the title and is revealed in the final scene between Joey and Ralf. *Like father like son*: in stage-managing his father's death, Ralf is obeying one of his father's rules, to follow through on a decision once it has been made. He is as vengeful as his father (who sought to kill his wife's lover), and as manipulative. Joey resents being used by Ralf, yet is equally capable of manipulating *his* lovers: master and disciple play out the vicious chain.

The current publishing crisis calls for an emphasis on action, adventure and sex. These novels pass muster. Both depict male worlds, and machismo patterns of sex. Yet both are also more than adventure tales.

Michael Carin and Roger Mitton are serious writers who probe contemporary values and mores with a healthy scepticism and at least a modicum of idealism. Theirs is (in Carin's phrase) "a seeking voice." But Canada's *Moby Dick* has yet to be written.

PATRICIA MORLEY

GOODY FLAT FOOT

LEO SIMPSON, *Kowalski's Last Chance.* Clarke Irwin, $12.95.

A FRIEND OF OURS who is a bookseller says she recently received a warning letter from a group of leprechauns living in New York. Mini-People Incorporated is very upset about Leo Simpson's new novel *Kowalski's Last Chance*, which exposes the infiltration of Bradfarrow, Ontario, by legions of little people blown almost life size by their North American diet of

KFC and Hostess Twinkies. Soon after, she said, Clarke Irwin sent a rebuttal claiming the book is just fiction, no names changed, and a real belly masher to boot.

A cartoon it is, with the real Irish mafia translating the last frontier to bog, but hardly the stuff of abdominal disorder. There is too much to satirize here: police, politics, megabusiness, bigotry and social disorder, and there is no time to sharpen or savour the sting. In *Kowalski's Last Chance*, to stretch Simpson's own arcadian metaphor, the author has chewed off too much cud. He has made Bradfarrow the microcosm of North American society and the human potpourri *in flagrante* representative of every deviance from the neo-nazism of the sixties to junk food-ism. This fast morality works on the television soaps but not on the printed page. For one thing, the soaps are free, at least on the surface. The shocking price we pay for the printed page these days makes anything short of perfection a downright rip-off.

Good satire needs flesh. If there had been time to make Kowalski and his cohorts real, the appropriate emotional responses would have been evoked. The idiom comes right off Kowalski's favourite medium, TV, and good lines sometimes materialize like Kojak's lollipops, but they merely tease, leaving the real moral hunger unsatisfied. We learn very little about Kowalski, except that he is the perfect gentle knight. It might have been fun to learn that this sentimental fool got sodding drunk watching his favourite programs, littering the floor with beer cans his ancient aunties might have cut their feet on while trudging barefoot to the biffy.

Kowalski, the good cop, has stuffed his holster with kleenex, giving us an attractive alternative to TV violence. Unarmed, he makes his way to the chapel perilous, survives his trial and is rewarded with his long desired sheep farm by a multinational of leprechauns and fairies.

The leprechauns control everything and they are a benign force on the tiny universe, where politics and sex and police corruption are getting out of hand. Kowalski has intuition. He can tell the difference between good and evil, thus he is rewarded. The novel is a cheerful synopsis of rath turned fruitful bog, a realization of the impulse to green America in the sixties: paradise is resurrected out of the ashes of a corrupt urban suburb, the rath of fairy lore. (A rath, by the way, is a pre-historic hill-fort.) It is a very Irish tale. What Simpson has failed to give us is the measure of Irish pain, which is essential to effective comedy.

Where I went to school, a bog was the place you went when you had to. Simpson's bog is an anachronism, the restoration of pastoral innocence, replacement of social disorder with a gentler feudal order. It is the leprechauns who mastermind the return of plutocratic gardens, managed and manicured by non-protestants, to pastureland in the care of Kowalski and the reformed Constable Ryan. Sheep farming is a noble and gentle art, a jolly dream, and some of the realities are arcadian, too. However, Ryan, the amoral aryan youth, is dropped in to remind us that the jungle can insinuate itself anywhere, even in bogs, even in communes, if there are any left.

The novel is a romance, real cowboy stuff with good guys and bad guys and the proper element of magic provided by the fairy folk. In a small town cesspool of racism and opportunism, Kowalski is the dark knight, the polack you know has what it takes in addition to knightly virtues, to remove the sting from the wasps who control everything in Bradfarrow before the arrival of the smallish fifth column.

The stuff of art is the disparity between

idea and reality. The leprechauns have the right vision:

> The thought of building heaven on earth isn't in our minds, but take the auto away and the world breaks down into the ancient pattern again, it was a terrific pattern, agricultural and artisan communities. I see your objection, somebody would have to milk the cows, but darn it think of the fresh air. Or how about seeing hills again, under those concrete snail tracks we have all over the landscape, drinking from clear streams. Detroit won it all, no question about that ... Still, we can turn the game around.

But we are quickly reminded that we are being manipulated and that idealism is the acne of the soul, the endemic condition of youth. Perhaps the little people are children after all, glorious and tyrannical in their optimism, lacking the experience to turn joy into art.

This is the weakness of *Kowalski's Last Chance* — no bitter ashes of experience, the leaven in those terrible novels of that strange kind of Irishman J. P. Donleavy. While reading Simpson's novel, I must admit I was picking through a biography of Wallis and David. I turned to the novel in relief; but I think Kowalski is a bit too good to be true.

LINDA ROGERS

TWO POETS

DIANA HAYES, *Moving Inland.* Fiddlehead.

R. W. FULFORD, *Powerland Minds.* Fiddlehead.

LIKE MOST Fiddlehead Books, Diana extremely valuable outlet for poets, Diana Hayes' *Moving Inland* is reasonably well-designed, with a readable, competently printed text. However, the black and white cover design for this volume is visually drab and unappealing and my copy

of *Moving Inland* was poorly glued and required a rubber band to keep the loose pages from falling out.

The poems deserve better. There is a brave, delicate, sometimes tentative, earnest, careful — too careful? — quality to Diana Hayes' mostly lyrical poems. *Moving Inland* is a collection of 28 poems most of which, as the titles suggest ("Three Days: Saltspring Island," "Pigeon on East Pender Street," "Chant of the Cedar Tree," "Deciding On Ross Bay — Vancouver Island") are rooted in the author's West Coast experience.

"Three Days: Salt Spring Island" evokes Fulford Harbour, the quality of place and even successfully conveys a particular mood. However, the relationship described, one involving a barely defined "you" and a more defined "I," is central to the full success of the poem. Moving, gentle and tender as the poem is, it falters because of Ms. Hayes' reluctance or inability to develop her characters more fully.

"Sestina For Superior, after the Edmund Fitzgerald," is interesting for the form and tightly controlled music. But "Sestina For Superior" has a dry, lifeless quality. It reads and sounds — when read aloud — like a classroom exercise.

> Is it that we must be alone?
> Is it that the winds must writhe today?
> I know I have forgotten the path home
> Many times . . .

For a sestina, it is surprisingly unrhythmical and this is especially startling given the lyricism and delicacy one feels in other poems by Diana Hayes.

There is a certain mystery and elusive beauty to the opening of "Cormorant With Wings on Fire":

> I walked out in the early light
> along St. Mary's edge,
> the mist rising
> across the dawn-still water.

or lines like these from Diana Hayes' "The Return":

> you sank beneath
> the gulf's angry current.
>
> I resurrect you —
>
> my hands
> sifting sand
> become an hourglass
> for your return

On the whole, this is a moving, deeply felt and varied (in terms of forms, voice and style) first collection. At her best, Diana Hayes has a fine lyrical talent and what is most striking in *Moving Inland* is her ongoing search for her own true centre and the attempt — and the ability, too, in some of these poems — to write and sing from that centre.

* * *

Fulford's "Capone Poems," which make up one half of *Powerland Minds*, open:

> Saluto
> to death
> the feast
> for death.
> Friends, dinner's
> done and bullets
> sink like a
> harpoon.
>
> Bastards!

There is a certain driving energy here that leads the reader on. The "Capone Poems" have a quality of pop violence. They exaggerate and evoke, as does the movie "Some Like It Hot," the larger and, in some cases, zanier-than-life images of that not precisely innocent period in American history. The Capone poems, as the title suggests, are about Prohibition, gangsters, revenge, sex, pimps, murderers and American history.

This 27-page free-form poem is loosely organized and has a number of prose passages. Here and there Fulford makes a certain wry observation:

Generally speaking, gangsters are very generous people about things that don't count.

Born and raised in Chicago, I have my own impressions of Al Capone — part of that City's proud mythology — and am naturally intrigued with Fulford's mostly sombre, documentary treatment and account of the reign of Al Capone. Unusual material for the Fiddlehead series.

The poet's treatment involves a combination of somewhat impressionistic narrative,

The meat hand pulls
trigger in the Adonis
Social Club basement.
Again again again
bottles explode in
a blood glass.
Perfect, the aim
leaves the stench
for cool harlot night.

plus first-person biography:

I was bartender and bouncer when Frank Galluccio got me. Three scars, all on the left: four inches, two and a half, another the same. See? I powder my face like a puffball. Frank's sister was the cause. Bitch! ... Frank works for me now.

Fulford advances his action sometimes with a briskly paced series of stark images as in a newsreel.

1919 — Chicago welcomes Capone.
New vice for new time.
Big Jim gone soft ...

The presentation is stark and functional. The "Capone Poems" are pop-newsreel-documentary with a mean, sardonic cartoon flavour. Chicago-born, I say this as one who has written for years out of the conviction that there *is* poetry in material of the kind *Powerland Minds* deals with. But Fulford is missing something. His tonal range is limited. He writes out of a kind of tunnel-vision. The "Capone Poems" are not placed in a larger context, though there are references for example to Viet Nam:

But even then
those young
were practising
for Viet Nam

But it seems to me that a poem dealing with history and a subject as rich and "charged" as this, a pop-epic in a sense, a meditation on violence and power and greed, on insane and random killing, on the ultimate business ethic and survival of the meanest and greediest and most organized — survival that depends for gangsters too on good bookkeeping and reliable accountants — that Fulford, for all his skill and daring, might have gone further. I admire the poem, am fascinated by it, but curious, too, why it isn't funnier. Fulford, it strikes me, hasn't picked up on that sense of the absurd, the delight in contradiction that underlies — fellow Canadians, you may not like this — an American discussion of the same material. If there is zany poetry in that old classic, "Some Like It Hot," why so limited a tonal range here?

Yet Fulford is amazing. What a crazy poem!

Fulford's "South Pole Poems" are open, accessible and eminently readable — and far more musical than the "Capone Poems."

The water is copper
and saffron for
ice that pushes
men below
the sea.

All day we lay in
the pack like
seals ...

Certainly an odd combination (Al Capone and Beardmore Glacier) to put between the covers of one book.

ROBERT SWARD

MOWAT AT WAR

FARLEY MOWAT, *And No Birds Sang*. McClelland & Stewart.

READERS OF *And No Birds Sang* who were active participants in the 1939-45 war cannot fail to be impressed by Mowat's brief account of his own experiences in it. At the same time they may feel that many of the events which he portrays so graphically might better have been forgotten. They bring back too many unpleasant memories. Those who had no association with the conflict may think of the book only as a further example of the futility of war, but they will be fascinated by its story and even excited by it, for it is one of the best accounts of part of the war in Italy by one who has personally felt the fears and terrors of conflict.

As a very young man the author joined the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment when he found that he could not get into the Air Force. This regiment, affectionately known as the Plough Jockeys, came to have a very fine reputation. Mowat himself wrote a very commendable historical account of the Regiment in 1955. He was encouraged in the first instance to join this branch of the army by his father who gloried in the Infantry as the "Queen of Battle." The author's experiences and feelings up to and after he gained the King's Commission and up to the end of 1943 are portrayed in the story in much detail but not without grim humour. "I believed," he says, "that every healthy young man was duty-bound to take up arms against the Fascist plague." This same opinion was likely the thought which prompted some thousands of others to enlist in His Majesty's Service.

And so he set out, the modern knight, to fight the battle against oppression and to make the world safe for democracy. "Dulce et Decorum est, Pro Patria Mori." In the early years of the war he became a reinforcement officer to the Canadian Army and eventually joined his regiment as a lieutenant. Reinforcement officers were there to take the place of those invalided out or killed and their tenure was usually short once action began.

In his story he traces the long series of events leading up to the landing on the beach of Sicily on July 10, 1943. He tells about the training camps, the battle drill schools, and the long forced training marches. He talks about his senior officers with little admiration, about the loss of his virginity to a land Army girl by the name of Phillipa, about the preparations in England for the battle yet to come — but always he romantically clings to his vision of the great cause. He writes to a girl in Canada: "we are about to quit the play acting and begin living the role worked and prepared for so long." It is only when he gets on board ship on the way to the landing in Sicily that he feels "a jagged shiver of self-doubt . . . between my ribs." And a little later, "although I had just seen the first of my comrades die I had not yet seen the fact of death: and so was fearless still."

A few days later, after the stormy landing and the long marches in the brutal heat without water, some disillusionment begins: "A sudden flaming rage against my father for having inveigled me into the clutches of the Infantry — the Queen of Battle." And Montgomery's unit prompts him to write: "It was not God who came, it was his self-appointed deputy — General Bernard Montgomery."

And so he goes on through the torturous days and nights up the hills and mountains of Italy. More and more the conflict dismays him. "The desire for action which had been my ruling passion since enlistment had collapsed like a pricked balloon — to be replaced by a swelling sense of dread."

At Assoro "that unforgettable fortress" the author plays a conspicuous part in the

battle but the moaning minnies (Nebelwerfers) bombardment shakes him greatly and his previous exhilaration disappears. And yet he comments that "it was only one more step towards spiritual exile and again the regiment grew strong because of it: becoming more and more the living home." He now finds himself in a new job in command of the Intelligence Section. Here he no longer leads a platoon in action but has continually to make recess and to liaise with adjoining units. Indeed the tasks which he was apparently required to do would seem to be well beyond the normal duties of an I.O. His commander, Tweedsmuir, is wounded, and is succeeded by Lt.-Col. Kennedy. (In spite of this officer's many brave exploits the author thinks little of him. It is noteworthy that in his historical account of the Regiment he extols his colleagues but in this personal history he continually downgrades them.) He himself frequently gets lost and at one time succeeds in getting the whole battalion lost. At times his superior officers must have been almost driven out of their minds by the erratic behaviour of Squib (the author) and his intelligence platoon. His gradual disillusionment with the whole undertaking is accompanied by an ever increasing hatred of the "brass" and of the army and of the war itself. He writes a letter home in which he says, "I was alone ... relentlessly alone in a world I never knew." Christmas Eve on the outskirts of Ortona was the ultimate: "Black nauseous dread was the burden of that livid night."

The story is remarkable in a number of ways. First of all it is astonishing that thirty-three years later he can remember and describe so vividly those events. He speaks of his journal and his letters home to Canada. As censorship was normally quite severe it is a little difficult to see how these were managed but then maybe the regulations were not followed so seriously by the Plough Jockeys. In any event those who know can vouch for the accuracy of the events and conditions.

Secondly it is almost incredible that the author was able to survive unscathed for so long. Reinforcement officers, particularly junior officers, did not last very long as a rule. The fact that he was not in a rifle company for much of the time later on may have helped somewhat, but as the I.O. he was under constant fire and his survival seems almost incredible — no wounds, no jaundice, no malaria, only a touch of dysentery.

Thirdly it is remarkable that a young man who was apparently widely read — he quotes some of the First World War poets: Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Rupert Brooke — could have had such naive notions about what war was all about. The title of his book is most appropriate — but an even more appropriate one might have been "A Romantic Goes to War." For many months he seems astonished to find that people are actually maimed and killed in conflict.

Fourthly, he still appears in 1979 to think that the officers of his particular regiment and indeed almost all whom he served under were somewhat less than what they should have been. His idealism today continues in spite of the fact that he must now have surely learned that this is an imperfect world and that war is always chaos and destruction. Perhaps this same idealism appears in some of his other books. In *Never Cry Wolf* his superiors and his organization are criticized severely. In *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be* all humans seem to be of an inferior nature. Only in his serious *History of the Regiment* does he allow himself somewhat grudgingly to praise others.

And No Birds Sang is a powerful story, even though the narrative ends abruptly and without explanation after the battle of Ortona, almost six months after the landing on the Beach, but some months before the end of the Italian campaign.

Some readers have suggested that Mowat's book reads more like fiction than fact. But those who were there can bear witness that the events, the conditions, and the extreme difficulties are real.

JOHN FRANKLIN MCLEAN

LA RÉALITÉ QUÉBÉCOISE

JEAN-MARIE POUPART, *Le Champion de cinq heures moins dix*. Leméac, n.p.

JEAN-PAUL FILION, *Cap Tourmente*. Leméac, n.p.

JEAN-MARIE POUPART nous offre son journal de bord, véritable "scrapbook" (comme disait Barthes) qui suit le fil des jours et des événements, la plupart apparemment futiles. Il y consigne réflexions et informations variées sans ordre de préférence ni de valeur semble-t-il tout d'abord et la disposition de ce recueil serait donc uniquement dictée par les circonstances. Ce livre puise au quotidien et au banal son matériau brut que l'auteur nous rend dans un humeur à la fois grave et léger, d'où le sous-titre "traduit du goguenard."

Poupart sait jouer avec et sur les mots et tirer les effets de ses goguenardises. Une telle entreprise constitue bien à elle seule une gageure car qui peut prétendre prendre la vie comme une partie de tennis ou de squash, quel écrivain peut prétendre qu'il pourra 'renvoyer la balle' sans défaillir et sortir "champion," c'est-à-dire indemne de la lutte avec le banal comme nous l'indiquent le titre et la couverture?

Bien sûr, on l'a vite compris, aucune partie, quel que soit le jeu, ne se gagne sans être calculée et pensée et tout dans ce texte obéit à l'organisation du carnet intime. Rien de gratuit en somme, l'écrivain est au travail. Des remarques les plus triviales et les plus insipides aux réflexions sur les artistes, les écrivains, les critiques, Poupart n'en joue pas seulement il s'en joue, rien n'échappe à sa plume. D'ailleurs s'il juge ce n'est jamais méchamment mais bien plutôt sainement; subtile il l'est avec fraîcheur, jamais de façon mesquine et de sa plume il s'en sert en effet comme d'une raquette, avec vigueur. De plus, s'il juge c'est aussi pour se juger lui-même d'une manière continuelle et ce journal intime n'est au fond qu'un prétexte qui lui permet de réfléchir sur sa fonction d'écrivain et sur son écriture. L'épigraphe en est témoin et plusieurs fois l'auteur revient sur ce sujet. Ce qu'il aimerait c'est "écrire comme le chien secoue ses puces," "pouvoir ne pas [s]e retenir," en fait écrire sur tout et sans être arrêté par les restrictions conscientes et inconscientes, par les limites de la langue. Il souhaite, croyons-nous, une écriture qui ferait une grande part au ludique, c'est-à-dire à la libre association et c'est cela sans doute que tente son livre *Le Champion*. . . .

Son écriture se veut flot continu, déferlement, plus de barrières ni linguistiques ni psychologiques, et si l'auteur s'est rendu compte que la libre association n'est pas plus libre que n'importe quelle autre forme d'écriture, le trivial néanmoins, "ces déchets du quotidien," passe en effet le plus souvent la rampe, car un tel ouvrage réserve à son lecteur de nombreuses surprises; il croyait s'amuser, il rira mais il se surprendra aussi bien souvent en train de penser.

Les préoccupations de l'auteur sont des préoccupations d'écrivain plutôt que de Québécois et si la réalité québécoise réapparaît c'est parce que l'auteur vit au Québec et déambule dans les rues en regardant les gens, rien de moins, rien de plus. Rien non plus de spécifiquement québécois au niveau de la langue si ce ne sont les réflexions et les jeux de mots que l'auteur fait lui-même à partir de certaines expressions québécoises.

Le troisième roman de Jean-Paul Filion

est une belle lettre d'amour à Yo sa compagne qui depuis plus de dix ans partage sa vie, ses joies, ses réussites mais aussi ses tristesses, ses déceptions et ses angoisses celles de la création avec la solitude, l'isolement qu'elle exige, les contraintes qu'elle fait peser sur l'écrivain et ceux qui l'entourent. Se roman-lettre, cette chanson d'amour (puisqu'il ne datera aucune de ses lettres) avec ses refrains et ses redites, pourquoi l'écrit-il? — Yo est à ses côtés, leur amour n'a rien de platonique, ils ont un fils Mann qui fait leur joie. Il dit préférer le langage écrit, s'y sentir plus libre mais surtout après s'être libéré dans *Saint-André Avellin. Le premier côté du monde* du trop plein des émotions de son enfance, après avoir écrit les *Murs de Montréal* ce livre de délivrance, ce livre aussi qui effraya sa compagne, il est nécessaire qu'il fasse le point en se définissant par rapport à celle qui a assisté à cette délivrance tout en restant à l'écart et qu'il rassure, qu'il s'explique, à propos par exemple de cette mauvaise conscience qui s'éveille en lui dès qu'il ne noircit pas de papier et qui l'empêche de s'abandonner au plaisir de vivre et le conduit à l'hôpital. Mais surtout ce livre lui permet de vivre intensément le présent, d'entrer en lui, d'élargir sa vision du monde, d'agrandir sa maison. D'ailleurs immédiatement, par l'évocation de son quotidien, il parvient à nous faire partager son amour des êtres et des choses, à faire renaître en nous notre amour des êtres et des choses. En effet si J.-P. Filion n'innove pas il sait se faire suivre dans cette digression par sa sincérité, par sa simplicité, par tout ce qu'il sait évoquer d'amour, de chaleur humaine, parce qu'il la situe aussi sur fond tragique, le Cap Tourmente, parce qu'il sait être réaliste, l'amour charnel est évoqué avec son juste poids, sa plénitude et sa tendresse, aucune ombre, les corps sont beaux de leur âge et les gestes de leur jeunesse éternelle; mais la vie y est présente aussi avec sa fatigue plein les reins, le bois est rugueux, la pierre blesse, avec son ennui, la routine d'un travail mercenaire, pour boucler les fins de mois, les séances exténuantes du lancement de ses ouvrages. J.-P. Filion sait encore lier son bonheur familial et intime à d'autres bonheurs, à celui de Félix Leclerc, comme au Cap Tourmente l'amour et la sincérité s'y amarrent. Ce qui n'était qu'une digression, sans doute Filion était-il occupé à d'autres grandes choses, d'où l'hôpital, la maladie, est devenu l'essentiel, le banal, le personnel est devenu l'universel.

Par ce roman sans doute J.-P. Filion a-t-il aussi tenu cette promesse, cette lettre qu'il veut "longue, interminable," l'est, toute poésie échappe au temps. Et si *Cap Tourmente* lui avait permis de différer le moment de la solitude, car *Cap Tourmente* est aussi un carnet intime, il lui avait permis aussi de faire le plein d'amour et de tendresse.

DAVID F. ROGERS

PRIMER *vs.* PRINCE

SELWYN DEWDNEY, *The Hungry Time.* James Lorimer, $6.95.

BRUCE KIDD, *Who's a Soccer Player?* James Lorimer, $6.95.

RUSSELL HAZZARD, *It Scares Me but I Like It: Creating Poetry with Children.* Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $6.95.

CHRISTIE HARRIS, *The Trouble with Princesses.* McClelland & Stewart, $9.95.

MARIUS BARBEAU and MICHAEL HORNYANSKY, *The Golden Phoenix and Other Fairy Tales from Quebec.* Oxford, $4.50.

BOTH SELWYN DEWDNEY'S *The Hungry Time* and Bruce Kidd's *Who's a Soccer Player?* are texts in the James Lorimer "Kids in Canada" series. They are, the publisher announces, specifically designed "for children five and up." Though one certainly applauds any publisher who recognizes the uniqueness of this audience, even a cursory examination of these

two texts suggests that the actual result is not so laudable. Rather than responding imaginatively to the specific needs of the young reader, the publishers have chosen to reduce the children's book to a formulaic exercise — totally predictable in language, style and, unfortunately, even content. The texts offer extraordinarily limited vocabularies and virtually no variety in syntactical structures, thus providing no challenge whatsoever to the child confronting, for the first time, the wonders of language. Note, for example, this description in the Kidd text: "She was a big woman with big shoulders and a big face. She had a big head of hair. She had big feet. The only thing she didn't have was a big smile." Surely there must be some synonym for "big," even in the world of the five-year-old.

Canadian children's literature has always been somewhat dwarfed by the mammoth number of children's texts produced yearly in the United States. Despite this, Canadian texts have always possessed a certain dignity; in particular, they have been well written, challenging the child with new linguistic worlds rather than simply catering to existing ones. Thus the decision of major Canadian publishing firms to print texts like those in the "Kids in Canada" series is particularly disturbing because it is so clearly a step backward.

Predictably, perhaps, the two books from this series under review also respond to the need for more varied heroines in children's literature in an equally formulaic manner. Rather than creating truly realistic modern heroines, they simply retell a boy's adventure story, inserting a young girl into a traditionally masculine role. In this form, the heroines are difficult to accept as believable human beings. They do not become valid arguments for a more expansive view of the role of women in society. Instead they are simply boys dressed up as girls — they remind me, in fact, of those dolls which toy manufacturers produced in the early 1960's to answer the growing demand for Negro dolls. In all their wisdom, the manufacturers simply dyed white dolls black.

In *The Hungry Time*, the heroine is a Mississauga Indian girl named Morning Sky who saves her brother from an itinerant bear, thus winning the grudging promise from her father that he might some day take her on a real hunt. Despite the cultural improbability of a girl being taken on such a hunt, the story does provide the child with a reasonably good insight into Mississaugan society, largely through the excellent illustrations of Olena Kassian.

The answer to the question asked by Bruce Kidd's *Who's a Soccer Player?* is: anyone, but particularly little girls who don't think they are very good at sports. To be fair to Kidd, an internationally known athlete himself, this is not just a formulaic "little-girl-makes-good" sports story. Rather, it argues that one must realize, in sports, that winning isn't everything, a point Kidd has emphasized throughout his literary career. The real protagonist in his tale is not little Louise, the girl who makes the team, but her coach, June Kennedy, a monstrous woman frighteningly portrayed by illustrator Jerrard Smith as a modern Medusa. Ultimately June does learn true sportsmanship, of course, but only after her team teaches her a great deal about what should be important in children's sports: playing, not winning. It is most unfortunate that Kidd was forced to tell his tale within the constrictions of the "Kids in Canada" format.

Unlike the "Kids in Canada" books, Russell Hazzard's *It Scares Me but I Like It* seeks to expand rather than restrict the child's love of language, by providing an impressive exploration of the real value of poetry for and by the child. The sub-

title of the bok clearly announces its overall purpose: *Creating Poetry with Children*. In his text, Hazzard chronicles twenty-four actual poetry classes with young children at Counterpoint School in Ottawa, the sole purpose of which was to make the students aware of the joy that is inherent in all poetry — to fulfill, as Dennis Lee suggests in his excellent Foreword, "the impulse to tell the truth about being alive."

And it is difficult to argue with Hazzard's results. The children seem to learn to appreciate poetry and, more importantly, to compose poems that truly deserve examination in their own right. One should note, however, that Hazzard's definition of poetry may be a bit broad. He feels that the essence of poetry is "the evocative immediacy of the individual imagination, the sudden involvement of the internal imaginative landscape with the external world." Some might argue that such "evocative immediacy" may also be present in the best of imaginative prose, and some of the poems included do appear to be more imaginative than poetic. But such distinctions may be rather trivial, for not only is Hazzard's defense of children's poetry eloquent, it also provides a proven method for teaching it successfully.

The two final books under review are both welcome additions to the varied collections of Canadian legends that have recently been published. *The Trouble with Princesses* is yet another collection of Indian legends from Canada's most prolific story-teller, Christie Harris, and it is clearly one of her finest achievements. The seven tales she recreates consider various problems faced by old-world princesses in various Northwest Coast Indian legends. Fittingly, Mrs. Harris includes a brief introduction to each legend, pointing out its clear similarity to more traditional legends and, by association, its obvious universality.

Those familiar with Mrs. Harris's earlier collection will recognize many characters; even the omnipresent Mouse Woman makes a few token appearances. And the collection does, as Mrs. Harris hopes, remind the audience of a proud people and their stories, tales that not only entertained, but which promulgated sacred rules of life that constantly remind man "what happened to a proud, wealthy people when it forgot to be worthy of its wealth and importance." Douglas Tait's illustrations for this text are brilliant, some of the best work of this truly gifted illustrator. A wonderful marriage of text and illustrations.

Marius Barbeau and Michael Hornyansky's *The Golden Phoenix and Other Fairy Tales from Quebec* is not really a new book, but a paperback edition of their well-received 1958 text, which should ensure a wider dissemination of these legends.

The collection includes, as Barbeau tells us in his brief Afterword, six fairy tales, one episodic story, and one *fabliau*. Originally collected firsthand by Barbeau from Quebec *raconteurs*, the tales are joyfully retold by Hornyansky with a humour and vitality that distinguish them from the comparatively bland collection of fairy tales so popular today. What immediately attracts one to the tales is their irreverence, their refusal to accept the solemnity and predictability normally associated with the fairy tale tradition. Here beheaded lions pick up severed heads and comment wearily on the sorry lot of monsters. Here princesses are not always redeemed or even rescued. The Princess of Tomboso, for example, as a reward for her constant thwarting of her hero's plans, is left not only unrescued but with a twelve-inch nose. Here, when you need a prince to marry one of the hordes of princesses traditionally remaining at the end of tales, you simply appropriate one

— one who at least looks like a prince in disguise even if he isn't one.

The most delightful tale of the series is a marvelous retelling of the traditional *fabliau*, "Jacques the Woodcutter." In it, Jacques discovers his wife Finette's infidelity by hiding in an old wicker basket while she cooks an elaborate meal for his rival, Prince Bellay. Ostensibly the intruder is only interested in Finette's culinary expertise, but one suspects some severe editing here. Note, for example, the prince's little verse on his paramour:

> There is a good woman lives in a wood
> (Savoury dumplings and pigeon pie)
> Who bakes and fries as a good wife should:
> Savoury dumplings and pigeon pie —
> If Jacques won't eat them, why can't I?

In a sense, these last three texts directly respond to the formulaic approach of the "Kids in Canada" series. Hazzard's exploration of the linguistic wonders of the child's world and Harris's and Hornyansky's carefully etched recreations of children's legends suggest how alive and how truly exciting a children's book can be. We need not retreat to Dick and Jane primers. Surely the children deserve more.

KIERAN KEALY

THE PLACE OF EXPERIMENT

GEOFF HANCOCK, ed., *Magic Realism*. Aya Press, $9.00.

DOUGLAS DAYMOND and LESLIE MONKMAN, eds., *Stories of Quebec*. Oberon, $15; pa. $6.95.

NO STORY IN EITHER *Magic Realism* or *Stories of Quebec* was written more than forty years ago, yet the two anthologies could scarcely be less alike. Their only similarities reside in their exclusively Canadian content and the fact that neither collection is what its title suggests it might be.

Magic Realism purportedly offers a representative selection of stories written in a single narrative mode, but is in fact better characterized as a collection of accomplished contemporary short fiction, written by both anglophone and francophone Canadians, largely drawn from the pages of editor Geoff Hancock's *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, and typified by an experimental spirit evident in any or all of theme, style, structure, or mode. The book is apparently designed both for the general reader with an interest in current trends in Canadian fiction, and for the academic market (hence the erudite introduction that bears regrettably little relation to well over half the stories in the anthology).

Stories of Quebec deceives in so far as its title leads readers to expect that this will be an addition to the profusion of authentic regionalist anthologies issued of late, for the 'region' it attempts to capture is artificially defined by the exclusion of all francophone writing. The editors attempt to justify this decision by making what seems to me an unconvincing appeal to a "tradition of anglophone fiction set in Quebec." The stories are characteristically conservative, some even predictable, in theme, mode, structure, and style, despite the editors' claim of "great diversity" in the latter two aspects. Realism is unquestionably dominant in both the choice of subject matter and mode of presentation, though Hugh Hood may claim the special modifier "moral" for his realism, and Mavis Gallant may deserve to have "psychological" attached to hers. The variation in structures is unremarkable, with the exceptions of Gallant's "Saturday" and Clark Blaise's "Extractions and Contractions." *Stories of Quebec* is likely to have little interest for the general reader, and small enough appeal to the academic community.

Magic Realism provides the more stimulating experience, though the reader is

apt to be puzzled by the host of definitions of, and statements about, the term "magic realism" which the introduction provides. After stating that it is "a blend of fantasy and everyday reality" Hancock then goes on to obscure the basic difference between the term as it is used in art criticism and as it is used by a group of Latin American practitioners of the narrative art. The one takes commonplace objects and looks at them in such intensity or detail or in such relationships that the objects assume a fantastic reality; the other achieves a vision of reality which includes the fantastic by placing mysterious characters and strange events in an entirely commonplace setting. The one begins with the ordinary and seeks to discover elements of the fantastic in it; the other takes the apparently fantastic as a primary constituent of the reality it seeks to represent.

Jack Hodgins's delightfully comic and mildly satiric story "The Plague Children" makes a fine opening piece for the collection, for if the anthology has a truly magic realist story in the Latin American tradition it is this one. Furthermore, the importance of voice and the primacy of story that Hancock rightly maintains are significant features of magic realism as a narrative art are readily illustrated by this story. The setting is resolutely ordinary, the narrated events comically fantastic, though violence breaks the comic surface at intervals in a manner characteristic of the tradition. Hodgins's marathon jogger, whose tip-to-tip island run signals the onslaught of the plague of magic mushroom pickers, turns out to have magic powers himself, powers which are described in a tone of such equilibrium there can be no doubting the occurrence of the events narrated however fantastic in nature. The people-hating bull that Angel Hopper sets on the trespassing pickers is miraculously halted in midcharge and offers obeisance to a rusty-bearded, sweatbanded figure, apparently the marathoner: "This fellow has only to life his arm and the bull nearly breaks his neck trying to put on the brakes. When he comes to a halt his front legs give out and he thuds to his knees. For a moment it appears to Hopper as if the bull is bowing, perhaps to kiss that outstretched hand." This same youth will later turn up inexplicably in Dennis Macken's bed, so completely at home there that his clothes all hang in Macken's closet, and he will single-handedly stop Macken's mock-epic tractor charge against the pickers.

Other stories in the anthology, albeit well written, fit the title description less well. Lawrence Mathews's "The Death of Arthur Rimbaud" at first appears to be in a magic realist mode, for the twentieth-century narrator begins by informing the reader "It came as quite a surprise to us, to learn that it was Arthur Rimbaud, the famous poet, who'd rented the old farmhouse on the south side of the river," and some of the story's details are, as he says, "hard to swallow"; but the whole story works to undermine the narrator's reliability because the Rimbaud of this story bears no similarity beyond name to the poet, and because the narrator is one of the xenophobes who participate in the murder of the twentieth-century Rimbaud. Peter Crowell's "When Your Mother Comes to Visit" seems to me outside the magic realist tradition because of the condition of psychological disturbance that is suggested in the narrator. The anthology contains several futuristic fantasies, but Esther Rochon's "The Starfish" and Andreas Schroeder's "One Tide Over" have more in common with John Wyndham's brand of serious science fiction than with the magic realist tradition, while J. Michael Yates's "Mysteries of the Man Who Walks and the Man Who Watches the Walker" is a cleverly conceived exploration of artistic perception

and the nature of art that uses the photographer and a traffic dodger in an unspecified city of the future as types of the perceiver and performer. There are also several tales that evoke a gothic atmosphere or might more properly be called horror stories. Jean-Guy Carrier's "A Premonition," Rikki's "Spanish Oranges," Ken Ledbetter's "Idiots," Erika Ritter's "What are Neighbours For?" and Marilyn Miller Trinkaus's "Loving Cousins" use very different forms and methods to achieve their senses of horror, though physical and psychological violence is abundant. Fraser Sutherland's "Wilderness Wild" is an amusing sexual and cultural parody and Sue Ericsson's "The Murder That Saved a Marriage" plays a clever trick on the reader while successfully evoking the consequences of a stifling marital relationship, but neither is properly described as magic realism.

Most, if not all, of the writers reprinted in *Magic Realism* deserve the notice such an anthology potentially gives them (though I must admit that the significance of Leon Rooke's "Dinner with the Swardians" and Madeleine Ferron's "The Tamed Coffin" escape me) but the collection would have been far better served by a title such as "Contemporary Canadian Experiments in Short Fiction." Such a title would have avoided giving the impression that these are a group of writers, remote from important cultural centres, claiming to be a part of an international literary movement whose basic nature they have failed to understand.

The stories in Daymond and Monkman's anthology, which were reportedly selected on the basis of their literary merit and their effectiveness in representing "the settings, the texture and diversity of the non-francophone experience in Quebec," present characters from a designedly wide variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds. The success with which individual characters are made to represent distinctive types, specific generations or eras, is the chief strength of Jack Ludwig's "A Woman of Her Age," Norman Levine's "By the Richelieu," and Peter Behrens's "Anarchy." Working class *canadiennes* and a destitute Canadian mix without matching in the frequently anthologized "Vacation in La Voiselle" which has considerable success in capturing the bilingual nature of Quebec speech. Witness the literal translation of the verb '*s'amuser*' in Mme Tipue's reproach to Hugo Pheffer, "*Oui! Oui!* You have become — how shall I say — a frightful bore. *Eh bien*, if you are not amusing yourself. . . ." Joyce Marshall bring relatively privileged anglophone children into a Québécois village in "The Little White Girl," and creates an effective symbol of the elusive but still possible beauty of communication between the two cultural groups in the anglophone narrator's memory of the irrepressible laughter of an invalid village girl, a memory which metamorphoses into a dream image of a delicate-sounding waterfall concealed in a darkening wood. Clark Blaise's autobiographically based "Extractions and Contractions" evokes the cosmopolitan air of Montreal, particularly that of the university sphere, with its mixture of East Indians, Americans, Québécois, and Canadians, though, in this story as in the rest of the collection, Montreal's increasingly large black community is not represented. The editors single out the structure of this story as "suggesting the most complex resonances among separate events through a collage-like arrangement of details and incidents," thereby totally ignoring the chronological sequence of the rather mundanely titled sections.

Mordecai Richler's "The Other Beach" derives what power it has from the reader's awareness that while the mischievous Jewish boys are invading the preserve of bigoted Quebec goys and carrying off the sign that proclaims anti-

Jewish prejudice on a Laurentian resort beach, the cruellest implications of that prejudice are being played out on the other beaches of Europe. In "The Quebec Prison" Raymond Fraser exhibits an unsatisfactory sense of story and structure, creating two engaging anglophone radicals and the beginnings of a plot before his piece degenerates into a kind of fictionalized journalism about prison life for an anglophone in a francophone jail, leaving the plot without an adequate conclusion.

"Looking Down From Above" is a sketch rather than a story, in which Hugh Hood freights his characters with an enormous significance in a manner and vocabulary reminiscent of Conrad. Hood makes each of his main characters an exemplum to justify his philosophic conclusion that "human purpose is inscrutable, but undeniable." An old woman that the narrator passes on a Montreal street is described as "somebody who has had to renounce all human pretensions to health, beauty, sexuality, earning and apparently even companionship." Examining her he finds that "the details of her appearance were extraordinarily sharply outlined and seemed pregnant with unstated meaning." Yet he is struck by the "fury in her eyes and extraordinary purpose." Then in an inverted syntax designed to emphasize the significance of the perception, he pronounces, "That woman am I. To her state must I come in time. I stood on the squalid street looking at her and wondering if she would speak to me, labouring under a drastic perception of the human soul in her impenetrable, and indissoluble."

Mavis Gallant is able to create this sense of significance in her characters without editorializing in this fashion. "Saturday" is a powerful portrait of a family that lives only in the mind because of the mother's decision to withhold from her children their heritage of French language and culture in order to free them from the pernicious influence of the Church. A shifting of focus from the troubled eldest son to the middle-aged mother and finally to the elderly father and youngest son, combined with a narrative technique that refuses to distinguish for the reader that which has objective reality from that which has only psychological reality, results in a style that is perfectly suited to the themes of alienation, disillusionment, and disorientation.

There are, then, individual pieces in *Stories of Quebec* that command attention and respect, and that would satisfy most literary tastes, but the need for and ultimate value of the anthology remain in question.

SUSAN BECKMANN

SMALL MIRACLE

BERNARD EPPS, *Pilgarlic the Death*. Quadrant Editions, by subscription.

THE EPIGRAPH TO BERNARD EPPS'S novel, *Pilgarlic the Death*, is from the parable of the unjust steward, Luke 16: "Verily, the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Not only are the children of Epps's fictional world wiser, they are entertaining, moving, and fabulously real. And what is more, Christ's ironic parable points to the thoughtful ironies of Epps's text. I missed reading, or even hearing about, *Pilgarlic the Death* when it was first published by Macmillan in 1967, and am therefore pleased that Gary Geddes chose to reprint this novel as one of Quadrant Editions' first publications — it was a wise choice, for *Pilgarlic* is a very fine novel.

There are many wonderful things about this novel — and I use terms like "*wonderful*" and "*fabulously* real" deliberately — from its characters to its language and structure to its subject. It is the story of

Stormaway, a little town supposedly nestled in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, and of the town's inhabitants, Dougal the School, Hugh the Hero, John the Law, Milly of the Hill and, of course, Pilgarlic the Death. But as the town and characters' Scots names suggest this setting and story is and is not about the townsfolk of Stormaway. From the opening paragraphs of the Prologue, in which a "black, bearded" boney man carries his coffin/house into town on his back, through the sequence of human events of love, story-telling, and death, we understand that this place and its people are part of a truly mythic reality which is rooted in the human imagination and expressed in the parables of the story-teller. What Epps has done is to surprise us with a fresh perspective on real life in any small town by drawing his people so sharply, vividly, that they become dream figures who are larger than life.

Dougal the School is the key character because, as teacher, poet, philosopher, he is the most articulate man in town. It is Dougal who speaks for man's intellect and spirit in sharp contrast with the cheerfully Priapic force of Stormaway, Long George. It is Dougal who, in a final gesture against twentieth-century vacuity and consumerism, brings his artificial, commodity-stuffed, loveless home crashing down around him, and in doing so symbolizes a radical, riotous rebirth. As his house burns, Dougal dances in the street wearing "an expression of sheer idiot ecstasy and nothing else — he was as naked and new as a babe."

What Dougal cannot purge is his need and love of words, although he knows that the children he teaches are closer to the truth of "one little grassblade":

> Ask any five-year-old. *That's* a blade of grass. We would do better to approach it directly without words or symbols and thereby avoid the all-too-common error of mistaking the symbol for the thing itself. We would do better to touch it, to feel it, to look at it, to taste it, to smell it. At least we'd avoid lies.

Here Dougal speaks not only for us and the many ways in which we separate ourselves from reality, but for the writer as well. The beauty and excitement of this novel spring from the fact that Epps accepts the limits of language yet succeeds in evoking the eternal realities of life — the feel, taste and smell of love, joy, grief and death — through his words.

Pilgarlic the Death is a relatively new occurrence on the contemporary Canadian literary scene, but it is not alone. Whether I call it "magic realism" or use Ray Smith's term "speculative fiction" to describe it, Epps's novel has much in common with Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* and Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. All three novels blend fabulous occurrence with vividly realized details of speech and place in order to celebrate the wondrous comedy of life. Like Sheila Watson's earlier, more reserved comic masterpiece, *The Double Hook*, all three novels explore the small town as mythic place and the oral traditions of storytelling as mythology. Behind this type of fiction, of course, stands Gabriel Márquez, an influence acknowledged by Kroetsch and Hodgins, but Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* and the rhetorical strategy of parable are equally felt presences in Epps's fictional world.

Does Epps belong in the company of Kroetsch and Hodgins? On the strength of this first novel, I would say, very likely. We leave Dougal in the Epilogue wandering the hills around Stormaway and writing in his notebook: "The best thing about miracles is that no matter how often they occur, they never become commonplace." Ordinary life is the miracle Epps celebrates, and in *Pilgarlic the Death* he has given us that small miracle in words, a novel far above the commonplace.

SHERRILL E. GRACE

INDIAN PLIGHT

NAN F. SALERNO and ROSAMOND M. VANDERBURGH, *Shaman's Daughter*. Prentice-Hall, $15.95.

SHAMAN'S DAUGHTER is another serious attempt in recent Canadian literature to emphasize the plight of the Indians in this century. Framed by a Prologue and an Epilogue (both of which describe the last day in the life of the heroine) the narrative traces the life of an exceptional person from age twelve when she was "blessed with a vision" to her death seventy years later.

Tension is created early, when Supaya Cedar is obliged to marry Eli Red Sky in return for a favour done her family by his father, Wenonga, a shaman from Red Bluffs Reservation. Her love for her cousin Kineu Bruley (by whom she is pregnant), Eli's decadence, and Wenonga's sexual designs upon her combine to make Supaya's first marriage a troubled one. It ends when Eli, finally attempting to prove himself a man, is killed in a confrontation with a huge black bear that is terrorizing the reservation. After a year of mourning Supaya marries Kineu. However, his recurring dream of eagle and white dog in mortal combat unnerves him, and convinces Supaya that Wenonga is using his shaman's powers to destroy her husband. She confronts Wenonga and scares him off with a suggestion of her own supernatural powers. Later, Kineu serves overseas during World War I and returns from that conflict a physical and emotional cripple. He withdraws from society, and even from intimate relationship with Supaya. Finally, he takes Taw, his youngest child, to live with him according to the old Indian ways. Both father and son drown when their canoe is overturned in a sudden storm. After another appropriate period of mourning, Supaya marries Jess Fallon, a white man. But she outlives him, too, and spends her last days treating the sick and trying to counsel her children and grandchildren.

Shaman's Daughter is the story of a strong, intelligent, and independent woman who learned to live by learning that love is not synonymous with exploitation or surrender. But it is more than the chronicle of an exceptional woman. The wealth of sociological detail, the sympathetic understanding the authors bring to their subject, and the motifs of alienation, adaptation, the changing and the changeless — dramatized by the clash of generations and cultures — elevate the novel to symbolic level: the tragic story of a whole race.

There are no technical innovations in this novel. The plot is linear; and the narrative has the simplicity of a bedtime story. (In the earlier sections it often has the compelling *quality* of that genre as well.) The symbols are adequate even if sometimes rather too obvious: a necklace, a small birchbark box, a black bear (in its various manifestations symbolic of good), water, especially spring water, the seasons, the cawing of a lone crow, a huge black dog. Then there is the recurring metaphor of the Four Hills.

The major characters are deftly drawn; indeed, the juxtaposition of contrasting characters is an organizing principle in *Shaman's Daughter*. Jules Cedar, Supaya's father, stands in contrast to the evil genius of Wenonga; Rhea, who reformed, contrasts with Eli who, unable to reform, could only repent; then there is Miss Harris, the kindly teacher, and her clergyman brother who for years had not "smiled spontaneously or looked with affection on any living creature." The list goes on. Unfortunately, there are too many characters for even a three-generational novel with such pronounced sociological emphasis.

And there is a more fundamental structural weakness still. After the death of

Wenonga at the end of Part Three, and the death of Jules at the beginning of Part Four, no character even approaches Supaya in stature. As a result of this imbalance, tension essentially disappears from the novel. All too often thereafter, episodes are linked together as a pretext for giving more sociological information and for thinly veiled authorial commentary on deracination and identity. For these reasons, *Shaman's Daughter* remains a seriously flawed novel.

DONALD R. BARTLETT

FROM PLAYWRIGHTS

STEVE PETCH, *Sight Unseen.* Playwrights Canada.

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN, *The Trojan Women.* Playwrights Canada.

BETTY LAMBERT, *Clouds of Glory.* Playwrights Canada.

BRYAN WADE, *Blitzkrieg.* Playwrights Press.

OUT OF THE INTRICATE PROBLEMS of human relationship and the inner conflicts of man's mind and his feelings, Steve Petch weaves an exotic drama entitled *Sight Unseen.* Five characters interact like a fugue in which the dramatic voices develop contrapuntally recreating relationships over and over again. The people are interchangeable; they assume identities in their associations with one another. The place is a small pension on a Greek island; the time, summer 1928. Life, love, and friendship are ephemeral. The characters flit in and out of each other's lives leaving impressions which conjure up the past or predict the future, while the present is intangible. The dream-like figure, Marie-Claude, an exotic Swiss woman, tangles with each of the characters in turn; she would make love to any of them, for that's what keeps us human:

> If we meet and I like you, then we sit and talk. Is it wrong? No. If we are happy talking, then I will touch you on the arm, hold your hand ... It is nice, good. And then if I touch your face, isn't it the same? ... It is just like talking: something I do with someone I like.

Yet we can't love honestly, openly, without deception or feeling shame. Our associations turn ugly and sordid. Alan deceives his wife, Richard deceives his friend. The wife, longing for security, clings to marriage even if her husband no longer loves her. She assures him:

> This isn't a match of convenience you can cast off. I'm with you for life, and you can't alter that. If you humiliate me, you'll make me old and mean; you won't lose me.

On the surface, the play is about infidelity, but it is much more than that. It touches on our basic conceptions of morality.

The play is compelling for its exquisite style. The dialogue is clean, uncluttered, the images pure and sensual, the rhythm of the language recalls the rise and fall of an eternal wave. Each character, from the prosaic, retired Mr. Davies, to the omnipresent, mysterious Marie-Claude, has a vital role to play. They are revealed in pairs — the couples may be strangers or estranged; friends or married. One leaves his mark on the other and the cycle is interminable. Steve Petch has created an original and evocative work of art. It is vacation time when people attempt to flee reality, but they cannot escape their own personalities and the fact that vacation, like life itself, eventually must come to an end.

Gwendolyn MacEwen offers a modern rendition of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* whose motifs are relevant to our own time. While death in battle brings their husbands' suffering to an end, women are doomed to bear the aftermath of war. The most moving moments in both versions describe the murder of Astynax, Andromache's child, so that "the son of a glorious and therefore highly dangerous

enemy should not . . . grow up." A prudent move from the enemy's standpoint, since Andromache has predicted that her son will be "the rebuilder of Troy." In Euripides, she hands over her child with bitterness: "Take him away, hurl him to his death." In the MacEwen rendition, she comforts him:

> You're going on a journey,
> You funny little thing: And where you're going
> Is somewhere you've *never* been!
> . . . It's where lightning falls
> From the hollows of the sky! . . .
> And when you go
> you'll meet your father
> with his great flashing spear
> and his deep booming laughter! . . .
> You funny thing . . . you smell so nice!
> Here, let's pull your cloak up,
> up around your . . . neck.
> Give me a kiss . . . come on!

One recalls words spoken by mothers who dispatched their children to the concentration camps' gas chambers, the most difficult of all, a lie to brighten a child's last moments.

Helen delivers an eloquent speech in her own defence: Hecuba had given birth to Paris "in the first place . . . despite the prophecies . . . that he was fated to bring disaster"; Paris had chosen a beautiful woman rather than the goddesses' offers of wealth or military conquests: she herself lives "beneath the shadows of men," an instrument of "History"; moreover, she tried to escape, but the guards caught her. Her arguments recall the appeal of war criminals — circumstances are responsible. Likewise, Talthybius, who executed the murder of Astynax, albeit unwillingly, will not stand trial — he only followed orders.

MacEwen emphasizes the role of women in society. They are "perfect" wives, they know their places, they have no "existence" apart from men and when the men are gone, they are "nothing." History books are rewritten by the ruling powers: "History . . . tells untruths / It tells them beautifully." People's deeds are obliterated, even misconstrued, figures falsified. Hecuba accurately predicts that Helen will be "famous in years to come. People like you never get punished for what they do." Helen revelled in her glory with "the men of Troy / kissing [her] feet"; but war is "blood and blood and blood . . . the final nightmare." Hecuba demands "meaning" but there is none. In the space of a relatively short work, the author succeeds in bringing to life several strong characters, the most effective being Hecuba, whose greatest tragedy is the knowledge that her own son initiated the bloodshed and destruction of Troy.

Satire attempts to present a true picture of reality by ridiculing the forces it exposes. A good satire arouses laughter while challenging the audience to consider the author's premise. It deals with a current political or sociological issue or may attack the manners and mores of a given society. Betty Lambert's *Clouds of Glory* falls into both categories. By far, the target of her most successful and scathing attack is academia.

The problem with the play, however, is three-fold: the author's ambiguous stand on political issues which prevents the audience from drawing the author's thesis to its logical conclusion; secondly, academic unrest cannot justifiably be equated with actual terrorism and revolution; finally, Lambert's endeavour to satirize multifarious societal problems in a single play does not allow her to examine one or two problems in sufficient depth.

The scene is a West Coast university. The crisis in the Philosophy Department coincides with Quebec's 1970 October crisis when kidnapping and violence invoked the War Measures Act. Each character represents a type: Max, the New York draft-dodger who supposedly adulates the working-class, here represented by Mrs. Wilson, the char, who has to

"clean up the mess" after demonstrations; sexually frustrated Sophie Love, the "rich and high class" student radical who brings her dog in a cage to burn as a symbolic sacrifice of the Vietnamese War; Dr. Korda, Head of Philosophy, the Establishment, a native German; his opponent, ambitious and affected Dr. Green, the American-Freudian-Marxist, and organizer of the Revolutionary Caucus; Jessie, an indecisive teacher of Logic, who would rather abstain than vote; Charlie, an Establishment French-Canadian who hasn't completed his dissertation, but thanks to a past romance with Korda, is given a lectureship in Moral Philosophy; and 18-year-old Bubba, Mrs. Wilson's daughter, who has replaced her interest in sex with violence. While an attempt is made by Green to oust Korda from his position, the faculty and student body participate in a hilarious "Revolutionary Caucus" replete with heckling, sexual inferences, phony revolutionary slogans summed up as "pretentious faggot academic bullshit." In the process, the Americans and Korda delight in insulting Canadians: "You have no sense of identity. No sense of history. No awareness of Realpolitik ... you can't say anything without quoting."

Korda, though claiming he has given his staff "uninhibited academic freedom," is marched into the Common Room, his head in a noose — a mere "college prank." Demands are made explicit: an end to the "feudal" exploitation of the Philosophy Department with strict student parity on all committees. However, events in Quebec intrude on the liberation movement. It's just that "Eastern Canada shit" and "if you people had done what we did in Louisiana ... passed a law saying everyone had to talk English, you wouldn't be in this fix now" sums up the general attitude. Once the War Measures Act is in operation, and "political demonstration ... illegal," Korda, echoing Trudeau: "... there are always the bleeding hearts ... who refuse to see that a society, a university, has to take every measure to protect itself from the bandits, the criminal terrorists ...," threatens to dispatch his opponents to jail, and suspends Charlie. But Charlie, a "*beer* Beaufort," is reinstated by the Board of Governors, Korda is deposed, and Green appointed liaison officer with the Board. Sophie, now protesting the War Measures Act, pours gasoline over herself — "nobody listens, nobody cares, until we will." During a scuffle in which Charlie tries to seize her lighter, a shot is fired, and Charlie is killed accidentally. Mrs. Wilson ends the play with a reference to "this War Measures thing" and assures us that "Mr. Lacrosse and the other one" will be "home safe and sound."

Whether or not the War Measures Act was valid, kidnapping, inserting bombs in mailboxes ... are acts of violence. Though the authorities over-reacted and in some instances took advantage of political unrest to promote their own interests, the author, protesting the Act ("the small freedoms go, and then the bigger ones") exposes the dangers of college pranks rather than overt terrorism. Charlie's death is not convincing — it comes almost as an afterthought. Korda, that stodgy, pompous conservative, who is presented as an unlikeable character in whom "one may recognize aspects of ... Trudeau" (author's note) winds up the wisest of all precisely because of Charlie's death. Thus, inadvertently, the satire turns on itself. Finally, the FLQ cannot be compared with naive, sexually frustrated students or phony radicals like Max and Green. The FLQ did not play games. As one of the men involved in the kidnapping of James Richard Cross said (*Gazette*, January 9, 1981):

> If I joined the Front of Liberation du Québec in 1970, it was because I believed, at that time, that terrorist action — what we

> called armed propaganda — constituted a valid method to change society. I was wrong. The FLQ was wrong.

While the explosive situation in Quebec provides the author with the play's climax, and many funny lines, it is a pity she did not confine her satire to "your basic liberated" university. Mrs. Wilson's unforgettable remarks on cleaning toilets are but one example of Lambert's sharp sense of humour:

> Business Administration, now, they're very good on aim. Physics is not quite so good as Business Admin., but the worst ones for aim is your philosophers. They never hit the mark. It's terrible cleaning up after your philosophers.

Bryan Wade's collection of five plays under the title *Blitzkrieg* is fraught with violence, sado-masochism, nihilism and pornography (without the redeeming qualities of titillation). This is experimental theatre that is neither profound nor funny, though the introduction by Bob White considers the author "one of our major theatrical voices."

In his desire to affect people on subconscious levels, Wade juxtaposes the perverse sexual games of Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun with Hollywood romantic movies. But the characters of *Grand Hotel* (John Barrymore and Greta Garbo) are fictitious, while Hitler and the Nazi regime constituted powers of evil that perpetrated the unspeakable horrors of World War II. To ascribe fantasy to this reality is as abhorrent as saying that Yorkshire's "Jack the Ripper" is only a concept of sadism, and the thirteen women he mutilated are figments of the imagination.

Adolf's ugly rat-dream; Eva's paper airplane bombing games; her seductive manoeuvres; her assurance that women will be sexually fulfilled merely by looking at the Fuhrer's photograph and the word "orgasm," repeated no less than thirty times; her description of the new era — "everything will be destroyed in flames and out of the ashes will grow a new race ... equal to the vision of the Messiah" (the intention is to rouse Adolf sexually): these are some of the components of this unpalatable piece.

Wade avoids explicit descriptions of Nazi destruction, but unless it is rendered graphically, Eva's perusal of the photograph album — "there's Goebbels and his wife ... and their children ... aren't they adorable?" ... and Bormann's so-called concentration camp joke, will not be interpreted as ironic. For the younger generation, W.W. II is as ancient as the Boer War.

There is, indeed, a need for literature about the forces of evil, for man must endeavour to understand them. But this play has the effect of a sick joke. The introduction states that since "we are watching Adolf and Eva fucking on the ashes of six million Jews ... the sheer obscenity of this image rivets us to the action of the play." On the contrary. It is repugnant.

Underground is a meaningless exchange of pseudo-Becket-von Itallie-Shepherd dialogue between three featureless, boring non-people, one of whom, prompted by his girlfriend's voice on the tape-recorder, mercifully finds salvation in suicide. The author describes the "underground" people, the metaphoric moles of society who burrow aimlessly in tunnels, never see the light of day, who pay lip-service to causes they neither understand nor care about. The tape-recorder is the only measure of reality, but since it is possible to "edit, mix it, transform it, fuck with it any way you want to," reality is constantly distorted. It is a harsh, alienating environment that breeds violence and confusion.

This nihilistic play is not devoid of truths, but the vehicle for portraying them is dull and derivative.

Alias attempts to debunk the mythic

hero, in this instance the Lone Ranger and Tonto, who are travelling across the desert to Wasteland in order to replenish their supply of silver bullets. Then they will continue rescuing women from "no good, swearing, drinking, spitting, fucking outlaws." A prostitute wearing a constricting penis costume intended to excite her clients, and the proprietor of a brothel-saloon who is plagued by a rattlesnake, join the pair. After the women are rescued, Tonto and the Ranger will accept their invitation to work as studs at the Golden Triangle Saloon, thus relinquishing their heroic roles. While some of the dialogue is amusing, much of the play recalls a tasteless sophomoric burlesque. Bryan Wade should employ his considerable dramatic talents and imagination to better advantage.

AVIVA RAVEL

ECLECTIC, CLASSIC

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *The World of Canadian Writing.* Douglas & McIntyre, and Univ. of Washington Press.

JEAN-ETHIER BLAIS, *Autour de Borduas.* Les Presses de l'université de Montréal.

IF ONLY BECAUSE IT SUGGESTS broader dimensions than the book actually possesses, Woodcock's title is unfortunate. A subtitle, "Critiques and Recollections," helps, as does the author's "Introduction," but still the ambiguity remains, particularly since only the first two essays attempt any sort of comprehensive approach to "the world of Canadian writing."

What the book does offer — and it is a substantial offering — is a series of reviews, articles and reminiscences dealing with a wide range of Canadian literature. Woodcock's interests are eclectic; so too is his choice of subjects, primarily writers for whom he feels "a degree of empathy or, more rarely, an obvious opposition of viewpoint." His approach is personal and usually relaxed, marked by a bias for prose and by a consistent concern for the social, moral and political — as well as the aesthetic — values in literature. The perspective adopted is obviously that of British Columbia, and while it may not quite reveal a "regional cast of mind" — the author being far too cosmopolitan for that — it does convey the impact of his immediate surroundings. For many jaded Easterners, this view from the West will be welcome and refreshing.

One senses Woodcock's sheer delight in reading and his eagerness to engage his mind with those of the various writers he discusses. His initial talent is for pointing out affinities and antecedents, for ordering, for placing the writing within the incredible range of literature he is familiar with. Equally impressive are his powers of synthesis and extrapolation; his commentary moves easily from general observations to specific insights, and back again. Curious facts emerge: "the average number of novels published yearly by Canadians has not changed in any marked way over the past forty years." New categories are established: "Canadian twentieth-century romanticism," for instance, is identified almost as a genre. Unusual perceptions are presented, sometimes simply in passing: "the kind of subliminally directed information that, at its most sensitive, literature can project over the centuries." The discussion, even when it rambles, is lucid, informative and — with the exception of a rather tedious study of Hugh Hood — lively.

Woodcock, who must be the most prolific critic in Canada, if not the world, writes with an ease that is apparent in the flow and fluidity of his prose. Such facility cuts both ways, of course; the piece on John Glassco shows signs of hasty composition, many of the articles come to rather flat endings, there are occasional

repetitions and even rare touches of pomposity — "(and I am not entirely inclined to deny it)." Usually, though, the writing is direct, dynamic and expressive. Few Canadian critics share Woodcock's sureness of language and none except Frye has his way with a phrase: "the capillary links between her poetry, her fiction, her criticism"; "one of those dynamically boring European literary men"; "a kind of psychic membrane in which recollection is replaced by telepathy"; "the slutter fringe of life on the Côte d'Azur." One of the distinct pleasures of the book is the achievement of its style.

As was evident in *Odysseus Ever Returning*, Woodcock's analysis can be brilliant and penetrating. The present volume, perhaps because of its diversity of subject and the occasional nature of some of the articles, seems to lack the kind of imaginative focus that characterizes Woodcock at his best. Still, there is much to be learned here, particularly from the appraisals of lesser-known writers like Roderick Haig-Brown and Mavis Gallant, or from the discussion of lesser-known works such as Margaret Laurence's travel writings. (An earlier attempt to discern an earth-fire-water-air pattern in her Canadian novels seems, for all its cleverness, forced and unconvincing.) Only the piece on McLuhan, uncharacteristic in its tone of high moral outrage, is really unworthy. As a general rule, however, the author seems more effective in praise and benevolent interpretation than in argument and opposition.

Perhaps it is unfair to criticize *The World of Canadian Writing* for what it is not in its nature to be. Lacking a controlling focus and a sustained vision, it is, as a book, considerably less than the sum of its parts. But as a collection of individual articles revealing much of the scope of Canadian literature, it is good, solid and informed criticism.

* * *

As a critic, Jean Ethier-Blais has always promoted the traditional values of classicism: clarity of expression, discipline, rationalism and a deep respect for the past. His weekly columns in *Le Devoir* regularly condemn the present state of culture in Québec, expressing strong and rather unfashionable disapproval of many of the reforms brought about by the "Quiet Revolution." It is curious, therefore, that he has chosen to write about Paul-Emile Borduas: painter, polemicist, cultural revolutionary, and probably the most influential figure in setting into motion the very changes that Ethier-Blais deplores.

Autour de Borduas, we are told in the author's foreword, is a personal attempt to come to terms with Borduas' immense prestige in Québec intellectual circles, to explain who the man was and why his work has had so much impact in the past three decades. Much of the explanation, we soon see, results from an exploration of Borduas' surroundings: his teachers and friends, his domestic and intellectual milieux, the vagaries of his existence in St. Hilaire, Montréal and abroad. Through a combination of personal familiarity, solid documentation and considerable evocative skill, a clear picture emerges of the people, places and events experienced by Borduas in the formative periods of his life.

We see, in the first section entitled "Le fils et le père," Borduas' childhood exposure to the strange charms of the landscape around Mont St-Hilaire, his early apprenticeship to Ozias Leduc and subsequent initiation into the techniques and conventions of Québec religious art in the early years of this century, and his departure in 1928 for a year of study and practical training in France. Upon his return to Montréal, his life is increasingly centred around the twin poles of painting and teaching. In the midst of artistic and intellectual circles almost completely dominated by the clergy, he slowly becomes

aware of the relevance of abstraction and surrealism to his own research form, and much of his production in these years is destroyed as unsatisfactory. Meanwhile, his increasing success as a teacher — a teacher bent on liberating the full creative potential of his students — gradually attracts to him a following of rather radical students. Tensions and confrontations with the authorities keep pace with Borduas' growing sense of mission and in 1948, soon after the publication of the fiery "automatiste" manifesto *Refus global*, he is summarily dismissed from his job at the Ecole du meuble. The publication of a second manifesto, *Projections libérantes*, in 1949, marks the beginning of a four-year period of sickness and anguish. His entire world having collapsed around him, he retreats to St. Hilaire and for the first time is forced to make his living by painting. As Ethier-Blais comments, "c'est là le début de sa véritable carrière." Only in the final eight years of his life, largely spent abroad, does Borduas finally fulfill his potential as an artist. In 1960, at a time when the Quiet Revolution is about to unfurl over Québec, Paul-Emile Borduas dies alone in Paris.

As a biographer, Ethier-Blais concentrates not only on facts but on circumstances. His approach is interpretive and idiosyncratic, leaving no doubt as to where his own sympathies lie with regard to any number of events or personalities. His respect for Borduas' talent as a painter, for his integrity, his "instinct créateur" and his emerging "certitude devant la vie" is readily apparent, but he speaks too of the artist's "autoritarisme," identifying it as nothing less than "stalinisme." He mixes anecdote with axe-grinding, devoting more pages than necessary to his old favourite François Hertel, for example, and to predictable defence of the clergy. Ethier-Blais is obviously unable to sanction Borduas' anti-clericalism, and he is mystified by his lack of nationalistic fervour, wary of his ego, and in fact somewhat sceptical about his entire enterprise. And yet in these pages Borduas lives — a paradox both author and subject would no doubt appreciate.

Having situated "le fils" in his time and place, Ethier-Blais proceeds to do the same for "le père," Ozias Leduc, a figure for whom he seems to have a deeper personal sympathy. In this study, the connections between the society, its values, and its art forms, are particularly well established: Leduc, in his progression from Italianate academicism through Pre-Raphaelitism to symbolism, is portrayed both as an individual and as a representative Québec artist of the period. Noting the distance between Leduc's religious painting, with its realism reflecting the social and religious context in which it was produced, and his private painting, with its transcendental mystery and nascent surrealism, Ethier-Blais describes the artist as a sort of repressed Aesthete or Idealist — thus drawing him, one suspects, rather too much in his own direction. Whatever the bias, however, Ozias Leduc is given a masterly presentation as the one who first set Borduas on his own path, a path the author sees as leading ultimately to the explosive expression of Leduc's hidden universe: *de père en fils*.

The book's second division, entitled "Trajectoires esthétiques," investigates the lives and works of several of the French artists and intellectuals who influenced Borduas. Through the figures of Maurice Denis, Georges Desvallières and Marie-Alain Couturier, we are introduced into the curious and little-known world of French religious art — a world which may well hold more interest for the author than it did for his subject. A following chapter on André Breton offers a fascinating comparative study of Breton and Borduas as "chefs de file," "animateurs" and "provocateurs." The discussion of the Surrealists' influence on Borduas is

particularly intelligent, especially in reference to their utilization of aesthetic theories for socio-political ends. One may wonder why Ethier-Blais chose to concentrate on the French instead of such Americans as Pollock, de Kooning and Motherwell, all of whom met and influenced Borduas during his most productive years as a painter. Here the explanation is probably not so much the author's notorious francophilia as the fact that it was Breton and the Surrealists who pointed Borduas in the direction of the *Refus global*, whose impact on the Québec imagination was so much greater than that of any of his paintings.

Refus global is a passionate and incendiary polemic that calls for collective liberation through a total rejection of the past. The very things that were most typical of traditional Québec — Church and state control, respect for the past, docility and resignation — were to be swept away, absolutely. These are not, one suspects, sentiments to which Ethier-Blais can subscribe, and yet the reading he gives of *Refus global* is often very convincing. Many of his observations are highly perceptive and pertinent, as when he begins by stating that the manifesto "procède d'une vision négative du passé. Deux idées force l'aminent; le choix historique et la médiation prophétique." Several pages later he characterizes it as "un cri passionné, d'origine religieuse, dirigé contre un 'système d'éducation' au sens le plus large." Borduas, he notes, "balaie le passé du Canada français pour ne regarder en face de lui, vers un avenir qu'il mystifie dans l'instant même qu'il le crée."

To be sure, Ethier-Blais also expresses disapproval, using his abundant irony and rationalism to chip away at the text by pointing up its inconsistencies and paradoxes — arguments to which the text, by its very nature, remains largely impervious. Here again the critic has greater success in dealing with context, examining for instance the surrealistic and existential origins of Borduas' attitudes, and admitting, however reluctantly, their later repercussions throughout the Québec intelligentsia. One senses a curious ambivalence in this entire discussion, as though the author, while conceding the importance and achievement of the *Refus global*, is nevertheless sorry it was ever written.

Projections libérantes is given a somewhat lighter treatment, apparently because Ethier-Blais sees it more as the "apology" of an exceedingly gifted teacher than as a socio-political document. Here the tone is warmer and the commentary more lyrical, focusing on Borduas' personality to the detriment of the manifesto's wider implications. Borduas' idealism is admired, but it is admired as idealism; his attempt to move from the "moi" to the "milieu," to translate individual experience into collective action is interpreted as being hopelessly utopian.

In his conclusion to *Autour de Borduas*, Ethier-Blais returns again to the myth of Borduas, again carefully places it in its context, again casts doubt on his role as a collective hero, and then, in a final and elegaic assessment, proceeds to present him as a kind of mythic individual, the artist as hero. It is a study — and an interpretation — that makes no claim to being definitive, and it is a book from which Borduas emerges with all his simplicities and complexities enhanced.

LARRY SHOULDICE

ELUSIVE SURFACES

M. TRAVIS LANE, *Divinations and Shorter Poems 1973-1978*. Fiddlehead.

CYRIL DABYDEEN, *This Planet Earth*. Borealis.

JOHN LANE, *I Want to Tell You Lies*. Turnstone.

TED COLSON, *The Beauty of It: Poems for Tuesday Night*. Fiddlehead.

I'M VERY EXCITED by what you might call the surface of life," states Alice Munro. "It seems to me very important to be able to get at the exact tone or texture of how things are." M. Travis Lane does just that in her remarkable collection of poetry *Divinations,* the most ambitious undertaking of these four works. The eye is repeatedly given more than it usually takes in. Here is a sensuous appreciation of minor changes, of subtle nuances, a quality she herself has celebrated in the work of D. G. Jones. "The seasoned mind sees neither fall nor spring nor darkness in the late winds turning / nor in cerulean chords the all: / but each a tone, a changing shade / within a mobile edifice, / no one condition strained."

With its echoes of Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, "Three Fathers" (from which these lines are taken) concerns itself with Lane's ongoing quest for that which constitutes "the real." The elusive essence of "its shifting, watery notes" is further explored in "The Weight of the Real" (the title taken from Spender on Rimbaud), "On Responding to the Real," and the intriguing "A Night's Lodging in the Actual." What is so pleasing is the Avisonian stress on the eye, on a perception quietly yet intensely attending to the myriad "trivial" details of the here and now, and this in a poetry so richly appealing to the ear.

On the strength solely of the title poem "Divinations," Lane's status as a strong and gifted poet should rest secure. The piece comprises three distinctly realized yet thematically linked sections, each of which is tightly unified and elegantly crafted around the vicissitudes of a different narrator. The poet takes advantage of the difference and similarities between speakers to pursue a movement out of a tortuous wasteland existence in "Nothing," through an ambiguous, sometimes macabre purgatory in Malecite Indian graveyards in "Red Earth," right to the "thrones of God" (as art embodies them) in an unusual celebration of "The Green Earth" in "The Book of the Thrones." In their own unique way, all three women speakers — "a high-school girl who lives in Sundown;" a nurse who leads a troubled existence with her anthropologist husband in the Red Earth Reserve "on the Separation River in the northern reaches of New Brunswick's never-never lands" among the "Abenaki, people of the dawn"; and "Pearl," whose dwarf-like sister creates the winged thrones of God out of cardboard, broken furniture, aluminum and gold foil so "that nothing that was human or human shaped could ever sit in those things and if you look at them for a while it gets spooky" — "want the real."

The whole piece is beautifully crafted, the imagery unerringly accurate, the verse generally incisive and evocative. This is particularly evident in "Red Earth," which initiates itself with an epigraph from the *Purgatorio,* deftly suggesting that "what our speaker is able to perceive there is necessarily and variously unreal."

> In dreams I saw them dancing / without sound. My John danced skull dance / with them. Masking Face, passing among them, / turned each one to white head, rag bone, whirling dust. It came to me and grabbed me, held my head inside its mask as in a fist, / squeezed me skew-eyed, glared from my face / with red eyes like a strangled hare. . . .

Lane has a sense of language, rhythm, and precise, dramatic detail that I find

missing in the other three poets under review. Despite its length, "Divinations" continues evenly without losing control of mood or quality of expression, bravely experimenting with the limitations of the form in variant uses of type size, lineal spaces and other typographical inventions, successfully incorporating poems within poems, letters and prose fragments.

It is harder to recommend the collections of poetry by Colson, John Lane and Dabydeen, although certain poems in the latter's *This Planet Earth* reveal a nascent poetic maturity. While Ms. Lane's verse is richer metaphorically, linguistically and allusively, Dabydeen's book is nevertheless a worthwhile publication. Though less versatile and sure in its treatment, it shares with *Divinations* recurrent dualisms, especially light/dark image patterns, a concern with the "ephemeral, trivial," with people who, monstrously closed in upon themselves, seek escape or transcendence.

"Seeking Light," the first poem, announces the volume's persistent focus on imagery of burrowing, of a tentative emergence out of a restrictive "caveworld, underground," "digging out for sun." This governing concept serves as a means of providing coherence to this collection. In Dabydeen's world, this release is both feared and welcomed. More often than not, it is a male who is so "grounded," buried alive in his shadow refuge, bracing himself against the flight into "space," "the claustrophobia / of light." In "Death of a Coniferous Man," we again find the speaker "burrowing into the pith / of wood," seeking "the deep, deep inside / where I see nothing else / but the absence / like a cave." In "Charlatan," likewise characterized by the proliferating imagery of entrapment, "the ground held him fast as its own . . . until he was completely smothered."

Unlike the "muttering," "grimacing" males in *This Planet Earth*, those who achieve, or embody, communion with nature, with the cosmos, are predominantly female. Not surprisingly, they are associated with imagery of open spaces, sky, ascension, sun, stars: "The stars gyrate with her — / she touches them with finger tips" ("She Prefers Not To Pine"); "she bled sun" ("Sacrament"); "leaves grow from her hair / her body is green all over" ("Jamie"). It is in such poems, rather than the "travel" ones, that Dabydeen is strongest and most convincing. In the longest poem of the group, "They Call This Planet Earth," both of these image clusters coalesce, giving us an unusually optimistic assertion: like Tom Wolfe's "right stuff" astronauts testing the outer limits of the envelope, pushing further into Edge City, "We will continue to rise higher / As we test the outer reaches / of the sky."

Colloquially told anecdotes and local colour sketches form the strongest poems in John Lane's short collection of nineteen poems. "Pat and I, Chinatown, Vernon, Circa July, 1946" shares with other Canadian literature an emphasis on the inviolable reality of childhood experience, of memories of the little town and the pleasant mysteries of long ago which resist, in this case, the fiery world of the present. The voice in "Fragments" and "Richland Flats," with its colloquialisms, slang and wall-to-wall obscenities recalls the more sustained and successful performance of Stan Dragland's *Peckertracks*. Like Ms. Lane in *Divinations*, Colson suggests in his title poem and others that "Fragility is the beauty of it." Yet, for the most part, he fails to approximate her gentle evocation of the delicate, elusive surface of things. His experiments in repetition ("Theory of Maps," "Near Quoddy Head," "To A Lady," "Wind, wind," in particular) seem to me to contribute to a needless stockpiling of images that impede the force of the verse, leaving

it at times deflated and unmusical. "My father is dead, and partakes with the sods" ("The Field Where He Mowed") and other unfortunate lines mar this collection which, like John Lane's, strikes me as somewhat self-indulgent and obscure. Seldom do they compel our attention and admiration as much as that work which strives to rouse us from a long ontological sleep, *Divinations*.

MICHAEL HURLEY

BETWEEN NIGHTMARE AND DREAM

DAVID DONNELL, *Dangerous Crossings*. Black Moss, $6.95.

ROBERT CURRIE, *Yarrow*. Oberon, $12.95, $5.95 pa.

GAIL FOX, *In Search of Living Things*. Oberon, $12.95, $5.95 pa.

WITH DAVID DONNELL'S *Dangerous Crossings* one can, regrettably, judge the book by its cover. We have here a quasi-Rorschachian blot, a cute visual pun: a Charon-like figure punts across a blue expanse in a red boat which, in turn, is shaped like a pair of rather large lips. Presumably the "poet" is offering to share with us his "quest" after an understanding of life's (and love's) wondrous ambiguities. Unfortunately the book, like its cover, just doesn't deliver and provides little real excitement, remaining simply a curious example of self-conscious intellectualism.

Most remarkable throughout these forty-two poems — dedicated to "Billy, Neil, Hiram, Bhudda & George" — is the singular lack of irony in Mr. Donnell's self-indulgent pose as the chic aesthete, the strangely anachronistic hipster intellectual; consider an excerpt from "Atlantan Confusions": "Why don't I run for office as a dadaist mayor / or traffic in gold and buy an enormous beach? / Every day the dictionary falls open at different pages."

"The Cock Poem," "Position" (where making love is, you guessed it, "one of the most beautiful positions of prayer"), "How To Become a Fashionable Writer" and so on are all of the same ilk: hardly offensive in themselves, they are merely indifferent, pedestrian. George Bowering's early response to Donnell — "We have not, it seems, heard the last of the Mauberleys" (*CL*, 13) — is unnecessarily harsh. For despite these reservations, Donnell can be successful when he is least introverted and least solemn. Poems like "Satie at the Disco," "Rustic," and "Making it in the City" are all highly crafted, witty, intelligent and compassionate; they manage to be unique without becoming idiosyncratic or eccentric. They are, however, as Bowering would hasten to add, only isolated examples in this short collection. I hope they indicate not a freak lapse, but a new, future direction for Donnell.

Robert Currie's *Yarrow*, on the other hand, is a thoroughly satisfying collection which charts the growth, development, and changing perceptions of the title-named child protagonist. Divided into six general sections, these interrelated poems are grounded in the particular locale of the Canadian prairies. Oberon has put together yet another sumptuous book, its laid paper, cover illustration by Bruce St. Clair, and design by Michael Macklem make it unquestionably a collector's item.

Like Kurelek's illustrations for Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, Currie's stark verse conveys the essential feel of prairie vastness. His characters are contemporary Crusoes who must survive an overwhelming landscape which is both inert and belligerent, benevolent and destructive. Yarrow's world is at once sublime and beautiful, poignant and horrific; his experiences involve the contrari-

eties of still deer and savage badgers, pristine mornings and howling midnights. This sense of an ambiguous physical environment, moreover, is matched by an equally uncertain metaphysical realm where, as Yarrow's father (and Northrop Frye in another context) remarks, we endure as best we can:

> I was never much for religion
> though God knows there's times
> I think I've been in Hell
> Huh and it's your mother says
> the devil's greatest triumph
> is that he's got everybody today
> thinking he don't exist
>
> Oh I believe in Hell all right
> Still I don't know about heaven
> I just don't know
> The way I always see it
> we have to do our living here
> I mean this is all we know for sure
> It's kind of like we're stuck somewhere
> between a nightmare and a dream

Currie is at his best dealing with young Yarrow's altering perceptions of adult life. Not once does he dwindle into tired innocence-to-experience formulae; he provides, rather, incomparable and uncompromising portrayals of one mind's gradual accommodation to the outer world. Yarrow moves from solipsism to community, from self to world; in the process he grows from fragmentation to integration, from a childish perception of life and morality towards a more flexible understanding of experience. *Yarrow*, in other words, delineates a "process of identity" — a process by which character and reader alike are led toward a comprehension of that middle-earth, that peculiar area lying "somewhere / between a nightmare and a dream."

It is precisely this need to form a viable personality, to create a self able to confront the otherness of the world, which underlies Gail Fox's remarkable new book, *In Search of Living Things*. This admirable collection represents a definite maturation since her previous two productions, *Flight of the Pterodactyl* (1973) and *God's Odd Look* (1976). Stylistically, Fox has strengthened the evocative powers of her crisp, haiku-like verse; intellectually, she has infused this "elemental" or minimal form of lyrical expression with a more mature, more contoured response to the intricacies of everyday life. Rich, compassionate, prophetic, this is one of the finest, most exciting collections to be published in recent years.

Ms. Fox divides her book into six discrete sections, each dealing with specific aspects of her own life. We encounter Gail Fox the poet, the lover, the harassed mother, the estranged woman; Gail Fox the clumsy tourist, the bereaved sister, the inspired *vates*. In each case the poetry addresses the complexities of survival in a contemporary society, the difficulties of achieving sanity, stability and coherence in the face of ever-changing moral, social and psychological contexts. Admittedly Fox's poetic experiments do not always succeed — some of these poems, for example, are enigmatic, bordering on incomprehensible; they reflect shards rather than synthesized perceptions of individual experiences.

Such failures, however, are rare and for the most part Ms. Fox writes superb poetry which continues to resonate, revealing subtle implications, long after one's initial reading. One thinks immediately of Sappho, Catullus, and Blake; of Whitman, Plath, and oddly enough, Allen Ginsberg. Here is a "religious" poet who celebrates exuberantly, who praises the angelic flesh and the heavenly imagination, a prophet who teaches the possibilities of love, health and regeneration:

> Nothing lacking me, perfect I am,
> created of You, bright Sun, pale Moon,
> small stars and straight trees
>
> Joy extends everywhere
>
> And everyone's body is like lace, so delicate
> the cool eye warms and touches there and
> there

While black leaves at night sing and extend
and reach for light, red light of peace and
meaning
between the dying elms

I am forced beyond my death to see
the Night, black light and blacker leaves

Nothing lacking in me, my children, anyone,
the perfect Beings, I see this way, and then
the
moment passes

Above all else I want to see

Throughout this collection Fox continually verbalizes the most intense energies and experiences. Bone-hard, oracular, *In Search of Living Things* confirms Gail Fox as one of our most accomplished younger writers, deserving of the utmost critical attention.

GARY A. BOIRE

INNIS'S BIAS

WILLIAM CHRISTIAN, ed., *The Idea File of Harold Adams Innis.* Univ. of Toronto Press.

HAROLD INNIS'S "idea file" consists of almost 1500 notes taken by Innis in the period 1945-1952, now arranged in a "tentative" chronological order by William Christian. Christian has also attempted to trace the sources for many of the notes in Innis's reading of the period; his annotations in this area are impressively wide-ranging (like the reading of Innis himself), but they are not complete — leaving the student of Innis's intellectual development with some difficult investigation yet to do.

Innis's "idea file" belongs to that later part of his career in which he had taken up what Carl Berger has rightly termed his "almost obsessive" investigation of how technologies of communication biased the cultures that generated them. The notes here collected show Innis seeking out evidence that will support his thesis, evidence that at times reveals a brilliant ability to draw inferences and make connections, that at other times shows Innis forcing conclusions that his reading will not bear, and that on some occasions shows him producing a magpie's nest of theoretical statement out of unassimilated materials. Innis's notes are also revealing as an indicator of the further weakening of a writing style that had never been a model of lucidity and logic. The aphoristic, apothegmatic character of these jottings may be directly linked with the styles of *Empire and Communications* and *The Bias of Communication.* (There are connections, as well, in subject matter; the editor does not trace these, but a cursory comparison of the "idea file" with the books suggests that such connections would be worth pursuing.)

By the time of the period covered by this book, Innis's characteristic unit of thought had become the sentence, or even the sentence fragment. Thinking of this kind is characteristically productive of the detached "insight" but is totally unsuitable for sustained logical argument, argument of the kind necessary to make Innis's expansive investigation of human cultures through time wholly persuasive. As S. D. Clark observed, Innis's style was "cryptic"; and the notes in the "idea file" show the basis for this tantalizing obscurity.

Publication of this book raises two other important questions. Why, despite his growing anti-Americanism of these years, did Innis rely so heavily on American studies of communications and the corruption of culture? There are, proportionately, surprisingly few references to the substantial amount of British work in this area during the post-1945 period. And, of greater importance, does this collection provide further evidence that Innis is, as several reviewers of the book have claimed, one of Canada's foremost intellectuals? It is possible to argue, on

the basis of these notes, that Innis is the very model of a social scientist's intellectual, cut off (by his rural and Baptist upbringing) from any acquaintance with literary culture and the subtleties and complexities of language. His few references to literature show neither sensitivity nor inwardness, merely a penchant for ransacking it (through secondary sources) in search of "evidence." So Dickens is described as an author of "novels of sensationalism" ("proof" of the decline of standards) and Tolstoy's [*sic*] *The Brothers Karamazov* is vaguely referred to as an example of how the background of the Russian novel can be found in the tension between the Orthodox Church (with its Greek traditions) and the Russian state. More disturbing still is the number of books from the years 1945-52 that Innis seems to have ignored or overlooked: writers such as T. S. Eliot, Karl Popper, Gilbert Ryle, George Orwell, F. R. Leavis, Lionel Trilling, and Julian and Aldous Huxley, among many others, make no appearance in Innis's notes. Although he may have wanted to avoid the biases of the contemporary world, Innis demonstrates the narrowness of his intellectual position in avoiding at the same time those who might have helped to shape his ideas more coherently. Perhaps the time has come for students of Innis's thought to take a harder look at his own bias in favour of the oral tradition — not as an insight, but as a handicap.

DAVID JACKEL

* *Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story*, edited by Walter Stewart. Hurtig Publishers, $14.95. This is a disappointing book. At present, when the Canadian newspapers are in a state of major transition and crisis, one could have done with a close study, by involved people, of the industry, what is wrong with it and what could be done to give us a responsible and intelligent daily press. But the journalists who have contributed to *Canadian Newspapers* have taken the subtitle of the book, "The Inside Story" much too literally; what they produce is anecdote rather than analysis, and the sad old stereotype of the drunken newsman occupies too large a part of the stage. Yet even on this level the majority of the contributions are weak and boring. Alden Nowlan, Heather Robertson and Michael Enright present lively and interesting bits of what is essentially autobiography, but most of the others write so wretchedly that they demonstrate one at least of the reasons for the failure of our newspapers: the quality of their writers who almost invariably write journalese rather than journalism.

G.W.

** TED FERGUSON, *Desperate Siege: The Battle of Hong Kong*. Doubleday, $13.95. There is a way of writing history that transforms it into stage melodrama. Crisis and rhetoric loom larger-than-life, and historical personages are made to have flamboyant conversations, as though the historian had attended with a romanticizing tape recorder. Yet it is true that in moments of crisis people often do utter the clichés of melodrama. And Ferguson is to be praised for interviewing the survivors of the 18-day battle for Hong Kong, and for reconstructing the events of 1941. The battle between ill-equipped but determined Canadian troops and the equally determined Japanese deserves to be a better known episode in Canadian history, because it tells both of courage and inefficiency, of spirit and of a failure to communicate openly, of a capacity for endurance and, perhaps least attractive, of an apparent willingness to undervalue the commitments and achievements of the past. There is a reforming impulse to the story Ferguson tells. His evangelical style may well be a means to that end.

W.N.

* MARGARET LAURENCE, *The Christmas Birthday Story*. McClelland & Stewart, $9.95. Any story Laurence tells takes on her voice. We become aware of the teller, as here, where (in a form designed to engage children as listeners and to allow them to visualize the scenes they are told about) she recounts the story of the birth of Christ. Unfortunately Helen Lucas's illustrations negate the book. They are static, and they are riddled with a brand of cuteness that does not serve the dynamic symbolism of the Christian narrative.

W.N.

opinions and notes

"LARK ASCENDING"

IN 1927 MAZO DE LA ROCHE'S *Jalna* was awarded a first prize of ten thousand dollars in the *Atlantic Monthly* fiction competition. The award brought her considerable attention, a dramatic change in lifestyle and "longed-for independence."[1] During the autumn of that year she vacationed at Rockport, Massachusetts, where she began work on the first chapter of *Whiteoaks*, a sequel to *Jalna*. Despite a six month period during which she was unable to write, Whiteoaks was completed the following year. Then, with *Jalna*'s sales soaring and her fear of a permanent block to her writing overcome, de la Roche and her cousin Caroline Clement made plans that reflected their new sense of freedom: "We felt that a chapter in our lives was closed. A new world was opening up."[2] The "new world" was to be the Old World, the world she had dreamed of visiting since her childhood, the world which was to provide the setting and inspiration for several short stories, plays and novels.

De la Roche embarked from New York for her first trans-Atlantic crossing in the winter of 1929 and celebrated her fiftieth birthday in Taormina, Sicily, where she remained until May. During this period she wrote several short stories including "Quartet"; this story, in its general outlines so reminiscent of Henry James's studies of American and European manners, portrays an escape from drabness and confinement to an exhilarating new life in the Old World and the discovery of an unexpected and unpleasant complexity in that world. It anticipates *Lark Ascending* (1932),[3] a novel which offers de la Roche's most detailed exploration of the clash between North American and European cultures and suggests her own complicated responses to her new life abroad.

The settings of *Lark Ascending* — Saltport, Massachusetts, and Tramontana, Sicily — are fictional counterparts of Rockport, where de la Roche vacationed late in the summer of 1927, and Taormina, the seaside village which she first visited in the winter of 1929 and again in 1930. Her autobiography and her letters reveal the extent of her sense of excitement and independence during these months and are filled with detailed descriptions of events, places and individuals that were eventually integrated into *Lark Ascending*.[4] When she returned to England in November of 1931, she was already deeply engrossed in the idea of a new novel:

> During those months of absence from England I had written some short stories and I had it in mind to begin a new novel, something quite different from the Whiteoaks novels — for I thought I had done with them when *Finch's Fortune* was finished. The scene of this new novel was to open in New England, then move on to Sicily. When I told Ellery Sedgwick of this he implored me to stick to the country I knew — to write of Canada, not of New England. But I persisted and when he read the completed manuscript he said he very much liked it.[5]

Work on the novel continued after she settled at the home she had rented in Devon with two recently adopted children:

> Now with my enlarged family about me, I worked somewhat erratically on *Lark Ascending*. Ellery Sedgwick's disapproval of the setting of the story had affected me. Sometimes I could not write for depression. ... Sometimes I wrote with exhilaration, feeling I was back once more in Sicily.[6]

The novel, the first since 1926 in which she turned away from the Whiteoaks, was completed in 1932.

Despite the reservations concerning

Lark Ascending expressed by some of de la Roche's friends and literary advisors,[7] the novel was generally well received as the following remarks from a review by V. S. Pritchett suggest:

> The book is a trick, but how expertly the trick is concealed! How convincing it is that her people should have decided to leave the deadness of Cape Cod for a hair-brained voyage to Sicily, how unexpected, rich, yet not improbable their sea-change. She is exuberant without running to nerves and wordy excitement; she gives her cramped characters a change of air in order that they may have a full release and development, and one has a growing confidence that she is the right person to imagine it generously.[8]

Several similarly positive reviews of the novel appeared in Canadian and American journals and de la Roche felt that her confidence in the book was vindicated.[9]

Lark Ascending is typical of de la Roche's writing in its strengths and weaknesses and reveals many of the essential features of her work: humour, irony, a blend of realism with romance, sentimentalism and melodrama, the translation of private experience into fiction, a preoccupation with characters in search of greater independence and self fulfillment, and a balancing awareness of the negative effects of aggressive individualism. Like many of de la Roche's works representing a departure from the *Whiteoak Chronicles*, *Lark Ascending* has been virtually ignored or forgotten. Yet, despite its flaws and limitations, it remains an interesting and suggestive novel which contributes to a more complete and accurate understanding of one of the most prolific and popular Canadian writers of the first half of this century and allows a clearer perception of the extent, variety and significance of her contribution to Canadian literature.

The novel is related not only to the many fictional studies of Americans abroad by such well known authors as Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton and Ernest Hemingway but also to the long tradition of Canadian novels by writers such as James de Mille, Sara Jeannette Duncan, Mordecai Richler, Norman Levine, and Robertson Davies concerned with delineating cultures distinctly different from or strangely similar to our own. It also adds a further dimension to the image of Americans in de la Roche's writing[10] and suggests both her view of Europe and perhaps some of the reasons for her decision to spend a large portion of her own life overseas.

Lark Ascending reveals de la Roche's sympathy for the dream of freedom and self fulfillment and her view that Europe offered the context in which that dream might be best achieved. There is, however, a strong sense of dialectic in this novel and European civilization is identified not only with colour, vitality, refinement and historical richness but also with empty gestures, indifference, deceit, and moral corruption. Similarly, the romantic dream of independence is linked not only with a free exploration of life's possibilities but also with a life of self gratification which is itself narrow and confining. Although these tensions remain essentially unresolved, they provide the framework for the novel's dramatization of contrasting cultural characteristics and its examination of individualism and independence. Ultimately, *Lark Ascending* transcends national or cultural boundaries and moves to an affirmation of freedom and love, appropriate alternatives to the ominous implications of the novel's sparse references to the Depression and Mussolini's growing power.

Many nationalities are represented in *Lark Ascending*, but the major figures are the "quartet" of restless Americans seeking an alternative to the monotonous and repressive conditions of puritan New England. The central figure, Fay Palmas, owns a well worn copy of *Huckleberry Finn* and dreams of escaping from cramp-

ing confinement to a freer, more resonant life. The territory she lights out for, however, is not beyond the limits of civilization in the American west but in the highly civilized and sophisticated Old World. With her once fine singing voice and her intense longing to rise out of the narrow and stifling conditions of the suspicious, reserved and inbred village of Saltport, Massachusetts, Fay is, of course, the lark of the novel's title. A typical romance heroine, she is a "passionate pilgrim" in search of a new identity. Her travelling companions include her devoted admirer, Purley Bond, her cousin, Josie Froward, and her son Diego.

Like Finch Whiteoak (*Whiteoak Chronicles*), Lindley (*A Boy in the House*), Joan Elliot (*The Thunder of New Wings*) and numerous other imaginative artists in de la Roche's fiction, Diego resents the alien environment in which he finds himself and aspires to a new life. Proud, aloof and self centred, his closest attachment is to his mother with whom he shares a deep-seated fear of entrapment and a reckless determination to achieve self fulfillment. In a brief synopsis of the novel, de la Roche describes Diego and Fay as Yankee idealists, "self-sufficient, self-centred — responding to an inward urge rather than to outward circumstances."[11]

During the transatlantic voyage, Fay's feelings often seem to mirror de la Roche's reactions to her own new-found freedom; she experiences a "wild joy in her escape from ... years of hateful bondage" and eagerly anticipates "the Old World with the rapturous hope that spurred early explorers on toward the New."[12] She assumes a variety of poses in a frantic effort "to absorb in haste what life had so long denied her" and, since "truth was congenitally distasteful to her," she fabricates a glamorous past. At Tenerife, she meets Gian Montleone, an impoverished count from an ancient Sicilian family. Montleone urges her to visit his home in Tramontana and, driven by "a primitive determination not to allow conventions to deprive her of this romantic escape from the tameness of ordinary relations," she agrees and compels the other members of the group to join her.

Fay's involvement with Montleone parallels Diego's affair with Varvara Wolkonsky. Varvara is typical of de la Roche's passionate and instinctive earth mothers. Born in Russia, raised in Paris and at home almost anywhere, she describes herself as a " 'worshipper of life' " and represents a degree of independence and experience and a lack of constraint which sharply contrast with that of the four Americans. Her exotic background, her slanting eyes, the sensuousness and simplicity of her movements, her laconic acceptance of life, her husky voice and unrepressed sexuality recall similar characteristics of Delight Mainprize (*Delight*), Fawnie Sharroe (*Possession*), and a variety of figures in the Jalna novels: "All that she did was so right and natural. She lived her life as naturally and with no more ostentation and pretence than a deer in a forest."

Varvara fosters an increased individualism and spontaneity in Diego's paintings including one in which she appears as "a goatgirl squatting nude among her ... horned, strange-eyed goats." The painting reinforces an earlier implication that Diego's fascination with his new environment is partly the result of his awareness of the Old World's willingness to acknowledge and even celebrate its primitive and vital roots in the past.

Diego's involvement with Varvara and the Nariskins, expatriate Russian artists, alters his art and his relationship with Josie who has previously shared in his painting by shaping the chaotic energy of his work into a more serene and disciplined form. The Europeans urge Diego to complete his works without Josie's in-

terference and warn that her tampering with his paintings removes their emotion, vitality and unique vision. Ironically, the independence which Varvara defends as a necessary adjunct to a satisfying and vital artistic vision is the cause of the failure of her relationship with Diego. He is attracted by her beauty, inspired by her vitality and independence yet fearful of her strength. Her efforts at seduction fail because he associates sexual experience with a crippling loss of power and independence.

Diego shares this obsession with power and self-sufficiency with Fay, who, soon after her arrival in Sicily, attempts to make Montleone "subservient to her in will." In this relationship as in many others in her writing, de la Roche reveals a fascination with power and powerlessness and the manner in which power is gained, manipulated and lost in human relationships. In *Lark Ascending* power is associated with individual freedom and self-assurance which are identified through Diego and Fay with an egocentric and often thoroughly selfish appetite for self-fulfillment and independence. Fay and Diego share "their concentration on their own needs" and draw energy from their separate yet similar commitments to independent and vital lives. Fay's continuing need for Diego reflects her desperate need for an objective image of independence and self sufficiency. She perceives her new role in life as an opportunity to fashion a unique dramatic performance without the interference or self sacrifice which have previously stifled her existence.

Yet here, as elsewhere in her fiction, de la Roche acknowledges that the romantic pursuit of independence can lead to a form of self-regarding individualism which may result in uninhibited exploitation, alienation and confinement. Fay and Diego attempt to separate themselves from their conventional pasts, pasts which involved self sacrifice and a sense of restriction. The energy, creativity and spontaneity displayed in their quests for freedom are attractive; nevertheless, they become increasingly isolated and unrelated. Moreover, attention is repeatedly drawn to the relationship between their dream of independence and their childlike selfishness. Fay "never [forgets] herself"; her thoughts are "egotistically childlike." Like an "exuberant child" she carelessly absorbs the solicitude of others and greedily seeks new experiences and greater self fulfillment. Although Diego's selfish search for independence appears as partly the counterpart to the commitment to and development of his artistic vision, Fay's increasing lack of relatedness is not identified with any similar goal and appears at times as a pathetic consequence of the fears associated with her enclosed and life-denying past and her romantic longing for a life fully lived. In contrast, the loyalty, honesty, restraint and selflessness of Josie Froward and, in particular, Purley Bond appear increasingly attractive. Their failure to adapt to the Old World appears less the result of a lack of wisdom or maturity than a conscious unwillingness to accept deceit and moral corruption as inevitable components of a sophisticated and historically rich culture. Josie's loss of her amber tinted glasses in one of the final scenes of the novel suggests her new-found willingness to confront life more directly and her growing appreciation for Bond's "sturdy power of taking life as it came, without fear, or irritation, or self-assertion."

The complexity of the Old World and the failure to recognize its proud and ancient heritage are the focus of attention following Fay's marriage to Monteleone. When Fay converts a portion of his ancestral home, the Villa Benedittini, into an antique shop, Montleone's resentment of her aggressive acquisitiveness and the process by which he is gradually dispossessed

of his past results in his adulterous relationship with Varvara. The choice of Montleone's garden for Fay's discovery of this "dark sea of knowledge" is carefully prepared for throughout the novel. Fay initially regards the garden as "a dream"; however, the descriptive details hint at her innocence and emphasize the complex reality of the world she has entered:

> Neglected flower-beds pressed between and ran over in urgent foliage. Cyclamen showed blue and violet and narcissi starry white. Oranges and lemons glinted. Urns placed on the walls overflowed in hanging flowers and tendrils. From a gargoyle face, set in a stone niche, a jet of water fell bubbling into a basin. A flock of doves that had been feeding on the terrace rose, beating their wings, and found perches for themselves on a wall and tree. One settled on the head of a marble figure of a man, weather-stained and clothed in moss.

In the later scene, the garden, transformed by moonlight, is associated with Fay's painful disillusionment as she confronts the sordid destruction of her dream.

Fay's decision to separate from Montleone is less the result of his affair with Varvara than a response to the restraint she feels in his presence, a restraint closely related to the clearly delineated contrasts between Americans and Europeans. With Montleone, Fay experiences a loss of power she associates with his familiarity with "the secret of an old civilization." In his presence she often feels "young and inexperienced," robbed of her strength and self-assurance. She fails to understand the complexities of Montleone's nature and refuses to see "that her inexperience often struck a jarring note on his sensitive nerves." Varvara provides a further insight into the essential difference between Fay and Montleone:

> "Yes, you look very wonderful, but — you are a child. You know nothing really. Neither you nor Diego. You have learned a little — yes — since Gian and I have had you in hand, but you are still — very boring. You are many centuries behind us. It is only for us to tolerate you while we must — while there is nothing better. No — no — do not be angry! — you have much to make up to you for what you lack. Your strength — your newness — your aggressiveness. . . . See, you have taken all that Montleone had — his house — his garden — his name — even, as well as you can, you have imitated his way of speaking. He has nothing left but his spirit, his knowledge, come down to him from Romans and Greeks and Saracens and Moors. You cannot take that. You cannot understand that. . . . That is left for me."

Her comments reflect resentment for the American intruders who thoughtlessly seek enrichment at the expense of the rightful heirs of the culture.

Despite the destruction of Fay's life with Montleone and Varvara's hostile image of the Europeanized Americans, Fay and Diego manage to achieve their dreams of free and regenerated lives in the Old World. Shortly after the disclosure of Montleone's infidelity, Josie, fearing that Fay may attempt suicide, follows her to the top of the Teatro Greco. There she recognizes that Fay is rehearsing "her new part in life"; she watches as Fay draws forth "a reed-pipe of the kind played by the Sicilian pipers in the street": "A high note, shrill and tremulous, issued from the pipe. It was followed by one of the wild tunes, charged with passion and vitality, that had been played among these mountains in the pagan days."

These "wild tunes" are distinctly different from the melancholy expressions of entrapment and the longing for freedom identified with the negro spirituals Fay's broken voice has attempted in the past. The scene confirms Fay's commitment to her new role and, despite Varvara's warning that Americans inevitably fail to grasp the spirit of European life, emphasizes her increasing awareness of the complex relationship between the formal tradition associated with the richness of the European cultural heritage and the primitive

vitality and freedom associated with its pagan past. Fay separates from Montleone but remains a Sicilian Contessa living in Montleone's ancient villa and ironically delighting in the attention of American tourists. Like de la Roche, who had returned to England in 1932 intending to make her home there, she is exhilarated by her new life and, like de la Roche who continued to expand the saga of the Whiteoak family, she maintains her lifestyle by selling symbols of a dying tradition with which she herself now identifies.

Like Fay, Diego continues to find value in the Old World. His adaptation is confirmed by his vision of Silenus, the Chief of the older Satyrs and companion to Dionysius:

> he made out a figure with rounded back and elbows crooked as though a pipe were held to the lips. He saw horns, and brighter eyes beneath the horns — a figure that moved with animal grace and careless strength. It moved to the rhythm of an air that was like the breathing of the earth, the turn of the leaves in sleep.... He was made one with the past of those mountains.... His present and his future he would give to them.

Diego's vision of Silenus, like Fay's trance-like performance at the Teatro Greco, confirms his adjustment to a new life in a world rich in pagan and mythical associations. Unlike Purley Bond and Josie Froward, who feel strangely unreal and out of place in Sicily, Diego achieves a sense of identity and harmony that provides new imaginative energy and a fresh spirit of artistic dedication. For Diego and Fay Palmas, the artist and the actress, the Old World offers a richer milieu, a new freedom and an opportunity to translate dreams into reality, a strange reversal of the American myth, yet one which is perhaps inevitable in the work of an author whose own country has shown such ambivalent attitudes towards its American neighbours and its European ancestors.

Lark Ascending provides a sympathetic view of the romantic longing to escape the oppressive limitations of conventional order and the quest for greater independence, creativity and self fulfillment. It also acknowledges that not everyone can participate in this transformation. Purley Bond and Josie Froward find the Old World too ambiguous and too sophisticated; often they seem awkard and confused in their confrontation with the more experienced Europeans. Too innocent and bound by "an eradicable vein of Puritanism," they cannot exchange the simplicity of their past lives for the richer yet flawed culture of Europe. Their decision to return to America reflects a clear awareness of the distinctions between sophistication and culture, and in some ways their failure to adapt, and their newly discovered love for one another, appear more important than the new identities of their fellow Americans. Fay and Diego find that the Old World offers new opportunities for self fulfillment and a promise of more freedom. Their choices are understandable, yet *Lark Ascending* suggests that the pursuit of independence can have ironic and unpleasant consequences because the world of the self, of fidelity only to the self is lonely and confining. For Diego, the artist, the acceptance of the loneliness and isolation that accompany his search for freedom may be necessary, but for Fay the lack of relatedness arising from her need for self-gratification and her yearning to be free lead only to new forms of imprisonment. Her dream of freedom ends in a narrow and enclosed life ironically unlike her original vision of a life of possibilities but perhaps more acceptable to her because it is self imposed. The final scene of the novel sharpens the ironies as Fay appears years later in her role as a Contessa. Dressed in black, she successfully conveys an atmosphere of mystery and an impression of wide ranging experience in her

encounter with tourists from Massachusetts. After a brief exchange, she leaves them, and passing through a gate into the enclosed garden of her villa, she elicits an ironically appropriate response from the outsiders: "What a tragic figure."

Lark Ascending acknowledges the significance of the pursuit of freedom and self-fulfillment. At the same time it dramatizes the forms of imprisonment that a lack of responsibility and relatedness can create. Similarly, the sense of the cultural and imaginative richness of life in Europe is balanced by an awareness of weariness, decay, boredom and decadence; and American narrowness and materialism are weighed against American enthusiasm and idealism. These multiple contrasts are not resolved, and *Lark Ascending*, like other novels by de la Roche, suggests that neither America nor Europe represents an ideal, and that neither self-regarding independence nor a narrow and life-denying repression is an acceptable mode of existence. Ultimately the central emphasis of *Lark Ascending* lies neither in its portrayal of the clash of cultures nor in its presentation of individual quests for freedom but in its questioning of the limits of individualism and its affirmation of individual freedom and creativity based on a respect for honesty, charity and love.

NOTES

1 Mazo de la Roche, *Ringing the Changes* (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 197.

2 *Ringing the Changes*, p. 202.

3 The de la Roche papers at the University of Toronto include the manuscript of a four act play adapted from *Lark Ascending*.

4 *Ringing the Changes*, p. 208.

5 *Ringing the Changes*, pp. 223-24.

6 *Ringing the Changes*, p. 225.

7 St. John Ervine was particularly worried by what he regarded as the novel's diffuse and episodic structure: "Your sense of character is remarkably keen, and you write dialogue that begs to be spoken. I found these qualities in *Lark Ascending*, where I found also the faults that are in your play: that is to say, you can create people, but you cannot make them do anything. The first half of *Lark Ascending* had me hopping with joy; the second half sent me flat on my back with boredom.... The character-drawing is superb, but you leave your people lying about in heaps." (University of Toronto, de la Roche Papers; St. John Ervine, letter to Mazo de la Roche, November 25, 1932.)

8 V. S. Pritchett, Review of *Lark Ascending*, *New Statesman and Nation* (September 3, 1932), p. 262.

9 University of Toronto, de la Roche Papers; Mazo de la Roche, letter to Katherine Hale, October 12, 1932.

10 See J. G. Snell, "The United States at Jalna," *Canadian Literature*, 66 (Autumn 1975), pp. 31-40.

11 University of Toronto, de la Roche Papers.

12 This and subsequent quotations are from Mazo de la Roche, *Lark Ascending* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932).

DOUGLAS DAYMOND

THREE VIEWS OF HAIG-BROWN

I. *The Intellectual Fisherman*

WHEN RODERICK HAIG-BROWN died suddenly in the late fall of 1976, he left behind him a great legacy of published works — some twenty-five books in all: books for the young, two successful adult novels, some richly personal essays, and a host of works on fish and fishing, most of which have become classics in the vast world of angling literature. In spite of his many other activities, he always considered himself primarily as a writer.

Perhaps this was inevitable, for he was born into a strong intellectual environment. His grandfather, William Haig-Brown (d. 1907), a fine writer and a good scholar, had been head of Charterhouse, one of England's great public schools; his father, Allen Roderick, killed

in action on the Western Front in 1918, was a master at Lancing College in Sussex, a noted athlete, an ardent angler, and a frequent writer; and his maternal grandfather, Alfred Pope, a brewer of good ale and twice mayor of Dorchester, was a well known antiquarian and a close friend of Thomas Hardy.

Rod had his first article published when he was sixteen (a delightful piece of juvenilia about fishing on the River Frome in Dorset); and at the age of twenty-three his first book, *Silver, the Life Story of an Atlantic Salmon*, came off the presses in London. Dedicated to a very young nephew, it still remains a little classic. But the rest of his works were written in this country and he always looked upon himself as a Canadian author. And justly so, for his entire adult life unfolded in British Columbia where from 1926 on (with the exception of a brief period back in England) he worked as logger, trapper, fisherman, hunter, and guide before settling down as a most respected citizen in Campbell River.

Today in the archives of the University of British Columbia there is a rich collection of Haig-Brown manuscripts: the originals of his published works, hundreds of letters to innumerable friends and associates, drafts of works done for radio and television, and many drafts, too, of works that were never published during his lifetime — principally essays and short stories. And it is from these archival materials that Valerie Haig-Brown, Rod's eldest daughter, has drawn the nineteen selections that constitute *Woods and River Tales*. With the exception of three or four, these are tales never before published. Some perhaps had been rejected by editors; and some undoubtedly had been withheld by the author himself.

The chosen works have been arranged chronologically. The first eight were written in the years 1930 and 1931 when Haig-Brown was in his early twenties (he was born in 1908); the next five between 1935 and 1939; and the last six in the immediate post-war period, up to about 1950. They were called "tales" in the title, but this I find misleading. True, some might be called short stories, but basically they are character studies, examinations of the reactions of men and women, young and old, as they encounter the stresses inherent in a frontier society — a society of west coast lumberjacks, hunters, trappers, prospectors, farmers and fishermen, for this book fundamentally reveals Haig-Brown's own working world and the world of his early friends and acquaintances.

Though some of the earliest works are somewhat tentative, coming as they do from the pen of a young and still developing writer, the book as a whole is highly readable. The style generally is firm and condensed, and the characters that emerge are, for the most part, memorable. Some of the dialogue is undoubtedly the product of the author's imagination but it is so convincingly handled that we do not stop to question its authenticity.

With little question, the best of the tales come from the post-war period. "The Wharf" (published in *The New Yorker* in 1950) is the somewhat sad story of a young English boy who, on the eve of his return to England, caught his first great salmon, then suddenly lost it as he was weighing it in at the Tyee Club in Campbell River. "The Sweep" looks at a local chimney sweep who was overly fond of gin. And "Black Fisherman" is a loving account of the author's Labrador dog, Souse, that became an expert retriever of cutthroat and steelhead from the fast waters of the Campbell River. The whole volume ends with "Uncle Reg," a warm tribute to Reg Pidcock, the author's neighbour and deep friend for many years.

Al Purdy's preface, entitled "Cougar Hunter," was originally published shortly

before Haig-Brown's death. The caption is misleading, for Haig-Brown was a cougar hunter for but a short period, and the work itself is little more than a quick look at his career as writer and magistrate. It has but slight critical worth and, because of the date of its composition, has little relationship with *Woods and River Tales.* This is regrettable.

Though this volume adds little to Haig-Brown's established reputation, it does reveal the emergence of his talents and will also stand as a valuable record of west coast frontier life in what is already becoming the distant past.

S. E. READ

II. *The Naturalist*

I HAVE ALWAYS ESTEEMED Roderick Haig-Brown as a man and admired him as a writer — perhaps Canada's best essayist and a late master in the kind of descriptive narrative of outdoors adventures at which the great natural historians of the Victorian era excelled. I have seen him as a worthy companion not only of Isaak Walton (though his interests were less bounded by the angler's needs than Walton's) — but also of H. W. Bates, Thomas Waterton, W. H. Hudson, and the Darwin who wrote *The Voyage of the Beagle.* And there, landlocked in a past that ended almost twenty years ago, are the books that prove the claim: *A River Never Sleeps, The Measure of the Year* (which perhaps contains his most evocative essays), and that splendid seasonal tetralogy, *Fisherman's Spring, Fisherman's Summer, Fisherman's Fall,* and *Fisherman's Winter.*

Remembering those fine and sometimes great books, I cannot do other than voice my disappointment with *Bright Waters, Bright Fish.* It is being presented as a "testament," as Haig-Brown's "last book." In fact it is a text that Haig-Brown wrote, in the months before he died, for Fisheries and Ocean Canada; its subject is sports fishing as a social and economic resource. Its size hardly makes it a book; prelims and illustrations (often rather poor ones) take up 67 of its 140 pages, so that there are only 73 pages of actual text, which hardly makes a book — and at $19.95 ($75.00 for the presentation edition!) is expensive reading even in an inflationary decade. Moreover, *Bright Waters, Bright Fish* is not a "testament" so much as a combination of polemic and report, arguing the merits of various official approaches to sports fishing and presenting its moral and financial advantages to the community. Almost any of Haig-Brown's earlier books would have had a better claim to be called a testament in the sense of evoking his joy in life and in the world of nature.

Obviously the book has an interest to anyone concerned with Haig-Brown as writer and public personality, but it cannot be regarded as more than a small and belated pendant to his career. And its lack of real inspiration and originality leads one into a reconsideration of the conformation of Haig-Brown's career.

He began to publish when he was quite young. When *Silver: the life of an Atlantic Salmon* appeared in 1931, he was 23, and he was 24 when *Pool and Rapid* came out in 1932. From that point his books appeared in quite rapid succession — books on fishing and natural history, novels and juvenile fiction, until the appearance of *Fisherman's Fall* in 1964.

Then began the long silence. Year after year passed. Haig-Brown wrote a few articles, became involved in some films, but no longer wrote books. Those who admired his writing were reluctant to admit that this lapse in creativity would last, and tried to regard it as a passing phase, due to his immersion in public activities, as a magistrate, as Chancellor of the University of Victoria, as a member of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission.

But now, with this final *Bright Waters, Bright Fish* reading like a faint reflection of what Haig-Brown once wrote, one begins to speculate whether the relation between the writing and the public work might not be interpreted differently. Many writers who start publishing when they are young, and who have a comparatively simple message to offer, come to the point when the permutations and combinations are worked out and the writing loses its urgency. It is not that they are mentally or emotionally burnt out. It is merely that all has been said, and to write more would be a repetition, using one's old ideas and one's old way of writing once too often. This, I am sad to admit, is what has happened in *Bright Waters, Bright Fish*; the sparkle of the title rarely glitters in the text. It will complete the canon, indeed, for those who have treasured Haig-Brown's writings, but it will do little more than add another volume to the shelf. Virtually, Haig-Brown fell silent in 1964, and I think — though he never said it — this happened because he felt he had written enough and there were other activities to which his energy might — at that stage in his life — be more productively devoted. It was not the life of public service that sapped Haig-Brown's energies as a writer. It was the slowing of those energies that made him retreat into his public self.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

III. *The Story-teller*

WOODS AND RIVER TALES is announced as the first of three books of previously uncollected writing "from the world of Roderick Haig-Brown." Actually, the book reveals that there are several "worlds" portrayed in Haig-Brown's work: the world of the west coast logger, the world of the woodsman and trapper, the world of the sport fisherman, and the world of Campbell River itself — the community where Haig-Brown spent most of his adult life. The stories date from three distinct phases of Haig-Brown's career, but their ordering in the book is not strictly chronological. Rather, the stories are arranged to modulate from simple tales of outdoor adventure, apparently intended for popular magazines, to more loosely constructed personal reminiscences. Arranged in this way, they make a significant comment on Haig-Brown's strengths as a writer, for they demonstrate how much better he is at the informal essay than he is at fiction.

The earliest stories were written in 1930 and 1931, when Haig-Brown had briefly returned to England after his first youthful venture into the logging camps and woods of the Pacific coast. These stories take place in the predominantly male world that forms the background for most of Haig-Brown's fiction. In this world, life is lived by a simple, elemental code. Whether a man confronts the wilderness or confronts his fellow man, he must assert his manhood — usually by a decisive physical feat, or by standing up to older, more experienced loggers. In other stories older men reaffirm their manhood — both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others — by decisively meeting difficult situations. They take the action that shows them to be "men," even if this choice works against their own happiness.

In the most striking of these stories, the primitive logger's world is shown to be breaking down under the pressure of "progress." The powerful but slow-witted Johnny, "last and mightiest of the old-time loggers," dimly realizes that mechanization has made his brute strength obsolete. Once he was the foreman of a camp; now he is merely a hook-tender. Rather than face the eclipse of his manhood, Johnny chooses to die by pitting his two hundred pound body against an eight ton log. The movement of the story is

tragic, but the characterization, as in so much of Haig-Brown's fiction, is shallow. Haig-Brown's materials might have led to the creation of Paul Bunyan-like legends. Instead, the logging stories often read like bad Jack London. Haig-Brown's presentation of this world does not match the deftness of Martin Allerdale Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West* (1908) or the near-mythic resonance of Jack Hodgins's recent evocation of the same world.

The second group of stories dates from 1935 to 1939, the years immediately following Haig-Brown's marriage and settlement in Campbell River. Two of these pieces simply shift the themes of the early stories to a more populated rural setting. The need to prove yourself a man is the theme of a brief sketch about a youth walking at night on a dark woodland road; he is frightened by an animal but will not confess his fright to the father who sent him out into the night. The bravery of an animal (rather than a human) is the basis of a story about a rooster who, with the connivance of an admiring farmhand, wins a reprieve from execution. Another story embellishes a fishing tale which later, in a less fictionalized form, became part of *A River Never Sleeps* (1946). The two other stories from this period show Haig-Brown moving towards the anecdotal form and sporting subjects with which he is most closely identified. One piece relates a series of hunting and fishing stories concerning a remarkable dog that Haig-Brown once owned; the other tells of a winter trek on snowshoes during which Haig-Brown displayed his qualities as an outdoorsman.

The third group of stories dates from about 1950, after Haig-Brown's duties as magistrate had made him intimately acquainted with his Campbell River community. Two relatively weak stories return to the logging and trapping worlds of the early fiction, but four stronger pieces deal with the same local subjects that Haig-Brown was concurrently using to express the essentially pastoral vision of his book about life in Campbell River, *Measure of the Year* (1950). "The Wharf" is a sentimental vignette about a young English boy's quest for a trophy salmon. It was first published in *The New Yorker*, and has the evanescent plot and bitter-sweet sadness of much writing from that magazine. Three other stories each focus on a particular "character" from the Campbell River area. They do not try to achieve a well-plotted climax, but dwell lovingly on the eccentric personalities of the central figures.

The stories in *Woods and River Tales* demonstrate Haig-Brown's versatility, but they will not significantly affect his reputation. This is a book primarily for the confirmed admirer. Readers who are new to Haig-Brown's several "worlds" would still do best to turn to one of his collections of angling essays or to *Measure of the Year*.

T. D. MACLULICH

ETHEL WILSON

1888-1980

To think of Ethel Wilson is, for me, to think of wry humour, of graceful, elegant prose, of delight in nature, of strong and solitary women characters, and, most of all, of Donne's phrase "No man is an Iland," which she used as the epigraph to *Hetty Dorval* and in other places, and which is central to her view of the universe and man's place in it. Ethel Wilson is a humanist whose humanism is existential and transcendental. All people, in her view, while necessarily asserting the freedom to be and to express themselves, are bound up with others. *Swamp Angel*'s Mrs. Severance, quoting Donne's words, even goes beyond his Christian metaphor to embrace all creation.

Often it is through interaction with the natural world that her characters acquire an awareness of self, and of that self's relationship with other human beings, with God, and with the cosmos. Specifically, the mountains, trees, and lakes of British Columbia form an integral part of "the miraculous interweaving of creation" in the experience of many of Mrs. Wilson's characters. What the narrator of *Swamp Angel* calls "the essence of place" has complex significance in Mrs. Wilson's fiction. For Ethel Wilson continually reminds her reader of the paradox which everyone must contend with. While acknowledging our responsibility as "a part of the maine," each of us is essentially alone. "I am ... like a swimmer," says her character Maggie Lloyd. "Swimming is like living, it is done alone." But this essential aloneness must be balanced by an involvement with others.

Reflecting on Ethel Wilson's fiction, and her humanism, brings me to consider her gallery of women characters — Maggie Lloyd and Hetty Dorval, Lilly and Topaz, Mrs. Forrester and Mrs. Golightly. Most of them demonstrate Maggie's sentiment — that living is done alone. Often, they are shown rejecting an untenable life to forge a new one, or facing new experiences with courage and determination. And Maggie, for me, is the most memorable of them all.

The concern of these women for others may be seen as a form of mothering, a taking on of the maternal role, which is social and psychological as well as physical. Thus do Mrs. Wilson's women work out their need to balance independence with commitment — a paradoxical combination which later women writers have also discovered a need to come to terms with. Like Eva of Constance Beresford-Howe's *Book of Eve* (whose first reaction to freedom is "I opened my eyes into a perfect self-centred bliss without past or future, and rejoiced in everything I saw"), today's women protagonists are discovering that they cannot opt out of life for "self-centred bliss," but must become, or remain, involved with others. Like Rachel of Margaret Laurence's *Jest of God*, their mothering may differ from that implied by the traditional concept of the role. To return to Maggie's swimming analogy, "one does not stay, ever, in a lagoon." Thus *Swamp Angel* in particular can be seen as an early feminist novel, for while the concern for independence and self-expression is one aspect of Mrs. Wilson's fundamental humanism, it remains true today, as it was in 1954, that to achieve these goals is more difficult and more complex for women than for men.

Mrs. Wilson's stylistic skill is best revealed in her adroit handling of the narrative voice. Her third-person narrator often takes on individuality and personality. At the same time, the tone of her essays leads to the conviction that aspects of her own personality are inherent in the sophisticated, ironic, narrative voice of much of her fiction. Yet, while wit, gentle irony and whimsical humour characterize her writing, it possesses at times a broader humour. Witness the "comic-strip" vignettes which reveal without comment the ludicrous Eddie Vardoe and his Ireen. But amusement at the foibles of the frailer members of the human race is always tinged with compassion. This is equally true of the short stories which, of all Mrs. Wilson's works, have received the least attention. With their polish, grace, deceptive simplicity, and unobtrusive use of symbols, they recall A. J. M. Smith's words about poetry, "... the worth of a hard thing done / Perfectly, as though without care."

Of international stature, Ethel Wilson's fiction remains quintessentially Canadian. The regionalism of much of her writing and the sense of commitment of her characters to the community, to others, situate

her in the mainstream of Canadian writing, as does her skill with the short story, the genre in which much of our most exciting writing is being done today. Her creation of strong women characters links her with Margaret Laurence, her irony and paradox with Alice Munro, the elegant polish of her short stories with Mavis Gallant, her superb craft with Audrey Thomas, and her humour with most women writing in Canada today. She was part of a generation which brought Canadian fiction into a new and exciting age.

LORRAINE MCMULLEN

JOHN COULTER

1888-1980

WITH THE DEATH OF John Coulter, Canada's oldest living dramatist and "Dean of Canadian playwrights," an important epoch in the history of Canadian theatre has come to an end. Coulter belonged to that group of dramatists, either born or educated in the British Isles, who wrote polished, sophisticated plays about Canada and Great Britain, influenced by their English, Welsh, Scottish, or Irish forebears in the art of playwriting. It was this group who prepared the groundwork for later indigenous Canadian plays.

The last of the "old guard," Coulter was a leader. With others he attempted in the 1930's to initiate a transition in English Canadian theatre from its devotion to the plays of other countries to its first tentative steps towards the creation and production of a national drama. Such authentically Canadian drama as is being produced today is the result of much dogged persistence in demanding of young Canadian writers a body of work true to the spirit and nuances of Canadian life.

John Coulter's long and distinguished career, though marked by many failures and few real triumphs, was, in retrospect, much more successful than he was able to admit. When Nathan Cohen, in a CBC radio interview "Tuesday Night" on December 3, 1968, asked Coulter why he continued to write for a theatre in Canada "that rejects you . . . which treats you so shabbily," Coulter replied: "Because I have something to say and I want to say it here. But it is a grinding and intolerable thing." Cohen went on to say that if Coulter had lived in London, Dublin, or New York, his works would have been produced. Coulter's problem was the same for all playwrights in Canada in the decades of the forties and fifties, when directors were afraid to produce Canadian plays which Canadian audiences rejected. Coulter had had his Irish plays produced in Belfast and Dublin. He was unfamiliar with an audience that rejected its own native plays. Born in Belfast in 1888, he lived and worked successively in Belfast, Dublin, and London. He wrote for *The Ulster Review* and produced radio plays with Tyrone Guthrie on BBC in Belfast; he learned to write stage plays from contact with theatre folk at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin; he was managing editor of John Middleton Murry's journal *The New Adelphi* in London. In 1936 Coulter followed the girl with whom he had fallen in love to Canada. He married her in Toronto a few weeks later, intending to bring her back with him to England, but to his own amazement, they remained permanently in Toronto. His wife, Olive Clare Primrose, a writer, was the daughter of Dr. Alexander Primrose, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Plunging into a writing career in Toronto in 1936, Coulter created plays for CBC radio, and the Arts and Letters Club. Modelling his own plays on the work of such great dramatists as Synge, Yeats, and Lady Gregory, he attained recognition in Canada with his Irish play, *The House in the Quiet Glen* (1937),

which won first prize that year in the Dominion Drama Festival in Toronto for an original play by a Canadian. He early recognized the need of government support for the arts, and became co-founder of the Canadian Arts Council (now the Canadian Conference of the Arts), a member of the delegation that presented the Artists' Brief to the Turgeon Committee in the House of Commons in Ottawa (Coulter read the Brief to Parliament), which resulted in the formation of the Canada Council, and an active supporter of the foundation of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario.

Coulter's work can be reasonably divided into three groups: (1) realistic satires on the dilemma confronting artists with an unappreciative audience; (2) romantic history plays depicting Canadian pioneers and leaders; (3) humorous Irish folk plays on the plight of the individual who prizes art as opposed to materialism. His Ulster play *Family Portrait* (1935), influenced by the plays of Rutherford Mayne and Sean O'Casey, highlighted the theme of the need for the liberation of the artistic sensibility in a cold northern country where the appreciation of art has either been suppressed or never realized. He sustains a satiric realism throughout as he portrays a lower middle-class family who attempt to suppress any active participation in the arts. Nor is the family redeemed in the end; the future looks bleak. Produced first as a radio play in 1935 on BBC in Belfast, it was, three years later, presented as a stage play in Hart House Theatre, Toronto. Because he used it as a statement of the insensibility of a people to the arts, it worked as well in Canada as in northern Ireland.

Coulter approached the problem of Canadian identity in drama from an historical-romantic rather than a popular-realistic point of view, as in the trilogy — *Riel* (1950), *The Crime of Louis Riel* (1960), *The Trial of Louis Riel* (1960); the three Quebec plays — *A Tale of Old Quebec* (1930), *Quebec in 1670* (1940), *Francois Bigot and the Fall of Quebec* (1970); and the Nova Scotian play *The Trial of Joseph Howe* (1942). Of them all, *Riel* (1950) was his most successful, earning from Nathan Cohen the appellation: "this brave and mythic drama" (*Toronto Daily Star*, March 29, 1962). In the same radio interview with Coulter, Cohen said that *Riel* is "the play in which, in my opinion as a critic, you have done your most significant work. As a result, Riel has become part of the Canadian conscience." With *Riel*, Coulter was responsible for a Canadian renaissance in the study of the history of Riel and the rebellion which made him a martyr. *Riel* was revived at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa, in a triumphant performance in 1975 which truly confirmed Cohen's judgment.

Of all Coulter's plays the type in which he truly excelled was the Ulster folk comedy or farce based on actual tales. The nature of colonial Canada in the 1930's and 1940's with its first and second generation immigrant families kept such tales alive, but the popularity of such "imported" material prevented indigenous Canadian drama from making the headway it deserved. One of Coulter's most successful folk plays was *The House in the Quiet Glen* (1937). The theme is liberation — the freedom to marry whom one pleases. The short, droll sentences and comic loquacity of his characters show the influence of Lady Gregory's farces. This play is both a folk comedy and a picture of Ulster life and character.

John Coulter's total body of work includes twenty-eight stage plays, several of which he adapted into radio and television drama; two opera librettos with composer Healey Willan, of which one was a Canadian opera, *Transit Through Fire* (1942); a novel; a biography,

Churchill; essays, literary criticism, short stories and radio feature programs. In his plays, Coulter has introduced characters with whom contemporary Canadian society can have easy rapport: the leader, outcast and rebel in *Riel* (1950); the homosexual artist in "Portrait of the Painter" (1979); the I.R.A. nationalist in *The Drums Are Out* (1948); the feminists in *The House in the Quiet Glen* (1937) and *Green Lawns and Peacocks* (1951); the emotionally disturbed woman in *Sleep, My Pretty One* (1954).

There was rarely a hiatus in Coulter's busy writing career of seventy or more years, but the last three years of his life were extraordinarily prolific when one considers that he was writing in his nineties. He edited and had published his play, *François Bigot* (1978), and his wife's journals and diaries, *Prelude to a Marriage* (1979); and he completed four one-act plays, of which *Portrait of the Painter* (1979) is a serious effort to recapture an emotional relationship of seventy years ago with James Sleator, the Irish painter. Of it he said in a letter to me, dated November 16, 1979, "I am recording a reality I knew — the dark and saddening truth of a lived experience. Doing this imposes hazards not there to endanger other imaginative work." In 1980, the year of his death, his 370-page book of memoirs, *In My Day*, was published. Of it he says:

> There is so much of importance to the social history of Canada as manifested in the arts throughout the 'forties and 'fifties, so much information about the struggle that went on behind the scenes, and which is not likely to be available elsewhere, that I think it a duty to see that the memoirs get into print. (Letter to me, February 16, 1976.)

The reality of death was always with him during those last years and prodded him to complete his work before the end came. In a letter dated November 28, 1977, he had said: "We shall assuredly meet when you come to live your year in Toronto — assuming I am here to be met. If not, as Eliot says, 'And all shall be well / And all manner of things shall be well.'" His last letter to me, dated October 23, 1980, refers to his career and that of his two daughters, Mrs. Primrose Pemberton, writer, and Clare Coulter, actress. Typically he says of them and the career of the artist: "Our daughters, in spite of every warning signal, have chosen to follow Babs [his wife] and me along this path so beset with what Eliot calls 'grimpens.'" We are grateful that John Coulter, despite the "grimpens," continued to the end to pursue his vocation of playwright. Canada is the richer for it.

GERALDINE ANTHONY, S.C.

ON E. K. BROWN

In the "Opinions & Notes" section of the Autumn 1980 issue (No. 86) of *Canadian Literature*, your editor's note (p. 143) on E. K. Brown quotes David Staines as saying that "Calgary is about to receive some ... [papers and notes]."

This speculation I believe arises out of some correspondence which I had with Mrs. E. K. Brown and I would like to clarify this question in order to save some frustration on the part of scholars.

Our Special Collections Division had in 1979 received from Mrs. Brown an offer to purchase some books and a few letters out of her late husband's collection. As is our usual practice when collections are already housed elsewhere I suggested that she approach the Public Archives of Canada, Victoria College, Toronto, and two other appropriate repositories regarding the archival materials.

We were very pleased to learn from Mrs. Brown that both the Public Archives and Victoria responded positively to her and as a consequence Calgary does not have any "new" E. K. Brown material other than that which was present in collections previously acquired by the University of Calgary, most particularly the Malcolm Ross Papers....

The problem of fragmentation of an author's work is shared by all repositories and does

make research more difficult. The University of Calgary in this particular case does have a fragment of E. K. Brown material — not out of a deliberate decision to purchase a fragment offered to us — but as an integral part of another collection.

To alleviate some of the frustration on the part of scholars, we are preparing our in-house inventories for publication as soon as possible and we welcome inquiries from scholars regarding any of the collections.

APOLLONIA STEELE

ON THE VERGE

**** LOUIS ALEXANDRE BELISLE, comp., *Dictionnaire nord-americain de la langue française.* Beauchemin, n.p. This is not just another dictionary, but a very fine one, which without putting in every new word which has found some currency, manages to reflect the developments that have taken place in North American French. I say "North American" because the book draws, as many other guides do not, on Acadian French as well as Québecois, and therefore becomes a helpful prop for non-Acadians wanting to read Maillet in the original, for example. But it is less helpful on joual — deliberately so, as the preface by Maurice Lebel makes clear: "Il établit une nette discrimination entre les canadianismes de bon aloi et les autres; il proscrit sans pitié les expressions fautives." Considering such scholarly objectivity, it is distressing to find it undercut in another section of the work, however; the detailed glossary of historical names and the extensive gazetteer betray a bias the compiler may not even know it has: in practice, he seems to assume the book will be consulted only in Eastern Canada. "Vancouver" is listed as an island and a city, but not as the captain; Cook appears as a South Pacific explorer, but not as West Coast navigator or (oddly) as a St. Lawrence surveyor; there is no Thompson, no Hearne, no Emily Carr. Western mythmakers are missing entirely, and with their disappearance goes a whole sensitivity to one side of Canadian cultural development. The result is to reassert implicitly a regional boundary that current history in other ways denies.

W.N.

*** JOY E. ESBEREY, *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $20.00. *Knight of the Holy Spirit* is an interesting supplement to the already considerable biographical material on William Lyon Mackenzie King. It is a personality study rather on the lines of those prepared by Erik H. Erikson on figures like Luther and Gandhi. Joy Esberey's thesis is that Mackenzie King did not in fact live a divided life, as some writers — notably C. P. Stacey — have insisted. Weighing carefully the evidence of diaries and other personal documents, as well as observing King's public actions, she shows rather convincingly how the traumas of King's family relationships set the neurotic pattern which was later followed in his political career. His Tennysonian ideal of spiritual heroism was constantly frustrated by his obsessive defence mechanisms, yet it was strong enough to make him follow consistently a policy of consensus — the Round Table ideal — rather than of compromise. So King emerges not as a man in a condition of perpetual inner contradiction, and hence perpetual guilt, but as an integrated personality whose ideals, despite his moral weakness, tended to shape his actions. It is a useful counterpart to Stacey's *A Very Double Life,* and on the evidence seems to offer a more defensible analysis of King's character and his career.

G.W.

*** TIMOTHY J. COLTON, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $15.00. Municipal politics, and particularly municipal politicians, have been far less studied in Canada than their federal or provincial counterparts. Yet, though the BNA Act takes no notice of them, local governments are the indispensable third level of any true confederation. If Canada eventually makes the choice to become a true confederacy rather than an old-style nation-state, municipal politics will assume steadily more importance, particularly as the realities of urban living produce metropolitan governments which are in fact confederations in miniature. This is why Timothy Colton's *Big Daddy* — the life of Frederick G. Gardiner — is important; more than any other individual Gardiner was the begetter of Metropolitan Toronto, the first metropolitan government in North America. Anyone interested in the future of a federal Canada, and the role which the metropolitan areas will inevitably play, will find a great deal of value and interest in this biography which is also a contribution to local history.

G.W.