

CANADIAN LITERATURE N^o. 94

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STORIES, TALES, & SKETCHES FROM LIFE

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TELLING TALES

I HAVE BEEN MEANING FOR SOME TIME to say something about the short story, and to draw attention to the useful series of reprints which for several years now the Books for Libraries Press has been publishing in Freeport, New York. There are at least fifteen Canadian short story texts in the series. Though reading through them by themselves charts only a selective map of Canadian short story history, it nonetheless proves instructive. For there emerges a glimpse of an unofficial canon of writers, a canon that needs questioning if we are adequately to reread and re-evaluate works from the past.

There are two anthologies among the fifteen reprints, which serve as a convenient guide to what I mean by "canon." Raymond Knister's *Canadian Short Stories* (1928) — gathering Denison, Duncan, Parker, Pickthall, Thomson, Roberts, de la Roche, Scott, and (more surprisingly) Leslie McFarlane, who went on to become more famous as the Ghost of the Hardy Boys — celebrates the "realistic" as it was "emerging from the imitative stage," a view of the times which has nudged its way into critical dogma. The other, May Lamberton Becker's *Golden Tales of Canada* (1938), more openly reveals its bias, which makes it easier to put down: "The charm of Canadian literature," the editor writes, "... is largely due to its romantic reassurance that in an over-crowded world, wide and wonderful spaces yet remain." Moreover, the "stories in this collection, like those in the five original anthologies that have preceded it, bring back an America that has ceased to be." In an age wanting realism, cosmopolitanism, and national character, neither the attributes of "charm" and "romantic reassurance" nor the backswing compliment of being a "region" of America were likely to take critical root. Yet clearly the interpretation involves a question of perspective, for the list of contributors to Becker's anthology is familiar: Denison, Duncan, Parker, Pickthall, Thomson, Grey Owl, Connor, and others. The "others" (Leacock, Haliburton, Hémon, Richardson, McClung, Beames, and Sime) scarcely alter the flavour — a flavour which Becker characterizes as Tory, Scottish, and influenced by "the manse." Jessie Sime, fascinated by Irish Catholic

Montreal, is a writer worth investigating a little, but the "story" from Richardson is merely a chunk from *Wacousta*, and the "story" by John Beames a bit from his novel *Army without Banners*, a tonally uneven tribute to the English contribution to Saskatchewan settlement. For editor Becker a "Golden Tale" seems to have meant an excerptable anecdote. But "anecdote," "sketch," "tale," and "short story" do not all mean the same thing, and a careful reading of the short fiction of the turn of the century shows that writers were experimenting with form as much as with romantic charm or national persuasion.

It is this continuum between form and political impulse that the Books for Libraries reprints (of volumes by Thomson, Scott, Parker, Barr, Allen, Roberts, Grenfell, Hickman, and de la Roche) reveal. E. W. Thomson's *Old Man Savarin Stories*, in its 1917 form (that is, with the addition of some late stories to the 1895 edition), is the most anecdotal, full of artificial dialect and high political principle. "'Dey's fight like dat for more as four hours,'" says one character. "'God be praised, I die in British waters!'" breathes another. A third, reminding us of the reality we are expected to find in an internal tale, declares, "I myself had shuddered and grown cold, so strongly had my imagination realized the awful experience that Petherick described. At length he resumed his story. . . ." Today we might balk at both the elevated tone and the sense of exaggeration that derives from the inverted syntax, but the "value" of these stories lies elsewhere than in technique. They are works which assert the validity of neighbourliness, the capacity to overcome temptation, and the existence of justice. Irony for the early Thomson did not declare a cynicism about life; it reinforced the values of a time. But it could do little in practice about public behaviour, and the later stories — "Boss of the World" and "Miss Minnelly's Management" — alter in tone, observe satirically such matters as urban political manoeuvres and business ethics, and perhaps therefore appeal more to the modern reader, who is more likely to find *them* "shrewd" and the *early* sketches "sentimental." For Thomson, one suspects, it wasn't shrewdness at all, but disappointment.

Thomson's set of beliefs has its parallel in works by C. G. D. Roberts, Gilbert Parker, and Wilfred Thomason Grenfell; his disappointment, a parallel in D. C. Scott's *The Witching of Elspie* (1923), which remains one of the finest collections of early Canadian prose. Gathering together *loup-garou* tales and trading-post narratives of psychological warfare, Scott's book carefully balances its respect for the idea of independence with its observation of the reality of human pettiness and tyranny. Scott, moreover, manages to convey the cadences of vernacular speech without the artificiality of Thomsonian dialect. But for Parker, Roberts, and Grenfell, something other than "tyranny" or political tension is true and real: an amalgam of duty, love of Woman, death, justice, and faith — mostly faith, which in their writings tends to override both human discomfort and literary form. With Grenfell it takes its most obvious and least effective shape.

Yet such a code appealed in its day, and will still appeal to those for whom it reinforces a particular moral set. Henry Van Dyke, who introduces Grenfell's *Off the Rocks* (1906), avers: "you who feel that religion is just as real as Nature, just as real as humanity, and that brave adventures may be achieved in the name of Christ, — this book is for you. This is the real thing." But as with the tales of *Down North on the Labrador* (1911) and *Labrador Days: Tales of the Sea Toilers* (1919), there is such elevation of suffering in the life-stories Grenfell tells that the effect is grotesque rather than truthfully eloquent. The tales may well be stories drawn from life, as Grenfell declares — and the photographs of his own Labrador travels, which he includes in his books, reiterate Grenfell's veracity — but their cumulative effect does not heighten a reader's awareness of human misfortune; instead, it emphasizes *Grenfell's presence* at the disasters he describes. The narrator intrudes into the tale just as much as he does in Thomson's anecdotes, in other words, but with a twist: for it is less the declared selflessness of the narrator than his undeclared ego that commands a contemporary reader's attention. The difference between intention and effect only stresses further the flaws in Grenfell's artistry, and by contrast stresses again the achievement of Scott, who as much as Grenfell accepted moral standards but made his readers come to understand them through art — using his art to reveal life's values in the context of its daily uncertainties.

Sir Charles G. D. Roberts was, of course, as aware of life's ambivalences as Scott was; his preface to *Earth's Enigmas* (1895), in which one finds such familiar sketches as "Do Seek Their Meat from God," stresses just such a perception. "Most of the stories in this collection," he writes, "attempt to present one or another of those problems of life or nature to which, as it appears to many of us, there is no adequate solution within sight. Others are the almost literal transcript of dreams. . . . The rest are scenes from that simple life of tide-country with which my earlier years made me familiar." Combined in theory, therefore, are his notions about real life, the life of the imagination, and the appropriate means for representing such life in literature. Hence Roberts' failure to match Scott derives not from his initial perception of life but from his lesser skill in manipulating words; whereas Scott pared his language back and revealed reality from inside his limiting forms, Roberts (like Parker in this respect) laid reality on his characters and scenes externally, by adjectival statement. One of Roberts' stories opens: "He was a mean-looking specimen, this Simon Gillsay, and the Gornish Camp was not proud of him." One of Parker's, from *An Adventurer of the North* (1896), begins in comparable fashion, though its crisp brevity gives it a certain cachet: "He was seven feet and fat." Far worse than either of these sentences are those which by intention use their adjectives to elevate the effect or the moral tone of a passage but in fact prove reductive because the diction is hackneyed or the comparisons forced. Hence Roberts:

Her hair, in color not far from that of the red ox, was rich and abundant, and lay in a coil so gracious that not even the tawdry millinery of her cheap "store" hat could make her head look quite commonplace.

And Parker, in excerpts from *Pierre and His People* (1894):

He was busy with the grim ledger of his life;

and *A Romany of the Snows* (1896):

"For heaven or hell, my girl," he cried, and they drove their horses on — on. Far behind upon a divide the flying hunters . . . saw with hushed wonder and awe a man and woman, dark and weird against the red light, ride madly into the flicking surf of fire.

The point is that despite these sentimentalizing techniques, both Roberts and Parker were aware of the moral distinctions that bedevil human experience, that mark it off from the kind of life governed by what Roberts calls "Natural Law"; and implicitly these distinctions call human judgments into question as well. Parker goes so far as to question even human institutions, having his trickster character Pretty Pierre champion Conscience over Law. But neither Pierre nor Roberts' characters can escape the language in which their authors have trapped them. In order to demonstrate their human nobility, Roberts' characters repeatedly have to discover their "slumbering manhood" (adjective, noun). Pierre's frontier compatriots have to express their "keen discernment." And Pierre himself, the outsider and the centre of Parker's interconnected "histories," is presumed to appear French because he punctuates his speech with "*Enfin*" and "*Alors*." The adjectives are too much. *Alors* is not enough. And the balance between heroic romance and real life falls apart.

Why, then, should Parker, Roberts, and Thomson have emerged as the "classic" Canadian story-writers of their day? The answer has, I expect, more to do with fashion than with taste. Commentators located natural morality in Canadian Nature and found it good: elevating their approval of a stance and a place into an assertion of reality (as Knister did) or locating charm and reassurance in it (as did May Becker). Writers like Mazo de la Roche, in the truly awful stories of *The Sacred Bullock* (1939), attempted to continue the Parker tradition, and it is perhaps not too far off the mark to find it continuing still, in an inverted form, in Joyce Carol Oates' world-weary fascination with naiveté in *A Sentimental Education* (Dutton, 1980). But it is worth reminding ourselves that fashion has to do with time, and that if in the present we might be seeking alternatives to Parker and Roberts, then Parker and Roberts wrote as they did in part because they in their day were seeking to be different from other traditions, too.

In this context it is worth going back to Knister, to ponder his assertion that Pickthall and Leacock show in their work that they were born in England,

whereas Albert Hickman is "Canadian through and through." So completely has literary history buried Hickman that one might be forgiven for asking "Albert Who?" Even Knister, after singling him out, does not include him in his anthology, and it is therefore bracing to find Hickman's volume *Canadian Nights* (1914), along with Robert Barr's *In a Steamer Chair* (1892) and Grant Allen's *An African Millionaire* (1897), among the Books for Libraries reprints. Reading Hickman, I am not clear what Knister meant by his distinction. Reading Hickman beside Allen, Barr, and Parker & Co., however, offers glimpses of a world of fashion that Parker and Roberts rejected as shallow, a world given to wit rather than to sentiment, to Style rather than Pathos, to society rather than nature. By opting for nature, the Parkers of Canadian literature felt they were opting for reality. From our vantage point in the 1980's, we can see that they simply opted for another form of artifice. While they offered a way of legitimizing Canadian nature in literature — and of developing a literary vernacular — they also established a rural illusion of Canada which it has taken many decades to shed. In their way, that is, Knister and Becker were both right. By the time of Knister and Callaghan, in fact, writers were trying to pare sentiment out of the laconic dialogues they found characteristic of Canadian speech; the little-known Thomas Murtha, whose 1930's *Short Stories* have recently been collected and published by the University of Ottawa Press, was one of these, though he more often *told* experience ("Irene was very happy") than realized it. But the literary games of the 1970's, which were part of the dismantling of the sentimental tradition and which have required us to view artifice anew, also allow us to return to Hickman and Allen with a different eye and to find in them not (dismissively, or "merely") practitioners of a "dated" international mode, but artificers (admittedly flawed ones) of ironic and urbane literary forms.

Barr is the least successful of the three, but even he could pen Wildean conceits. "I am glad to find that I am in the majority," says one character, discussing Howells, James, and Chutney, "even in the matter of ignorance." But Barr's solemn comedies — romances between the naive and the articulate, gamesmanship among the low and the highborn — scarcely reach beyond anecdote and do not survive their time. Characters called Plodkins and Cupples are pre-Leacockian stereotypes, of the sort that Leacock himself satirized. And a story like "The Man Who Was Not on the Passenger List" — about a man killed on shipboard and buried at sea, whose ghost keeps returning and requiring reburying because he paid the fare for a WHOLE transatlantic trip — begins in suspense and ends in banality. Allen and Hickman could both manage better the artful craft of literary silliness.

Hickman, for example — and perhaps this was the quality that Knister acknowledged in him: a sensitivity to social attitude that could express itself in literary nuance — wrote a story about an architect from Ontario who on a visit

to a Quebec bar is disrespectful to Montreal, and is promptly taken up to Mount Royal and made to apologize to all the institutions separately. In another story he drily observes that

In North America there is a small but delicately perfumed army of young ladies who have made it their business to start an aristocracy. For certain obscure reasons, including the lack of aristocrats to fill it with, they have failed; but, instead, they have what is called a plutocracy, which is the same thing from the inside, though from the outside it is quite different.

Still other stories, certainly, show that Hickman was capable of overwriting adventure, but he was also magnificently adept at indirect satire; one forgives a lot for a polished sentence like this one:

Miss McNab . . . braced both feet against the sloping footboard and labored with her expression.

Hickman's stories are, in other words, about politics and manners rather than about combat in nature, and are no less real for that. And they are no less unaffected by fashion — as Hickman himself was aware. He opens his story "Oriented," for example, this way:

This is a poor story, for it has no plot, and all stories written in America are supposed to have a plot. Nothing else matters. This story has a girl and a man and a chief event.

The language of the time tells us about the social relations of the time; it also helps to distinguish between the plotted American tale and the fragmentary Canadian sketch form, which Hickman (like Scott, and like Leacock and Callaghan and Hugh Hood much later) was making his own.

By contrast, Grant Allen in *An African Millionaire* was more attracted to the tale and was using it to reach a more international readership. His book (which is also full of pungent asides: a definition of "bigamy" as "occasional marriage," or an observation that "two things go to produce success — the first is chance; the second is cheating") is subtitled "Episodes in the Life of the Illustrious Colonel Clay." It tells of the escapades and final capture of a Robin Hoodish character with an India-rubber face, an elusive name and nationality, the profession of wax-figure maker, and the skills of a con-man — whom the crowd loves and the narrator deplures. Over the series of linked adventures, what emerges is a revelation of the "honest" narrator's shady morality, which it is tempting to read as parable; using the familiar convention of the honest con-man, Allen reports on the connection between South African economics and European politics, and more particularly on the inability (or the failure) of ordinary public power to contend with multi-national enterprises. Allen writes to entertain rather than to preach, but he pens a clear message anyway, a message of some literary facility and some political sophistication. If he is not a great

writer, he is at least as good as many who are now known better. But he was an expatriate, and his mannered message was one which post-Victorian Canada would either dismiss as formal contrivance, or find irrelevant to the new century and the growing nation, or ignore.

It seems one cannot overestimate the impact of the new nationalism and the First World War upon the direction Canadian literature took in the early decades of this century. As Elizabeth Spencer observes about two of her characters, in one of the rare Montreal stories in *The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer* (Doubleday, a collection of works written between 1944 and 1977): "The man and his wife . . . seemed, above everything else, concerned with their own relevance to the world they lived in." Enquiring into the relevance of the world to *them* seems beyond their capacity to imagine, and it is just such a closure of mind that literary and political isolationism begets. Perhaps it is the fate of every generation to presume that cultural sophistication is the achievement of its own day. Glimpses of the international connections that stimulated (and perhaps also threatened) Canadian life at the turn of the century suggest, however, how much was cut off by the exigencies of the war in 1914 and by the subsequent determination to forget what led to war, and therefore how much in the way of political, social, and cultural connection with the rest of the world had to be started anew after 1945. A true cosmopolitanism is not something Canada has yet acquired. And a lot of the old connections, with their attendant biases, have persisted in the society, unrestrained. To look back carefully at the writings and the urbane culture of turn-of-the-century Canada, however, is to see how lively the culture actually was, to reassess the literary judgments that have shaped our picture of it, and to appreciate once again how important the satiric voice is in shaping a politically astute and culturally informed society.

W.H.N.

BATS

Judith Harway

At night the orchard shook with bats
in flight, tight-ropes of sound strung
tree to tree. Between the leaves
their whine evaporated to gnat hum
and toad antiphony. On the way home,
crushing apples underfoot, you'd pause
and listen for the gypsy moths,
for fish teeth clicking, ants among the roots.
We heard, we did not hear.

One night a dark wing grazed your cheek,
 aware of your shape, where you stood.
 I would transcribe that sonar,
 sing your face, or trace the route we followed
 home those nights. Instead I write
 an alphabet of wings — the first word,
 Dusk, spelled out by flights of geese — to say
 I think of you when tense wires coil in silence,
 when the bats hang sated, upside down, and sleep.

ON DOSTOEVSKY'S "NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND"

Len Gasparini

Sometimes I too feel like a character
 in a nineteenth-century Russian novel —

one of those morose, solitary characters
 given to boredom and low debauchery,

for whom life is as meaningless and grim
 as this planet that moves in its doom —

starred course like a bomb through space.
 Then I consider the unreal but egotistic

roles we play to survive among our kind,
 and in the consciousness of my despair

know that twice two will always equal four,
 because everything is a necessary lie.

CANADIAN CULTURAL NORMS & AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL RULES

Susanna Moodie's "Roughing it in the Bush"
and Marcus Clarke's "His Natural Life"

John F. Tinkler

ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH and *His Natural Life* are dissimilar in a number of immediately striking ways. The first is the autobiographical account of a British gentlewoman's attempt to come to terms with a "rough" farming life in the Upper Canadian bush; the second is a fictional record of the convict system in Eastern Australia, in which the innocent protagonist, Richard Devine, is arrested in Britain and transported under the name Rufus Dawes, finally escapes imprisonment to re-emerge as a storekeeper (now named Tom Crosbie) in the gold rushes, and returns at the end of the novel to England and his rightful inheritance.¹ Yet both works first appeared within twenty years of each other in the middle of the nineteenth century, both concern themselves largely with the 1830's in each country, both deal with the phenomenon of British colonial settlement, and both have proved successful and enduring works in their respective cultures. These similarities between the cultural positions of the two books make the differences between them significant.

This paper will attempt to understand some dissimilarities between the two books by showing how they display different patterns of cultural sensibility in nineteenth-century Canada and Australia. In particular, I will argue that Canadian literature of the period displays a commitment to the notion of cultivation, and to the implementation of cultural norms as a way of achieving progress, whereas Australian literature demonstrates a national tendency to rationalise activity by creating social rules and institutions. To avoid drawing too much significance from the merely personal eccentricities of each writer, I also consult other works from each culture — most notably Alexander Harris' *Settlers and Convicts* (for Australia), William Dunlop's *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada*, and Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, all works which have stood the test of time, if only in a minor way, and which were either published in the 1830's or deal with that period.²

The obvious place to begin a comparison of Moodie's and Clarke's books is their titles. The title of Moodie's book does not contain an irony so much as express an underlying faith: "roughing it" is a polite vulgarism, an expression specifically derived from the vocabulary and values of the "smooth" life which it implies as the norm. To "rough it" is to take a pastoral break, like the Duke and his entourage in the Forest of Arden, without losing one's sense of the distinctions between "rough" and "smooth," without relinquishing the verbal discriminations and mental structure of one's smoother origins.³ Mrs. Moodie is not quite in a class with Shakespeare's Duke, but so firm is her commitment to the distinctions of her inherited culture that her initial responses to Canada are naive and far too schematic. She glows at the Canadian landscape with a sense of the Edenic potential of pastoral: "Cradled in the arms of the St. Lawrence, and basking in the bright rays of the morning sun, the island and its sister group looked like a second Eden just emerged from the waters of chaos"; and glowers at fallen man with a clear-sighted sense of his corruption: "here, as elsewhere, man has marred the magnificent creation of his Maker." As a woman enlightened by Christianity's saving faith in the virtues of order, her endeavour becomes, rather like that of the Duke's entourage, to carry purified courtly manners, or their nineteenth-century genteel equivalent, into the wilderness.

From a philosophic point of view, the most interesting aspect of her initial attitude to the new colony lies in her imported conviction of man's natural evil: "You would think they were incarnate devils, singing, drinking, dancing, shouting, and cutting capers that would surprise the leader of a circus. They have no shame — are under no restraint — nobody knows them here, and they think they can speak and act as they please." Natural man, with "no shame," is not for Mrs. Moodie, and her book becomes a monument to the power of culture. On all levels, culture, the taming of the wilderness, provides the premise upon which her view of the world is built. On the subject of the equality of classes, she is firm to Mrs. D—— about the importance of cultivation through education: "There is no difference in the flesh and blood; but education makes a difference in the mind and manners, and till these can assimilate, it is better to keep apart." Mr. Malcolm strains her faith in cultivation, but she remains firm in her commitment to the values of gentlemanly education: "A dirtier or more slovenly creature never before was dignified by the title of a gentleman. He was, however, a man of good education, of excellent abilities. . . ." This faith in the need for social culture in man is repeated in the broader context of the Moodies' relations with the natural environment. The structural skeleton of the book is her record of the family's attempt to restrain, put in order, cultivate the bush, and it is for this purpose of agricultural cultivation that they have come to Canada. Culture, both of the physical environment and of the social man, is a dominant theme and faith of Moodie's narrative.

The obvious contrast evoked by Moodie's and Clarke's titles is that between a civilized woman "roughing it" in the bush, and a writer who plunges into "natural life" unequivocally. But, interestingly, Clarke's view of "natural life" appears initially as pessimistic as Moodie's: "We must treat brutes like brutes," remarks Maurice Frere of his fellow men (III, v). Clarke's natural men are animals, and even, in the case of the convict Gabbett, cannibalistic. What is different about Clarke's attitude is that he dwells on and pessimistically exaggerates the condition of brutishness, while Moodie avoids it or attempts to civilize it.

But Clarke's title is ironically misleading, and the fact of this irony provides an important contrast with Moodie's title. Moodie's title belongs to the vocabulary of a particular class and mental outlook, and indicates a refusal to relinquish the distinctions between "rough" and smooth" even while living in the rough. As Carl F. Klinck comments of Moodie and Traill, "a defence could be set up by use of stock words with inflexible interpretations, or surrender could be announced by a change of idiom with the risk of unpredictable responses,"⁴ and Moodie, with no intention of surrendering, tends to want her vocabulary unambiguous. Her response to the custom of "borrowing" is so violent, and so lengthy, partly because her neighbours use the word in a way that confuses its meaning: "As you never repay us for what you pretend to borrow, I look upon it as a system of robbery. . . . If you would come honestly to me and say, 'I want these things, I am too poor to buy them myself, and would be obliged to you to give them to me,' I should then acknowledge you as a common beggar, and treat you accordingly." Her sensitivity to language is acute: she abominates swearing, she reproduces dialect with an extraordinarily keen ear, she is enormously conscious of the titles people use in addressing each other — and this sensitivity to the diversity of linguistic phenomena indicates a strong sense of the inherited norms of language.

Moodie's desire to maintain an unambiguous language for social intercourse places her in direct contrast with Clarke, whose title derives its impact from the complex set of ironies that it initiates — ironies that deprive the title of stable meaning. The most immediate irony is the one literalized by the longer title given to the novel after its author's death: *For the Term of his Natural Life*. The "natural life" of the title really refers to the most complete and intrusive of social controls: penal servitude for life. Rufus Dawes, as a convict, is made into an epitome of the unaccommodated nature of poor, bare, forked animals, and is maintained in that state by an unremitting institutional surveillance. His brutishness is in fact unnatural and socially enforced, the result of the guards' paradoxical conviction that men taken in charge by society's law are animals. Dawes the animal plunges to the depths of misanthropy, as Gabbett resorts to cannibalism, but this is not the nature of man so much as the nature of social man caught up in the paradox of penalty that Clarke evokes: at the heart of social control

and surveillance is enshrined a simultaneously unnatural and anti-social ostracism and isolation. "Rufus Dawes came back to his prison with the hatred of his kind," Clarke tells us, "that his prison had bred in him" (iv, xii). Marooned with a small group of people at Hell's Gates, Dawes is placed in a true state of nature rather than a state of institutionally controlled brutishness, and he there displays a positive social altruism. It is one of Clarke's piquant ironies that in this "semi-savage state," Dawes shakes off his enforced Hobbesian brutishness and regains the specifically social title of "'Mr' Dawes" (iii, xiii).

Clarke points to a morally positive natural man, especially in the portraits of "good Mr. Dawes" (iii, xvii) and the young Dora, but Dawes is stripped again of his title and Dora is fatally caught up in the trammels of Frere's machinations. Where Moodie believes in culture, Clarke's novel concentrates on the paradoxical symbiosis of brutish "nature" and excessive social control — with the determinant position occupied by social control. The positive conception of natural man, a man unfettered by social control, is consistently frustrated by Clarke's Australia: Dawes has to return to England to have his natural innocence vindicated. In the minds of Clarke's government officials, there are only two alternatives: law in all its rigour, or else lawlessness; convicts restrained in prison, or convicts rampaging at large. Where Moodie's attempt is to cultivate the wilderness of the backwoods, the issue for Clarke's Australian officials is so much one of institutionally regulated order opposed to mere chaos that they formulate a theory of Australia as a divinely appointed prison, a "Natural Penitentiary" (iv, xx), which sets the convicts and their environment in a state of irreducibly hostile contradiction and estrangement.

THE TRANSFERENCE OF VALUES that allows the Australian officials to see the natural environment as a function of man's institutional arrangements, a conspirator in his social conflict, reveals a scale of values with social order placed well above nature and the soil. Later Australian writers who have emphasized the facts of the natural landscape as primary characteristics of "Australianness" run quite contrary to the Australian cultural tradition as inherited from writers like Clarke.⁵ For Clarke, the landscape is of relatively little interest beside the facts of the Australian social condition. Clarke's Australia is a social rather than a natural entity, to such an extent that social distinctions come to appear, in the minds of characters like Frere, as self-evident as the natural distinctions between animals and human beings. The social environment assumes the role and importance that might otherwise have been assumed by the natural environment.

In 1869, Patrick Maloney claimed that "In Canada they have a nation, but no national feeling. In Australia we have national feeling in abundance, but no

nation."⁸ In some ways, it appears a true statement (and very Australian), but we must qualify what is meant by "national feeling." Although Moodie concludes her book with a damning warning to prospective immigrants, she is more lyrical about Canada than either Clarke or Harris about Australia: "British mothers of Canadian sons!" she exclaims, "teach them to love Canada — to look upon her as the first, the happiest, the most independent country in the world." Moodie never quite relinquishes the idea of Canada as a potential second Eden, while Clarke instinctively uses a range of infernal images, including the striking spectre of the prison at "Hell's Gates."

If there is something hollow in Moodie's rhetorical flights of national fervour which would justify Maloney's claim, it is their abstraction, their idealization of a socio-political idea of which she understands little. While Moodie, who "knew nothing, heard nothing of the political state of the country," is giving a rousing "Huzza for England! — May she claim / Our fond devotion ever" for the Canadian war effort, Clarke is involved in examining the conflicts and tension between predominantly unlovely government officials and the rest of the predominantly unlovely population that the officials will not, or cannot, leave without supervision. Clarke's "national feeling" is not expressed in rhetorical flights of nationalistic fervour and optimism, but in the complexity and subtlety with which he is drawn to examine the country's internal social oppositions and dilemmas. The Australian flavour of Harris' and Clarke's books is not their national optimism, but the passion with which their authors find themselves forced to examine and respond to the political and social anomalies of Australian social life.

Moodie escapes from corrupt customs officials at Québec into the backwoods to cultivate her farm, but Clarke insists that the regulatory machine of the Australian national institution is inescapable, and Harris devotes a whole chapter to the "extensive and galling inconvenience to which the labouring class is subject" because of the Bushranging Act, whose provisions are so extensive that civilian settlers "have commenced building private lock-ups on their own farms." The distinction that our writers indicate between a pervasive Canadian faith in culture, and a pervasive Australian sense of social intrusion, has implications for the way they present the social or cultural coherence that binds each nation together.

The Canadian writers have a close involvement with nature and the soil that the Australians lack. Moodie lives in the bush and responds to nature with lyrical fervour; Catharine Traill experiments with dyes from native plants, names the flowers and tries to save groves of the native trees; Dunlop opens up new regions of the country for cultivation, and advises the new immigrant to "lose not a day in setting to work upon your farm." But in Australia, Rufus Dawes is kept in prisons absurdly imposed on the landscape; Harris lops down trees, not for the

sake of clearing the land for cultivation, but merely in order to remove timber from the surface of the land and sell it for what he can get; and Harris' timber-cutting adventures find a striking later equivalent in Clarke's diggers who pick out of the soil what gold they can get, transforming pasture land into "lines of white tents . . . surrounded on all sides by red heaps, like molehills" where "ten thousand cradles — sometimes six abreast — whirred, hummed, and sung" (vi, v). The suggestion of a factory in Clarke's description of "ten thousand cradles" is revealing. Where the Canadians think in the terms of cultivation and adaptation natural to an agricultural society, the Australians' dissociation from the soil has all the marks of an advanced industrial society without the advanced industry. In the extensive proliferation of Australia's techniques of social organization, it is typical that money, the archetypal symbol of socialization, should assume enormous importance. Not only is it assiduously dug out of the ground as gold, but Harris ritually adds up his financial profits with evident satisfaction after each venture; Dawes (now Tom Crosbie) displays considerable business acumen in maximizing his profits by establishing a store rather than mining; and, throughout *His Natural Life*, the thread of the Devine wealth runs as the only sure line to salvation. The Australian alienation from the soil appears to be not just a negative function of the peculiar landscape, whose flora and fauna were destined to alienate a European mind, but also a positive result of the institutional nature of the country's settlement, governed ultimately by the socially constituted imperatives of money and power.

The reason for the difference between the two countries appears too obvious in our writers: Australia transported a social institution, while Canada imported a set of cultural values. The institution was intensified in its new Australian context, and this produced a distortion of cultural values. Meanwhile the cultural values imported into Canada were retained, though the conditions of Upper Canadian life loosened and even democratized the English social structure that had contained them, producing a kind of "universal gentry."

One of Clarke's more astute perceptions is that the prison officials he describes are not merely gothic monsters. They are distinct English types transported, intensified, and distorted. Mr. Meekin is a clerical dandy who would be innocuous enough in a suitable English parish, but he is a positive evil when transplanted to Australia. Of the Bible that Meekin lends Dawes in prison, Clarke remarks that "All the material horrors of Meekin's faith — stripped, by force of dissociation from the context, of all poetic feeling and local colouring — were launched at the suffering sinner by Meekin's ignorant hand. The miserable man, seeking for consolation and peace, turned over the leaves of the Bible only to find himself threatened with the 'pains of Hell,' 'the never-dying worm,' 'the unquenchable fire,' the bubbling of brimstone, the 'bottomless pit,' . . . (iv, xix). The fact that Dawes, the "suffering sinner" in question, has already passed through the prison

at "Hell's Gates," transforms Meekin's clerical inadequacy into sanctimonious malice. The delineation of Frere is masterful, for Clarke establishes him in the first book not as a pathological sadist, but as a type of the "Old English Gentleman" who has always had the potential to be intensified from Fielding's brutal country squires into Clarke's sadistic tyrant.

Clarke's Australian intensification of an English social model produces a stratification of human beings into two distinct groups separated by something more than English class, more even than race — they are separated by zoological species. Frere's dictum that "We must treat brutes like brutes" is a startling index of the Australian ruling-class mentality which contrasts sharply with the tolerant gentility that pervades the Canadian writers. But the two Australian species hold their positions because of each other. Michael Wilding has commented that "without a Dawes to persecute, Frere would be lost . . . and, in a terrible way, the prisoners are dependent on him and admire the authority he wields."⁷ The relation between guards and convicts has something of the dialectically symbiotic nature that Hegel ascribed to masters and slaves. This mutual dependence of opposites is distinctive. John Matthews has shrewdly remarked of Australian egalitarianism that it "is felt to be necessary only because the economic conditions for its attainment have not been realised."⁸ The ideology of equality springs dialectically from the oppressive existence of inequality. To the extent that Harris espouses egalitarianism, he does so not as a positive creed, but in reaction against the inequality of ruling-class institutions and power: "I always found my betters so readily breaking the laws of the land when they imagined them to run counter to their own 'law of honour,' that I never found the slightest difficulty in my own particular case about making the same exception in favour of the law of nature." If Clarke's and Harris' "national feeling" is measured by the extent of their response to social anomalies, in a country where social arrangements and institutions take the place of the natural environment as a focus of concern, so it is the very fact of social opposition that gives Australia its coherence. Harris' title is typical. He sees the country not in terms of a life-style *Roughing it in the Bush*, or in *The Backwoods of Canada*, but in terms of a social polarity: *Settlers and Convicts*.

On either side of this social opposition, desperate attempts are made to standardize behaviour: the settlers and guards impose overwhelmingly harsh regulations of control as a way of establishing order (and protecting their positions), while the convicts and workers develop codes of mateship and egalitarianism in their own defence. The irony of Australian culture, as its writers present it, is that the rage for order and uniformity produces disorder and opposition. The unity that develops is a unified field of oppositions and contradictions. This habit of forming conflicting interests between groups, each of which develops its own regulations and language, is typical of predominantly social man. Michel Fou-

cault has remarked that, among the human sciences, "sociology is fundamentally a study of man in terms of rules and conflicts:"

On the projected surface of economics, man appears as having needs and desires, as seeking to satisfy them, and therefore as having interests, desiring profits, entering into opposition with other men; in short, he appears in an irreducible situation of *conflict*; he evades these conflicts, he escapes from them or succeeds in dominating them, in finding a solution that will — on one level at least, and for a time — appease their contradictions; he establishes a body of *rules*.⁹

As Harris points out, the various rules in Australia — laws "of the land," "of honour," and "of nature" — are subsumed in the facts of conflict.

In Moodie's book, Canada's relationship to Britain is marked by neither such a slavish transportation of social systems as Clarke's Australia, nor by such violent reactions against them. Cultivation is the keynote, and it implies a specific attitude toward both the new colony and its British origins: cultural values are imported by Moodie and adapted as tools for cultivating the new land. Anna Brownell Jameson commented of Toronto in 1837 that "it is a *young* place; and in spite of this affectation of looking back, instead of looking up, it must advance,"¹⁰ and Catharine Traill exclaimed that "Canada is the land of hope; here everything is new; everything going forward; it is scarcely possible for arts, sciences, agriculture, manufactures, to retrograde; they must keep advancing." Here is not only a faith in the Canadian cultural soil, but a sense of Canada advancing as a nation by developing the "arts, sciences, agriculture, manufactures" inherited from Britain. Canada appears at once different from, yet compatible with Britain, diverging into independence by developing in a necessarily different way from a common basis. The country's parallel yet different development gives it a claim to equality with Britain: "But oh!" declares Moodie, "beware of drawing disparaging contrasts between the colony and its illustrious parent."

The second, and related, keynote of the Canadian writers is independence: Moodie praises the "happy independence enjoyed in this highly-favoured land," while Traill talks of the "country where independence is inseparable from industry." The independence of individuals is analogous to the independence of the country as a whole, and is constituted by a sense of common interest that is strong enough to allow smaller differences to be countenanced. Traill, Moodie, and Dunlop share a common faith in cultivation, in a broad standard of gentility or decency, in political stability allied to Britain, though their individual attitudes to smaller matters may be quite different. When Moodie describes, through Mr. Malcolm, the absurdities of a botanist, she is in part poking fun at her botanist sister, Mrs. Traill. But these differences are personal and, as Dunlop comments of religious sects, do not, or should not, intrude as conflicts into common interest. "This blasphemous mixture of political and religious dogmas, however it may add to the numerical strength of any sect, must be pernicious in the extreme to

the true interests of Christianity," remarks Dunlop with a typical dislike of divisive "sect" and a sure sense of "true interests" that would not be possible in Clarke's divided and morally ambiguous world. Whereas the Australians become unified around a common field of conflicts, the Canadians have a sense of unified sensibility sustained at the core of divergent personal interests. Thus, when we talk of Australian egalitarianism and Canadian cultural diversity, it may be necessary to qualify our terms; for at the core of Moodie's Upper Canadian diversity lies the need for a substantial body of agreement, while Clarke's Australian egalitarianism functions within a field of oppositions and inequalities. To reverse the received definitions of each country, it is the inequality and conflict of Australian society that gives rise to the philosophy of egalitarianism in Clarke's novel; while it is the sense of a basic homogeneity of Canadian ideals that permits Moodie to tolerate the cultural diversity engendered by personal independence.

OVERALL, THE APPROPRIATE MODEL for these Canadian writers is not the social one of conflict and rule, but what Foucault defines as the biological model of function and norm, in which the physical facts of the environment (soil, nature) play a central role in man's adaptation to, and cultivation of them:

It is upon the projected surface of biology that man appears as a being possessing *functions* — receiving stimuli, . . . reacting to them, adapting himself, evolving, submitting to the demands of an environment, coming to terms with the modifications it imposes, seeking to erase imbalances, acting in accordance with regularities, having, in short, conditions of existence and the possibility of finding average *norms* of adjustment which permit him to perform his functions.¹¹

This model helps us to illustrate how the Canadian writers, in their concern to adapt to and cultivate the natural environment, developed a strictness of normative values to accompany their social flexibility. Moodie sees herself in terms of the gentry, and struggles to maintain the values of gentility. Her initial response to Canada involves a shock at the loss of class distinctions, and she never quite relinquishes her sense of having fallen in Canada from her genteel origins. In her closing pages she remarks with some bitterness of Canada that "to the poor, industrious working man it presents many advantages; to the poor gentleman, *none!*" Her reluctance to work on the farm appears to spring from a reluctance to descend below the level of the gentry defined as a class whose members do not work with their hands. But, with the aid of some religious reflections, she survives the ordeal of manual labour with her sense of values intact. She begins to learn that her values of gentility can be adapted and generalized without the attendant social relativity and wealth of the gentry. There is a revealing irony to the term

"inferiors," and a revealing emphasis on proper conduct rather than on class in her remark that "The conduct of many of the settlers, who considered themselves gentlemen . . . was often more reprehensible than that of the poor Irish emigrants. . . . The behaviour of these young men drew upon them the severe but just censure of the poorer class, whom they regarded in every way as their inferiors." Moodie begins to accommodate herself to a kind of universal cultural gentry on a reduced social scale, as Dunlop had already advised: "A man of fortune, in my opinion, ought not to come to Canada. It is emphatically 'the poor man's country' . . . though the necessities and most of the luxuries of life are cheaply and easily procured."

Like Moodie, Dunlop is aware that Canada is not the country for the English gentry, but it is a country where the "poor man" can acquire the "necessaries and most of the luxuries" of a kind of reduced or democratized genteel independence. Drawing a contrast between England and Canada in the way employers treat their servants, Moodie remarks that "In Britain, for instance, they [servants] are too often dependent upon the caprice of their employers for bread. . . . They are brought up in the most servile fear of the higher classes," whereas "the happy independence enjoyed in this highly-favoured land [Canada] is nowhere better illustrated than in the fact that no domestic can be treated with cruelty or insolence by an unbenevolent or arrogant master." The contrast with Clarke's and Harris' Australia is striking: the convicts who act as servants are reduced to a completeness of literal servility that Moodie does not dream of. What Moodie describes as "that common vice of English mistresses, to scold them for any slight omission," is transformed in Australia into an imperiousness which inflicts physical tortures of sometimes gothic dimensions, leading in the case of Clarke's unfortunate Kirkland, who cannot bear to hear his master swear, to being whipped to death.

If Clarke's Australia imported and intensified English social institutions with a corresponding intensification of class conflict, Moodie's tendency was to import the values of a class and then to begin emptying them of their class specificity. The distinctive demographic spread of Canada, with each settler on his own farm, implies an extended landed gentry which contrasts sharply with the Australian habit of huddling together in the social monoliths of large cities. This extended gentry (or gentility) is socially paradoxical: its values are those of a distinct and definite class, while their universal applicability appears to empty them of the pejorative and divisive implications of conflicting class interests. The values which, in Australia, would characterize a particular class in a state of conflict become in Canada universal *norms*. For an Australian, this phenomenon is sinister and obscures real conflicts of interest, while for the Canadian writers it is an assurance of harmony and progress.

The comparison between Moodie and Clarke reveals differences between the aspects of British culture and society that were of most significance in the two colonies — a social institution in Australia versus cultural values in Canada. Clarke sees Australia as developing from an imported social institution of which stratification and conflict are the key features. As his book progresses, the convict system becomes the pattern for later historical development. Thus, when the action is brought forward in Book vi to the gold rushes of the 1850's, patterns of social tension are seen to be reproduced from the convict beginnings, even though many of the actors of the new drama of the gold fields are recent immigrants unacquainted with the convict prisons. The diggers of Book vi, "yellow figures, bare-armed and bearded" (vi, v), are yellow from the soil, but their appearance immediately recalls the yellow uniforms of the convicts, and the opposition that develops between the diggers and the police, culminating in the Eureka Stockade, is intended to be seen as repeating the pattern of opposition between the convicts and their guards which had culminated in the prisoners' riot of July 1, 1846, in Book v (v, iv).

The extent to which Clarke intended to say that the convict system established a national pattern is suggested by the way he revised the book. When he excised the whole of Book vi, he also withdrew the earlier riot chapter (the only chapter dealing largely with convict life withdrawn from the original Book v). The only plausible reason for the withdrawal of this chapter is that Clarke had set himself to explain in Book vi a landmark of Australian history, the Eureka Stockade, by pointing to its reproduction of an already established pattern of opposition and unsuccessful revolt. When he removed the famous diggers' rebellion, he also withdrew the convict riot on which it was patterned, thus leaving in his revised version, which is almost exclusively a record of the convict system, a starker model of oppression and social opposition.

Moodie, on the other hand, sees a social development that is the exact reverse of Australia's. In the revised introduction that she wrote for Canadian reprints of her book in 1871, she remarks that her compatriots "can lead a more independent social life than in the mother country."¹² This is not to say that there is no method of social control involved in Moodie's vision. Comparing the Canada of 1871 with the country she had known forty years before, she comments that "its aspect is wholly changed." What is not changed are her values, her sense of cultural norms — and these norms are triumphant. The bond that she sees holding together the independent individuals of her world is a commitment to cultural standards imported from Britain, represented especially by an ideal of education. "A young Canadian gentleman is as well educated as any of his compeers across the big water," she reports proudly. She witnesses the ideals of the British gentry taking hold, and is able to record with satisfaction that "the farmer gradually became a wealthy and intelligent landowner . . . and was able to send his sons to

college and his daughters to boarding school." The educational norm is British genteel culture, and when she remarks, with an odd phrase, that "our print shops are full of the well-educated designs of native artists," she clearly means that the native artists are conforming to the cultural standards of Europe. In sum, then, she can point in 1871 to the social fulfilment of an inherited cultural ideal that binds together the socially diverse and independent individuals of her world.

Normative values usually have a regulatory function. In 1871, Moodie calls on her compatriots to "unite in carrying out measures proposed by the government for the good of the country, irrespective of self-interest and party prejudice." Laying aside the possibility that there is any such thing as an abstract and universal "good," a widespread cultural agreement about normative standards of the "good" will produce the relative stability that was in fact to characterize Canadian federal politics. Robert L. McDougall argues, especially on political grounds, that "Mrs. Moodie's way, was to become the Canadian way." The power of a common cultural ideal to produce political unity is one aspect of this "way." Of Moodie's later Canadian book, McDougall remarks that "it is no wild fancy to see in *Life in the Clearings* a kind of prophecy."¹³ This is no blind, Sybilline prophecy, but a self-fulfilling one. The regulatory function of Moodie's cultural norms is their "prophetic" capacity, through widespread assent, to realize themselves in social reality. If Moodie's title implies a mental commitment to the vocabulary of a "smooth" norm, she sees her world in 1871 gradually conforming to her norm: "The country is the same only in name. . . . The rough has become smooth, the crooked has been made straight, the forests have been converted into fruitful fields." The institution that Clarke portrays is a concrete structure of social reality in which individuals are enmeshed, willingly or not. The norms that Moodie inherits and employs to cultivate her world constitute a mental structure to which social reality is gradually brought to conform. Moodie's norms are less concrete than the institutional regulations that characterize Clarke's Australia, but they are no less definite in origins and outline. Significantly, the regulations of Clarke's officials produce opposition and rebellion, whereas the genteel norms to which Moodie gives expression invite assent in conformity.

NOTES

¹ Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush*, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1962); Marcus Clarke, *His Natural Life*, ed. Stephen Murray-Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970). There are two versions of *His Natural Life*, the original version which was published serially between 1870 and 1872, and a shorter version, revised by Clarke for publication as a book in 1874. The Penguin edition used here follows the original serial version, and to avoid confusions book and chapter numbers are cited with all references. The history of *Roughing it's* publication is more confused. Early versions of some of the sketches first appeared serially in 1847, while the complete book was first published in London in 1852. Moodie made some further revisions for a later Canadian edition

of 1871. Although the McClelland & Stewart edition is an abridgement of the edition of 1852, it is used here because of its general availability.

- ² Alexander Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, ed. C. M. H. Clark, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954); William Dunlop, *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada*, in *Tiger Dunlop's Upper Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), pp. 63-137; Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada*, ed. Clara Thomas (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966). The original dates of publication of these works are, respectively, 1847, 1832, and 1836.
- ³ Washington's use of the expression (1796) cited in *OED* bears out its connotations of a departure from normal experience: "Never having been accustomed to shift or rough it" (s.v. "rough").
- ⁴ "Literary Activity in the Canadas 1812-1841," in *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck et al., 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), I, 157.
- ⁵ The social issues that concern Clarke are quite different from the journey into the interior landscape that Patrick White places at the centre of his modern interpretation of early Australia in *Voss* (1957).
- ⁶ Quoted from *Australian Union*, 2 (1869) by John Pengwerne Matthews, *Tradition in Exile* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1962), pp. 4-5. I wish to thank Prof. Matthews for his helpful advice during the preparation of this paper.
- ⁷ "Marcus Clarke: His Natural Life," in *The Australian Experience*, ed. W. S. Ransom (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974), p. 34.
- ⁸ Matthews, p. 23.
- ⁹ *The Order of Things*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (Random House, 1970), chapter 10, sections III, V, and VI; rpt. "The Human Sciences," in *The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Richard and Fernande deGeorge (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 259, 258.
- ¹⁰ *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, ed. Clara Thomas (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), p. 52.
- ¹¹ Foucault, p. 258.
- ¹² The introductory chapter of 1871 is reprinted in W. C. Bell's edition of *Roughing it in the Bush* (Toronto: Bell and Cockburn, 1913), pp. 3-15.
- ¹³ "Editor's Introduction," in *Life in the Clearings*, by Susanna Moodie, ed. Robert L. McDougall (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959), p. xx.

HOUR 17

5:35 to 6:35 p.m.

from "A Book of Hours"

bpNichol

two freighters gliding in the distance
 as if they would finally meet & touch
 somewhere south of here
 in the grey blue haze of lake erie

the different planes & surfaces become unclear
collision course

feet in the crashing waves at pelee's tip
sun in a haze above me
hugeness of the sky surrounds this i
the mind beats against the skin contains this brain
& only that thin shell of flesh & bone remains
maintains this sundering

empty it out

empty it out

only the wind moving in the tear ducts
blowing into my open mouth
my throat carries this noise & force within
it is consumed

blood thrives on it
all that this animal flesh contains
thrives on it

gulls in clouds above & around
pelee island's outline over the waves
so little to say when the birds scream & the wind
the world is in voice around me

all of this
the personal references

the names
nothing more than shrill chatter
noise
reaching some day a final destination
unintelligible vocabulary
history

earlier today
ellie & i at southwold earthworks
pacing the perimeter
(Arthur's Table? Mayborough?)
no trace of a maker remains
these monuments we raise, books we write,
wind up in a lost tongue
finally all reference vanishes

tho reason points out the folly
a voice is born again

tho the different purposes & meanings remain unclear
this voice is born again

empty it out

empty it out

i have this dumb shout within me
a lifetime cannot approximate

i have this wish to write the world i can never realize

stand here mouth open

air fills me

blown away

in the day to day hugeness of this hazy being
i can never take it all in

i have this sentence i must finish

i have this poem i must write

the boats steam away
west towards lake huron
east to lake ontario
the planes & surfaces foreshorten & change
bird song & wave noise
wind & whistling air

in the midst of
there is something

a presence or a silence
an absence or the pressure of

(leaving southwold
drove west
paused near morpeth where Lampman's buried
read his lines inscribed in the graveyard:

"Yet, patience — there shall come
Many great voices from life's outer sea,
Hours of strange triumph, and when few men heed,
Murmurs & glimpses of eternity.")

THERE

THOMAS HALIBURTON & TRAVEL BOOKS ABOUT AMERICA

Darlene Kelly

THOMAS HALIBURTON'S OBSERVATIONS on British travel commentaries about America reward examination on several counts. First, they are valuable historically, recreating for the modern reader a phase of Anglo-American relations when these analyses of America renewed hostilities between two nations recently at war. Also, they point up Haliburton's interest in the format of travel writing itself and his adaptation of it in books as diverse as the *Account of Nova Scotia*, the *Clockmaker* and *Attaché* series, and other humorous works like *The Letter-Bag of the Great Western*, *The Old Judge*, and *The Season Ticket*. They reveal as well two general features of Haliburton's satire: the objective appraisal of all sides of a situation, and the didactic personal voice.

Studies of America written by travelling Britons never fail to excite the contempt of Haliburton's famous character, Sam Slick. In the first volume of *The Clockmaker* (1836), he bluntly states that the writers of these travelogues are no doubt "ensigns and lieutenants . . . from the British marching regiments in the Colonies, that run over five thousand miles of country in five weeks, on leave of absence, and then return, looking as wise as the monkey that had seen the world."¹ In other words they are superficial tourists who too quickly see little and understand less:

When they get back they are so chock full of knowledge of the Yankees, that it runs over of itself, like a hogshead of molasses rolled about in hot weather — a white froth and scum bubbles out of the bung; wishy washy trash they call tours, sketches, travels, letters, and what not; vapid stuff, jist sweet enough to catch flies, cockroaches, and half fledged galls.²

In the second volume of *The Clockmaker* (1839), Sam tells his Nova Scotian Boswell, "I've read all the travels in America, and there ain't one that's worth a cent!"³ Derogatory references to this travel literature are scattered throughout both the *Clockmaker* series (1836-1840) and its sequel, *The Attaché* (1843-1846). A key passage occurs at the end of the third *Clockmaker* when Sam is given his first assignment as American attaché to the Court of St. James. An

official from the Secretary of State's office informs him that the British government has been commissioning the unflattering portraits of America and instructs him to make the Queen aware of America's displeasure:

It would be advisable, if a favorable opportunity offers, to draw the attention of the Queen to the subject of her authors and travellers, — carelessly like, as if it weren't done a purpose, for it don't comport with dignity to appear too *sensitive*, but jist merely to regret the *prac-tice* of hirein' authors to abuse us in order to damp the admiration of our glorious institutions.

We have every reason to believe that Captain Hall received five thousand pounds for this purpose, and Mrs. Trollope the same sum; that Miss Martineau is promised a royal garter, (it's a pity she warn't hanged with it,) and Captain Marryatt to be made a Knight of the Royal Baths. This conduct is onworthy a great people like the English, and unjust and insultin' to us; and you might suggest to her Royal Highness that this mean, low-lived, dirty conduct will defeat itself, and that nothin' short of kickin' out her ministry will be accepted as an apology by the American people.⁴

Sam's exposé of the deceptions practised on the reading public by British travel writers echoed actual defences voiced everywhere in America. In *America and her Commentators*, a study of the offensive commentaries published just before the end of the Civil War, H. R. Tuckerman writes that many English publications critical of America were believed to be anti-emigration propaganda for which the authors were remunerated in secret by their government.⁵ In *The American in England*, a more recent analysis of this crisis in Anglo-American relations, Robert Spiller supports Tuckerman's argument, citing the rise of the United States as a world power as a reason for these measures.⁶ The American official tells Sam to convey outrage and to feign indifference at the same time — "it don't comport with dignity to appear too sensitive" — when he brings this problem to the attention of the British Crown. But the ultimatum he is to deliver shows that, whether it comported with dignity or not, Americans were sensitive to British censure. Tuckerman notes regretfully, "The importance attached to the swarm of English Travels abusive of America, upon calm reflection, appears like a monomania; and equally preposterous was the sensitiveness of our people to foreign criticism."⁷ Americans were, in fact, so nettled by this criticism that they began to publish their own travel books about America, ostensibly by a foreigner greatly impressed with the country. Charles Jared Ingersoll wrote *Inchiquin, the Jesuit's Letters* (1810), a mock-collection of praiseworthy epistles on America by a visiting Jesuit. In *Notions of the Americans Picked Up by a Travelling Bachelor* (1828), James Fenimore Cooper used a similar technique for bolstering up his country in the eyes of the world. James Kirke Paulding preferred to make standard British comments on America look ridiculous, as he did in *John Bull in America; or the New Munchausen* (1825), by having a British narrator inflate them to absurd proportions. And in *A Sketch of Old England, by a New England*

Man (1822), he reversed the tactic of the British commentaries by putting the Old World under scrutiny.

One reason then that British travel books and the American response to them figure prominently in Haliburton's writings was their topicality. Haliburton's interest in them may also have owed something to his own attempt to write a commentary about America, or at least that corner of it that he knew well. A decade earlier than *The Clockmaker*, he was at work on a project which eventually came to be called *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*. After seven years of painstaking research, it appeared in 1829. Given the success of the English commentaries, Haliburton expected an enthusiastic reception for his *Account* on both sides of the ocean, but especially in England. On January 7, 1824, he wrote excitedly to his friend and advisor, Judge Peleg Wiswall: "Every thing . . . which has America for its Subject (how dull or absurd soever it may be) is read in England with avidity, and I am not altogether without hopes of being able to dispose of my labours in some way or other. . . ." ⁸ Moreover, the *Account* provided a corrective to misconceptions Englishmen had been given of Nova Scotia. Years later at a banquet given in his honour the celebrated author of *The Clockmaker* recalled the misrepresentations of Nova Scotia that were current in England during his youth:

You have been so good, Sir, as to refer in terms of approbation to an humble effort of mine — the History of Nova Scotia. On that subject permit me to say, that in early life I twice visited Great Britain, and was strongly, and I may say painfully, impressed with a conviction that has forced itself upon the mind of every man who has gone to Europe from this country — namely, that this valuable and important Colony was not merely wholly unknown, but misunderstood and misrepresented. Every book of Geography, every Gazetteer and elementary work that mentioned it, spoke of it in terms of contempt or condemnation. It was said to possess good harbours, if you could see them for the fog, and fisheries that would be valuable, if you had only sun enough to cure the fish, — while the interior was described as a land of rock and barren, and doomed to unrelenting sterility. Where facts were wanting, recourse was had to imagination. . . . ⁹

Sam attributes errors such as these to the breakneck speed with which British commentators travelled through the country, perceiving accidental rather than essential features. He insists to the squire that only the native writer — a title for which Haliburton's *Account of Nova Scotia*, not to mention his chronicles of both Yankee and colonist, would have qualified him — can provide an accurate picture of the New World:

if you *want to understand us, you must live among us, too*; your Halls, Hamiltons, and DeRouses, and such critters, what *can* they know of us? Can a chap catch a likeness flying along a rail road? Can he even see the features? . . . if you want to know the inns and the outs of the Yankees — I've wintered them and summered them; I know all their points, shape, make and breed; I've tried 'em alongside of

other folks, and I know where they fall short, where they mate 'em, and where they have the advantage, about as well as some who think they know a plagy sight more. It tante them that stare the most, that see the best always, I guess. Our folks have their faults, and I know them, (I warnt born blind, I reckon,) but . . . the tour writers, are a little grain too hard on us.¹⁰

HALIBURTON'S *Account of Nova Scotia* won him plaudits at home and in the United States, including an honorific membership in the distinguished Massachusetts Historical Society, but in England it did not sell as well as either the author or the publisher had hoped. Joseph Howe, who had confidently printed 3,000 copies of the work, took the brunt of the financial loss. He noted in his business memoranda, "None sold abroad. . . . I was left with about 1,000 copies, scattered about, unsaleable on my hands. As late as 1837, these 1,000 copies of the history remained unsold, though offered at half price."¹¹

The *Account of Nova Scotia* failed to spark the interest of English readers in 1829, but a few years later the author's sketches of Sam Slick, designed initially for the readers of Joseph Howe's *Novascotian*, were pirated by British publisher Richard Bentley and became, to the author's astonishment, immediately successful. His visit to England shortly after the first volume of *The Clockmaker* had appeared there generated great excitement in literary circles. We read in the 1838 journal of Charles R. Fairbanks, Haliburton's fellow traveller at the time: "Haliburton [is] now the greatest Lion in London. Mrs. Trollope and Theo. Hook desire to be acquainted with him."¹² The name of Sam Slick fast became ubiquitous. Justin McCarthy commented in his *Portrait of the Sixties* that for a time Sam Slick rivalled Sam Weller of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* in popularity, "his sayings and doings . . . the subject of frequent allusions and quotations in English books and newspapers, and in the conversation of all who had a genuine relish for fiction of the comic order."¹³ Allusions to Haliburton's famous Yankee even appeared in such famous commentaries about the New World as Captain Marryatt's *Diary in America*¹⁴ and the revised 5th edition of Mrs. Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*.¹⁵ A reviewer writing in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* urged the author of the first *Clockmaker* to turn his attention to the Mother Country in subsequent works: "Let him leave Nova Scotia and come to England. Caricature of the most cauterizing kind never had ampler opportunities."¹⁶

Haliburton did not hesitate to make capital of his popularity in England. As the writer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* suggested, he directed much of the subject matter of the second *Clockmaker* to the English reading public. In discussing this book with a former colleague living in New Brunswick, he wrote: "I have another volume ready for the press, which is not so local as the other,

and I think better suited for English readers."¹⁷ In the second *Clockmaker* as in the first, Sam Slick continues to attack British books about America. In this same book he also makes his readers aware of Haliburton's *Account of Nova Scotia*. Some references are oblique, as when Sam enthusiastically recommends a historical study written by his brother Josiah Slick, like Haliburton both a lawyer and a writer:

he is a considerable of a literary character. He's well known in the great world as the author of the Historical, Statistical, and Topographical Account of Cuttyhunk, in five volumes; a work that has raised the reputation of American genius among foreign nations amazin', I can assure you. He's quite a self-taught author too.¹⁸

The "Historical, Statistical, and Topographical Account of Cuttyhunk" is very close to the title which Haliburton had once projected for his own book at an early stage of its redaction: *An Historical, Geographical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*.¹⁹ The bid to associate his own commentary with that of Josiah Slick is made explicit when the narrator jocularly declares that, next to Josiah Slick's History of Cuttyhunk, "Haliburton's History of Nova Scotia . . . is the most important account of unimportant things I have ever seen."²⁰

As this coy reference to himself would suggest, Haliburton had taken the measure of publicity achieved by *The Clockmaker* and resolved to exploit it.²¹ Evidently he still considered his history of Nova Scotia marketable. His jest at this study as an "important account of unimportant things" combined self-promotion with humour, demonstrating a shrewd understanding on Haliburton's part of how to make a product appealing to a consumer. In a letter written on December 19, 1839, shortly after the second *Clockmaker* was issued, Haliburton tried to persuade his publisher Richard Bentley to republish the work if only for the colonial sales:

I believe you are aware that ten years ago I published a history of Nova Scotia in 2 vols. Somebody, I don't know who, has reprinted it in London, which I am sorry for as it is now an old work. I am loudly called upon here for a new Edition that shall bring the Statistics down to the present day, and I should like to do it, if it would cover expenses. If you can find it worth while to give 250 pounds for this service, the book itself I will say nothing about, as my object is utility to the country, and not money. Let me know immediately and I will go to work at it. It is said to be the best Colonial History, by every review of it, that has appeared, and was as perfect at the time as I could make it, but our civil divisions are all altered since, and so have our statistics materially changed. It cannot have a great circulation in England nor would it be worth your while to pay for the work, but if revised in the way I have spoken of might suit your views and mine. All I require is the expense of revision and correction.²²

Another letter to Bentley written on September 1, 1840, reveals, however, that the publisher declined the offer:

I find that there was no English Edition of the history of Nova Scotia published, that it was a trick of a bookseller here to dispose of the remaining copies by giving them a new title page. I am sorry you declined it, because I do not wish to publish with Colburn, but as the work must either be republished or superseded by someone else I shall have to do it.²³

Determined not to have to call his first literary attempt a failure, Haliburton continued to submit it to publishers. Finally, sometime after 1844, another edition was issued.

The idea of vicarious travel continued to dominate many works that Haliburton wrote after his *Account of Nova Scotia. The Letter-Bag of the Great Western; or, Life in a Steamer* (1840) consists of letters written by Haliburton on the steamship voyage from Bristol to New York, ostensibly by various passengers on board. One of these is entitled "Letter from a Traveller Before He Had Travelled," an ironic portrait of a British commentator who is going to tour America in eight weeks in order that he might interlard his already completed book on America — essentially a "hash" of the "cold collations" of previous commentators²⁴ — with colourful tid-bits. Travel books are in the main badly done, Haliburton insists here as elsewhere, but he nonetheless adopts their successful format. The journey is the main organizational principle of almost all his fictional works, a thread upon which is hung a miscellany of facts, impressions, sketches, and anecdotes. The "sayings and doings" of Sam Slick in both *The Clockmaker* and *The Attaché* are occasioned by sights seen and people met by the famous Yankee, his friend Squire Poker, and other characters in their travels throughout Nova Scotia, the United States, and England. *The Old Judge* (1849) is narrated by a British traveller who begins his American tour by a stay in the colonies where he is introduced to the people and their traditions by his lawyer host and the wise, experienced "old judge" of the title. In *The Season Ticket* (1860) Squire Shegog and his fellow-passengers on the London-Southampton express discuss people they have met while travelling through life. In this, the last of Haliburton's works, the speaker asks, "Who shall write a book of travels now?"²⁵ The subject of world touring has been exhausted in literature, he states. "We must, at last, turn," he argues, "to what we ought to have studied first — ourselves. 'The proper study of mankind is man.'"²⁶

FROM THE FIRST *Clockmaker* on, Haliburton had demonstrated a lively interest in the study of mankind. As one might expect in a satirist, he paid special attention to human foibles and shortcomings. The British commentators were censured by him chiefly for publishing impressions of America that were grossly, perhaps intentionally, distorted. His criticism of these writers was not one-sided, however, but often balanced by telling thrusts at the unde-

sirable traits of persons from other countries as well, as in the following exchange between Sam and the squire. When his Nova Scotian friend tries to declare himself free of prejudice, Sam mockingly compares him to travel writer Basil Hall:

Captain Aul, (Hall,) as he called himself, for I never seed an Englishman yet that spoke good English, said he hadn't one mite or morsel of prejudice, and yet in all his three volumes of travels through the U-nited States, (the greatest nation it's ginerally allowed atween the Poles,) only found two things to praise, the kindness of our folks to him, and the state prisons. None are so blind, I guess, as them that won't see; but you folks can't bear it, that's a fact. Bear what? said I. The superiority of Americans, he replied. . . .²⁷

First, Sam ridicules the squire's contention that, as a North American colonist, he is somehow free of bias. Secondly he makes the point that British commentaries like Captain Hall's are niggardly in their praise. And thirdly he indicts himself as an uncultured and boorish American in a speech replete with bad grammar and vulgar boasting. Robert L. McDougall describes this type of triple-edged satire as "controlled orientation," an aspect of technique which he defines as a "process by means of which Haliburton gains the detachment necessary to move freely and in the best sense critically between the three points of the North Atlantic triangle."²⁸ This technique also reflects a strategy of adjustment to the American and the British spheres of influence and justifies McDougall's claim that, in this area of his achievement at least, Haliburton is solidly in the Canadian stream of writing, "ours or nobody's, part of our living tradition or no living tradition."²⁹

But at times Haliburton seems too overcome by intense political convictions to remain detached in his analysis of the British travel writers. This is suggested by certain puzzling shifts of attitude on the part of his main character. For example, when Sam discusses controversial features of the United States outlined in the commentaries — such as republicanism and the absence of an established religion — his views strangely become more Tory and Anglican than American. In short, for brief stretches of *The Clockmaker* and *The Attaché*, he becomes a fictional incarnation of his creator. Nowhere is this clearer than in Sam's attacks on the political economist and reformer Harriet Martineau whose liberal theories were anathema to Haliburton. The correspondences which exist between her writings and Haliburton's parody of them in the second *Clockmaker* are especially enlightening in this connection.

Of all the British commentators mentioned by Haliburton, Harriet Martineau is the only one who is attacked at length. No study of Haliburton's work has undertaken to explain why he singles her out in this way. Brief unflattering references are made to her in several of the Sam Slick books, but in the second *Clockmaker* the offensive is an extended one. Here a number of conversations take place between a famous author and Sam Slick, whom Haliburton uses to

lampoon her in what at least one contemporary thought a tasteless way.³⁰ Although he does not name Harriet Martineau directly in these episodes, Sam's allusions to her French ancestry and to her celebrated *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834) would have made her identity immediately obvious:

Year afore last, I met an English gall atravellin' in a steamboat; she had a French name that I can't recollect, tho' I got it on the tip o' my tongue too; you know who I mean — she wrote books on enonomy, — not domestic economy, as galls ought, but on political economy, as galls oughtn't, for they don't know nothin' about it.³¹

But it is the arguments in Harriet Martineau's more recently published *Society in America* (1837), and not those in her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, which Sam ridicules. No direct reference is made to the title *Society in America*, but thinly disguised excerpts from this book of travels appear in the second *Clockmaker*, establishing that Haliburton knew it well. To begin, Sam tries to discredit the book by drawing the reader's attention to the author's deafness:

She had a trumpet in her hand, — thinks I, who on airth is she agoin' to hail, or is she agoin' to try echoes on the river? I watched her for some time, and I found it was an ear-trumpet.

Well, well, says I, that's onlike most English travellers any way, for in a gineral way they wear magnifyin' glasses, and do enlarge things so, a body don't know 'em ag'in when he sees 'em. Now, this gall won't hear one-half that's said, and will get that half wrong, and so it turned out.³²

Harriet Martineau herself had called attention to her impaired hearing in the preface to *Society in America*, advising the reader to consider it a handicap if he saw fit, but pointing out as well that this disadvantage proved an asset in drawing confidences out of otherwise reticent people. Sam attributes the distortion in her views to her failure to hear perfectly, aligning it with the exaggeration found in British commentaries generally. He then examines several observations made in *Society in America*, striving to make each look as ridiculous as possible.

Given Sam's patriotism, his attempts to dismiss Harriet Martineau's criticisms of the United States are, if at times discomfiting, at least understandable. Her condemnation of the disparity between egalitarian principles and slavery is a case in point. It was incredible to her, she wrote in *Society in America*, that even religious slaveholders could be blind to "the fact that the negro is a man and a brother."³³ The English "gall" with the French name speaks along the same lines in *The Clockmaker* when she asks Sam, "... do you not think these unfortunate fellow-critters, our sable brothers, if emancipated, educated, and civilised, are capable of as much refinement and as high a degree of polish as the whites?"³⁴ Sam responds by way of anecdote. His brother Josiah Slick, he says, once bet a man a thousand dollars that he could find ten black men who would prove more polished than the same number of whites. He then proceeded to polish up ten

blacks with Day and Martin's blacking until they shone so brightly in the sun that they blinded the judges assembled to decide the bet.³⁵ Sam's handling of Harriet Martineau's objections to slavery is deliberately flippant, an attempt by him to impugn observations on slavery made by those who had no first-hand knowledge of it. He says elsewhere in this connection, "...nothin' raises my dander more, than to hear English folks and our Eastern citizens atalkin' about this subject that they don't onderstand, and have nothin' to do with."³⁶ And he returns to the problem in the second volume of *The Attaché*, where he scorns "the absurd accounts that travellers give of the United States in general, and the gross exaggerations they publish of the state of slavery in particular."³⁷

TO FEND OFF ATTACKS on American institutions by Harriet Martineau and other commentators is for Sam a patriotic activity that is consonant with his belief in "the superiority of Americans." He repeatedly boasts to acquaintances from England and the British North American colonies that "the U-nited States [is] the greatest nation it's ginerally allowed atween the Poles."³⁸ Thus for Sam to attack those parts of *Society in America* which praise aspects of the country he considers superior to all others is out of character. His occasional concession that America is not faultless never quite rings true because it departs too radically from the boasting for which we know him best. For instance, Harriet Martineau's accolades for the voluntary system of religion in the United States and the accompanying attack on the evils of the Established Church of England displease Sam, causing him to remark uncharacteristically to the squire:

I don't like to hear English people come out here and abuse their church; they've got a church, and throve under it, and a national character under it, for honour and upright dealin', such as no other people in Europe have: indeed, I could tell you of some folks who have to call their goods English, to get them off in a foreign land at all. *The name sells 'em*. You may boast of this tree or that tree, and call 'em this dictionary name and that new-fangled name, but *give me the tree that bears the best fruit, I say*.³⁹

Sam's contention that England is the tree that bears the best fruit is at odds with his belief that the United States is the greatest nation "atween the Poles." Also perplexing is his complaint that no one church or form of worship is established in the United States over any other:

... we don't prefer one and establish it, and don't render its support compulsory. Better, perhaps, if we did, for it burns pretty near out sometimes here, and has to be brought to by revivals and camp-meetin's, and all sorts of excitements; and when it does come to, it don't give a steady clear light for some time, but spits and sputters and cracks like a candle that's got a drop o' water on the wick. It don't seem kinder rational, neither, that screamin' and screechin', and hoopin' and

hollerin', like posset, and tumblin' into faintin's, and fits, and swoons, and what not.⁴⁰

In his partiality for the English Church and his view that certain democratic manifestations are suspect, Sam Slick is close in spirit to Thomas Haliburton himself. Notice the double thrust of his attack on Harriet Martineau's analysis of what she called the "spirit of religion" in America. In the chapter of her book bearing this title, Martineau commended those congregations "where the people of colour are welcome to worship with the whites, — actually intermingled with them, instead of being set apart in a gallery appropriated to them."⁴¹ These situations, she argued, illustrated perfectly the ideal of Christian brotherhood summed up in the quotation from Novalis used as the chapter's epigraph: "The Christian Religion is the root of all democracy: the highest fact in the Rights of Man."⁴² Sam's mockery of this view, which he is able to render almost verbatim, demonstrates that Haliburton had read this section of *Society in America* closely:

If you was to revarse that maxim o' yourn, said I, and say democracy is too often found at the root of religion, you'd be nearer the mark, I reckon. I knew a case once exactly in point. Do tell it to me, said she; it will illustrate "the spirit of religion." Yes, said I, and illustrate your book too, if you are awritin' one, as most English travellers do. Our congregation, said I, to Slickville, contained most of the wealthy and respectable folk there, and a most powerful and united body it was. Well, there came a split once on the election of an Elder, and a body of the upper-crust folks separated and went off in a huff. Like most folks that separate in temper, they laid it all to conscience; found out all at once they had been adrift afore all their lives, and joined another church as different from ourn as chalk is from cheese; and to shew their humility, hooked on to the poorest congregation in the place. Well, the minister was quite lifted up in the stirrups when he saw these folks jine him; and to shew his zeal for them the next Sunday, he looked up at the gallery to the niggers, and, said he, my brether'n, said he, I beg you won't spit down any more on the aisle seats, for there be gentlemen there now. Jist turn your heads, my sable friends, and let go over your shoulders. Manners, my brothers, manners before backey. Well, the niggers seceded; they said it was an infringement on their rights, on their privilege of spittin', as freemen, where they liked, how they liked, and when they liked, and they quit in a body. "Democracy," said they, "is the root of religion."⁴³

One suspects that Harriet Martineau's reputation as a radical reformer helped to draw her the lion's share of abuse heaped upon the British commentators by Sam Slick. The low opinion of the extension of democratic rights reflected in Sam's story calls to mind Haliburton's own political views. In Nova Scotia he fought vigorously against responsible government, seeing in it a creeping republicanism. Not surprisingly he was also opposed to the additional voting privileges granted by the Reform Bill of 1832. Thomas Poker, the Nova Scotian narrator who more often than any other character in the Sam Slick books articulates Haliburton's own opinions, comments sorrowfully upon arriving in England that

the once sterling conduct of the English has been despoiled by "dissent, reform, and agitation."⁴⁴ Martineau's affiliations with the reformer, Francis Place, and the main author of the 1832 Reform Bill, Lord Durham, would in themselves have discredited her in Haliburton's eyes.⁴⁵

Haliburton's intense antagonism to Lord Durham became public just before Durham, after a brief period of office as Canada's Governor-General, published his famous *Report on the Affairs of British North America* on January 31, 1839. In a work entitled *Bubbles of Canada* which Tories attempting to forestall the *Report* had commissioned him to do, Haliburton denounced Durham as "a radical dictator and a democratic despot."⁴⁶ The *Report* itself when it appeared alienated Haliburton further. To support his contention that Nova Scotians were not fully developing the resources of their province, Durham made a veiled reference to the first series of *The Clockmaker*, "a highly popular work," he wrote, "which is known to be from the pen of one of Your Majesty's chief functionaries [an allusion to Haliburton's appointment to the judiciary] in Nova Scotia."⁴⁷ Haliburton immediately dispatched an angry series of letters in rebuttal to the *London Times* which was later reprinted as *A Reply to the Report of the Earl of Durham*. Durham's biographer, Chester New, remarks that Haliburton expended bitter sarcasm on portions of the *Report* that he had, either deliberately or otherwise, misunderstood.⁴⁸ And Haliburton's own biographer, V. L. O. Chittick, dismisses the letters as ineffective "products of ill-temper."⁴⁹ Exactly when in the turbulent 1830's Haliburton's passionate dislike of Durham began and to what extent it influenced his caricature of Harriet Martineau and her views it is difficult to say. Certainly his rude treatment of both Durham and Martineau reveals an intense dislike for what he saw as perniciously liberal tendencies on both sides of the Atlantic. Why he attributed his own anti-republican sentiments to Sam Slick is another vexed question. It is possible that he hoped to weight his argument more heavily by enlisting the support of an otherwise patriotic Yankee in pointing out the weak spots in the American system; or perhaps, all unconsciously, he mistrusted the indirection of art in his eagerness to make these deficiencies perfectly clear.

Thomas Haliburton's recreation of the battle of New World commentaries waged by citizens from all points of the North Atlantic triangle is nourishing to the historical imagination. It is also relevant, for although the books themselves are no longer controversial, Canada's relation to Britain and to the United States is. To see where we as a nation have been is the first step to seeing both where we are and where we are likely to go. This is not to suggest that Haliburton was writing for posterity. On the contrary, his repeated allusions to British travel books indicate a concern that was immediate and, in places, highly personal. Not surprisingly we find him using this popular genre himself. Elastic in form, it was able to accommodate the pronouncements on every imaginable subject that con-

stitute his best-known works. His remarks on the British authors themselves, moreover, demonstrate two features of his general satiric approach: the revolving, dispassionate criticism that Robert L. McDougall calls "controlled orientation," and the biased comment. Finally, the passages on the travel books, barring a few intemperate lapses, have genuine literary merit. As Northrop Frye has observed, invective is more readable than panegyric.⁵⁰ And the invective in this case is distinguished by the wit, sharp caricatures, and vivid tropes that mark Haliburton's better writing.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville*, I (Halifax: Joseph Howe, 1836), p. 58.
- ² *Clockmaker*, I, p. 58.
- ³ *The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville*, II, 4th ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1839), p. 319.
- ⁴ *The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville*, III (London: Richard Bentley, 1840), pp. 299-300.
- ⁵ *America and her Commentators with a Critical Sketch of Travel in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), p. 252.
- ⁶ *The American in England During the First Half Century of Independence* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926), pp. 300-01.
- ⁷ *America and her Commentators*, p. 256.
- ⁸ As quoted by V. L. O. Chittick, *Thomas Chandler Haliburton ("Sam Slick"): A Study in Provincial Toryism* (1924; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 200.
- ⁹ As quoted by Chittick, p. 123.
- ¹⁰ *Clockmaker*, I, pp. 60-61.
- ¹¹ As quoted by Chittick, p. 144.
- ¹² As quoted by Chittick, p. 222.
- ¹³ (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), p. 170.
- ¹⁴ Frederick Marryatt, *A Diary in America with Remarks on Its Institutions* (1839), ed. Sydney Jackman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 301, 306.
- ¹⁵ Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), ed. Donald Smalley (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 209.
- ¹⁶ "The World We Live In," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XII (November 1837), 677.
- ¹⁷ As quoted by Chittick, pp. 202-03.
- ¹⁸ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 87.
- ¹⁹ As cited in a letter from Haliburton to Judge Peleg Wiswall. See Chittick, p. 130.
- ²⁰ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 116.
- ²¹ On more than one occasion in his fiction, Haliburton appealed to highly placed readers for preferment. At the end of the second *Clockmaker*, for example, Sam recommends that the Nova Scotian squire request of the Minister of the Colonies substantial rewards for his literary efforts in such words as these:

if you want to make an impartial deal, to tie the Nova Scotians to you for ever, you'll jist sarve him [the creator of Sam Slick] as you sarved Earl Mulgrave (though his writin's ain't to be compared to the Clockmaker, no more than chalk is to cheese); you gave him the governorship of Jamaica, and arterwards of Ireland. John Russell's writin's got him the berth of the leader in the House of Commons. Well, Francis Head, for his writin's you made him Governor of Canada, and Walter Scott you made a baronet of, and Bulwer you did for too, and a great many others you have got the other side of the water you sarved the same way. Now, minister, fair play is a jewel, says you; if you can reward your writers to home with governorships and baronetcies, and all sorts o' snug things, let's have a taste o' the good things this side o' the water too. . . . The Yankee made Washington Irvin' a minister plenipo', to honour him; and Blackwood, last November, in his magazine, says that are Yankee's books ain't fit to be named in the same day with the Clockmaker — that they're nothin' but Jeremiads (319-20).

Another instance of self-promotion can be found in the "Dedication to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell" which prefaces *The Letter-Bag of the Great Western; or Life in a Steamer* (1840; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). "Like a good shepherd, my Lord, open the gates," Haliburton pleads, "and let down the bars, and permit us to crop some of our own pastures, that good food may thicken our fleeces, and cover our ribs." He points out further that, although it is not fitting to say what he expects for himself, ". . . if the office of distributor of honours and promotions among colonists is vacant, as there are no duties to perform, and the place is a sinecure, it would suit [him] uncommonly well, and afford [him] leisure to cultivate talents that are extremely rare among the race of officials" (xiii). The main thrust of this remark is, of course, satiric in its criticism of governmental neglect of deserving colonists, but Haliburton's willingness to be officially recognized and rewarded is also underlined.

²² "The Correspondence of Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Richard Bentley," ed. W. H. Bond, in *The Canadian Collection at Harvard University*, ed. W. I. Morse, Bulletin IV (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Printing Office, 1947), pp. 61-62.

²³ *Canadian Collection at Harvard*, p. 63.

²⁴ *The Letter-Bag*, p. 130.

²⁵ *The Season-Ticket* (1860; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 1.

²⁶ *The Season-Ticket*, p. 3.

²⁷ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 58.

²⁸ "Thomas Chandler Haliburton," in *Our Living Tradition*, Second Series, ed. Robert L. McDougall (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 29.

²⁹ *Our Living Tradition*, p. 29.

³⁰ Lt.-Col. C. R. Fox, an officer of His Majesty's forces stationed at Halifax in 1836 to whom Haliburton dedicated the second series of *The Clockmaker* sight unseen, is said to have deplored its allusions to Harriet Martineau. This is mentioned by Chittick, p. 232.

³¹ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 58.

³² *Clockmaker*, II, pp. 58-59.

³³ *Society in America* (1837; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), I, x.

³⁴ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 86.

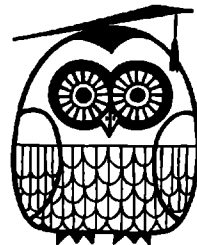
- ³⁵ *Clockmaker*, II, pp. 88-89.
- ³⁶ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 89.
- ³⁷ *The Attaché; or, Sam Slick in England*, II, 2nd ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1843), p. 67.
- ³⁸ *Clockmaker*, II, p. 3.
- ³⁹ *Clockmaker*, II, pp. 61-62.
- ⁴⁰ *Clockmaker*, II, pp. 63-64.
- ⁴¹ *Society in America*, III, p. 258.
- ⁴² *Society in America*, III, p. 258.
- ⁴³ *Clockmaker*, II, pp. 65-66.
- ⁴⁴ *The Attaché; or, Sam Slick in England*, I, 2nd ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1843), p. 117.
- ⁴⁵ In 1834 Harriet Martineau collaborated with Lord Durham in the composition of a tract on the improvement of labour relations. As her posthumous *Autobiography* (1877) reveals, she held him in high esteem, an opinion she may well have expressed publicly during the period of their association.
- ⁴⁶ As quoted by Chittick, p. 238.
- ⁴⁷ *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, ed. Sir C. P. Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), II, p. 214.
- ⁴⁸ *Lord Durham: A Biography of John George Lambton First Earl of Durham* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 517.
- ⁴⁹ Chittick, p. 263.
- ⁵⁰ *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 224.

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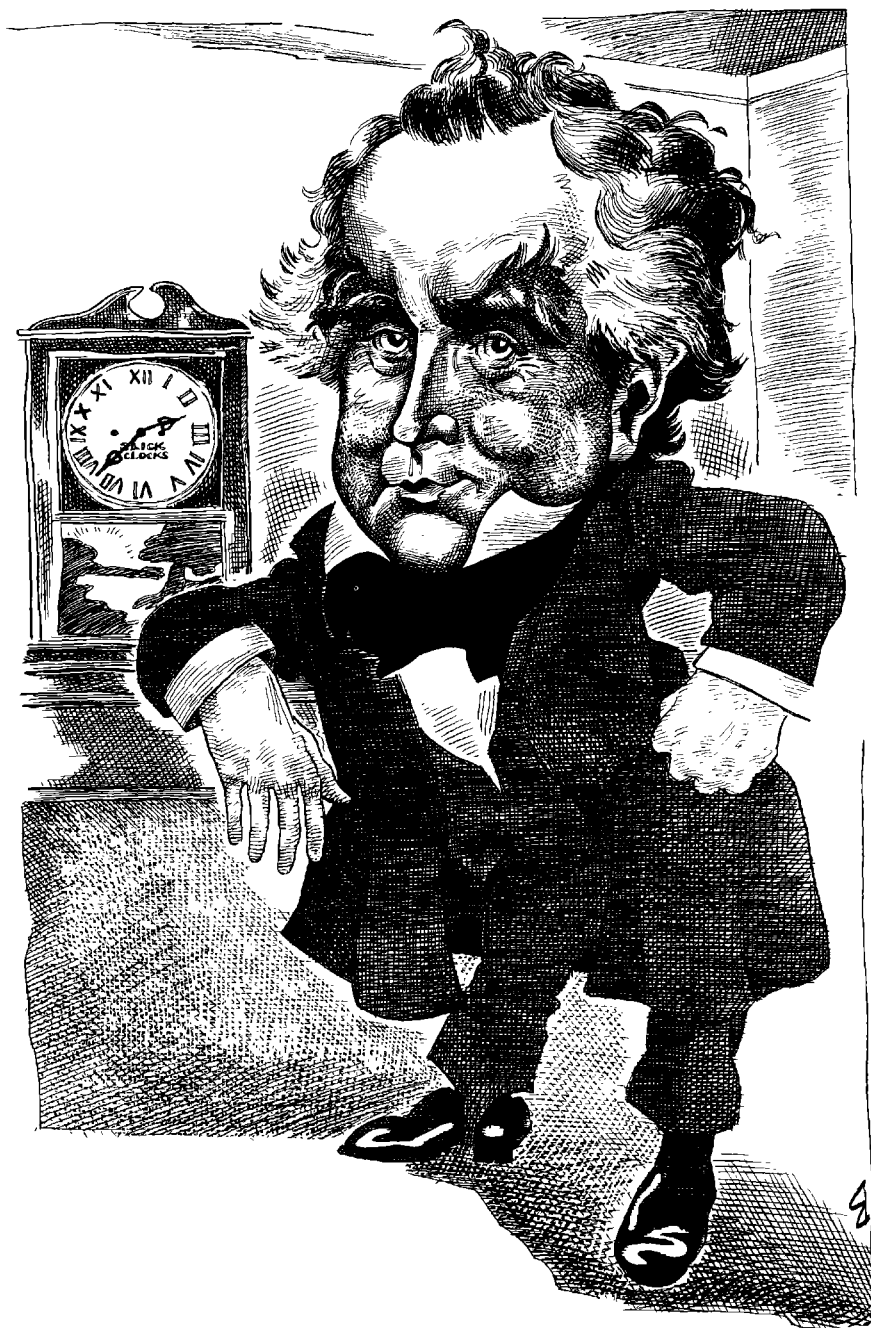
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CHARLES G.D. ROBERTS



BLISS CARMAN



DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT



ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN



SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN



RALPH CONNOR

THE GRACKLE

Milton Acorn

A grackle squats up on my roof and squacks
 Until I want to target him for rocks.
 He soon will drive the tuneful robins off.
 Bad music is all they're afraid of.

It's illegal to kill a robin
 Or a man in some few circumstances
 Or a human foetus on Prince Edward Island.
 This is a neighborhood of miracle
 Working mechanics, too honest for garages
 Who'd certainly be failed by I.Q. tests
 Being not very strong upon language.
 They're stubborn about their folksongs;
 Singularly uncolorful curses;
 Oldtime fiddlers whom their hearts engage:
 Not very modern about rock music.

They do not heed the voice of the grackle.
 The lawns are converted to dinosaur pastures
 Onto which are towed ancient vehicles
 Which by and by drive off, momentarily fixed.
 Three young ravens patrol up and down —
 Visited and counseled by elders —
 This street, playing crow, a favorite raven game;
 Observing the manners of these strange beasts.

One said "*kaw*" to me. I answered "*growk*"
 With an inside-of-a-bottle intonation
 I consider pretty genuine.
 I think she was actually startled
 As if a grackle'd made a proposition
 For sex, to become a handsome prince.

Then she re-enacted a scene from a dream
 I'd had some months ago about a hawk
 Contrary to Professor Asimov
 To whom all things are as they all seem
 Or don't, by this watch and estimation.

THE CONCEIT OF A RAVEN

Milton Acorn

Down over the lip of the verandah
 Into my sight swept the raven. *Whup!*
 His shadow fell from the roof to the lawn;
 So quiet the spell I heard that patch flop.

Oh sure it was some other phenomenon
 Like breaking the ripple-barrier of wind
 That flicked like flame about the eaves:
 Or his shadow made more noise than he did.

It's a universal rule of miracles;
 There must be a natural explanation.
 The catcher must not leave home plate
 Nor the eye fool about in dimensions.

I maintain it's likely, to repeat,
 For the very green grass to feel a twinge
 If suddenly brushed by dark and such
 Conceit as is dealt by ravens, and flinch.

That raven wore a tight toque on his head
 Quite black of course, plus a body-stocking
 Blithe russet brown, for those raven-pelfs
 Have various tinges of unblack shadings —

Which ravens and raven types can descry —
 Besides that obvious fust for deceit . . .
Since shadows are not black but colored.
 I saw him as oneself. Jesus that bird!

PARKDALE

Milton Acorn

It is absolutely true that ravens
 Roost in cemeteries. We are between
 Three of those big ominous bird havens
 In our village where no spirits are seen

Perhaps for lack of eyes to look at them
 Unpreoccupied. This is a bedroom
 Community for leftover spasms
 Of rest that seems to be part of our doom.

Sometimes a solemn dark-plumed procession
 In numbers amounting to the hundreds
 Without creaks, caws or croaks of discussion
 Pondering the possibilities of thunder
 Will give an unaccustomed colorful
 Dimension to the air above Parkdale.

HOMETOWN

Len Gasparini

Oh it was a joy to be alive
 and back in my hometown
 after so many years abroad!
 The train rumbled into the station
 on time. The midwinter sun
 came out to greet me.
 I wanted to shake hands with the world.
 Never had I felt so alone.
 I took a taxi to the nearest tavern,
 and everything was copasetic,
 (as we used to say in the Sixties).
 I drank three screwdrivers,
 tipped the waitress a ten-dollar bill,
 and swaggered to the men's room.
 Scratched on the wall
 above a smelly urinal
 choked with cigarette butts
 was the latest graffiti:

*If you only have a year to live,
 spend it in Windsor,
 and it'll seem like twenty.*

WILFRED CAMPBELL RECONSIDERED

Laurel Boone

THE ART OF WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL cannot be separated from his life.¹ Campbell believed that only social thought was worthwhile and that intellectual and artistic activity could properly take place only within society. Therefore most of his poetry is social or public. His poems about nature often depend on nature's value to man in society; his dramatic poems tell of heroes and heroines who live and die by the highest social ideals; and, after the success of "The Dead Leader" in 1891, he came to see himself as the laureate of Canada, duty-bound to commemorate persons and events and to rouse the nation to achieve its best nature and highest dreams. His poetry would teach what that nature and those dreams should be. Unlike the work of more individualistic artists, Campbell's poetry must be seen in the context of the man's intellectual and spiritual nature and his intellectual, political and social milieu.

In the *Literary History of Canada*, Carl Klinck recognizes Daniel Wilson's *Caliban: The Missing Link* as a source of Campbell's "experiments in imagery of primitive nature and primitive religion."² Wilson influenced Campbell even more profoundly than that. He had been a professor of history at University College, University of Toronto, since 1843, and when Campbell began his studies there in 1881, Wilson was the new president of the College. Campbell probably heard him lecture, and he had the opportunity to know the man himself, a singular blend of poet and scientist. Wilson credited Shakespeare with discerning the proper application of the theory of evolution to man because in *Caliban* he had shown how high man's animal nature, uninformed by the divine, could evolve. Shakespeare's unique poetic intuition enabled him to know and describe what nineteenth-century scientists had just begun to discover. Other thinkers, such as George Paxton Young, professor of ethics and metaphysics at University College, and William Dawson LeSueur, an acquaintance of Campbell's middle age, rejected with Wilson the positivist idea that all knowledge must be derived from sensory perceptions. Young finally became an idealist, and LeSueur regarded knowledge derived from intuition or revelation to be factual along with scientific

knowledge.³ Wilson's idea about Caliban seized Campbell's imagination, but it was the holistic view of knowledge he and his fellows shared that gave Campbell the impetus and courage to regard all knowledge as within his province and to pursue science through spiritual or poetic intuition for the rest of his life.

Campbell left the University of Toronto in 1883 to study at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass., where the intellectual ferment marked him as permanently as did the exposure to American transcendentalism. The School had been founded just sixteen years before Campbell began his studies there. It was independent of Harvard, but its nearness to the university and the freedom of students to take courses at either institution meant that the Theological School had to meet Harvard's high intellectual standards. In *Faith and Freedom*,⁴ a history of the School, the Rev. George Blackman says that faculty members were required to teach "theological science" and had to display "a scientific mind and culture, . . . some acquaintance with the later results of scholarly research in other departments . . . [and] acute knowledge of the relations of modern Science to Revealed Truth." The social sciences and psychology were welcomed, and higher criticism of the Bible was both practised and taught. Faculty and students were on intimate terms, studying, living and worshipping together. Blackman describes some of the men who were Campbell's teachers: Peter Henry Steenstra, his professor of Old Testament, was a man of "monolithic honesty" who was "almost frighteningly frank." Because of his continuous inquiry, his "scholarly opinions changed throughout his life." Alexander Viets Griswold Allen, who taught church history, was "absorbed by the history of ideas embodied in institutions"; "the large and cloudy canvas on the grand scale" was his "favoured medium." A student said of New Testament Professor Henry Sylvester Nash, "His was no Sunday-school course, shielding our faith. We were given the supreme documents of Christianity and we were set to find their meaning and their truth. If they were filled with hard questions which might later unsettle our faith, we were forced to face the issue at once." Campbell's spirit of restless inquiry into any subject and his sense of the unity of knowledge, set in motion at University College, received direction and encouragement at Episcopal Theological School.

By contrast, his life as a rural priest must have been extremely frustrating. A man with such an appetite for speculation and (as Klinck suggests in his biography) such a relish for lively conversation would chafe under parish duties performed in isolation from suitable friends. Campbell also became disenchanted with the church as a model of society. The hypocrisy of churchmen and the pettiness of parish politics disgusted him so much that while he was writing a sermon with one hand he was composing invective against churchmen with the other.⁵ He left the priesthood in 1891. The poetry he wrote near the end of his ministry shows that he felt the despair induced by a vision of a godless universe.

Nevertheless, all his life he remained at least a spasmodic churchgoer. His speculations on man and nature carried him away from trinitarian, sacramental orthodoxy, but if he no longer defined his faith according to the Thirty-nine Articles, he did not deny them either. His view seems to have been, not that the faith of the church was wrong, but that it was insufficient. In verse and prose he flayed both Protestantism and Catholicism, but he praised Christianity itself as one of the main unifying forces in society, a part of the common heritage of the British race. Campbell's faith was tried severely during his six years in the priesthood, but he neither lost it nor ceased to value the institution which embodied it. The harmonizing of religion, science, and social theory which preoccupied his middle age began in these years.

Campbell spent twenty-six years as a civil servant in Ottawa without rising above the rank of clerk. His 1910 diary⁶ is filled with complaints: when he is late he must sign a book; his office is too small and uncomfortable; he is not paid enough. But not one of these complaints concerns the work itself. In 1908 he had been promoted to Archives because of the fine historical work he had done while working in Privy Council (1897-1908),⁷ and his projects continued to be historical. Far from creating intellectual or artistic tension in his life, his work coincided with his interests. He seems to have worked alone much of the time too, so that when he took advantage of the policy which permitted civil servants to take unpaid leave when they wished, he was not constrained to hurry back. In 1897, 1901, 1906 and 1911, he made extended visits to Britain; letters to Mrs. Campbell during the 1906 visit express his intention to write to various people to forestall criticism of his four-month absence. These letters admit, too, that one of the purposes of the trip, as well as the means of financing it, was to sell some poems and *Ian of the Orcades*.⁸ He succeeded in these endeavours, but not in his search for a position in which he could contribute more directly to the Empire. His yearning for work that would serve not only his interests but also his highest ideals, first expressed when he became a priest, persisted until the end of his life. When his age and health prevented his becoming a soldier in the Great War, he threw himself into the war effort in Ottawa, recruiting, drilling Home Guards Corps, lecturing, farming, and writing poems, songs and articles. Finally, Archives loaned him to the Imperial Munitions Board as historiographer.⁹ At the time of his death, he was writing an account of Canada's munitions industry, his daily labour at last the outlet for his spiritual as well as his intellectual energy.

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF Campbell's quarrels and his contentious nature, but it is worth noting that the complainers have been other writers. Professional jealousy sharpened Campbell's pen, and it also amplified

the responses to its jabs. Campbell may have parodied Lampman's poetry in "At the Mermaid Inn,"¹⁰ and irritated his fellow travellers to the 1897 meeting of the Royal Society by declaiming blood-curdling passages from his tragedies;¹¹ he may have been too eager to defend his literary territory by ravaging someone else's; but among philosophers and historians, and among politicians and other men of the world, he was more at ease. On May 23, 1894, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and from 1903 until 1911 he was secretary of Section II, the section for English humanities. His correspondence shows how zestfully he performed his duties and documents the warm relationships he formed with the most interesting men in Canadian letters. In Ottawa, Campbell made lasting friendships with William Lyon MacKenzie King, who was his frequent companion from 1901 until his death; Thomas Gibson, his physician and an amateur pianist of local fame; the Rev. D. W. R. Herridge, Ottawa's leading Presbyterian minister; and W. J. Sykes, an anthologist and the librarian of the Ottawa Public Library. He became close friends with his clan chieftain, the ninth Duke of Argyll, and with Earl Grey when he was Governor General of Canada. He also visited Nicholas Flood Davin, A. R. Dickey, John Peter Featherston, and other politicians who could enjoy a heated discussion with him. He conducted a long and animated correspondence with R. Tait McKenzie about art in general and their own art in particular, and he and Charles Harriss, the composer, enjoyed a fruitful and pleasant collaboration.

Unlike the writers who criticized him, Campbell was a showman. He filled his life with music. His mother, a musician, owned the only piano in Wiarton,¹² and doubtless taught young Will to play. His daughters played, composed, and sang, and he may have done the same. The Lorne Pierce Collection contains manuscripts of musical settings for poems, one by his daughter Faith and at least one that may be in his own hand, although whether he copied it or actually composed it cannot be known. He and Amy Troubridge, who adapted "England" and set it to music, planned to earn a good deal of money by collaborating on songs, and he and Charles Harriss enjoyed several notable successes. Campbell's poetry has been called unmusical, but many poems that appear to be repetitious and harsh, such as "Chant Cordiale" and "The Sea Queen," could easily be made into rousing songs, and perhaps this was the fate Campbell intended for them.

Whether Campbell himself played or sang for others is not known, although as a priest he could hardly have avoided it. But he did recite. On February 17, 1896, at the Historical Ball given by the Governor General and the Countess of Aberdeen, "Mr. Hayter Reed as Donnacona made a speech in the Indian language to Their Excellencies. Mr. Wilfred Campbell as Tessonot interpreted."¹³ Campbell's photographs show what an elaborate event this was, and how intensely he played his part. A year later, on March 2, 1897, he performed in "An Intellectual Treat," in which Dr. Thomas Gibson and others played the piano

and Campbell and Miss M. F. Kenny, an actress, recited Campbell's poetry. Miss Kenny's offerings included "The Vengeance of Saki," "written for her by the author." Her rendering of "Harvest Slumber Song" was accompanied by music she had composed. Either she or Campbell recited "Pan the Fallen," and Campbell's recitation of an excerpt from "Daulac" was "quite the intellectual feature of the evening."¹⁴ There was some enthusiasm, at least in Ottawa, for Campbell's closet drama. Four of his "poetical tragedies" were published in book form and a fifth appeared in a magazine. One typescript play remains in a full script with well-thumbed individual parts and another is in six copies; both were rehearsed, if not performed.¹⁵ In his lectures on life, literature, and the Empire, which he began to give in the early years of the new century, Campbell combined this passion for drama and performing with his sense of mission as a teacher.

CAMPBELL TRIED CONTINUOUSLY to discover the nature of man, his place in the physical and social universe, and his relationship with God. From his earliest exposure to the idea of evolution at University College, he was obsessed by the puzzle of man's origin. From about 1902 until at least 1910, he worked on a treatise called "The Tragedy of Man,"¹⁶ which begins with an idea akin to Daniel Wilson's: man's animal nature evolved according to the pattern suggested by Darwin, but his spiritual nature came more directly from God. Campbell then postulates a superior race, one not evolved from the rest of physical nature, which mated with the evolved race to produce human nature as we know it; this mating, he says, was the Fall. On this scheme depend twenty-two chapters of speculation about mythology, ethnology, the Bible, literature and art, religion, ancient and modern history, monarchy and man's social relations, and man and the universe. Campbell builds the entire corpus of his religious, literary, and political thought upon his theory of man's origin.

Campbell does not subscribe to the dualism inherent in Wilson's suggestion: man for Campbell has one nature, not two, although his nature was formed by two influences. Man's spirit, he believes, is dominant, infusing and controlling his whole being. Klinck says that Campbell's thought is "Emersonian idealism returning through reliance upon spirit, if not through spiritual self-reliance, to something very near orthodoxy." He adds, "The only -ism in [Campbell's] approved list was idealism." Actually Campbell's idealism is not Emersonian. It is related only collaterally to that New England school of thought.

Klinck's statement contains the key to the difference. Emersonian idealism is individualistic; "reliance upon spirit" is very different from "spiritual self-reliance." A. B. McKillop, in *A Disciplined Intelligence*,¹⁷ outlines the idealistic philosophy of John Watson and George Paxton Young in terms that come very

close to describing Campbell's. Watson, a Scot from Glasgow University, taught logic, metaphysics and ethics at Queen's University from 1872 until 1924. He published frequently in magazines as accessible as *The Canadian Monthly* and *Queen's Quarterly* as well as in scholarly journals. A charter member of the Royal Society, he was in Section II when Campbell was secretary. George Paxton Young was older than Watson, but he became an idealist late enough in life to be considered Watson's follower. He taught ethics and metaphysics at University College when Campbell was there. These men were disciples, not of the American school, but of Kant and Hegel by way of Edward Caird, Watson's professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow. For them, "the universe [is] an organic whole," and the single principle behind history is a spiritual one. Physical nature is "transmuted by the action of thought into exemplifications of necessary laws, and thus half-subjective generalizations are raised to objective truths." Man is literally made in God's image, because reason "connects him with the Divine"; Nature is "the visible garment of God"; and Duty is "the voice of God speaking in the innermost depths of our moral nature." This appeared to Watson to be "the essential principle of Christianity, the union or identity of the human and divine." Christianity, not the personal expression of private religious sentiments, followed from the idealism propounded by Caird and interpreted and taught by his followers in Canada. Watson reconciled the contradiction between the need for freedom and the belief in necessity by calling a free act one which "is regulated by the highest laws of our nature," that is, by the internal sense of duty which comes from God. One who acts freely in this way "is not subject to any external necessity, but only to the inner necessity of his own nature, in obeying which he strengthens his will." By "working out one's freedom through seeming necessity," one [is] brought to a universal point of view." "Watson . . . taught that the Christian message was best understood and acted upon, not by depending on traditional creeds or doctrines . . . but by the application of idealist social thought to life in the secular world. In so doing, the secular world would be spiritualized and the Kingdom of Heaven would arrive."

The Canadian idealists extended to society their notion of duty as freedom. Their view, like Hegel's and Caird's, was that because society is an organic whole, social freedom is found in subordinating personal to social good. This means that personal life ought to be assessed from a social perspective, and that it will have meaning only insofar as it contributes to the common good. Watson says that the man who has freed himself from "undue accentuation of his own individual desires" moves from being merely a citizen of his family and then of his own country to being a citizen of the whole community of man. His duty is to serve larger and larger social organizations: the family, the church, the state, and the whole race of man.

“‘[E]ach individual must conceive of himself as a member in a social organism,’” Watson said. Because the parts of an organism are bound to their various orders of duties, an organic view of society encourages monarchism and Toryism. And if the organic metaphor be extended over time, society is seen as evolving, just like other organisms. Natural selection suggests that if one organism flourishes more vigorously than others, it has a natural superiority; when evolutionary theory is reconciled with Protestant Christianity, that organism’s superiority becomes an expression of God’s purpose. For idealistic imperialists like George Parkin, George Grant, and Wilfred Campbell, the supremacy of the British race was clearly a sign of its superiority, and the expansion of the Empire was “‘as natural and organic as the force which compels the bursting of a bud.’”¹⁸ They translated Watson’s ideas on personal duty to the human race into an imperative to serve the British race and his idea of the world into their vision of the British Empire. Campbell thought that the higher, godlike portion of his nature inspired in him a sense of brotherhood, not with all people, but with those who, like himself, had evolved into the supreme race on earth. Serving this race was Campbell’s mission in life. As a poet, he sang impassioned songs to inspire his feelings in others, for his imperialism expressed not simply his political stance but his deepest spiritual beliefs.

Campbell’s passion for history springs from these same sources. If present society is an organism, and if it has evolved like an organism, then a man who aspires to guide it into a nobler future must know its history. With his fellow idealists, Campbell believed that the direction in which the race would evolve was neither predetermined nor decided by such externals as geography or the encroachment of other cultures. In his “Life and Letters” essays,¹⁹ Campbell insisted that analysis of the race’s history disclosed the special strengths of the national character and therefore that it could enable statesmen to pursue strenuously and effectively the highest national goals. Widespread study of history, he said, would rekindle in all members of the social organism the racial pride that would make each one a devoted contributor to the progress and welfare of all.

WATSON IDEALISTICALLY VIEWED Nature as “‘the visible garment of God.’” Because of Campbell’s intimacy with nature, his philosophy became more complex than Watson’s. Campbell found the natural world, like the social world, to be informed by spirit, and nature’s physical beauties communicated this spirit to him. Poems such as “The Mystery” (CP 104, PW 187) and “The Earth Spirit” (CP 142, PW 102) articulate this attitude fully and beautifully. In “Nature the Benign” (CP 274, PW 233), Campbell says that the reality is not the randomness and violence seen by the materialistic observer; instead,

"She is a spirit, and her joy is life." His poems involving gods, goddesses, nymphs, satyrs, or dryads express his sense of that continuous, timeless spirit which gives value to nature's physical reality. In "An August Reverie," he confesses that

I may not know each plant as some men know them,
 As children gather beasts and birds to tame;
 But I went 'mid them as the winds that blow them,
 From childhood's hour, and loved without a name.
 (CP 117, PW 61; ll. 43-46)

He concentrates emotionally on that spirit in nature which informs her physical manifestations. In his earliest poems, the haunting of woods, lakes and rivers by the souls of ancient Indians marks the beginning of this concentration. In his mature work, exhausted man, attracted by the beauties of nature, draws his only solace from nature's spirit.

Campbell's feeling of oneness with nature, expressed in "An August Reverie" and also in "March Morning in Canada" (PW 325), comes from two sources. First, as a physical being, man is a creature of earth, and is kin to other earthly creatures. But he is not to be identified with them. Man is not part of the economy of nature because his spiritual component separates him from the natural world. Yet the spirit of man can find its counterpart in the spirit of nature, and so on the spiritual plane, as well as on the physical one, man is united with nature.

This sense of spiritual unity and continuity means that the effects of nature can be felt even when the physical reality is absent, and for Campbell, recollection is as important as experience. Not only is he able to recreate at will the pleasures of nature as he writes about them, but he is also able to draw from his spiritual communion with nature the strength that enables him to maintain his equilibrium in his daily life. Nature alone is rarely the subject of his poems about nature. Man is almost always present to be acted upon by nature or to reflect on her lessons. In the later poems, the persona finds a refuge in nature from the stresses of life. He turns away from other men to refresh his spirit in the spirit of nature, and then he is able to continue his worldly life. Although Campbell conceives of society as an organism in which each member ought to find his own good in seeking the good of the whole, men succumb often enough to their individualistic animal natures to make actual life intensely materialistic, even for an idealist like himself. Communion with the spirit of nature mitigates the damage inflicted by other men.

One of Campbell's favourite words is "dream," and he uses it to describe the state in which his spirit is united with nature's. In this state, he receives the messages of nature, spiritual truths apprehended by his spirit. He knows the source of these truths, too: God. Visible nature may be the garment of God, but

the spirit of nature, which alone has power and value for him, is the voice of God. This distinction between the voice of God and God Himself, and between the spirit of nature and physical nature itself eliminates the need for Terry Whalen's division of Campbell's poetry into "romantic" and "transcendental" categories.²⁰ For Campbell, nature is neither the stepping-stone to a transcendental God nor the physical manifestation of God. The "face behind earth's face" and the "mystic word our wisdom fails to spell" is the spirit of nature through which man's spirit is in speechless communion with God ("Nature's Truth," CP 277, PW 235). In "The Mystery," Campbell articulates this relationship clearly. The mysterious "glory" or "greatness" which "nature makes us feel" *guides* men to God; the "glory" is not God Himself, nor does nature's physical reality alone lead directly to God.²¹ "Stella Flammaram" (PW 285) gives concrete expression to the idea that God communicates through the spirit of nature with the spirit of man. Although man cannot understand the actual errand of Halley's comet, his certainty that it has a duty imposed by God is in itself an important message. In his diary entry for April 13, 1910, Campbell says, "I believe that the comet has its appointed place and task in the universe. . . . No one can fathom the vast unplumbed depths of the mystery of the vast universe. Our mind is finite; but the soul is wider in its dim consciousness of things outside of its whole comprehension." Man's nature is in part godlike; his spirit, which has come from God, responds to the spiritual quality in nature and is thus united with God. From this union Campbell derives the energy to try to practise idealism in the world and his comfort when his efforts seem futile.

Sometimes Campbell is unable to achieve this "dream" state; nature seems utterly dead and symbolic of human death. Then, in "The Winter Lakes" (CP 346) and "Into My Heart the Wind Moans" (PW 333), his images are all of winter. Even in "September in the Laurentian Hills" (CP 151, PW 95) and "An October Evening" (CP 146, PW 69), autumn signifies only the approach of death-dealing cold. Yet in some of his most frigid poems, such as "To the Ottawa" (CP 120, PW 119) and "Cape Eternity" (CP 103), he is awed by sublimity rather than numbed by emptiness and fear. In many poems, too, death is seen as the final mystery, an awesome passage to some unknown state of being. It is only in poems combining winter imagery with ideas of death that the spirit is absent. Campbell experiences his version of religious despair when the spirit of nature holds no communion with his own, for he is separated from God.

Actually, for Campbell, winter is usually a time of peaceful sleep and hidden growth; nature rests in preparation for spring, and the snow is gentle and kind. Even a storm can be exhilarating when nature's spirit is present, in the poet as well as in the woods and streams. John Ower is surely mistaken in his suggestion that "How One Winter Came in the Lake Region" (CP 344, PW 74) ends with the "equation of spiritual inspiration with annihilation" and the "celebration of

an apocalypse of obliteration.”²² Lines 1-20 indeed show nature devoid of spirit, and, by extension, they also describe the poet’s desiccation. However, the reddening of the sky and the landscape in lines 21-25 communicates not “incipient horror” but the mystery of some burgeoning life force. The tone of the stanza is positive: red is usually a colour of life for Campbell, and all of the content words in line 22, “Flooding the heavens in a ruddy hue,” have positive connotations throughout his poetry. When the sun in line 21 sets “like blood,” it does so in favourable contrast to its “blear” and “aghastr” appearance in lines 6 and 18. The lake in lines 9 and 10 is deadly still, and in lines 3 and 4 the fields are dead, but in line 23 the red light begins to revive them. The marshes and creeks become red, too, and no longer seem “shrunk and dry.” Life has not yet returned — “never a wind-breath blew” — but the landscape, the poet and the reader are poised on the brink of true apocalypse. In the last stanza, new life arrives violently. The “north’s wild vibrant strains” finally bury the deadness of the world in snow so that nature can begin her yearly movement toward rebirth. The winter in the poet’s veins and the “joyous tremor of the icy glow” signify nature’s spirit rushing into the poet, awakening his creativity, just as the snow comes to prepare the earth for its new life. When the spirit of nature is absent, poet and landscape are dead, but however violently that spirit returns, it brings back the essence of life. The last stanza of “How One Winter Came in the Lake Region” communicates the joy and peace of this return. “Thunderstorm at Night” (PW 323), on the other hand, ends with terror. The spirit of nature is absent and “ancient Dread” overwhelms those primitive men whose “modern cults” give them no security against nature’s outward rage. The sonnet “Nature the Benign” (CP 274, PW 233) sums up Campbell’s solution of the problem: when the spirit of man is at one with nature’s spirit, even her violence is life-giving.²³

Poetry was Campbell’s vocation, and in “The Night Watcher” he tells of receiving his calling.²⁴ The speaker, on a hilltop in the stillness of a winter night, refers to his shadow, the evidence of his material self, as “doggedly” following him, a “grotesque giant on the snow.” The “I” experiencing the event is his spiritual self. The great intelligences of the past come to him through nature and enrapture him so that for a while he knows immortality and the infinite directly. As he returns to the material world, each intelligence kisses him, baptizes him into their fellowship, and bestows on him the fiery gift of tongues. Receiving the holy spirit of poetry, he hears the music of the spheres and is set apart from other men. Campbell sent “The Night Watcher” to the *Atlantic Monthly* on January 23, 1891, but it was not published there or anywhere else until Sykes included it in the Posthumous section of his *Poetical Works*.

The reason for this may be that the poem speaks of a private, personal inspiration that Campbell soon came to regard as only a part of his calling. His elegies on the deaths of poets show the beginnings of this change. “To Mighty Death

Concerning Robert Browning," probably written shortly after Browning's death in December 1889, is a meditation on death and poetry, whereas "The Dead Poet," composed in August 1891, and "Tennyson," published in October 1892, reflect on the services Lowell and Tennyson gave to humanity and the public grief upon their deaths.²⁵ In mid-1891, Campbell distributed his first occasional poem, "The Dead Leader" (CP 183, PW 77), written on the day of Sir John A. Macdonald's funeral. The 1892 notebook contains several poems prompted by social rather than personal feeling; by the fall of 1894 Campbell had written "The Lazarus of Empire," and in 1896 he published "Ode to Canada." By 1900, he could write "[Canadians in this great Canadian Land]," his statement of intention to direct all of his poetry to the public good.²⁶ Social thoughts and current events inspired about half of his poetry in the decade following the Boer War, and during his last years the horror of the Great War compelled him to write public poetry almost exclusively.

HIS "LIFE AND LETTERS" ESSAYS OF 1903-05 spell out his convictions about the poet's mission. He has not given up his sense of the poet as seer: "the poet, who interprets [nature], is also a prophet of God . . . listening to the oracle and uttering it in tongues of fire, on human pages. . . . [T]he truest prophet, the truest revealer of Deity, is he who has the largest nature, who can find Deity not only in the Bible and the church, but also in history, life, genius and nature" (December 26, 1903). Poets must continue to sing, whatever obstacles be placed in their way (March 26, 1904); they will remember "the sacred office to which they were born, and its relationship to mankind" (January 30, 1904). The measure of a poet's work is the benefit the world derives from it (September 12, 1903). Indeed, "the religion or philosophy of any writer greater or less should be that of the whole community in which he lives. . . . No true genius is eccentric. He cannot stand alone. . . . [H]e represents [the people's] ideals" (September 17, 1904). Poems about society need not be directly nationalistic: "A nation's greatest poets are not always those who have written its most striking patriotic verses, yet the body of their work is generally imbued with many sentiments of a patriotic nature." "The poems of a true poet crystalize from the finest emotions and ideals of his life," which necessarily include his patriotic feelings, and a great national poem "must represent the highest crystalization of a truly national sentiment" (November 14, 1903). "Literature is the voice of a people's ideals" (January 23, 1904), and the poet is the conduit of this voice. Campbell's persona, therefore, is usually the Poet Laureate, the anointed one. He does not hesitate to be openly didactic, for that is how he must perform his duty to God and his people. Philosophy, politics and religion are suitable subjects as well as themes for poetry

because the public poet, in "crystalizing" the highest ideals of his audience, inspires them to nobler lives.

The poet should remain committed to art as well as to society, but humanity must be at the core of artistic expression. The "truest realism" is unrelated to the accumulation of facts about daily life on the material plane, but instead it "is the creation of a mind great enough to see human life as it is in all ages — which can grasp universality" (February 27, 1904). "Art for art's sake" is worthless, and so is art for nature's sake. Scorning merely descriptive poetry, he says, "Humanity is everything, because it is soul; and nature is only its environment or mirror. . . . Nature on the large scale, in its various moods . . . has a wonderful effect on our humanity; but we must have the humanity first on which the nature can act" (September 3, 1904). The peculiar quality which makes the works of the greatest artists immortal is "a wonderful touch of the purely natural" taken from "the book of nature and of life" (May 21, 1904). "[T]here will ever be a wide gulf . . . between art and nature. . . . To discern this is needed a divine instinct of the truly natural." The artist must go "to life and nature first and to letters afterwards" (September 12, 1903).

Naturalness forbids "fine writing" and artificial style, first because of the purity and beauty of the thought behind the poem, and then because the truly great artist will write only in his own unique way. "That which is simplest because most human and natural . . . is the great literature. . . . [T]he words themselves are lost, like elements in the limpid water . . . in the greatness and beauty of the thought which they help to clothe" (September 26, 1903). "I would lay it down as an axiom that in literature and art the style . . . if it is natural, is but a product of the message. . . . [W]hat is language save the magic expression of thought and ideal." This magic expression should be unpedantic, free of "artificial conceits," and universally comprehensible. "What the great mass of sincere men and women can understand and appreciate . . . is without doubt the best and the nearest to nature. The universal judgement is after all the final one." To be simple and understandable, literature must not "strain to a pretence of, or an arrogation of intellectual meanings and spiritual insight which cannot be expressed in ordinary language . . . so as to be intelligible to the average sincere mind." Great literature cannot come from the "cult in which small cliques of men and women claimed to see and feel beauty and idea in language and art, for the most part unmeaning to the rest of the world" and therefore "divorce[d] . . . from humanity" (July 9, 1904). Truth to nature demands simplicity of style, and the touchstone of simplicity is the accessibility of the ideas to the sincere reader.

Campbell's poetry shows that he did not push this ideal of naturalness and simplicity to the logical conclusion of refusing to revise lest he strain after "fine writing" or "artificial conceits." On the few occasions when he changed a poem

after he had decided on its final form, his alterations coincide with his ideal of simplicity, consisting mainly of cutting out repetitious material and substituting specific terms for general ones. The drafts show how he wrestled with his material to find the forms, words and expressions he wanted, and his letters record that he invited criticism and willingly made changes his friends suggested. He also accepted editorial criticism. Instead of holding his original expression sacred because it was "natural," he attempted an artistic rendering of the natural. As he developed his theory of simplicity, his use of grammatical inversion declined. His continuous use of archaic verb forms is not natural, in the sense that it does not imitate speech, but it seemed to Campbell to be the natural language for a poetry which he intended to be universal, linking his audience with their poetic heritage as well as with one another in the present. Believing that contrast is as necessary in natural poetry as it is in nature itself, he praised the unevenness of finish such contrast requires and did not take pains to distill his thoughts or express them economically. He believed that true simplicity and directness demand not mere compression, but greatness of thought expressed according to the writer's natural genius. The greatest poets, he said, have always "been considered uneven in the character of their work," and "the uneven poem may be as necessary to the line or stanza of beauty therein as the wood or heaven to the flower or star."²⁷

Naturalness and simplicity led Campbell to use conventional stanza forms. Seeing himself as a member of the timeless community of poets, too, he felt that innovation would be a rejection of his calling. In his earliest Indian poetry, he plainly imitated Longfellow, although he soon outgrew this attachment. His enthusiasm for Poe helped him to shape his melodramatic impulses into marketable verse in the 1890's. Of the English Romantics, he loved Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley, but he found Wordsworth too far removed from humanity and Keats too deliberately artistic. Campbell's poetry was obviously influenced in a lasting way by Tennyson's, although his critical appraisal of Tennyson was ambivalent. As an artist, he said, Tennyson was a "writer of polished verses," a "mere maker of rhymes and phrases." Poems such as "The Lotos Eaters," "Ulysses," and "Enone" exemplified his "drivel about mated vowels." But "he was not the most finished artist when he produced his best and most characteristic verse" such as "Locksley Hall," "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and "The Death of Wellington." These represent "genuine bursts of inspiration," written in "his truest and least self-conscious moods." He credited Tennyson with "a strong individuality . . . which chafed . . . against that very smugness and artificial conventionalism, of which Tennyson the artist afterwards became the chief and leading apostle" (May 7, 1904). The key to Campbell's mistrust of Tennyson the artist lies in his term "self-conscious": the true artist is conscious of his mission, not of himself. Consequently, he writes narratives or meditations with clear messages for his audience, not self-indulgent tone poems. Campbell did not like Kipling either,

and for the same reason: his work was self-indulgently boisterous and vulgar, and his narratives contained little to mirror and encourage the highest ideals of the race (October 17, 1903). Campbell admired Lowell without reserve, praising "the noble spirit of his verse which voiced a high ideal of human effort and ultimate destiny." Lowell "felt and put into his song the responsibility of the national life and saw the ill resultant from the failure of the people to realize that only unselfish citizenship and the putting into practice of the golden rule could ultimately save the Republic," a lesson Campbell found appropriate for Canadians, too. He especially loved Lowell's patriotic "Commemoration Ode," on which he modelled his own (June 18, 1904). Campbell regarded Shakespeare with awe as both a dramatist and a poet. That the British race had produced Shakespeare was one of its highest achievements. Campbell worshipped him; he did not criticize him. Among his contemporaries, his friend William Henry Drummond was his favourite. But Campbell loved Burns above all other poets. Whenever he wrote about others, Burns was his touchstone. Burns wrote naturally; he "went to life and nature first"; he recognized and was inspired by "Nature in the abstract, the great purifying, elevating, consoling influence" (September 3, 1904); and he was the quintessential poet of humanity. None of the poets Campbell admired was an experimenter with form. All were conservative, making the poetic conventions new by their special use of them rather than leading other poets into new ways. As a poet of humanity writing for "the great mass of sincere men and women," Campbell found his only suitable vehicle to be the familiar verse forms.

Although Campbell did not invent new forms, he was not enslaved by the old ones. In "Sebastian Cabot" (CP 172, PW 107) and "The Tragedy of Man" (PW 280), for instance, Campbell shaped the feelings he wanted to evoke with varied line lengths and irregularities of metre. These irregularities suggest the organic nature of the emotion as it arises little by little from the thought, as well as conveying the emotion itself. With his use of the six-beat line in such early poems as "The Winter Lakes" (CP 346) and "To the Ottawa" (CP 120, PW 119), he augments his descriptive and evocative powers with a subtle yet intense onomatopoeic rhythm. Such manipulation of form cannot be considered innovative, but it shows more sensitivity than Campbell is often credited with having. In general, his meditative poetry is less regular than his narratives, exhortations, or songs, and the poetry from the middle of his career, from the 1890's until about 1910, is a little more adventurous in rhythm and less regular in rhyme than his earlier, more imitative work or his later, more didactic work. Campbell wrote to draw a certain response from a certain audience, not to express his private feelings or to create detached works of art. His poetry is "self-expression" only in the sense that he expressed feelings and ideas that he believed to be worthy of public attention and general application. His attitude toward the formal qualities of

poetry, like his attitude toward its subject and the emotions it should convey, was governed by his vision of the use of poetry in the world and his mission as a poet.

In the fragment "[Canadians in this great Canadian Land]," Campbell articulates the unity of his poetic impulses: the aim of his poetry is to improve all Canadians by showing them the essence of their land and their own collective nature. He asks for the poet's crown because, knowing these essential truths, he can communicate them at the one appropriate level, the poetic. He would be the laureate who would teach his countrymen to nurture their own best selves so that they could contribute whatever was good in themselves to the nation and the race. Most of his poems about man and nature and all his poems about events have this pragmatic aim, and this is the context in which we must read them. Then we can see how interesting his poetry is, and how valuable it is in our literary history.

NOTES

¹ For a biography of Wilfred Campbell, see Carl F. Klinck, *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1942; rpt. Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1977). References will be to the reprint; the title will be abbreviated *WC*.

Page references will be made in parentheses in the text to the two collections of Campbell's poetry most likely to be found in libraries: *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Campbell* (Toronto: Briggs; Toronto: Ryerson; New York and London: Revell, 1905) (CP); and *The Poetical Works of Wilfred Campbell*, ed. W. J. Sykes (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923) (PW). For poems found in neither of these books, I will refer to Laurel Boone, "The Collected Poems of William Wilfred Campbell" (Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of New Brunswick, 1981) (B). See also Carl F. Klinck, intro., *Wilfred Campbell: Selected Poems* (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976), and Raymond Souster, ed., *Vapour and Blue: Souster Selects Campbell* (Sutton West: Paget, 1978).

The Lorne Pierce Collection at Douglas Library, Queen's University, holds most of Campbell's papers. The initials LP and the letters, numerals and titles following will indicate material in the Lorne Pierce Collection.

² Carl F. Klinck, *Literary History of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), Vol. 1, p. 175. Daniel Wilson, *Caliban: The Missing Link* (London: Macmillan, 1873).

³ A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1979), p. 168.

⁴ George L. Blackman, *Faith and Freedom: A Study of Theological Education and The Episcopal Theological School* (New York: Seabury, 1967).

⁵ Ms. notebook LP 13/V Poems. Collected (5) (ca. 1885-1887). See also *At the Mermaid Inn*, ed. Barrie Davies (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979), December 24, 1892, p. 216. This essay is anonymous but Campbell is certainly its author.

⁶ LP 11/III Diary. 1910-1916.

- ⁷ Klinck, *WC*, p. 12.
- ⁸ LP 9/II Letters. Draft letters to Mrs. Campbell, not bound.
- ⁹ Klinck, *WC*, pp. 239, 241-42.
- ¹⁰ Davies, viii; July 1, 1893, p. 341.
- ¹¹ Arthur S. Bourinot, ed., *Archibald Lampman's Letters to Edward William Thomson (1890-1898)* (Ottawa: privately printed, 1956), 39.
- ¹² Klinck, *WC*, p. 23.
- ¹³ *The Lounger* (July 1986), p. 16.
- ¹⁴ Clipping in LP 13/V Poems. Collected (1) [1895-1897]. See also *Montreal Gazette* (March 13, 1897).
- ¹⁵ *Mordred and Hildebrand* (Ottawa: Durie, 1895); *Poetical Tragedies* (Toronto: Briggs, 1908); "The Brockenfiend," *The Lounger* (December 1896), p. 285; LP 12/IV Drama 8. "The Fatal Throw"; LP 12/IV Drama 4. "The Heir of Linne."
- ¹⁶ LP 20/VI Prose 76. "The Tragedy of Man."
- ¹⁷ See note 3.
- ¹⁸ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 226.
- ¹⁹ "Life and Letters" appeared weekly in the *Ottawa Evening Journal* between August 29, 1903, and June 24, 1905. Barrie Davies is preparing an edition of the series and has kindly permitted me to use his typescripts.
- ²⁰ Terry Whalen, "Wilfred Campbell: The Poetry of Celebration and Harmony," *Journal of Canadian Poetry* (Autumn 1978), 27.
- ²¹ (CP 104, PW 233). Klinck found what he believes to be an authoritative correction in one of the copies of CP which came to the National Library from William Lyon MacKenzie King's collection. On this basis, Klinck emends the last line of the poem to read "Linking life to God" (*WC*, pp. 219, 278). This emendation does not alter the point made here.
- ²² John Ower, "Portraits of the Landscape as Poet," *Journal of Canadian Studies* (February 1971), 27.
- ²³ For another criticism of Ower's analysis, see Whalen, pp. 33-35.
- ²⁴ (PW 316). "The Night Watcher" is Campbell's ms. title for the complete poem. Sykes' title for his slightly abbreviated and changed version is "The Sky Watcher" (B 466).
- ²⁵ "To Mighty Death Concerning Robert Browning," *The Dread Voyage* (Toronto: Briggs, 1893), p. 181; B 509. "The Dead Poet" (CP 162, PW 210). "Tennyson," *The Week* (October 28, 1892), p. 758; B 537.
- ²⁶ "The Lazarus of Empire" (CP 303, PW 113). "Ode to Canada," *Massey's Magazine* (July 1896), p. 55; B 673. "[Canadians in this great Canadian Land]," LP 13/V Poems Collected (10) [1900]; B 919.
- ²⁷ Davies, November 12, 1892, p. 189; "Life and Letters" (January 28, 1905).



LEAVING HOME

Mary Razzell

Small house on a sad street,
 the North Hill of Calgary.
 Purple crocuses in Mid-March
 matching mauve bruises on my mother's arms,
 from him or self-induced,
 sum of a Depression.

Thin string line of diapers
 between water heater
 and drainboard in the kitchen,
 Tied to the lean wail
 from the front bedroom
 of yet another baby:

Result of a hurried assault in the grey light
 of a January dawn, when,
 back from Edmonton, and holding
 two white jack rabbits by frozen
 hind legs, hit by his Ford
 on snow-drifting highway, he came
 home from a selling trip.

A sometimes salesman:
 cars, waterless cookware,
 shrubs of marvelous blossom,
 cookies with confection centre
 lying like melted pink bathsoap
 in stomach's dish,
 tractors for Massey-Harris. (Later
 Massey Fergus.) Betraying
 heritage of worn linoleum,
 long ribbed stockings, and goose-grease.

Makeshift picket fence
 missing laths, half-painted.
 Warped front door, letting in the storms
 but lock-jammed in summer.
 Inside, welter of worry lines:
 One pound of baloney (ten cents)
 on white chipped enamel table
 set for seven.

Lean view from cramped house,
 through prairies reached unbroken
 to mountains rimming west with blue.
 Shut door. Hate seeping under the crack
 to lie hidden in dust balls
 under all the beds in all the rooms
 holding the many children
 that were my father's nonchalance
 and my mother's religion.

Lift the shell of then. Hear
 shock waves of anger
 go round and round, bounce
 from aging bathroom, cracked tub and
 slanting floor, to where
 sleeping on a couch not yet paid for
 I recorded all.

Let me quit that house,
 Join jubilanting meadow-larks
 celebrate spring waters
 and violets rising from old snows.

I'M IN NO WAY

Michael Mirolla

I'm in no way afraid of my worst enemy's knife, gun or words.
 They are no more powerful than those I possess. I'm in no way
 worried that he might jump me from behind or attack me while
 I sleep. I have a bodyguard trained to do nothing but walk back-
 wards — and I do not sleep, having cultivated insomnia through
 long and arduous practice. Nor is there any possibility whatsoever
 of his catching me unawares, perhaps drunk and debauched, spilling
 myself copiously into one of his beautiful spies. I drink and make
 love moderately, with always a watchful part of myself in reserve.
 No, I fear absolutely none of those things. What frightens and
 disturbs me, what sends unearthly shivers down my back and causes
 me to pace nervously is the diabolic talent my enemy has of for-
 getting.

FIELD OF VISION

Hugh Hood and the Tradition of Wordsworth

Anthony John Harding

ROMANTICISM, ITS CRITICS have suggested, was locked in a futile struggle against time. The elusive beauty which was sought by a Wordsworth or a Keats mocked the steady running of the hour, and could be described only as it disappeared from view, as we can perceive a subatomic particle only by the track it leaves on the screen of an electroscope. The realistic novelist — so the argument often ran — could not stay for such phantoms of sublimity, but must make time the very essence of his or her work, paying no attention to Romantic notions of the eternal moment, the moment out of time. Romantic poets, it was argued, wrote about the evanescent, the unrealizable; the novelist wrote about life as it is lived.

Fortunately for Canadian writing, Hugh Hood in *The New Age* has rejected this dichotomy between “dreamy” Romanticism and “down-to-earth” realism. By making his narrator a self-confessed Wordsworthian, and a reader of Coleridge and Blake, Hood has claimed for himself and his readers the tradition of the central English Romantic poets, and embarked upon a major revisionary reading of Romanticism. The aim of this essay is to determine how far the three parts of *The New Age* so far published (*The Swing in the Garden*, *A New Athens*, and *Reservoir Ravine*)¹ have enlarged our understanding of Romanticism, and established a place for it in Canadian cultural life.

Most modern critics of Romanticism agree that the Romantic feeling towards time is not altogether one of outright fear or distrust, but rather the sense that time is the matrix, the essentially creative and beneficent medium in which our perceptions are formed.² In terms of Christian mythology, it is the rapture of Adam and Eve at learning that God will bring final good even out of so potentially tragic an event as the Fall and the loss of Eden, contrasted with their earlier despair at that loss:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good. . . .³

Instead of Eden and the Shechinah, we have human history and the light of common day — and the substitution is not altogether something to grieve at. Time, seen in this manner, permits humanity to participate in the redemptive process foreseen by the archangel Michael — particularly through the creative powers of the artist, the poet, the historian.

In an interview with Robert Fulford broadcast in 1974, Hood suggested that the moral universe of Canadians is essentially postlapsarian, as that of Americans is Edenic:

I think there is Canadianness, and I really do think there is a Canadian style. I think sometimes it's a more blameworthy, a more After-the-Fall moral style. The Americans are all questing after Eden, and I think every American would like to be in Eden. . . . we're so conscious of the Fall in Canada. We always seem to accept the limit in the possible because we know we're in a fallen state. That's the kind of thing I'm interested in.⁴

For just this reason Matthew Goderich, Hood's chief narrator, is at pains to stress the humanness of what he is doing, its time- and history-conditioned quality. Works of art, in the words of Matthew's father, are "an extension of our agency" (*Swing*, p. 119), they will have the marks of the workshop on them, the grainy vitality of a Cézanne, as their claim to authenticity, their signature: *artificer humanus fecit*. Goderich's career as an art historian begins in his study of stone houses in Ontario's Loyalist County, rather than in the university lectures on the (for him) remote Watteau and Rubens, accessible only in photographic reproductions. News of the discovery of the cave paintings at Lascaux almost stuns him with the revelation that art is more than thirty thousand years old, coeval with humanity itself. The brilliant Maura Boston, Matthew's friend at Victoria College, deeply versed in *Fearful Symmetry*, sees all art as revelation, all literature as theology — but Matt's comment on Maura's vision is "there's an essential piece of the structure missing" (*Athens*, p. 36). We are surely invited to guess that what is missing from this complete, unified vision is our own postlapsarian incompleteness.

Goderich's Romanticism, then, is not of the apocalyptic kind, the Romanticism that T. E. Hulme unjustly called "spilt religion," but the Romanticism that looks before and after, that is as entranced by the processes of becoming as by the mysteries of being. This Romanticism is not impatient for sudden revelations of absolute truth and beauty, but uncovers its values progressively, through patient study of time and its structures. Memory is essential to it, but not the unselective, purely linear memory of the chronicler: it is not the sequence of events that matters to it, but the correspondences, connections and transformations lurking within the events, history's cunning corridors. Wordsworth's "The days gone by / Return upon me almost from the dawn / Of life"⁵ can in this sense be applied to all human history, as well as to the story of one life, for to the Romantic

memory is not a mere chronicler of sense-impressions but a power that continually supplies and shapes the materials of our individual and national consciousness. Without the knowledge that this shaping memory can give we are lost, literally un-conscious. What Roger Shattuck remarks of Wordsworth — “To notice was for him an act of imagination: forming an image so strong and integral it transformed the world” — is, at key points in the narrative, true of Matthew Goderich. Yet *The New Age* is not a portrait of a man born out of his time and place, nostalgically yearning for Grasmere and the lost Wordsworthian wholeness. Hood’s point is precisely that Canadians, like other moderns, have inherited the Romantic-Wordsworthian task of reunifying a dislocated world. To borrow Shattuck’s terms once more, *The New Age* is “the portrait of a consciousness resolved to assimilate its surroundings as a fully conscious expression of the universe, as the locus of a whole life” (Shattuck’s version of Wordsworth’s achievement in *The Prelude*).⁶ Canadian dislocation and *anomie* constitute a particular, perhaps exemplary case of the post-Enlightenment dilemma.⁷

PERHAPS NO OTHER new-created country is so much a product of history’s quirks and U-turns as Canada, which is why Hood’s novel sequence can claim to be *about* Canada in a fuller sense than most previous Canadian works. Decisions taken elsewhere — in Paris, London, Washington — have had so significant an impact on Canada’s development that some have been tempted to dismiss all talk of Canadian nationhood as empty rhetoric. The truest Canadian style, it would then follow, would be some form of Dadaism, Hans Arp’s response to the fate of his native Alsace, which was claimed alternately by France and by Germany as the chances of war pushed it first in one direction, then in the other. Hood takes the different route of acknowledging the exterior determinants on Canada’s development, while arguing that they still do not altogether invalidate the sense of possibilities, of alternative futures, that has characterized the Canadian psyche in some of its manifestations.

He achieves this by revitalizing the favourite Romantic analogy between the personal development of the individual and the historical development of the state.⁸ While giving full play to his narrator’s sense of his own inner life, Hood shows at the same time Goderich’s acute awareness of the determinants placed upon him by his political and economic environment — by Toronto, by North Rosedale, the CPR, Canadian Catholicism. Goderich is no mere cipher in some sociological blue book, however: the point is that *he* can see, *he* can know.

We want to tell what we have seen, and more than that we assign values in the course of our narrative. Being is Being Born, moving through the seed to the womb to the go-cart to the coffin, always human, always free though always constrained,

always entering into new knowledge, retelling it, testifying to its truth, guaranteeing it. (*Ravine*, p. 203)

Wordsworth's "something evermore about to be" seems present to the narrator's mind here, and so too does something like Heidegger's concept of "the human existent," *Dasein*, of which John Macquarrie remarks "*Dasein* is never complete in its being. To exist is always to be on the way . . . constituted by possibilities rather than properties."⁹

If one image conveys this Romantic understanding of being-in-time more than any other it is that of the path, track or (sometimes) labyrinth; in particular, the strange trick that paths have of returning us to the place we started from. As individuals, we like to think we travel in straight lines: history tells us we travel in circles, or in spirals. When James Joyce left Dublin in 1902 he was travelling towards Ireland, not away from it. The white arms of roads leading Stephen Dedalus towards Europe are the white arms of Eileen in the first chapter of the *Portrait*. Like Wordsworth at Tintern, we are perpetually recrossing our own paths, and all we see is *déjà vu*.

There is nothing intrinsically reassuring about this: the experience can be restorative, as at Tintern, or oppressive, involving more "sad perplexity" than "cheerful faith." Its value depends upon the imaginative intelligence that is brought to it — without that, it is no more illuminating than Alice's baffling inability to find a path away from the house that doesn't immediately return her to the house again. "We assign values in the course of our narrative." Matt Goderich sometimes benefits from the telescoping of time, as when he stands before the Master of Alkmaar's seven panels in the Rijksmuseum and discovers knowledge he didn't know he had, knowledge that had been lying in wait until this moment of its fulfilment. And sometimes the experience is mystifying and troubling, as when he glimpses his schoolroom of forty years ago on a late afternoon walk, and his importunate demand for reassurance and Wordsworthian restoration is met only by a sense of "perpetual loss, paralysis of will" (*Ravine*, p. 219).

After banishment from Eden, however, the Wordsworthian knows that the only sane course is to accept the substitution of earth itself for the lost paradise, or still more radically, to make earth itself one's Eden:

whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?
(*Prelude* 1, ll. 27-30)

Imagination brings together the crossings of the paths where meaning waits, aligns the corridors of history so that meaning comes down to us, sometimes

bewilderingly, sometimes with the force of illumination. There is no choice but to do it this way: there are no more Mount Sinais to climb.

Matt's infant dreams are blended, not with the voice of Derwent, but with the traffic of the CPR line that borders his parents' back yard. Where another writer would see opportunities for parody, Hood keeps our attention on the object as it really is. The CPR line running through North Rosedale is first of all an irreducible fact, neither holy nor unholy but one that is woven into the texture of many thousands of lives, as indeed was — and is — the River Derwent.

Later, Matt visits Tintern and finds that many more paths meet there now than even Wordsworth could have envisaged. The episode beautifully illustrates Hood's understanding of the spiral or cyclical nature of Wordsworthian time. Matt Goderich, drawn by Wordsworth's account of what happened to him as he recrossed his own path near Tintern, visits the spot — like many others before him and since — and tries to retrace the very footsteps of Wordsworth and his sister.

We decided that the earlier travellers had ascended the hillside southeast of the abbey buildings, so we looked around and sighted the elegant small bridge that crosses the river a couple of hundred yards north of the abbey. We wandered across the bridge, admiring the serene flow of the river as we stood above it looking down from the bridge. Then we followed a track along the east bank, climbing at quite a steep angle into woods. In a few minutes we'd gotten into thick greenery and were on high ground, on a hillside which rises maybe 700 feet. Most of the way we were in cover, on a straight, evenly graded walkway.

In ten minutes we stopped, turned and looked down upon the ruined abbey, supposing we had found our way to the exact prospect that the poet had gazed down upon just as he began to conceive his poem, 160 years before. We could see sportive hedgerows. After taking in the beauty of the prospect we began to wonder about the walkway which had led us up here, a path of some sort, mighty wide, man-made perhaps.

The damn thing was an abandoned rail-line. (*Athens*, p. 49)

Then in an even more time-warping moment, Matt and Edie, in the sepulchral emptiness of an unused railway tunnel, feel the same *frisson* as Wordsworth felt as he descended into the grave-like dungeon at Cockermouth Castle. (A further richness of meaning is added by the fact that it was at Goodrich Castle, a few miles north of Tintern, that Wordsworth spoke to the little girl described in "We Are Seven." There is, it seems, a Goderich-Goodrich connection, in which the main link is the notion of the continuity of the human enterprise, the indivisibility of living and dead.) When railways were new, Wordsworth loathed them, but to those who come after him an unused railway is already an antiquity, part of the landscape, more truly an antiquity, in a sense, than Tintern Abbey itself, which is constantly renewed by Wordsworth's poem. The abandoned railway line, with its empty, sepulchral tunnel, becomes Hood's image of existence-in-time-past

(not, he is at pains to emphasize, of non-existence), uncreated, virtually, because now untravelled, but still continuous with Matt's present path. What has once existed cannot cease to exist: "History traces the footpaths of the Divine Being" (*Athens*, p. 11). Hood rejects in this image the dark belief visited upon Forster's Mrs. Moore, in the Marabar Caves: "Everything exists, nothing has value." In the continual refashioning of our world by the paths we take, we *bestow* value, and the artist more than anyone has the power of doing this.

So Wordsworth, again, roaming the hills in "the blessed hours / Of early love," and coming upon the spot where once a murderer had hung in chains on the gibbet — the spot from which Wordsworth himself as a boy, conscious of this horrible association, had fled in terror — now finds even this dark remembrance of fear and panic enhances the "radiance" of the place for him, because that fear, and the subsequent visionary sight on the bleak moorland, is part of him: his memory and imagination have fed upon the experience, uncovered its particular meaning. The power which shaped Wordsworth the man has brought good out of what had once been evil (*Prelude* XII, ll. 225-271).

WRITERS ON THE PICTURESQUE, such as William Gilpin, would often rank beauty spots in order of aesthetic value, much as the *Guide Michelin* ranks restaurants: this view is nearly perfect, that is imperfect but worthwhile, a third is quite uninteresting. Wordsworth, scorning this cultivation of the eye at the expense of other human faculties, democratized geography. Not the "objective beauty" of the spot, but its interweaving with a human life, is the source of its value, its visionary meaning.

There is no trickery in this, no literary hocus-pocus. Some readers of Wordsworth have felt that, if anything, he explains too much, is over-particular. Keats, in his jibe about Wordsworth's "Matthew, with a bough of wilding in his hand," means to suggest that Wordsworth deliberately chooses images that are prosaic, devoid of literary association, images that resonate only within a particular experiential context. For Wordsworth, it is not "fields of Arcady," or even "fields," but: "A single Field which I have looked upon." Particularity, the opposite of Johnson's "just representations of general nature," is the very fabric of Wordsworthian Romanticism; without it you cannot "see into the life of things," a notion which in Hood's view is closely related to the Thomistic, and Joycean, understanding of the *quidditas* or "whatness" of a thing.

I have . . . written some stories about a kind of experience close to that of the artist: metaphysical thought. . . . It is the seeing-into-things, the capacity for meditative abstraction, that interests me about philosophy, the arts and religious practice. I love most in painting an art which exhibits the transcendental element dwelling

in living things. I think of this as true *super-realism*. And I think of Vermeer, or among American artists of Edward Hopper, whose paintings of ordinary places, seaside cottages, a roadside snack bar and gasoline station, have touched some level of my own imagination which I can only express in fictional images. . . . The kind of knowing which Wordsworth called "reason in its most exalted mood" and which Coleridge exalted as creative artistic imagination, *does the same thing* as that power which Saint Thomas Aquinas thought of as the active intellect.¹⁰

The pivotal instance of vision, seeing-into-things, in *The New Age* as we now have it is probably the moment at the opening of *A New Athens* when Goderich, walking along Highway 29 north of "Stoverville," crosses a strange embankment, a pair of close parallel paths leading off into the far distance spatially, but temporally leading Matt right back into his own past. "This place intersected with that time. . . . I knew where I'd been, where I was now, what funeral ground I'd impinged upon" (*Athens*, p. 18). But this moment of vision is not an incommunicable, evanescent, purely private experience. The meeting of road and of those parallel tracks is for Goderich the opening of a tunnel in time, "that strange junction where an object turns into a subject, where classification and science leave off and imagination and history begin" (*Athens*, p. 18). Imagination *and* history; because Wordsworthian imagination, if "egotistical," is not solipsistic, it does not behave as though its awareness of the present moment came from nowhere and led nowhere. What does it mean to say that something "belongs to history"? The railroad that intersected with Highway 49, and whose "funeral" Matt Goderich now recalls, is of far more than merely incidental interest, the insignificant fact that accidentally triggers a nostalgic association. Like Tintern Abbey itself, it was the expression of the aspirations of a community, their political and economic structure and resources, and even in its demise, in 1952, it continued to affect human lives by the traces it left, both literal and figurative. In "noticing" the railroad, as Wordsworth "noticed" his field, Goderich both uncovers and bestows its significant form.

Wordsworth and Coleridge never made the error of rejecting the historical reality of a thing in favour of its idealized form. Coleridge, according to one of his more insightful nineteenth-century critics, "denounced as equally heretical the attempts to exclude either the 'ideal' or the historical element of Christianity."¹¹ Christianity's progressive development of spiritual significance out of historical actuality, one might add, was the Romantics' model for the understanding of human history at all its levels. Wordsworth's rejection of Cambridge, and his admiration for the democratic beliefs of the French republicans, resulted — as he well knew — from his love for the egalitarian community he had known intimately during his boyhood in Hawkshead. Hood is at his most Wordsworthian when using one of Matt's apparently commonplace boyhood recollections to reconstruct an entire town or segment of Ontario society, complete with its class

snobbery, its preferred ways of trading, investing, building, all the underpinnings of what a sociologist would call its "value-system." But where the sociologist eliminates the personal in order to draw general conclusions about socioeconomic conditions, the novelist reunites personal and imaginative life with political life. Hood's dominant motif of the road, railroad, and navigable river enables him to traverse this false boundary with ease. Nothing is more clearly a product of economic forces than a railroad or highway; and nothing is more immediately a part of everyday life. (The St. Lawrence Seaway and the CPR are admittedly frequent motifs in Canadian writing, but that is only to say that they are ripe for demythologizing.) The manifold causes that bring Matt and Edie together in 1952 at the last run of the Stoverville, Westport and Lake Superior Rail Road are traced out by Matt in *A New Athens* not from egotism, but from his entirely credible desire to comprehend the cultural and political powers that have shaped his life. Yet Hood avoids historical determinism, knowing that history and the historical imagination create the concepts by which they illuminate, they do not disinter them from the granitic mausoleum of some historical *datum*: "we assign values in the course of our narrative."

In the third novel of the sequence, we learn that a similar preoccupation with value as conditioned by time had gripped Andrew Goderich, Matt's father, even on his wedding day in 1925, as he replayed in his mind a conversation with his German colleague Aaronsohn: "Valuation seemed to imply the necessity of concepts. . . . To be valuable will be to exist as issuing in concept; to evaluate will be to form concepts" (*Ravine*, p. 136). Through Aaronsohn and Andrew Goderich, then, what was in 1925 "advanced" European thought filters down to the young Matt, but more as a series of questions than a set of answers. Although Andrew Goderich later describes himself as an axiologist, he leaves it to his son to make his own discoveries about value, usually *a posteriori*, and sometimes, he admits, embarrassingly late in the day. If Goderich *père* is a Coleridge or an Emerson, asking all the right questions, Goderich *fils* is the Wordsworth or Thoreau who lives and experiences some of the right answers.

THE TRADITION OF WORDSWORTH is, then, one of the determinants of *The New Age*; but criticism of the kind I have attempted has to beware of mistaking the process for the product. To be preoccupied with becoming at the expense of being, with history and process at the expense of imagination and *quidditas*, can be fearfully destructive, as Hood knows. An early story of Hood's, written, I think, to exorcise this past-obsessed, regressive tendency in his Romanticism, centres on Arthur Merlin, a Prufrock-like, past-obsessed, ghost-ridden man, his name evidently ironic since he is short on both courage and

wisdom. At the story's climax, Merlin addresses the woman he loves in what for him are words of sincere praise: "everything that you do is fixed by the tradition, and that's what makes you a beauty. Your inheritance."¹² She is understandably repelled by this morbid inability to see her as existing in time present, a desirable, sexually alive woman. The danger in doing what I have tried to do in this paper — relate Hood's work to the Romantic tradition which it draws upon — is the danger Arthur Merlin falls prey to, that of confounding the product in the process, the perception of the thing-as-it-is in the perception of the thing-as-it-has-come-into-being. Any criticism that addresses itself to the exploration of a "tradition," must beware of saying to any writer "everything that you do is fixed by the tradition," a self-evident absurdity. Our sense of the Wordsworth tradition is considerably widened by *The New Age*, but in reading it what we experience is a refreshing return to the living source, not a minimal endgame largely predetermined by some other players' initial moves. Hood's Romantic inheritance cannot help but enrich his work, especially for any reader who accepts his belief that we are still in the middle of the Romantic movement, but the thing-as-it-is, the three parts of *The New Age* as they now stand, is no late-blossoming flower on a transplanted tree. It displaces Grasmere and Derwent, as Wordsworth displaced Elysium and the pit of Erebus; in localizing and particularizing Canadian understanding in Canadian geography and Canadian experience, it simultaneously reveals the locality, the humanity, and the contemporary relevance of the Romantic enterprise itself.

NOTES

- ¹ Published in Toronto by Oberon Press in 1975, 1977, and 1979 respectively. I should like to thank Dr. Susan Beckmann, of the Department of English, University of Saskatchewan, and Dr. Vincent Sherry, of Villanova College, Pennsylvania, for their comments on a draft of this paper.
- ² The most vigorous opponent of this orthodox or "canonical" way of reading Wordsworth is Harold Bloom: see his remarks on the "Intimations" Ode in *The Anxiety of Influence* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 9-10.
- ³ John Milton, *Poetical Works*, ed. Douglas Bush (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966, rpt. 1970), p. 455; *Paradise Lost*, Book XII, ll. 469-71.
- ⁴ Robert Fulford, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," *Tamarack Review*, 66 (1975), 66-67.
- ⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, second edition, rev. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), 1850 text, Book XII, ll. 277-79. All further references to *The Prelude*, 1850 text, are given in text by book and line number.
- ⁶ Roger Shattuck, "This Must Be the Place: From Wordsworth to Proust," in David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman, eds., *Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 185, 196.
- ⁷ Hood has argued that Canadians have yet to resolve for themselves "the doctrinal and philosophical battles of the Enlightenment": see his essay "Moral Imagina-

tion: Canadian Thing," in William Kilbourn, ed., *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 33.

- ⁸ Thomas Arnold, for example, in his essay "On the Social Progress of States," speaks of "a natural period in history, marking the transition of every country from what I may call a state of childhood to manhood" (*The Miscellaneous Works* (London: B. Fellowes, 1845), p. 81). The related notion of the childhood and maturity of the *human race* became almost a commonplace of criticism after J. G. von Herder expounded it in *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*: "Es ist längst bemerkt, dass das menschliche Geschlecht in seinen Zeitaltern und Revolutionen den Abwechslungen unsres Menschenlebens nachzugehen scheint; (wenigstens dichtet sich der Mensch also) und wie die Empfindungs- Sprach- und Sehart eines Kindes nicht die Art des erwachsenen Mannes ist; wer wollte von Nationen im Kindheitszustande der Welt unsre erfahrene Geläufigkeit und Flüchtigkeit in Bildern, den Eckel und die Feinheit unsres abgebrauchten Herzens fodern?" (*Sämmtliche Werke*, 33 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-1913), xii (1880), 8-9).
- ⁹ John Macquarrie, *Martin Heidegger* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 12-13.
- ¹⁰ Hugh Hood, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," *Canadian Literature*, 49 (Summer 1971), pp. 30-31.
- ¹¹ F. J. A. Hort, "Coleridge," in W. G. Clark, ed., *Cambridge Essays* (London: J. W. Parker and Son, 1856), p. 328.
- ¹² "Fallings from us, Vanishings," in *Flying a Red Kite* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1962), p. 16.

CHIAROSCURO

Judith Harway

As sun slips lower, I can see
the road-gate and the purple hills across
the county line. But not our pastures,
not the River Dearing: all the mossy
bottomland gives in to darkness first.

Shifting lines of light and shadow dust
the plain with possibility. I work the pump,
I stare into the dusk, imagining
broad fields of corn and sugar beet. The cows
jostle and drain the half-filled trough.

With this handle, I plait ropes of water
binding them to me. I've always understood
that cows see auras, nameless colours, blurry
borders for the world. I want to bend and drink
dark water with them, feel my muzzle steam,

and chew each moment twice. But I labour
 here, I bend and rise, and night
 is flooding in across the fields.
 There is no colour left. I slap the cows' rumps hard
 and shout them back into the barn.

THE FOOL IN WINTER

Gwladys Downes

jealous of air, feathering silky
 swirls on your window
 brittle with frost

jealous of the wheel you finger
 and the stylus
 that cuts your hieroglyphs

jealous of the tulip tree's shadow
 guarding the courtyard
 of your graves

jealous of a woman you loved
 and a man who loved you
 above all jealous

of the masked black dancer circling,
 sashaying by, who hung your only heart
 from her wrist with diamonds

in this theatre of the absurd, remember:
 faced with your face, ancestral,
 one player cried a name and cursed his bones.

WEST OF THE GREAT DIVIDE

A View of the Literature of British Columbia

Allan Pritchard

FASHIONS IN LITERARY CRITICISM change rapidly. The “survival” thesis that has dominated the thematic criticism of Canadian literature in recent years may be about due to fall from favour. Yet it has proved highly stimulating, and its usefulness has still not been totally exhausted. Before it recedes from its present prominence at least one further value can be extracted from it, although of a paradoxical kind. It serves admirably as a means of defining the regional characteristics of the literature of British Columbia — if one merely reverses its central propositions.

The survival thesis is now so familiar that little reminder is needed of its salient points. Like much of the best in our criticism, the view that conflict between man and nature is central in Canadian literature seems to have developed from some brief but perceptive remarks of Northrop Frye. It has been elaborated by many critics and given its fullest and most influential formulation by Margaret Atwood. According to Atwood, the essential literary symbol for Canada is survival in the face of hostile nature. In our literature, she suggests, man is seen predominantly as a victim and nature as a monster. The land is alien. Of the seasons only winter is real. The characteristic experience of the immigrant and settler is exile and defeat. Canadian books are populated by life-denying women and trapped, defeated characters. The central experience represented is death, and as a whole the literature is “undeniably sombre and negative.”¹

If one turns from these propositions about the nature of Canadian literature and looks at the work of such notable writers of British Columbia as Roderick Haig-Brown, Malcolm Lowry, Ethel Wilson, and Jack Hodgins, the sense of contrast is so strong as to suggest the scene in *October Ferry to Gabriola* where Lowry describes the journey of his central characters, the Llewelyns, westward from Ontario. At the Great Divide they had their first view of “the wild beauty of lakes and ravines and pastures of British Columbia” like “two children of Israel shading their eyes before a vision of the Promised Land.”²

This contrast brings into sharp relief the common qualities that the writers of British Columbia have tended to share in their response to the land, notwithstanding their admirable individuality and diversity. This is not a case where the Atwood thesis can be applied with minor modifications to take into account variations from the norm caused by local factors of geography, climate and history. Rather, the dominant characteristics of the literature of British Columbia appear to be diametrically opposed to those Atwood postulates for the literature of Canada as a whole. Here the writers have more often shown relations between man and nature as harmonious than as hostile. The experience of the immigrant has more often been represented as fulfilment and growth than as imprisonment or defeat. Writers have more often developed themes of integration than of alienation. Celebration of the splendour and generosity of the land has been central in the literature. If a single symbol or myth can be found for the literature of British Columbia it is certainly nothing so negative as survival, but so far from this that a strong case can be made for the legend of Eden or the earthly paradise, which is developed in a great variety of versions ranging from the romantic to the ironic yet always with a sense of its special relevance for the experience and literature of this region. Appearing in local literature as early as the 1840's, it is grandly elaborated a century later by Malcolm Lowry, and is prominent in the work of many other writers, both major and minor. The most remarkable writer to emerge recently in the region, Jack Hodgins, recognizes its centrality by making an examination of the quest for Eden the subject of his novel, *The Invention of the World*.

AMONG THE USEFUL LESSONS Margaret Atwood has helped impress upon us is the importance in studying themes of this kind of giving due attention to documentary accounts, such as the writings of Susanna Moodie, as well as to fiction and poetry. The literature of British Columbia is exceptionally rich in autobiographical narratives and these provide the best starting point for an exploration of the response of the writers to the land. This approach has a special value for it reveals that to a surprising extent even such an exotic figure as Malcolm Lowry fits into well-established local patterns of response. In the documentary narratives the basic pattern is established very early. The prominence of Edenic language and imagery in descriptions of British Columbia by early European settlers is striking. The mountainous coastline had impressed the navigators of the late eighteenth century sometimes as sublime but often as sombre and desolate. From the mid-nineteenth century, however, explorers and settlers seem to have been confident that in this wilderness were to be found places that might fittingly be compared to the earthly paradise. In 1843 James Douglas saw

the rugged northwest coast as a "dreary wilderness" in contrast to the rich Oregon territory about to be lost to British possession, but he reported he had found a site for the Hudson's Bay Company's new headquarters on the southern tip of Vancouver Island that appeared "a perfect 'Eden.'" In March 1850 John Helmcken, the young doctor who was to become Douglas' son-in-law, arrived at the newly established Fort Victoria, where as he later recalled, in his first view of the park-like landscape in the bloom of spring, against the background of sea and mountains, "everything looked paradisiacal." He responded with similar enthusiasm to the rougher and more heavily timbered coastline he observed on a voyage in May 1850 to the north end of the Island, even though his scientific training had made him aware of the struggle for survival that rages in the world of nature: "Wild and savage, yet wonderfully lovely . . . apparently happiness, peace, contentment reigned."³

Gilbert Sproat, who arrived from England in 1860, not only reported that Victoria had probably the best climate in the world but described on the west coast of the Island, where he founded a settlement at Alberni, scenes "like the creations in a happy dream." In this period there appear many similar celebrations of the visual splendour and the richness and abundance of nature in the coastal area. Before long we find that even the remote and misty Queen Charlotte Islands are being described as if they were some Hesperides. In a narrative of his visit in 1863 an English engineer, Francis Poole, calls the Queen Charlottes "a land of enchantment," "the Eden of the North Pacific," and comments: "As far as the eye can reach either way the land was a picture of loveliness. The very atmosphere seems laden with the perfume of its vegetation."⁴

Such enthusiastic early descriptions may not be in themselves necessarily a contradiction of the survival thesis, for Atwood suggests that a characteristic pattern of Canadian experience has been a favourable first impression of the land followed by disillusionment upon closer acquaintance. Thus she states that Susanna Moodie's first impression of the scenic grandeur of Canada was replaced by a sense of the wilderness as prison, and that the life of the immigrant then became an exile from the loved home country. However, this disillusionment seems far from characteristic of the narratives of pioneer life in British Columbia. Perhaps the closest Western equivalent to Mrs. Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* is Susan Allison's *Recollections*. Mrs. Allison was an English gentlewoman who lived and brought up her many children during the 1860's and 1870's in parts of the Similkameen and Okanagan areas so remote that years sometimes passed without contact with other European settlers; yet she writes in her reminiscences: "I led a perfectly ideal life at this time." Among some specially advantaged settlers of a particularly idyllic area, the Gulf Islands, we even encounter the complaint that life was too good, so easy and pleasant as to be damaging to the characters of boys growing up there.⁵

In more typical narratives we have descriptions of the arduous labour of clearing homesteads of the great trees of the coastal forest and other pioneer hardships, but almost always with the reflection that the immigrant has come to a land that offers him far more than the one he left. Eric Duncan, pioneer settler and poet of the Comox Valley, comments that if a band of crofter-fishermen of his native Shetland Islands had suddenly been set down with their boats on the coast of Vancouver Island "they would have thought themselves in Paradise," such was the richness of both land and sea. In one of his poems, "Unreasonable," he expresses homesickness for the Shetlands but he turns this into a reflection on the illogical nature of nostalgia in "A land of rural bliss, to poverty unknown."⁶ Rather than suggesting imprisonment the narratives of pioneer life often lay great emphasis on freedom found in the new land, including liberation from the rigid class structures of older societies. The young Englishman Martin Allerdale Grainger in perhaps the first notable novel to be set in British Columbia, the strongly documentary *Woodsmen of the West* (1908), writes much of isolation and other hardships of life in a logging camp on a sombre inlet but he comments enthusiastically on the sense of freedom he feels to be characteristic of the country. Frequently this freedom is associated with human growth. Eric Collier, who arrived in the Cariboo from Northamptonshire at the age of nineteen, writes, "I took to the sparsely settled outlands of interior British Columbia as the sunflower takes to the sun."⁷ Here the survival thesis of Margaret Atwood seems to have less relevance than the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner.

Such accounts cannot be dismissed simply as belonging to an early period of uncritical optimism about the new land, for narratives of personal discovery and experience that locate the great good place in British Columbia have continued to be numerous in the middle and later twentieth century. Nor have they been confined to the mild climate of the coastal area; in recent years they have often been set in the more remote parts of the interior, as is the case with Eric Collier's book. Theodora Stanwell-Fletcher's *Driftwood Valley* (1946) is a classic account by an expert naturalist and gifted writer, a native of Pennsylvania who spent some three years in a very isolated area of the interior, where she encountered winter temperatures cold enough to freeze horses. Yet she found the land far lovelier than such tropical areas as Fiji and Java, where she had previously lived. She comments that here nature is much harder and more terrible than that known to Wordsworth and the English Romantic poets, and needs someone stronger and more elemental, but that it has all the greater wonder and beauty. Despite dangers and hardships, the cold of winter and the flies of summer, her confidence in the wilderness steadily grew, and she gained an ever increasing contentment. She writes in her diary: "This must be what is meant by perfect happiness." Even the accounts of hardships often rise beyond survival into something approaching epic, as when she reports that farewells with a family of

Indians with whom she had had many disputes were affectionate: "for we have seen and done great things together."⁸ Although *Driftwood Valley* is superior to the average in its literary qualities, the experiences it records have close parallels in many other narratives. For example, T. A. Walker's recent account of life in the remote Cassiar mountains, *Spatsizi* (1976), is much more a story of growing harmony than of antagonism with the environment. The author writes: "The wilderness never failed us, and the first years in Spatsizi were our paradise."⁹

In these narratives the attitude toward the native Indians conforms no more closely to the Atwood thesis than the attitude toward nature. While Atwood has emphasized that in Canadian literature the Indian is frequently seen as a menacing figure, associated with an alien world of nature, in British Columbia writing the hostile Indian is relatively rare. Helmcken discovered in 1850 that even among the war-like Indians of northern Vancouver Island he could roam freely, and stated he certainly "felt less fear of molestation than I had often experienced when traversing the slums of London."¹⁰ Such narratives as Susan Allison's have much of kindness and friendship received from Indians. Rather than appearing as threatening, the Indians and their traditional cultures provide in the writings of Stanwell-Fletcher, Emily Carr, Earle Birney, and many others models of the ideally harmonious relation between man and nature. In the literature of this region the menacing figures are much more often land surveyors and real estate developers than Indians.

Many of the autobiographical narratives are built around dominant themes of the kind Atwood identifies and discusses, but these are rarely developed in ways so "sombre and negative" as the survival thesis would lead one to expect. For example, there is the theme of exploration, which is nowhere more prominent than in this region. The earliest literature of British Columbia in the European languages is literature of exploration; and the exploits of the early explorers have been made the subject of books by writers as diverse as Haig-Brown, Roy Daniells, and George Bowering. It seems in keeping with the spirit of the place that the daughter of a pioneer of the Gulf Islands should remember in later years that what she had learned from her father was above all a love of exploration,¹¹ and that one of Ethel Wilson's characters, Aunt Maury in *Love and Salt Water*, although a native of Nova Scotia, should frequently occupy her time in those same islands by reading the journals of Captain Vancouver. How far this oldest of themes is from being exhausted is indicated by the fact that in *The Invention of the World* Hodgins gives the ferryman who conducts us to Vancouver Island, Strabo Becker, the name of a great classical geographer.

As a fine and original example of the many modern narratives of personal exploration we may take M. Wylie Blanchet's *The Curve of Time* (1961), a story of voyages made in a small boat by the author and her children during several summers in the Gulf of Georgia and the coastal straits and inlets, some-

times following the routes of Vancouver and other early navigators. The book is not without sombre aspects, for it is haunted by the awareness of mortality and a sense of the ruins of time represented by the relics of a vanished Indian culture, in a way that brings into question Earle Birney's well-known dictum of a land without ghosts, but it is none the less a joyful celebration of the beauty and variety of the coastal landscape and life and of the possibilities of adventure. It provides a total contradiction of Atwood's suggestion that in Canadian literature exploration is typically represented as leading only to disappointment or death.

By a natural process the narratives of exploration frequently lead into a second major theme: the making of a home. A good example of a book that has making the home as its primary subject is Eric Collier's *Three Against the Wilderness* (1959). The author settles with his wife and child in the remote Meldrum Creek area of the Cariboo, builds a house, clears a garden, and learns how to make a living from the land, experiences that bring none of the frustration postulated by the Atwood thesis but fulfilment and growth. The title seems to suggest an antagonistic relation between man and nature but the narrative has more of heroic adventure than mere survival, and its ultimate theme is harmony with nature. The author works not only to build a home for his family but also to create a habitat for wild life, to restore streams and bring back the beaver. Here the theme of making the home leads into another theme that, as will be seen, has special prominence in the literature of British Columbia: conservation.¹²

The theme of making the home is closely related to another very large theme, which may be termed possession. It attempts to answer the question of how those who have newly arrived in a land can gain any close and enduring hold upon it, and often recognizes that no real possession is to be bought with money or conferred by legal ownership. One of the most moving manifestations of this theme occurs at the end of Cliff Kopas' *Packhorses to the Pacific* (1976). The author and his wife rode by horseback in the 1930's from Alberta, then blighted by depression and drought, through the mountains to the Bella Coola valley on the coast. His response to the lush valley, with its rich soil, great trees, and salmon-filled streams, was to kiss the earth and then kiss his wife with the earth still on his face, and to take the resolve that there they would remain. Kopas takes pride in the fact that his identification with the place was later strengthened as a result of medical blood transfusion: he has in his veins the blood of the Bella Coola tribe, as well as of the Norwegian and Scottish pioneers of the area.¹³ This desire to establish some special tie with the native Indians is a form frequently taken by the possession theme: if the Indians cannot be claimed as ancestors by ties of blood, then there will be at least an attempt to establish by adoption ties of culture and art. Other striking manifestations of the theme include the wish in those who have come from other places that they had been born in the new land, a feeling sometimes detectable in Haig-Brown's fictional accounts of boyhood in British

Columbia (despite his happy memories of his own childhood in England) and expressed also by characters in Ethel Wilson's *The Innocent Traveller*. In the context of this local fascination with possession it is entirely appropriate that Joseph Bourne's splendidly ambiguous book of poems in Hodgins' *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* should be titled "Possessing Me." For the writers of this region the theme of possession clearly has special importance, and they have made it, whether implicitly or explicitly, very nearly the major theme of the literature of British Columbia for the past one hundred years, the grand theme into which all other themes dissolve. It is the antithesis of the exile theme of the survival thesis.

SUSPICION MAY OF COURSE ARISE that the strongly favourable view of the land that dominates such minor and documentary writers as have been considered thus far is superficial, and it may be expected that we will encounter a view that is much darker as well as much more complex when we turn to the major writers of the region. In fact, when we make this move we find much less contradiction than continuity. The transition to the major writers is most easily made by way of Roderick Haig-Brown, who has good claims to be regarded as the first to sustain a long and distinguished career as a writer in British Columbia. Like Lowry he is an exceptional figure who arrived on the scene rather deceptively in the guise of a familiar, easily recognizable local type of English migrant: while Lowry might be seen as the last of the remittance men, Haig-Brown was initially attracted to British Columbia, like many another young Englishman, by the possibilities of sport and adventure in a frontier area, but instead of contenting himself with a conventional book on British Columbia as a sportsman's Eden he proved to be a talented and dedicated writer with the fullest possible commitment to the new land. His first book with a local setting, *Pool and Rapid*, published in 1932, was followed by more than twenty others during the next forty years. Although he wrote some fiction, he was primarily a naturalist and essayist: this is a region that has tended to produce and attract naturalists before novelists, and painters before poets.

Haig-Brown's special subject was angling, but his writings range far beyond this, to describe the splendour and variety of the coastal landscape, the richness and abundance of the vegetation and wildlife, the distinctive ways of life of the loggers, fishermen, and farmers. Taken together his books probably provide a more comprehensive picture of the landscape and life of the coastal area — outside the cities, at least — than is to be found in any other writer. His work is a prolonged celebration of the land. He constantly writes of it not only with scientific precision but also with wonder and with an overwhelming sense of its generosity. A typical comment is the one he makes on a fixed fishing line stretch-

ing into a channel of the sea at Stuart Island: "I can never pass this contraption without feeling that I live in a country whose generosity is in a class with that of the better South Sea Islands."¹⁴

In Haig-Brown's writing the themes already identified as characteristic of much of the literature of British Columbia are fused inextricably together: exploration, making a home, possession, and conservation. He insists that possession can come only from knowledge, from no other form of ownership, and he seeks this knowledge both through the scientific skills of the naturalist and through years of close observation and varied experience of the land. For him life was a continual process of exploration, and though he travelled widely throughout the world he valued specially the detailed knowledge of the single locality where he made his home at Campbell River. In striking contradiction of the Atwood theory of a land that disappoints on close inspection, he held that a lifetime was not long enough to exhaust the fascination even of a single stretch of his home river.

In his writings about nature scientific language moves easily into the language of love, and a favourite word for the knowledge he seeks is intimacy. This intimacy is revealed especially in relation to the seasons, for he believes, as perhaps countrymen always have, that the true test of knowledge is the ability built up through observation of a place over many years to mark what is specially early or late, usual or unusual. Hence his two finest collections of personal essays, *A River Never Sleeps* (1946) and *Measure of the Year* (1950), have the structure of a monthly calendar of the year. In a key passage of the latter he writes that to watch the signs of the seasons is "a rite among men." These signs have passed "through wonder into superstition and religion, and are now become wonder again and living pleasure." They are a pleasure not for themselves alone but they bring also "the sense of participation in the world's real life, of steadily increasing intimacy, of possession that grows gradually stronger over the years."¹⁵

As this statement suggests, Haig-Brown's celebration of the land is of a much profounder kind than is characteristic of the numerous books written to praise British Columbia as the "sportsman's Eden." He writes as a naturalist but even more as a humanist. His ultimate theme is the quest for the full, harmonious, and integrated life, and he celebrates the land because it provides opportunity for complete human growth and balanced development. He is, he declares, although a professional writer, "the professional amateur" in all other things, holding that in an age of specialization "amateurism is the world's lost youth and hope and delight."¹⁶ He writes not only as the fisherman, scientist, and artist, but also as the farmer and gardener, the axeman, book collector, magistrate and conservationist, not least as husband and father, and as one who combines many other roles; and he rejoices in a land generous enough to allow fulfilment and growth in all these diverse roles.

HAIG-BROWN'S PRIZING of his amateur status, his refusal of the status of the specialist, and his desire to express in his writings all the aspects of a very full and rounded life no doubt make the essay the right form for him, for in these things his position is much like that of Montaigne, from whom the great tradition of the personal essay springs. Unexpectedly, however, it is not the finely balanced Haig-Brown but the tormented Malcolm Lowry who applies to his writings of British Columbia the motive he believes existed for Montaigne, the belief "that the experience of one happy man might be useful."¹⁷ In the new environment Lowry temporarily achieved a balance and happiness he had not known before, and integration became the theme of the best of his writings with West Coast settings as much as of Haig-Brown's. In a letter in 1951 he described "The Forest Path to the Spring" as the only short novel he knows of its type that brings the kind of majesty usually reserved for tragedy "to bear on human integration and all that kind of thing."¹⁸

In the regional context Lowry has a special claim to interest as the writer who has made the most serious, sustained and successful application of Edenic imagery to the British Columbia setting. His modes of celebration of the land are of course completely different from Haig-Brown's. He writes not so much as a naturalist (although he took a great interest in studying the flora and fauna of the area) as a poet and symbolist, much less literal and more "literary" and allusive than Haig-Brown, more intense and lyrical, reaching closer to mystical levels, although with less power to sustain or achieve permanence in the vision. As has often been pointed out, "The Forest Path to the Spring" was conceived by Lowry as the *Paradisio* to the *Inferno* of *Under the Volcano*. The image of British Columbia as the earthly paradise is established near the end of *Under the Volcano* when the consul Geoffrey Firmin meditates in the heat of Mexico that the place may be "an undiscovered, perhaps undiscoverable paradise."¹⁹ Lowry's description of life in British Columbia in "The Forest Path" is "half real, half fable," filled with paradisiacal imagery from Genesis and Revelation, from Bunyan's journey to the Celestial City in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and many other sources. His home on the north shore of Burrard Inlet is given the name Eridanus from the river that in Virgil's *Aeneid* waters the Elysian Fields of the Earthly Paradise. His narrator meditates: "there was everywhere an intimation of Paradise."²⁰

In "The Forest Path" the splendour of natural setting, its beauty and peace, lead to inward purification and ecstasy, and the realistic details of the description of place become the symbols of divine perfection. In this benign setting the cougar is not harmful, the mountains are not threatening but guardians; the clear waters of sea and spring, the greenness of the forest are emblems of life and

growth. Even the seagulls are "dovelike" and have "angelick wings." Here the narrator finds both freedom and tranquility; he learns the nature of reality and love. He achieves a true harmony with the world of nature, with the woman he loves, with humanity as represented by neighbours, who appropriately are fishermen; and he gains an almost mystical sense of unity with the whole creation. He reflects: "Ah, what a life of happiness had now opened before us!" "Was it possible to be so happy?" "We were still on earth, still in the same place, but if someone had charged us with the notion that we had gone to heaven and that this was the after life we would not have said him nay for long."²¹

A writer could scarcely go further than Lowry does here in celebrating the earthly paradise, but his vision is expanded in *October Ferry to Gabriola*, which is filled with memories of the perfection of life in Eridanus, from which the narrator feels threatened with eviction. It provides another demonstration that in British Columbia Lowry had found a natural setting so magnificent and benign as to liberate him for a time from the prison of egotism, the self-absorption of the writer and alcoholic, and from the obsession with words and symbols to the exclusion of other realities. Here the wanderer found a home, and the archetypal theme so prominent in much of the literature of British Columbia, making or finding the home, is developed with peculiar intensity. The narrator in *October Ferry* is the eternal wanderer, sometimes linked with the Wandering Jew, who has lost through a succession of catastrophes every home he ever inhabited, until he finds the perfect home unexpectedly in a little wooden shack built on piles over the water in Eridanus, and then he fears nothing so much as losing it. He meditates that it is so precious to him and his wife he would lay down his life for it: "But what was it that gave them this life so free and dear, that gave them so much more than peace, what was it that made it more than an ark of timber? Ah, it was their tree, door, nest, dew, snow, wind and thunder, fire and day. Their starry night and sea wind. Their love."²²

A stronger confutation could hardly be found of the Atwood thesis that the characteristic experience of the immigrant has been disillusion and defeat, the sense that the good place is not here but elsewhere, the feeling of exile. Lowry and Haig-Brown both declare their preference for the new land above the most idyllic settings of the old. Haig-Brown had spent much of his childhood beside the Frome, in the place that stood for Thomas Hardy as the earthly paradise, the Valley of the Great Dairies in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; yet though he was well aware of the advantages of the Dorset setting for the novelist he came to prefer the Campbell River to his native Frome.²³ Lowry not only contrasts Burrard Inlet with his native area, "the terrible city" of Liverpool, which becomes a symbol of deprivation and alienation from nature, but he prefers it even to the most sacred place of Romantic nature poetry. After the return to England at the end of his life he visited Grasmere, as he states in a letter, "not because it reminds

one of Wordsworth so much but because if we half shut our eyes we may be able to imagine we're back on Burrard Inlet."²⁴ For him the flow of nostalgia was totally reversed.

A VERY SIMILAR VIEWPOINT PREVAILS in the fiction of Ethel Wilson, even though in many other respects she is as different from both Lowry and Haig-Brown as those two writers are from each other. If her characters experience any sense of exile it comes not from life in British Columbia but from absence from that place. In *Hetty Dorval* the narrator Frankie Burnaby spends a happy childhood on a ranch near Lytton, which provides a total contrast with Atwood's picture of the typical childhood of Canadian fiction as crippling or restricting. Hers was so filled with love of her parents and love of the land that she writes: "Life, for me, could not have been bettered." When Frankie is later taken to live for a time in England, even though she appreciates the beauties of Cornwall she knows that she must return to her native place, and in London she yearns for the sage brush country of her early years when some reminder calls up "a disturbing magic," "the genius of my home."²⁵

Ethel Wilson, who was born in South Africa but lived in Vancouver from childhood, provides her fullest account of the immigrant experience in *The Innocent Traveller*, which is based on the life of an older member of her family. Aunt Topaz, although migrating in middle age from a very comfortable life in England to the raw new town of Vancouver in the 1880's, responds to the land with the greatest enthusiasm, rejoicing in its beauty and openness, and when she returns for a visit to England she becomes a fierce defender of the "colonials." Although she has the limitations of a person who lives on the surface of life, she is shown to possess good judgment, and her enthusiasm for the new land is shared by the other characters of the novel. On arrival from England Aunt Rachel feels immediately that she has come to her own kind of country, although no words could express her all pervading release of spirit. She wishes she had come there two generations ago. She writes to a cousin: "It is so lovely, Eliza, that I feel I've wasted my life in not living here before," while the grandmother writes to a son in England that although they miss the family and old home "this place is beautiful beyond description." Nor is there any disillusionment after this initial enthusiasm. Before long the contours of the mountains have become part of the lives of the characters, and they are happily tied in numerous ways to the new land.²⁶

Ethel Wilson has just as powerful a sense both of place and of the goodness of the land as we find in Haig-Brown and Lowry. In *Swamp Angel* Mrs. Severance comments: "Everything of any importance happens indoors," but the central character Maggie Lloyd immediately replies, "Oh, it does not," and here we feel

that Maggie speaks for the author.²⁷ As a psychological novelist and moralist Ethel Wilson is primarily concerned with the inner landscape, with the development of the heart, and with relations between people, but the outer landscape and local imagery are of great importance to her also. Indeed they are so prominent in her novels as sometimes to puzzle critics to account for them. The novels provide loving descriptions of so many areas as to constitute a literary exploration of the province: the mountains, harbour and townscape of Vancouver, past and present, in all seasons and all weather, the Fraser Valley in a golden autumn and a severe winter, the sage brush country at Lytton in the drought and heat of summer, a peach orchard in the bloom of spring beside the lake at Naramata, lakes in the Cariboo, numerous rivers and streams, Comox with its bay and spit, the west coast of Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands. These landscapes are developed not in vague general terms but with precisely observed details of vegetation and wild life, whether the arbutus, juniper, and cedar of the Gulf Islands, the aspen around a lake of the interior, the seabirds of Vancouver harbour, the flight of wild geese, or the ways of trout. These things are not superficial touches of "local colour" but part of the substance and texture of her novels and stories.

Ethel Wilson's view of the relation between man and nature, inner life and outer landscape, is far from simple. She develops images of Darwinian cruelty as well as of Wordsworthian beauty, joy, and healing power in nature. In her fiction sometimes a character's move to an idyllic rural setting may represent a flight from responsibility or a retreat into life-denying isolation, as with Ellen Cuppy's flight to the Gulf Islands in *Love and Salt Water*. More often, however, the country is a setting for renewal, integration, and growth — providing the character makes the right moral choices, as is the case with Maggie Lloyd in *Swamp Angel*. Maggie follows the river from the city to its source in a pure lake, and there, while working to help others, she is able to recover and grow, to make a new and better life. Themes of growth and integration predominate in her fiction (published mainly in the late 1940's and 1950's) to a degree that seems to run counter to the literary fashions of the mid-twentieth century. She has, like Haig-Brown, a distrust of extremes, including perhaps such high flights as Lowry's, but a belief in the possibility of a "happy chequered life," which is Ellen Cuppy's fate at the end of *Love and Salt Water*.²⁸ There is surely a close relation between the two features of her novels that have most puzzled critics: her predominantly optimistic view, despite her strong awareness of the fragility of human life and happiness, and the prominence of landscape and nature. The optimism seems so inexplicable to one critic that he has referred to it as "whimsy,"²⁹ but it springs partly from the sense that once one has learned to accept inevitable limitations the created world becomes a source of great and enduring joy.

Ethel Wilson's descriptions of place and time provide the strongest possible contradiction of Margaret Atwood's claim that Canadian fiction has only one

season: winter. Wilson, Haig-Brown, and Lowry all share the view that a special glory of the land they describe is the variety of the seasons, the endlessly repeated cycles of gradual change: Haig-Brown is as much the essayist of the gently changing Vancouver Island seasons as James Thomson is the poet of the English seasons. If there is a single season that dominates the others, for the writers of the mild coastal area it is not winter but spring. This is of course a clear case of geographical determinism. The spectacular nature of the coastal spring immediately impressed the early settlers. Eric Duncan recollected fifty-seven years later the indelible impression he received upon his arrival at Comox in June 1877: "everything was a tangle of green. I had never seen such growth before, and I shall never forget my first sight of it — I can shut my eyes and see it now."³⁰ The challenge for the coastal writers has been to evoke this extraordinary phenomenon of greenness and growth, to render it as vividly as Emily Carr in paintings. The most successful, in addition to Emily Carr herself in her journals, have been Haig-Brown, Lowry, and more recently Hodgins. Haig-Brown made his first attempt to describe the coastal spring in *Pool and Rapid* and returned to the subject again and again, achieving his finest handling in *A River Never Sleeps* and *Measure of the Year*. In keeping with the paradise theme, spring is the dominant season in "The Forest Path to the Spring," although Lowry describes all the other seasons as well. Comparison between his and Haig-Brown's descriptions, for example, of the varied shades of green in early spring would make an interesting exercise in criticism. It need hardly be added that just as the imagery of winter is associated with negative views of life in the survival thesis, in the literature of this region imagery of spring is commonly associated with themes of growth and fulfilment. The fiction of Hodgins, where the idea of "second growth" has special prominence, provides notable examples.

THE WRITERS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA have been much more inclined to praise than to curse the creation, and there has been more of celebration than of survival in the literature. This tendency has been carried so far, indeed, that concern is sometimes expressed by Hodgins and others that the poets and novelists of the region face special dangers in being seduced away from other subjects and themes by the very splendour of nature and landscape. Even where the writing expresses anguish of mind and spirit, the land is more often seen as a mitigation than a cause, as the poetry of Susan Musgrave illustrates. Frequently the writers seem inspired by the spirit of the Psalmist (*Ps.* 16:6): "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the survival thesis does a great injustice both to the land and to those who have written of the land.

There are of course darker and more negative aspects of the literature of the region than the picture given thus far suggests. Many of these are inherent in the theme of the earthly paradise itself, for no writer of any sophistication can write of paradise without also writing of paradise lost. Even in his most exalted celebration of Eden in "The Forest Path to the Spring" Lowry is well aware of the dangers of immaturity and delusion in the idea of the earthly paradise: death camas is among the flowers that grow in Eridanus. In his later writings and those of others the special strength of the theme of possession is matched by an equally intense fear of dispossession; there is growing protest against the spoiling of the land, and strong contrasts are developed between the magnificence of the natural setting and the imperfection of the social order.

If we carry our examination of the Eden theme into the later part of the twentieth century we will find that its tragic and ironic dimensions become increasingly prominent, as if serious treatment were taken as far as it could be in Lowry's "Forest Path" and after that only ironic versions were possible, perhaps even for Lowry himself in later writings. Here one might well echo Milton's words as he approaches the Fall in *Paradise Lost* (ix, 5-6): "I now must change / Those Notes to Tragic." The "perfect 'Eden'" of James Douglas and the "paradisiacal" place of John Helmcken are replaced by such ironic versions as the "Garden of Eden" in a real estate advertisement (Lowry) and the "Paradise Beer Parlour" (Hodgins).³¹ In Birney's *The Damnation of Vancouver* the picture is of a spoiled place that is described as "this Eden" only by Legion, an absurd booster and blind believer in material progress.³² Hodgins makes the central myth of *The Invention of the World* not Eden but the "Eden Swindle." Such a development appears inevitable, particularly if one recollects that during the very year when Douglas described the site of Victoria as an "Eden" Charles Dickens published *Martin Chuzzlewit* with its satire on the ironic gap between the promise and the reality of the western American paradise, as represented by the activities of "The Eden Land Corporation."³³

Yet there is much in Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* to suggest that the "Eden Swindle" was not a swindle after all, or at least that the goodness of the land and the strength of the human spirit were great enough to convert tragic into comic irony. The Irish peasants who followed Donal Keneally to Vancouver Island were deceived by the messianic pretensions of their leader and harshly exploited by him but they were not disappointed in the place to which he led them, where the forests had "a higher, sweeter smell even than the furze" of Ireland.³⁴ Space does not allow any detailed examination of Hodgins here, but there is in fact a high degree of continuity between the responses to the land exhibited in this novel and those expressed by Haig-Brown, Ethel Wilson, and even by Lowry in the "Forest Path." It is not to question Hodgins' very striking

originality to suggest that their central theme of integration and growth in a generous land is ultimately also his central theme.

The Invention of the World is a novel that might almost have been written to refute the survival thesis, and this is equally true of the more recent *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, even though it carries further Hodgins' satire on the western Eden and his criticism of all materialistic conceptions of paradise and possession. While Atwood comments on the lack of heroes in Canadian literature, Hodgins' fiction is as full of exemplars of true and false heroism as the work of Spenser and Milton (although his characters may hide their heroism beneath unpromising exteriors), and her criticism that vital life-giving women like Molly Bloom do not appear in Canadian fiction³⁵ is contradicted by such prominent characters as Maggie Kyle in *The Invention of the World* and Jenny Chambers in *Joseph Bourne*. While Atwood suggests "surely the central Canadian experience is death" and holds that funerals have a special prominence in Canadian literature,³⁶ *The Invention of the World* concludes with an exuberantly joyful wedding. *Joseph Bourne* does indeed include a funeral but it is comically rendered, and the central subject is not death but resurrection. At the conclusion of this novel the words are carefully chosen in the comment on the life-affirming dance with which Jenny Chambers responds to disaster: she and the other characters are "much more than simply survivors."³⁷

The existence of these strong and pervasive contradictions between the literature of British Columbia and the survival thesis obviously raises the question whether a thesis that fails to pass such a regional test can be valid as a national theory of literature. The contradictions have their own value, however, in defining many of the special characteristics of British Columbia writing. They may help us understand the meaning of Ethel Wilson's words: "my locale in a sustained piece of writing (that is, in a book) has to be British Columbia. There are other places in the world that I know and love, but none that I know, and feel, and love in the same way. But I did not choose it. It chose. It is very strong."³⁸

NOTES

¹ *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 245. Such a summary inevitably makes Atwood's formulations appear cruder than they really are, but they were clearly intended to be provocative. If they have hardened into an orthodoxy, that is probably the fault of others.

² Ed. Margerie Lowry (New York and Cleveland: World Publishing, 1970), p. 151.

³ See Douglas to James Hargrave, February 5, 1843, *The Hargrave Correspondence*, quoted by Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole in *From Desolation to Splendour: Changing Perceptions of the British Columbia Landscape* (Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin, 1977), p. 29; and *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*, ed. Dorothy Blakey Smith (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1975), Appendix II, pp. 282, 298; cf. pp. 103-05. Tippet and Cole's study of

regional traditions in painting provides many interesting points of comparison for the literary treatment of the landscape.

- ⁴ Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London: Smith, Elder, 1868), pp. 12, 18. Poole, *The Queen Charlotte Islands* (London, 1872), quoted by Sam L. Simpson, "Two Voyages by Sea — 1863 and 1971," *The Charlottes: A Journal of the Queen Charlotte Islands* (Queen Charlotte Islands Museum Society), no. 1 (1971), 35, 38.
- ⁵ *Survival*, pp. 50-51. Mrs. Allison's comment is specifically on life in the Okanagan in the 1870's: *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison*, ed. Margaret Ormsby (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1976), p. 47. The last comment is Beatrice Freeman's, in *The Gulf Islanders, Sound Heritage*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1976), 15.
- ⁶ See Duncan's *From Shetland to Vancouver Island, Recollections of Seventy-five Years* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1937), p. 80, and his *The Rich Fisherman and Other Sketches* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 104-05.
- ⁷ *Three Against the Wilderness* (1959; Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1965), p. 10.
- ⁸ *Driftwood Valley* (1946; New York: Ballantyne, 1971), pp. 178, 101, 75, 342.
- ⁹ (Surrey, B.C.: Antonson, 1976), p. 260.
- ¹⁰ *Survival*, pp. 91-95, and Helmcken, *Reminiscences*, p. 326. Cf. Helmcken, pp. 143, 284, 292, and Allison, *Recollections*, pp. 33-39.
- ¹¹ Dorothy Richardson, in *The Gulf Islanders, Sound Heritage*, 5, no. 4 (1976), 23. For Atwood on exploration see *Survival*, p. 115.
- ¹² I hope to deal with themes of spoiling the land and conservation in a sequel to the present article. Here of course the Atwood thesis becomes relevant but only in its reversed form: nature as victim of man.
- ¹³ *Packhorses to the Pacific* (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's, 1976), p. 125, and Kopas, *Bella Coola* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1970), p. viii. Atwood has an interesting discussion of attempts by Canadian writers to adopt Indians as ancestors, although this phenomenon is not easy to reconcile with her main thesis (*Survival*, pp. 103-05).
- ¹⁴ *A River Never Sleeps* (Toronto: Collins, 1974), p. 236.
- ¹⁵ *Measure of the Year* (Toronto: Collins, 1950), pp. 3-4.
- ¹⁶ *Measure of the Year*, pp. 246-48.
- ¹⁷ "The Forest Path to the Spring," *Hear us O Lord from Heaven thy Dwelling Place* (Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott, 1961), p. 281. Lowry gives his source for this idea simply as what "someone said, speaking about Montaigne"; "someone" is probably Virginia Woolf in her essay, "Montaigne," in *The Common Reader*.
- ¹⁸ *Selected Letters*, ed. Harvey Breit and Margerie Lowry (Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott, 1965), p. 266.
- ¹⁹ (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 354.
- ²⁰ "Forest Path," pp. 255, 261. Like many of Lowry's allusions, "Eridanus" is complex and ambiguous, but this is the explanation given in *October Ferry*, p. 164.
- ²¹ "Forest Path," pp. 232, 242, 281.
- ²² *October Ferry*, p. 67. Cf. Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry, A Biography* (New York: Dell, 1975), pp. 406, 415-18.

- ²³ See for example *A River Never Sleeps*, pp. 83-84 (where the context is trout fishing).
- ²⁴ "Forest Path," pp. 225, 240. Letter to Ralph Gustafson, April 29, 1957, *Selected Letters*, p. 410.
- ²⁵ (1947; Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 8, 56, 87.
- ²⁶ (Toronto: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 113, 121, 122.
- ²⁷ (1954; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1962), p. 149.
- ²⁸ (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956), p. 203.
- ²⁹ Frank Birbalsingh, "Ethel Wilson, Innocent Traveller," *Canadian Literature*, 49 (Summer 1971), pp. 35-46.
- ³⁰ *From Shetland to Vancouver Island*, p. 128; cf. Duncan's *Fifty-seven Years in the Comox Valley* (Courtenay, B.C.: Comox Argus Publishing, 1934), p. 21.
- ³¹ See *October Ferry*, p. 244, and *The Invention of the World* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), p. 95.
- ³² (1957; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), p. 49.
- ³³ However, even Dickens in his role as editor helped disseminate the Edenic view of British Columbia. When he published a report in the journal he edited, the region was described as a "garden of the Hesperides," with rich resources and ideal climate, from which the world had long been jealously excluded by the Hudson's Bay Company; and Bishop Hills' opinion was quoted that Victoria was "the most lovely and beautifully situated place in the world": "Episcopacy in the Rough," *All the Year Round*, 4 (February 23, 1861), 470-74. (Dickens was a close friend of Hills' patroness, Angela Burdett Coutts.) Nevertheless, the complaint that British Columbia has been falsely represented as an "Eden" by land speculators appears in R. Byron Johnson's *Very Far West Indeed, A Few Rough Experiences of the North-West Pacific Coast*, third edition (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1872), pp. 44, 278; and no doubt earlier examples could be found.
- ³⁴ This is the comment of one of Hodgins' characters, Seamus O'Mahony, p. 116.
- ³⁵ *Survival*, p. 199. In regional terms it is interesting that Atwood notes Ethel Wilson as in some respects an exception.
- ³⁶ *Survival*, p. 222. In keeping with this view, Atwood emphasizes the prominence of death by drowning in Canadian literature (p. 55), but Hodgins in *Joseph Bourne* (like Ethel Wilson in some of her work) develops symbolism of swimming in a much more positive way, to represent mastery over fear.
- ³⁷ (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), p. 269.
- ³⁸ "The Bridge or the Stokehold? Views of the Novelist's Art," *Canadian Literature*, 5 (Summer 1960), p. 44.



FLOTSAM AT ROSE POINT

Gwladys Downes

A brave boy beareth the flukes away —
after three days
no blood is criminal in these Islands

where we offer our faces
to the glittering spite of the midday sea
our vulnerable eyes

but do not admit a distant destruction
moon arcs of madness
gashing of green boughs

admitting it we should be wholly lost
in quicksands waiting by the river's mouth
unstable dunes

no perfect shells lie angled in these stones
but we are permitted to gather agates
of a certain luminosity

our real care, searching heads down over dry salt
is to avoid the haunted eyes
beyond the sun

"We have survived" — your voice against the wind
as though the end were
breath only, bitter air

binding us to knives and whale and running boy
and brilliant fingers torn apart by light,
the strange rebirth of suns.

REDEEMING REALITY

LOUIS DUDEK, *Continuation 1*. Véhicule Press, \$4.95.

LOUIS DUDEK, *Texts and Essays. Open Letter*, Fourth Series, Nos. 8-9 (Spring and Summer 1981), \$7.00.

LOUIS DUDEK and the Véhicule Poets, *A Real Good Goosin': Talking Poetics*. Maker Press, \$2.00.

Of all sad fates the avant-garde's the worst —

They were going nowhere, and they got there first.

You can go through a red light but you can't go through a red truck. — *Louis Dudek*

THAT THE TRUE GOAL of modernism is silence or nothingness, as some contemporary critics might argue, is not an idea that would appeal to Louis Dudek, though neither would it surprise him. No-one in Canada has understood better than he that the liberating impulse of the modernist movement may embody its own self-destruction. Yet in the path of the current flight from meaning and referentiality in literature lies a formidable red truck of poetry and criticism that is the legacy of Louis Dudek.

So many paradoxes surround this man. For thirty years, he has been a professor of English literature at McGill University, and yet he is relentlessly anti-academic in his approach to the writing and study of poetry. Who else but Dudek would have had the temerity at a symposium on Isabella Valancy Crawford to denounce her poetry as "hollow convention," "counterfeit," and "fake idealism"? Though he has done as much as anyone to encourage young Canadian poets, especially in Montreal, he has also trounced the younger poets for the slovenliness and self-indul-

gence of their writing. His own poetry has progressed from finely-crafted lyrics through long philosophical meditations to what an uncharitable critic might characterize as shapeless and self-indulgent rambling, a stream of consciousness quite unexpected from a man who clings tenaciously to the New Critical ideal of the poem as an autonomous work of art.

But perhaps the biggest paradox of all is that Dudek the outspoken opponent of Black Mountain poetics finds himself celebrated in a special double issue of *Open Letter*, edited by Frank Davey, the foremost Canadian exponent of Black Mountain, whose postmodernist bias would seem to preclude any sort of appreciation of the modernist aesthetic espoused by Dudek. In fact, Davey has considerable praise for Dudek as the first Canadian man of letters — poet, editor, publisher, anthologist, critic, and cultural commentator. Perhaps the apparent contradictions I've outlined are no more than an indication of the wide range of Dudek's interests, for if these three recent works tell us anything about the man it is that both his poetry and his criticism stem from a deeply-felt and intellectually coherent view of life and art, a view that is neither avant-garde nor outdated. But before turning to an explication of this view, let me just briefly describe the nature of the texts under review.

A Real Good Goosin' is a 23-page pamphlet in which Louis Dudek and the Véhicule poets exchange ideas about poetry. Rather loosely edited and printed, the book says more about the Véhicule poets (Ken Norris, Stephen Morrissey, Endre Farkas, Tom Konyves, Artie Gold, John McAuley, Claudia Lapp) than it does about Dudek. For an elaboration of the poetics sketched out in 4 or 5 pages here, it's necessary to turn to the 320-page special issue of *Open Letter*. It contains a long interview with Dudek (conducted by George Bowering, Frank Davey, Steve

McCaffery, and bp Nichol), reproductions of manuscript drafts of *Europe*, *Atlantis*, *Continuation 1*, and "Silence," two letters from Dudek's poetry mailbag, 21 essays, and an autobiographical sketch, plus numerous snapshots of Dudek from 1940 to the present. In this collection may be seen, in Frank Davey's words, "the whole Dudek, not only critic, commentator, and lyricist, but modernist theoretician, author of four extraordinary long poems, editor and energizer of a decade of Canadian writing." More than this, the collection, taken together with Davey's recent book on Dudek and Souster, is a tribute from the present generation to the preceding one, an acknowledgement of influence without anxiety, that should go far towards a revaluation of Dudek's position in Canadian literary history.

What are the proposals so clearly demonstrated in these texts and essays? Of the relationship between literature and reality, Dudek writes, "for me literature has no other reference, no other ground, as its starting point and its ultimate point of return, than this reality as we know it." This statement holds true from the earliest lyrics in *East of the City* to the long poem just published, *Continuation 1*, and from the essays in *First Statement* through to the interview in *Open Letter*. Reality as we know it is the basis of literature, a view which explains Dudek's well-known attacks on Northrop Frye and mythopoeic criticism. But for Dudek there is another potential reality, unseen but always within the realm of possibility, the Atlantis, the nine-tenths of an iceberg below the surface, an as yet unrealized potential towards which we struggle up out of the muck of the mundane reality that our senses perceive. In Dudek's words, "behind this reality, the human sense image, we assume there must be another, its substratum, which we do not know, so that the reality which we know is authentic and true only because it has a certain

correspondence with the one we believe exists beyond it, as the unknown real." The greatest power of a poem thus "derives from the faint hint or suggestion it gives of that other, unknown world of being." Surprisingly, perhaps, Dudek is able to apply this quasi-Romantic idea to modernism, arguing that "modernism descends to the destructive element of reality, and it tries to raise that reality, by an act of criticism, or by ecstasy, to the height of vision." Here it's important to understand, however, that the real is never actually abandoned or transcended — rather, the real is the very *basis* for whatever vision may occur. Thus, for Dudek, the true modernists are Joyce and Proust, Pound and Williams, but not T. S. Eliot, because Eliot does not "force the real world to yield its treasures of infinite joy." By the same reasoning, A. J. M. Smith, the "Aesthetic Master of Canadian Poetry," may be better known for his poetry of "extreme austerity" which turns its back on reality, but it is his "contradictory reaching toward life" that Dudek finds most attractive.

As a postmodernist, Dudek is "celebratory" in the same way that Ken Norris describes the Vehicule poets — "we celebrate what it is about life that we can find to celebrate." But as a modernist, Dudek chooses to celebrate not chaos, not meaninglessness, not the *nostalgie de la boue*, but order, beauty, and above all, art. For him, the imagination, the "power which is behind the word-assembler of the poet," seeks "possible webs of unity, to organize the chaos of impressions, to create an order." So that whereas he can tell the Vehicule poets that he likes their spontaneity, their experimental vigour, the way they "descend into the chaos of the actual," and he can assure bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery that he is for "total liberation and total renovation" and supports their efforts in that direction, he still affirms, "I want a *poem* to result." It's

not at all surprising to find Dudek praising the conservative position of Gerald Graff articulated in *Literature Against Itself*. Liberation is fine as long as it does not become an end in itself, as long as it does not undermine the possibility of creating a culture antithetical to the bourgeois philistinism it opposes. "I want," says Dudek, in what I take to be a perfect description of the man himself, "Henry Miller and Matthew Arnold rolled into one."

What sort of a poem would be written by Henry Miller and Matthew Arnold rolled into one? A poem that is at the same time ironic and sincere, rhetorical and reflective, lyrical and epigrammatic, serious and banal, a poem of quotation and self-parody, always striving "to find that meaning which eludes us." *Continuation 1* has five sections, the first of which was previously published in the *Collected Poetry* (1971), and the second in *Tamarack Review* in 1976. Dudek calls it "an experiment in poetic process" without a specified conclusion or endpoint, eschewing a consciously-imposed order to find "an order in the nature of the mind itself, or of the world we live in."

"So let's continue" it begins, and the sense of continuity is in the voice, in the alternating patterns of short and long lines structured in verse paragraphs whose spatial arrangement on the page seems natural, not artificial.

Beyond a few sentences, in our lives, there
is nothing

But what did you expect —
the poem to write itself?
or to start a hurricane?

Not really, only a language
to contain the essentials that matter, in all
the flux

of illusion

Pebbles, that shine through the cobbled grey
that emerge, in time's
liquid flow
as diaphanous heaven

And the viscosity of things
How it all hangs together
hiding whatever it is it hides.

The content of the poem is Dudek's own experience, and his thoughts about that experience — politicians and the students of Poland, Bartok and Irving Berlin, dandelions and telegrams, God and the gravy train, many fragments and competing ideologies. But from this heap of broken images Dudek, the *bricoleur par excellence*, forges a unified vision of reality and its shadowy counterpart, the reality behind or beyond sense perception.

"Let the words lead us wherever they go" — one could describe Dudek's poetic as phenomenological or proprioceptive but there would have to be a qualifier — the words, however they come, wherever they lead, are still subject to a final shaping or revising, for poetry is *made*, not *emitted*. Dudek argues that any revision that "violates the text as it came . . . is fake," but at the same time maintains that "What is required to turn your talent into that real poetry you are interested in is the critical sense, discrimination, a grasp of 'principles' which will make your revision masterful." A contradiction? No, because what Dudek is saying here is that revision is necessary but that it should not be false to the initial impulse, it should not betray the spirit of the original words. The revision that involves cancellation and substitution is evidently all right in Dudek's view as the selected pages from the early drafts of *Continuation 1* reproduced in *Open Letter* testify to such a revising process, though we cannot say whether that revision was more or less instantaneous or was effected some time after composition began. Though the open-ended poem is coterminous with the life of the poet, it is subject along the way to growth and change.

And the poem is never finished
Death puts on the finishing touches

However much they may or may not agree with the view of life put forward in *Continuation 1*, readers will, I think, come away from this poem with an understanding and appreciation of the integrity of both its form and the vision of its author. Dudek's attempt to "get the moment down on paper" is absolutely faithful to the theory that stands behind it, and resolutely uncompromising. As one man's attempt to redeem reality, it is inevitably a fragment, a search without end, but in that sense is true to its time and place.

MICHAEL DARLING

THE WILL TO BE

TIMOTHY FINDLEY, *Famous Last Words*. Clarke, Irwin, \$17.95.

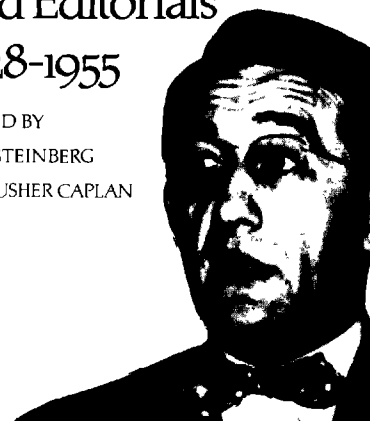
"END FACT. TRY FICTION." This quotation from Pound's poem, "Near Perigord," serves as epigraph to Chapter Five of Findley's new novel, *Famous Last Words*. The relationship between history (the allegedly factual account of what Larousse describes as "*la vie de l'humanité*") and fiction (the stories we invent about people "*qui n'existent que par convention*") is difficult to pin down partly because the word "history" combines two meanings: a *record* of events and the *events* themselves. In the sixth century B.C., the Greek word *historia* meant the search for knowledge in the widest sense. It meant inquiry, investigation, not narrative. But, since Aristotle's time, history (a recital of the details of accumulated knowledge) has been regarded as a form of literature, and the word has been used (in French as in English) to mean a narrative of actions or events, real or imagined, a story, *une histoire*. That Wells could write *An Outline of History* within ten years of writing *The History of Mr Polly* makes the point and the problem clear.

A.M. KLEIN

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Yet no one who has read Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, any of Scott's Waverley novels, Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*, or Thackeray's *History of Henry Esmond* can have felt uneasy about the mixture of historical facts and fiction in more recent novels like Wilder's *Ides of March* and Doctorow's *Ragtime*, or been puzzled by the subtitle of Capote's *In Cold Blood* — "A Non-fiction Novel." Then why is *Famous Last Words* so unsettling? After all, it announces itself unambiguously as "a novel" on the title-page. And certainly our disquiet cannot derive from the fact that one of the two protagonists is Wallis Warfield Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor, still alive though comatose in her home outside Paris; we have become accustomed to encountering the famous and still-living in journalistic fictions by Kerouac, Mailer, Wolfe, and others.

Much more than Findley's daring resuscitation of the driven duchess who, in her demonic but frustrated ambition and her compulsively courtiered desperation, seems distantly related to the less loveable members of the family surrounding another duchess — entitled Amalfi (and the *whiteness* of the Official Party at the incendiary Spitfire Bazaar is wonderfully Websterian) — much more disturbing than Wallis is her literary non-lover, the narrator of Findley's novel who is, paradoxically, a fictional fact. Debate will doubtless flourish at a later date as to whether Findley's Mauberley, hunted and haunted inscriber of "the ultimate graffiti" (which explicitly parallels the judgment scrawled by God's hand on the wall of Belshazzar's palace and boldly interpreted by the prophet Daniel) bears any resemblance to the fastidious fragments of Pound's imagination immortalized in the poem-persona with the unforgettable name of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." Mauberley is the discomposing element in *Famous Last Words*. In his devastating

deconstruction of his private and public history or age — the "accelerated grimace" of which he is himself an image — Mauberley makes the reader shudder with revulsion and shiver with contempt; and yet, at the same time, he forces from the reader gasps of amazement at his audaciously stylish and witty wall-inscriptions. He also makes us weep at what Wilfred Owen called "the pity of war": the poetry of Findley's book is undoubtedly in the pity.

That Findley chose Mauberley as his narrator is a stroke of genius. Inspired by a sensitive reading of Pound's poem, but mainly a man of his own invention, Findley's Mauberley, "a compulsive witness" whose "notebooks were feared like a morgue where the dead are kept on ice — with all their incriminating wounds intact," compels admiration because he is so horribly honest; and he commands sympathy because he is so anxious to say everything, to tell the whole truth, to salvage what he can "of words and hold them up against the sword." Like Isabella Loverso (another in Findley's gallery of great female portraits), Mauberley puts his faith in "the currency of the human mind, the written word"; and like Isabella's husband, Mauberley is murdered by fascist thugs fearful of what he has written. This is why *Famous Last Words* is itself the answer to the impossible question Captain Freyberg puts to his literate lieutenant, Quinn. Gesturing at the walls on which Mauberley has recorded his last will and testament to the world, Freyberg, in a fury of outraged indignation and incomprehension, asks, "Can you tell me why it is your heart goes out to all these people here?" — meaning all the people Mauberley has written about, including himself: fascist sympathizers, many of them, plotting to outwit Allied and Axis forces in order to set up their own elitist government with the Duke and Duchess as their puppet king and queen. Quinn

cannot and is not allowed to answer. Because Freyberg wants facts. Like Dickens' Gradgrind, Freyberg collects facts. He is putting together an historical account of all the atrocities committed by fascists against innocent victims. Freyberg does not care about fictions, or about interpretations. On the contrary, he hates them; to him they are lies obscuring the truth, the facts. He has no love of words, either. Almost the last thing we're told about him is that he "appeared not to hear a word that was said to him." For Freyberg, actions speak louder than words. And to prove it, he punches Quinn in the stomach when frustration refuses verbal expression.

But it is to Mauberley, incarnate in his own words, that Quinn's heart goes out, just as it is to Findley's words (famous already but not, we hope, his last), and to the fictions he forges with them, that the reader's heart goes out. Thus the reader's response repeats Quinn's which repeats Findley's, since it was to Pound's words (amongst other things) that Findley's heart went out in the first place, enabling him to find exactly the right voice with which to tell this ingenious story, or to retell this curious and complicated piece of history.

Amongst the "other things" that seem to have commanded Findley's creative attention in *Famous Last Words* (as in *The Butterfly Plague*) are "fascist aesthetics" — briefly formulated by Susan Sontag in a 1975 review of Leni Riefenstahl's photography (Findley's interest in and use of photography has been discussed by a number of critics, most notably Eva-Marie Kröller in the Fall-Winter 1981 issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies*). Fascist aesthetics "flow from (and justify) a preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behaviour, and extravagant effort" — all of which can be demonstrated by turning to Findley's latest fiction, in particular to Mau-

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berley (given to submissive behaviour) and the Duchess (full of extravagant effort), and to the fight for control between Von Ribbentrop, Bedaux, Reinhardt, and the cabal that goes under the code name of "Penelope" (Flaubert, rather than Wallis Windsor, should have been and perhaps is, finally, Mauberley's "true Penelope"); and to the rival fascist faction centred in Schellenberg-Schaemmel and the Nazi Central Security. Egomania and servitude are ostensibly opposite but in reality complementary states which Sontag sees as crucial to fascist aesthetics; and the "relations of domination and enslavement take the form of characteristic pageantry." Mauberley sees a number of handsome young Blackshirts making "a great show of their presence" in a restaurant. They exude "an aura of masculinity," and when one, "wearing boots and a wide belt," passes his table, Mauberley wants "desperately to follow him. . . . And I went away with him — in my mind. And knelt before his strength. And his victory." Later, he is drawn to Reinhardt, Mauberley's eventual murderer: "desire . . . rose against my will when I saw Harry Reinhardt's inhuman eyes. Inhuman and, therefore, without the impediment of moral choice. There was nothing — nothing one could not imagine him doing."

Ruth Damorosch, in *The Butterfly Plague* (which is the novel *Famous Last Words* resembles, rather than *The Wars* or *The Last of the Crazy People*; though, like *The Wars*, Findley's latest fiction is another "Fire Chronicle"), experiences the same desire as Mauberley when she encounters the blond "Superman," "the Messenger of Race" and of Death who comes "all the way from the pages of Nietzsche" to deliver his message to her. And in her "War Sermon," in *Can You See Me Yet?*, Cassandra Wakelin acknowledges in herself those impulses which generate fascist art (it "glorifies

surrender . . . exalts mindlessness . . . glamorizes death") and become the principles of the fascist aesthetic. Hearing voices on the radio (Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, Ma Perkins, and Aimee Semple McPherson), Cassandra asks, "Why do we listen? Why do we pay attention? Why do we obey?" Because "there's something eager and malignant in us all that yearns to cringe, wants to be obedient. That is the secret of their power. Our willing weakness. We are the horses that they ride, the beasts they hunt, the cattle in their abbatoirs. We are their victims — everyone — because we are afraid to be ourselves." Commenting on *Can You See Me Yet?* in a 1981 CBC interview, Findley said that "Everyone is so afraid of life itself that they would prefer to be locked up in an insane asylum." All his works, he said, are concerned with the different facets of what, at some level or other, "allows fascism to be": a "what" going beyond politics, a spiritual sickness the symptoms of which are fear, hatred, a lack of love which makes cruelty possible, and a failure of imagination which betrays us into confusing the truly beautiful with the allure of the high and the mighty, with the glitter and glamour of "the surface people." We are seduced, Findley asserts, by "the attractiveness of the elite. We acquiesce."

"Ezra will be condemned," says Mauberley in *Famous Last Words*; but only "because the world cannot acknowledge that the mad have visions of the truth." No one "wants to be seen by a madman — lest the madman call him 'brother.'" And so Pound will be pulled down by those who want to dispose of "the madness in themselves . . . by blaming it all on him." But those who say "'We should never have done these things . . . were it not that men like Pound and Mussolini . . . drove us to them'" miss "the fact entirely that what they were responding to were the whispers of chaos, fire and anger

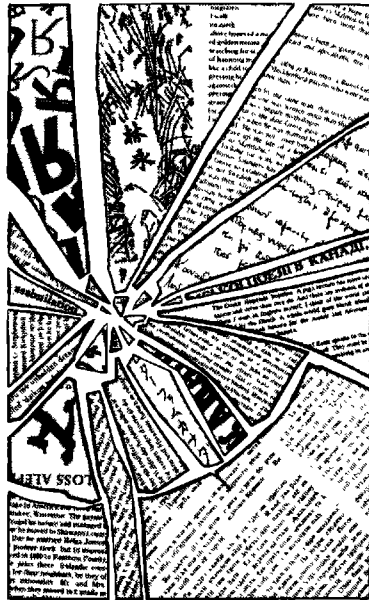
in themselves." This is precisely the fact that fact-hungry Freyberg misses. He dismisses the words that whisper chaos, fire, and anger in himself. Thus, by refusing to acknowledge his own guilt and responsibility, by trying to blame "others" for "everything," Freyberg inaugurates yet again the tragedy that Quinn recognizes and can acknowledge his part in — the historical tragedy recreated by Mauberley in his own private Passion: a passion to tell the Truth that attaches him to the facts (two pieces of wood) with forever questionable fictions (maybe nails, maybe ropes). All of which may help to explain why Findley calls *Famous Last Words* a

novel, but why he also allows his fabulous tale-teller to assert that "*All I have written here . . . is true; except the lies.*"

This is a brave and beautiful book: brave because Mauberley tries to tell the truth about himself — "Including the mistakes he made"; beautiful because "Mauberley's whole and only ambition is to describe the beautiful." Findley's "greatest gift," like Mauberley's, is "an emphatic belief in the value of imagination." Findley's mount, as we know from *The Wars*, is Pegasus, and he rightly belongs in that famous company identified by another high-stepping stylist, Wallace Stevens: the company of noble riders

IDENTIFICATIONS: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada

Edited by Jars Balan



Examines the relationship between ethnicity and the literature of selected writers in Canada. The contributors are D. Arnason, J. Balan, G. Bisztray, M. Campbell, P.G. di Cicco, M. Haas, M. Kostash, H. Kreisel, S. Levitan, G. Ryga, Y. Slavutych, D. Struk, A. Suknaski, R. Wiebe and J. Young. The volume is a pioneer study of Canadian ethnic literature: "What we learn may not only change our understanding of Canadian literature, but may also change fundamentally how we see ourselves."

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moved by and moving to the sound of words. His subject-matter is often grave, and could not be of greater concern to readers than now when the world is marching deliberately to the right, and right into formations hideously familiar to those who remember the last "outbreak of hostilities." And yet his manner is often humorous and occasionally hilarious (on board the *Excalibur*, for example, and at the Spitfire Bazaar).

In the "creative vision," as Roger Fry noted in 1919, "a man's head is no more or less important than a pumpkin." And, in the final analysis, Findley's subject-matter is only as important or as moving as the articulating power of the novel's form allows it to be. In eight chapters, subdivided into forty-three episodes covering thirty-five years, Findley fashions a marvellously complex "prose kinema," its choreography alternating between what Sontag (in her essay on fascist aesthetics) calls "ceaseless motion and congealed, static, 'virile' posing." Findley's narrative facility is a marvel to behold and to be held by. It entices, teases, compels, even bullies, but it never leaves the reader to drift aimlessly. If, as Todorov asserts, the end of narrative is death, then the end of *Famous Last Words*, when Quinn prepares to "walk down from the mountain," having had his vision and played Daniel, is a triumphant transcending of the inexorable nature of narrative boundaries, and therefore of mortality. Since Mauberley identifies himself with the shadow lying dormant on the other side of reason and whispering "*I am here; I wait*," he locates himself "at the heart of the human race — which is its will to say *I am*." In doing so, he aligns himself with all of us, in and out of fiction, who are still alive and waiting for the end.

JOHN F. HULCOOP

NUTGALLS & SUNBURSTS

IRVING LAYTON, *Europe and Other Bad News*. McClelland & Stewart, \$8.95.

AL PURDY, *The Stone Bird*. McClelland & Stewart, \$8.95.

THERE IS SOMETHING ABSURD and fabulous about the Layton legend. Like a character from a Bellow novel he charges through the mind astride a blaze of words, hefty and febrile, with a fecundity probably unmatched in poetry since the early Victorians. Symphonies of verbal inflation attend him across the land: bard of the brutal, bestial and beautiful, outrageous, superb, proclaim the blurbs. We need him, swoons the *Victoria Times*, as though somehow, had he not existed, he would have to have been invented. There is something fabulous and familiar also about his place of residence, the Niagara Peninsula, our great, golden horn of plenty, at the lower and of which one pictures Mr. Layton, always about to pour forth something for his public seated at the other end, ears up, for all the world like the dog on the R.C.A. Victor decal. Still, what this dog is actually doing, the critics don't rightly know. Some reckon he is wagging his tail, others that he is merely astonished. Many insist he is about to foam at the mouth. Anyway — cheer, marvel, shudder, or foam as you will, Irving Layton's *Europe and Other Bad News* has something to support every viewpoint, beginning with a foreword that is not so much a foreword as it is a peremptory fanfare, grim, sometimes comic and simultaneously a quite expert piece of verbal demolition. Amid alternating blasts of rhodomontade and righteous wrath, walls are shaken — those between east and west, those of the middle class, of the religious establishments, of academe, the pedants routed, disarmed or buried in the rubble. What follows next

is a series of eighty pieces which, in a review this short, can be gathered loosely under three headings: the joyless, the joyful, and those in which the two moods sometimes meet. A prose postscript — a strangely comic reprise in which immortality is bestowed on, among other things, the Canada Council and the New Brunswick potato — of course does not count.

The joyless are the most numerous and among the most vivid of the pieces. Their range is a wide sweep of inhumanity, injustice, stupidity, and betrayal from biblical days up through World War II to the present. "Michel," "Flora," and "Good-bye to all That" might be mentioned in this context, each in its own way sharp and convincing yet — curiously — fading from the mind as one turns the page. Tone and stance have much to do with this: little tonal modulation from piece to piece and, in some, too much soother as well, Whitmanish, but a Whitman gagging on nutgalls, his auguries

("Anarch," "Malachi," "Reingemacht," "Eternal Recurrence," for instance) running together, lost in a flow of hectoring and vitriol.

Then there are the joyful pieces, too few of these alas ("The Consummation," "The Annunciation," "Early Morning Sounds") — shot through with sunbursts, bright feathers, and garden sounds, but in no sense a Wordsworthian communion with nature. This is strictly a Robinson Jeffers sort of affair, no mysticism, the peace and joy described, moments to breathe in really, attainable close to the natural world because nature's pain and violence, in contrast with man's, is innocent.

Pieces under the third heading are not abundant either, maybe because as one title explains, there is "No Absolute Joy." However there are moments of buoyant illumination ("Other Beginnings and Starts," "A Psalm in Niagara") and of a kind of mellow grace achieved in sweet

Hugh MacLennan 1982

Proceedings of the Hugh MacLennan Conference at the University of Toronto last February. Edited by Elspeth Cameron. Papers and commentaries by Stanley Ryerson and Brian McKillop, Jacques Brazeau and David Dooley, William Keith and David Staines, Robin Mathews and Patricia Morley, Eli Mandel and Barrie Davies, Antoine Sirois and Ben-Zion Shek; personal reminiscences by Robert Kroetsch, Solange Chaput-Rolland, Marian Engel and Constance Beresford-Howe. Copies available at \$10 (plus 75¢ postage and handling) from:

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thoughts of woman's love, sexuality, and goodness ("Astoreth," "Deliverance," "The Queen of Hearts"). Unfortunately, there are moments of vaudeville, too, in which two inelegant aspects of human behaviour are put on stage: the gross and the ludicrous. From "The Itch," for example, some readers might be stunned to learn that sexuality can, on occasions, be a leering, cumbersome, thick-fingered business, or from "The Glimpse" that too much sun and a glimpse of a lady's drawers may activate a bout of satyriasis, Homeric and loony. Such pieces surely are misplaced and get a person a bad name.

Still, only the most captious of critics would deny Mr. Layton as an entertainer. His work read aloud, especially by him, sounds right. People flock to hear him, or they used to. They don't to Al Purdy, although he's also a bit of a showman. Maybe that's because his pose is more mannered, low-keyed, nonchalant. Either way, if Layton's poetry is sometimes less than it sounds, Purdy's is perhaps a bit more, although *The Stone Bird*, like Layton's *Europe and Other Bad News*, is not — on the whole — what solid reputations are built on.

The Stone Bird is principally an overview of the Americas, past and present, with a side glimpse or two of Europe. In this way it is a rather comfortable and painless account, first class, as from an automobile, train, and airplane — your genial guide usually, as it were, purring over the seatback, a can of cold beer in his hand, or a peg of good bourbon in the offing ("South of Durango," "Journey of the Sea," "Hail Mary in Dawson City"). His eye is acute: here are the shimmering hunks and colours of lost worlds and ancient civilizations — Mexico, Yukon, Galapagos, Samarkand — teeming plant and animal life, living and dead, reptiles, porcupines, burros, mammoth wolves, tortoises, and blue-footed boobies. Here, too, sound, sense, and motion merge neatly,

as in "Bestiary" and more especially in "Red Fox on Highway 500," a succession of poems edging over the threshold of some vast conception, each one a minor-keyed breakthrough in some post-Darwinian rediscovery. Now your guide has become the diagnostician, ear down to the circulatory surges and borborygmic churnings of Old Mother Earth ("The Stone Bird"). Case histories are consulted, illusions peeled back ("Near Tofino, Vancouver Island," "Moses at Darwin Station," "Across the Mary River," "Nurse-log"). We are tuned into the core of reality, the natural processes, the prognosis: earth's the right place for love, nature's song in the seasons, in her evolutionary motions will provide the missing connection, the key so sadly lost these days amid the concrete and plastic distractions of the shopping mall. Poems like "Mantis" and "The Darkness" strike some of these notes well, but in others real feeling is sometimes dissipated in trivial puns and cuteness ("Birdwatching at the Equator," "Found Among the Effects"). And then there are those lamentable lapses in voice, an adolescent squawk, slangy and nasal, reminiscent of Holden Caulfield, cropping up for no discernible reason in pieces as diverse as "D. H. Lawrence at Lake Chapala," "No Second Spring," and "Writer in Rez." Even the titlepiece, "The Stone Bird," suffers in this regard — the wrong note — an evangelical persistence, the whine and the hankering aspect of a recent convert determined to press the *Watchtower* on an indifferent passerby. In the best poems, though, deep affection and feeling show. Here Purdy is an expert practitioner, as in the good-humoured "For Bumper," a piece about old age, and in "On the Hellas Express," where a haunting image of tired faces before a scene of injustice, selfishness, and pampered privilege becomes a telling comment on our identity.

PETER MITCHAM

ACROSS BROKEN GLOBES

HENRY KREISEL, *The Almost Meeting and Other Stories*. NeWest Press, \$12.95.

HENRY KREISEL OPENS his well-known essay "The Prairie: A State of Mind" with his memory of a letter in an Edmonton newspaper, from a man Kreisel imagined as "a giant, a lord of the land [who] asserted what his eyes saw, what his heart felt, and what his mind perceived" — that the earth was flat. Kreisel eventually transformed that giant's unshakeable faith in his flat prairie world into the figure at the centre of his finest story, "The Broken Globe." All of Kreisel's stories document the breakup of worlds and worldviews; as a Jew fleeing Austria in the late 1930's, Kreisel lived his own way through one. His forced passage to the new world fissured his ties with the past, and, inevitably, with his first language — any writer's first home. Deciding to write in English, Kreisel adopted Conrad as a "patron saint"; deciding to make a life in Canada, Kreisel looked to A. M. Klein, who showed him that he could lay claim to both halves of the immigrant's world without sacrificing either.

In the title story, appearing here for the first time, Kreisel pays Klein a warm tribute. "The Almost Meeting" recreates Klein's personality, transforms lines of his poetry, and evokes the enigmas of his reclusion in the figure of David Lasker, "a great poet as well as a great novelist, who had created an astonishing body of work, but had then suddenly fallen silent." Lasker writes narrator Alexander Budak a congratulatory note on his first novel, an autobiographical story of old world feuds splitting up a new world marriage. The son, Budak, searches all over North America for his father, but never quite meets him. Budak's eagerly anticipated meetings

with Lasker never materialize either, but Lasker's closing note explains that even almost meetings are "something":

It was impossible for me to see you. . . . You wanted to ask me things. I have no answers. But you are in my heart. Let me be in your heart also. We had an almost meeting. Perhaps that is not much. And yet it is something. Remember me.

Kreisel has: his heartfelt evocation of Klein, like Livesay's "For Abe Klein: Poet," is imaginative literary history, private and public.

"The Homecoming," revised and greatly expanded in this version, is Kreisel's bleakest evocation of the European postwar wasteland. Mordecai Drimmer feels compelled to return to what remains of his home town in Poland; he is Kreisel's most tormented figure, haunted by demons real and imagined, Jew-hating peasants and leering gargoyles that threaten him from church spires. Kreisel's vision of the post-holocaust landscape is surreal, vaporous with desolation; Drimmer's agonized descent into the past is so powerfully imagined, the devastation so utter, that in contrast his final rebirth of hope seems a fragile scene, more wished for, more strained after than fully realized.

The remaining six stories are reprinted without change. "The Travelling Nude" is a comical, tongue-in-cheek sendup of an art instructor who loses his job teaching extension courses in outlying prairie communities because he insists that a travelling nude would be just the ticket for his students. Mahler, the artist/teacher, opens his story with a portrait of his travelling nude, travelling nude — to pose for aspiring artists in Great Fish Lake, Three Bears Hills, Pollux, Castor. . . . Kreisel gives Mahler's tantalizing obsession whimsical, lighthearted treatment.

"Annerl" and "An Anonymous Letter" show Kreisel's sensitivity to children's rites of passage into adolescence. Annerl is an

irreverent old peasant woman who sells roasted chestnuts on a Viennese street-corner. Two schoolboys make her post a regular stop; she disappears for a few days and then returns, her drunken husband dead and buried. She continues to rail at him as she had when he was alive, but fondly remembers that he was a "right good 'un" in bed when he wasn't too drunk. Intrigued, the boys ask her to explain how men make love, but Annerl sends them off with free chestnuts and orders to pray for her Joseph's soul, and they walk off towards several initiations at once. "An Anonymous Letter" follows a boy's investigation into his father's infidelity. David tracks his father to his rendezvous with his mistress and then confronts them in a restaurant. His innocence gives way to ambiguity in the space of a sentence: wondering if he is guilty of spying, and whether he should now tell his mother, he realizes that "everything was too tangled up and nothing could ever be simple and straightforward again."

In "Two Sisters in Geneva," Warren Douglas, a young Canadian student of history at Oxford, is privy to two sisters' monologues in a Geneva train station; his occupation makes him an apt auditor for a debate between old and new world sensibilities. Mrs. Miller emigrated with her husband from England to Canada; after his death, she moves from their Peace River homestead to Edmonton. Now she's come to Europe, bent on dragging her sister away from her home in Florence to the alleged comforts of the new world. Mrs. Miller is intolerant, bigoted, a blithe materialist. She can't pronounce her sister's name; she's shocked that Emily would "up and marry an Eytalian," and she's scandalized at statues of nude figures in Florence. Emily Buonarroti, also widowed, tells Douglas a very different history: her husband was a teacher of Renaissance art, and "when you live in Firenze — in Florence — you have to learn

something. Art, religion, history — it is all preserved around you." Nowhere is Kreisel's perception of the deep divisions between worldviews more artfully imagined. The story closes with the three boarding their train — Emilia longing for Florence, Mrs. Miller eager to show her the "wide-open prairie . . . and the Rocky Mountains," and the student of history silent; the sisters' monologues have told separate stories all too well.

I've saved for last the two stories I admire most. "Chassidic Song" sings first with the voice of a Chassid, another of Kreisel's giant, faithful figures. During a plane ride from Montreal to New York, the Chassid questions Arnold Weiss (a modern Jew, a Joyce scholar who has just presented a paper on Leopold Bloom) on the nature of his faith. Rhythmically reasoning, the Chassid answers himself with more questions, in dialectical couplets: in the mind's eye, he sways back, forth, nodding, sighing, incantatory:

What do you mean—I? . . . Did I start this? What did I start? Did I talk to you first or did you talk to me first? Did I tell you where I was going? Or did you ask me? Who mentioned the *Farbrengen*? Did I or did you? . . . But even did you? Or perhaps it was Moses Drimmer speaking through you. Not the father. The grandfather.

The Chassid communicates a grandfather's faith to his grandson, a song submerged for a generation. He leaves Weiss with an invocation: "Remember your grandfather. He knew that the tongue is the pen of the heart, but melody is the pen of the soul. . . . He sang. Your grandfather. Oh, yes. He sang, too."

"The Broken Globe" is simply a classic. Nick Solchuk, a young geophysicist in London, is making a name for himself with his work on the earth's curvature. He is estranged from his father: the two had quarrelled years ago when Nick came home with a toy globe to show him that the earth moved, that it was round. The

father had smashed the globe and beat Nick. As in other Kreisel stories, there is an intermediary in this one, a figure poised between two worlds, looking both ways; here, the narrator accepts a teaching post at the University of Alberta and promises Nick that he'll drive out to his father's farm to bring him greetings. The broken globe still sits in the old house; when he sees the narrator examining it, the father tells him the story behind it. Like Kreisel, the narrator is fascinated with the farmer's brooding, massive figure; the closing image evokes his unbroken faith in all its stillness, size, and shadow:

I looked back at the house, and saw him still standing there, still looking at his beloved land, a lonely, towering figure framed against the darkening evening sky.

In postwar Europe, on the prairie, in the family, at the writer's desk, Kreisel's immigrants inherit and inhabit a broken globe, living the double experience that Kreisel knows so intimately. By presenting all of his stories to us in one place, *The Almost Meeting* makes one of the richest aspects of Kreisel's varied contribution to Canadian literature that much more coherent.

NEIL BESNER

A PERFECT FIVE

MARIAN ENGEL, *Lunatic Villas*. McClelland & Stewart, \$14.95.

ANYONE WHO GREW UP receiving *Little Women*, *The Five Little Peppers*, and *What Katy Did* for Christmas and birthday presents will recognize in the Ross-Littlemores of Marian Engel's *Lunatic Villas* distant relations of all the poor-but-virtuous families of this sentimental moral fiction, so beloved of gift-giving aunts.

Engel's heroine, Harriet Ross, has, through adventures both amorous and litigious, acquired six children, and tem-

porarily taken in an unruly seventh. To their overflowing Toronto home comes a little old English lady, Mrs. Saxe, with a "face like a boil," and "an eye like an old poached egg," who pulls up uninvited on her ancient bicycle and settles in. The coming of Mrs. Saxe to Rathbone Place, though portentous, like that of the stork, or the wolf to the door, is not the beginning of the story; for Engel furnishes a prologue — a profane Genesis, to account for the creation of the small piece of real estate that will be the world of *Lunatic Villas*. Like all good geneses, this one stresses original cause, is casual about subsequent event, and revels in reeling off names:

Which is how Harriet Ross, and Sim, Melanie, Ainslie and Tom's Mick came to christen [it] Ratsbane Place. It didn't come to be Lunatic Villas, however, until it had met Vinnie and Winnie and Sylvia and Roger, Michael Littlemore and the twins, Madge and Adge, Elaine and Pen, and Marshallene, Bob the Painter and his friend Fred, the people from Saskatchewan and oh . . . all the others.

It is partly this sheer multiplicity of characters, especially in Harriet's family, that allies them to the Marches and the Peppers, the *Eight Cousins*, and all the other fecund families of yesterday's children's fiction. But Harriet's brood has a more than numerical resemblance to these earlier families, which were often fatherless, usually poor, and fiercely loyal to a "Ma" who was a good, strong woman, daily rubbing in the lesson that they possessed in their happy home a wealth that no riches could purchase. To point the moral even more surely, these books usually boasted a rich family, who tended to have solitary, unhappy children who strayed inevitably into the homes of their poor-but-happy relatives or neighbours.

Now Engel's Ross-Littlemores are in many ways far removed from the Marches and the Peppers. Billed on the paperback as today's "typical extended family," they

exhibit marked contemporary characteristics — they swear, play hooky, make out, smoke pot, steal records from the A&A, and are suspected of wearing safety pins in their earlobes. And Harriet, though essentially the good, strong Ma, is a divorcée, an adultress, and a harbourer of uncharitable thoughts. Given, however, the contemporary setting, the failings of the Ross-Littlemores aren't any more seriously deviant than the March girls' pranks, and their virtues are almost identical. Mrs. Saxe may snap, "Modern youth," at the revelation of Sidonia's misconduct, but as Harriet points out, "I keep meeting girls like that in Victorian novels."

We've met Sim before, too — the gentle older brother, good with the kids and relied upon by Ma. Sidonia is the spoiled rich kid seeking to be healed in the poor-but-happy household. There are the irrepressible twins, Patsy and Peter, the rich relatives, Madge and Babs, the legacy, and even the struggle to keep the poor family together, here against the triple adversaries of money, respectability, and leather shoes.

What, above all, *Lunatic Villas* shares with this early children's fiction is its concern with the depiction of love, specifically that seven-eighths of love that is loyalty, commitment, and responsibility, that brings its rewards slowly, and is not in the least romantic or sentimental. Harriet, the "competent" one, epitomizes this kind of love; her neighbour, Roger, discovers it in his role as single father to Winnie, and the solitary Marshallene pays tribute to it as she laments her own inability to meet its demands:

Oh Mrs. Saxe, what do you do with this big white moon-sized loneliness inside you? . . . Marriage? Don't make me laugh, it's unjust; don't make me cry, it isn't fair. I want to love. I want to cry, I want to eat. But I don't want to vacuum or cook. And those who want everything both ways get it no way.

There's nothing particularly original about the overflowing, harum-scarum lovable family; even their rebellions are part of the canon. What originality there is in *Lunatic Villas* comes not from its more sensational flauntings of the canon — the children's dining-table initiation into the politics of adultery — but from its unspectacular rejection of idealized pictures of parenthood and childhood. In *Lunatic Villas* children are presented as children: they may be strong, but they cannot replace fathers; sweet, but they can be seduced by money; vulnerable, but they can survive away from home. Moreover, the abundance and attractiveness of Harriet's brood should not obscure the fact that the *real* story is that of the older generation — Madge, Babs, Harriet, their father, and the sad "failure of love" that destroyed their family.

In a final violation of the canon, *Lunatic Villas* eschews morals — the didactic is, of course, "out" in modern fiction — but here even generalization is avoided. Like the coming of Mrs. Saxe, *Lunatic Villas* itself "refuses abstraction," despite a perfectly worked-out ending, in which all loose ends are accounted for. "Making fictions," Engel has said in an interview with Graeme Gibson, "is an opportunity to add two and two and make five. If you are too careful, if you work it all out too neatly, you'll only get four."

MICHELLE GADPAILLE

SHOCK: RECOGNITION

DAVID ADAMS RICHARDS, *Lives of Short Duration*. Oberon, \$8.95.

"YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT," says Quentin Compson of his native American South in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*; "you would have to be born there." The same sense of exotic exclusiveness emanates from David Adams

Richards' fictional images of the Miramichi region of Northern New Brunswick. In his third novel, Richards has turned away from the economically and psychologically disoriented working-class youths and their families who were the focus of *The Coming of Winter* (1974) and *Blood Ties* (1976), to encompass the bourgeoisie, the entrepreneurs and would-be social leaders of his backwoods and small town society. He also continues his explorations, begun in some of his short stories collected in *Dancers at Night* (1978), of the historical and geographical associations of the Miramichi, including the relationships between whites and native Indians, and the century and a half transition from pioneering society to decadent North American cultural and economic backwater. The result is a novel of Faulknerian proportions and intensity, a novel which is bound to provoke initial incomprehension and revulsion from the reader secure in his urban garrison of Vancouver or Toronto who knows the Maritimes only from the songs of Anne Murray or an auto trip along the Cabot Trail.

Essentially, the novel is the story of the Terri family, told in four sections in the voice of an omniscient narrator, with each section emphasizing the point of view and experience of one member of the family. The action moves backward and forward over a period of almost one hundred years, and occasionally beyond the memories of the living characters into regional tradition and folklore. Personal and communal reminiscences are interwoven with the present-time action, often in abrupt and seemingly arbitrary succession; climactic actions, speeches, and episodes are repeated, from varying perspectives and in shifting contexts. In structure and narrative technique the work is not particularly experimental by 1980's standards, but Richards handles the established devices of discontinuous narrative and motif

repetition with the assurance of an experienced artist. The fragmentary mode of plot development, furthermore, is well suited to the almost unbearably grotesque and repulsive fictional world which he reveals.

The novel opens powerfully, with a drunken barbecue party seen from the bleary perspective of George Terri, middle-aged failure and alcoholic, whose incoherent actions and egotistical fragments of memory are comparable to the perceptual mosaic of the idiot Benjy Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. The twisted chronicle of family and community fortunes becomes clearer — and more morally complex — in the section dominated by old Simon Terri, ailing patriarch of the family, and in the subsequent sections featuring Lester Murphy, old Simon's half-brother, and "Packet" Terri, old Simon's intelligent but surly and self-destructive grandson. As he has demonstrated in his earlier works, Richards is most convincing when dealing with the perspectives of old age and young adulthood; but all four parts of the novel are accomplished with psychological perceptiveness and narrative skill.

In his earlier novels, Richards managed to elicit a good deal of tolerance and sympathy for his alcoholics and violence-prone derelicts, by allowing occasional glimpses into the pathetic solitude and barrenness of their secret selves. In *Lives of Short Duration*, he concentrates more relentlessly on the cruelty, selfishness, and stupidity of his characters. His women, unlike some of the rather idealized female characters in *Blood Ties*, seem especially crude: George Terri's ex-wife Elizabeth is a self-centred, destructive bitch; their daughter Lois is a foul-mouthed, over-sexed slattern. Among the more numerous male members of the family, Old Simon is an ineffectual and uncomprehending relic of the past; the lives of his grandsons Packet and Simon are dominated by alco-

hol, drugs, and the suicidal pursuit of excitement.

Other middle-class members of the local community are presented through the resentful eyes of the less successful Terris, but they all seem to be locked into their self-absorbed obsessions with money and status. Indeed, self-centred and defensive isolation seems to be the characteristic stance of all these people: family ties, a sense of community, any kind of recognition of the common bonds of humanity emerge only in half-suppressed and ill-comprehended glimpses.

Richards' *Miramichi*, on first encounter, seems unique in the pervasiveness of human degradation; but the drunkenness, the violence, the marital and family conflict gradually emerge as concentrated reflections of modern North American society. This society destroys nature and aboriginal peoples, ruthlessly sets individuals against each other in economic, social, and sexual competition, then salves its conscience with meaningless gestures of institutionalized benevolence. Richards' novel is a strong, and at times bitter indictment, unrelieved by irony or by prominent suggestions of counteracting positive values. *Lives of Short Duration* is a bleak vision to which many readers will not want to consent; but it is a vision which fascinates even as it appals. What is particularly unsettling is the possibility that this vision is closer to the Canadian reality than either the traditional True North self-glorification or the more recent self-pitying Victim/Survival syndrome which have so far dominated English-Canadian fiction. In the mood of self-pity, Canadians are fond of complaining that their country, and the world as a whole, is being Americanized; Richards suggests, on the contrary, that the world is being Canadianized, a process which, even more than Americanization, is terrifyingly redolent of universal decay and death.

JAMES DOYLE

UNRECONCILED OPPOSITES

KEITH MAILLARD, *The Knife in My Hands*.
General Publishing, \$15.95.

NOVELS OF GROWTH and development usually trace a familiar pattern of the process of individuation. Often, such works indulge a nostalgic vein, depending largely for their appeal on the recreation in the reader's mind of a particular time, place, and collective sensibility. Keith Maillard's third novel, *The Knife in My Hands*, attempts more. Though it captures the special flavour of the years between 1958 and 1963, charting the transition in generational touchstones from the sullen insouciance of James Dean to the rasping protests of Bob Dylan and from the beatnik wanderers inspired by Kerouac to the revolutionary activists simmering restively before the full boil of Vietnam, the novel suggests that these years of searching and challenging are haunted by a fundamental concern not so much with personality or society as with reality itself, a conviction, as Maillard states in the last paragraph of the book, that life is significant, that evil is real, that something greater than "a series of small, decent, liberal corrections" could be fought for, won or lost.

Set in West Virginia, *The Knife in My Hands* takes the form of an autobiographical reminiscence by John Dupre of his life between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. It is clear from the start that Dupre does not fit any of the conventional roles offered him, but his non-conformity is both unusual and unfocused. Two tendencies, sexual and metaphysical, provide an unsettling polarity for his life. From an early age, Dupre is confused about his sexual identity. As a child he dressed himself as a girl, and as a teen-ager and young adult, notwithstanding the military academy to which

he is sent to reinforce his masculinity, he suffers from a confessed Lolita-complex — an attraction to young girls, pre-teen, slender, boy-like. Throughout the novel, however, the issue is never clarified: Dupre comes no closer to revealing or understanding his true nature than does the reader. His other peculiar characteristic is a fascination, developed during his university years, with the Cabala and, like a miniature Lowry, he spends much of his time wandering drunkenly through its labyrinthine mysteries.

Surrounding the main character are a handful of other eccentrics: Lyle Ledzinski, a high school friend and long-distance runner with a highly personal brand of Catholicism, who jogs his way to insight and disappears early in the novel; William Revington, rich, bright, who drops out of university to be on the road; Carol Rabinovitz, beautiful, intelligent, independent, who tries to reconcile her gifts with her Jewish role models; Marge Levine, social activist, committed socialist; and Bill Cohen, who somehow, one is meant to believe, through self-discipline and a kind of rugged passivity, achieves sainthood. In one important scene, each character in turn is challenged by the others to state his or her credo. Carol defends the beauty and value of literature; Marge, the dignity and wisdom of the working class; Cohen, the universal significance of each being and each moment; Revington, the futility of everything. Against these, Dupre constantly measures himself. For him, the Cabala furnishes "an accurate map of the things that are ordinarily hidden to us. I want to know those things."

Indeed, Dupre is obsessed with the Shekinah, the abiding presence of God, the source and centre of glory, and is frequently visited by strange voices and visions. Though Maillard gives such scenes thematic prominence, they seldom sustain the weight they are meant to

carry. Of course, Maillard is aware, perhaps through that other drunken mystic, of the connection between alcohol and the occult and may even be using alcohol in its symbolic role as a conjunction of opposites, fire and water, male and female. In addition, Dupre's sexuality itself becomes a metaphor, not only of a confused society, but more importantly of a possible creative resource of mythical dimensions. But Dupre himself goes no further than to become a voracious reader of rabbinical esoteria and women's fashion magazines, lusting eventually after the open, waiting, womanly Carol, but withdrawing instead into self-centred sex and escapist drinking, while his philosophical speculations diminish into sublimation, fantasy, and frustration.

Near the end of the novel, Dupre, deciding he is unfit for anything else, toys with the idea of becoming a writer (somewhat dubious credentials, one would think). Whether he pursues this goal may appear in the sequel in which Maillard intends to follow Dupre from 1963 to 1970. As it stands, *The Knife in My Hands*, though it aspires to something other than the conventional *Bildungsroman*, and though it contains some powerful and evocative scenes, remains loose, episodic, incomplete, not taking full advantage of its potential. In fairness, Maillard sees the novel as one half of a whole, and one must wait to see if the rest fills out developments underway but so far unresolved.

R. H. RAMSEY

SOUND & VOICE

W. J. KEITH, *Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe*. Univ. of Alberta Press, n.p.

AS W. J. KEITH REMARKS in his *Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe*, any assessment of the work of a writer "in mid-career . . . must . . . be tentative." Indeed,

that such an evaluation is necessarily made without the benefit of hindsight and historical perspective is one of the potential perils scholars understand well enough; however, it also offers its own special kind of challenge. Speculation as to what future years might bring is intriguing too, but it is valuable only as speculation; posterity will judge its accuracy, just as posterity will also make its own assessments and comment on the rightness of mid-term criticism on the subject writer's canon as a whole. And clearly, time will also offer, directly if there is sufficient interest, or indirectly by virtue of comments on the primary material, its comments on the criticism of the criticism. Thus the reviewer of a critical work on a contemporary writer and the author of that work essentially walk the same path or, if they feel nervous about their task, the same high wire.

There is, however, no evident nervousness in Keith's study of Wiebe's prose fiction. The book moves from a short Preface and brief list of Abbreviations and References to a useful introductory chapter and then to considerations, in individual chapters, of Wiebe's novels as they appeared — *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1964), *First and Vital Candle* (1966), *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), and *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977). The novella, *The Mad Trapper* (1980), the play, *Far As the Eye Can See* (1977), and the short stories receive principal attention in a final chapter. Notes, carefully prepared and often offering additional insights, information, and signposts, a useful Bibliography (divided into sections listing books, books edited, articles and reviews by Wiebe, and criticism), and an Index conclude the volume.

Given the structure of Keith's book one might assume that its central chapters on the five novels break down into five inde-

pendent essays; indeed, these chapters can be read as separate critical studies, but in fact to do so is to risk losing the thread of Keith's argument that Wiebe appears, as one examines his prose fiction, to be moving in his later writing to "features . . . that belong to epic more than to the conventional novel." Beyond this, a reading of only one or two of these sections would also miss another point: this book is a thoughtful and careful study of the *development* of Wiebe's prose, and the value of Keith's work lies in great part in the notion of cumulative comment, in the deliberate way in which he moves along his critical trail. Links between Wiebe's works are explored — Keith looks both forward and backward in time as he proceeds; the result is a well controlled and integrated treatment of Wiebe's themes and techniques. He provides, then, an exploration of what Wiebe has to offer, the way in which he presents his concerns, and the importance and success of both content, structure, and style. Just as he comments that "continuities are so important a feature of Wiebe's work," so one might fairly observe that continuities are an essential element of Keith's critical approach. There are no loose ends.

It is clear that Keith admires his subject's writing; the approach he takes, while not without criticism, is appreciative, fair-minded, and encouraging. For example, he comments that in *First and Vital Candle* one will "find the clumsiness as well as the excitement of the growing powers that may be considered characteristic of a transitional work. Here, the conspicuous structuring of the climax seems in conflict with the modernist sense of tentative development that distinguishes Abe Ross' story. Elsewhere, the didactic sections of the novel become oppressive; while they can be defended intellectually, they remain vulnerable artistically." In his view, Wiebe in *First and Vital Candle* "has not yet succeeded

in fusing meaning and action; he only achieves this in the novels from *The Blue Mountains of China* onwards." These are not in any way words of unqualified praise, but the sense of realistic, overall evaluation is there. With *The Blue Mountains of China*, Keith asserts, "Wiebe becomes a major novelist. Exceptional promise has evolved into indisputable achievement. . . . The sensitive reader will recognize, within the texture of the writing, what I can only describe as the exhilaration of accomplishment."

It should not be assumed, however, that in his comments about *The Blue Mountains* and the later novels Keith offers his reader only unreserved approval. His assessment of *The Scorched-Wood People*, for example, moves from a careful look at the background to this piece of historical fiction—at Wiebe's care in his treatment of Riel—to the structure of the novel and, in particular, the employment of Pierre Falcon as narrator. He addresses with understanding issues which might well disturb some readers. For Keith, "Riel and Wiebe and, to a lesser extent, Falcon, are linked by a preoccupation with the visionary. 'Vision,' indeed, is a major element not only in the subject-matter but even in the structure of the book"; "when Falcon speaks 'from beyond the grave' as an authoritative, omniscient narrator, he has taken over the function of the novelist; author and narrator can no longer be easily separated." There is a "richness" in this novel, though it is "a richness seldom accompanied by formal elegance; there is a roughness and jaggedness . . . that can offend devotees of artistic decorum." Here is a book which, in Keith's opinion, "lacks the gradual development to which we are accustomed in a traditional novel; indeed, each section relates to the next not by any necessary plot-connection but because it adds yet another facet to our ultimate understanding

of Riel." Thus, Keith not only suggests that a "reader may well find himself bewildered, overwhelmed by an embarrassment of riches," and bothered by the structure, but he also moves on to suggest an approach to the novel which allows a potential source of difficulty to become a very real basis for coming to grips with it. He remarks that his own "first reading broke down in puzzlement as . . . [he] tried to account for apparently capricious shiftings of the spectral narrator"; a further reading suggested that the novel be seen as "a series of imaginative tableaux . . . ; in this respect it proceeds like *The Blue Mountains of China*, through the cumulative effect of significant spots of time." One is, Keith asserts, "in the presence of an unquestionably major novelist."

Keith is a sensitive critic; he has learned "to listen to Wiebe's novels; sound and 'voice' determine meaning . . . Wiebe demands sympathetic perseverance on the part of his readers; ultimately, however, his prose yields up its secrets and, to adopt one of his own phrases, he can make the past sing in our ears with sweet songs."

Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe is, then, a clearly worked, considerate, and useful study. It is not long—the text (without Notes, etc.) runs to some 128 pages—but in the best sense it is long enough, given what it sets out to do. His book is worth reading—for its clarity of structure and statement, for what it says about Wiebe's art, and for its spirit and sensitivity which have their proper result in that they impel one to return to the works of Wiebe himself with heightened understanding and enthusiasm.

BRYAN N. S. GOOCH



LOOKING NORTH

THOMAS YORK, *Trapper*. Doubleday Canada, \$19.95.

DAVID WILLIAMS, *The River Horsemen*. Anansi, \$9.95.

JIM TALLOSI, *The Trapper and the Fur-Faced Spirits*. Queenston House, \$12.95; pa. \$6.50.

THE CANADIAN NORTH is the strongest common bond linking these three books. Yet "north" should be thought of as a direction only, and not as any definable geographic locale, for these three volumes share little more than settings that are "north" of Toronto. *Trapper* is set along the Peel and Porcupine watersheds of the Yukon Territory, *The River Horsemen* tells of a short journey up the South Saskatchewan River, and the poems in *The Trapper and the Fur-Faced Spirits* were inspired by the wilderness regions of Manitoba.

Of the three authors, only York draws on an arctic setting. In the Author's Note he claims that "the land itself is the primary source," thereby explicitly directing attention to his setting as something particularly important to him, and not simply a necessary component of the narrative process. York's other books — *We, the Wilderness*, *The Musk Ox Passion*, and *Snowman* — suggest that such a setting is essential to what the author wishes to say, yet unlike the prairie novels of Grove, Laurence, and Ross, York's books are based on visits to the north, not on long-term residences. In *Trapper*, he takes up the Albert Johnson/Mad Trapper figure in an effort to "come to terms with the Arctic," an attempt he had previously made through the character of John Hornby in *Snowman*. As he did there, York asserts the authenticity of his landscape by pointing to his personal confrontation with the geography he evokes, and welcome as such first-hand knowledge of the land would be in northern fiction, it

is difficult to see what York has "come to terms with" in this novel. Certainly his efforts leave my own appreciation and understanding of the Arctic unchanged. Possibly this failure arises because even though the author has journeyed over some of the routes travelled by his characters' prototypes, York sets the climax of his stories in mid-winter, although his own knowledge of the land has been garnered in the summer season. Significantly, those two northern figures who would allow York to come to grips with the Arctic died miserable deaths after lengthy periods of starvation and exposure to the elements, circumstances bearing nothing in common with York's well-outfitted and seasonal excursions. The point is not that York must starve before he can write about starvation, but that his stories smack of contrivance because he does not write from his own experience.

In spite of these problems with setting, *Trapper* is not at all a conventional romantic adventure set in the wastes of the uninhabitable north. York's prose, in fact, is anything but predictable, and his story is hardly a one-dimensional thriller. Using language that at times is intensely lyrical, York shifts between narrative and dramatic modes. He consciously varies his prose from that of a ponderously scientific treatise on the nature of matter to straight-forward narrative development of event. Few of these shifts, however, have solid aesthetic validity; they betray instead an undisciplined story-teller whose enthusiasm for his subject is greater than his self-control. For example, when Johnson's doom draws inevitably nearer in the final chapters, *Trapper* spins off in a kaleidoscope of voices and points of view. But York's efforts at poetic intensity here undermine the vigorous narrative developed in the earlier pages. After building on the innate narrative potential of this legend, York loses track of everything in a blaze of unrestrained ejaculations.

This lack of discipline is equally clear in other narrative elements. The first two-thirds of the book centres on R.C.M.P. Inspector Eames and his domestic afflictions — an unfaithful wife, an unconvincing sexuality, and an uninteresting plan-tars wart. Johnson remains in the background, an almost petty aggravation to Eames' more visible irritations. In the final third, however, Johnson himself moves to centre stage and becomes the principal actor, and Eames is all but forgotten.

The control missing in *Trapper* is working overtime in Williams' *The River Horsemen*. The setting here is Saskatchewan south of the Laurentian Shield; "rural" evokes the geography better than does "wilderness." Like *Trapper* the events take place during the Great Depression. A sequence of short interior monologues reveals the story of two Indians, a Ukrainian boy, and a fallen-away revivalist preacher who canoe up the South Saskatchewan to Saskatoon, where each seeks to satisfy his own personal obsession. This motley collection is comically, irreverently, yet tellingly reminiscent of earlier travellers who plied these same waters, perhaps ultimately for the same reasons. Hilarious, pathetic, outrageous, tragic — the full gamut of emotions is finely executed by Williams.

The book has one weakness — *As I Lay Dying*. Williams is too much under the influence of Faulkner's *tour de force*. The narrative technique — a series of 1-4 page interior monologues related by and in the idiom of the various characters — is clearly derivative. Of course, Faulkner himself could hardly be said to have invented the stream of consciousness technique that underlies this narrative mode. But the similarities between *As I Lay Dying* and *The River Horsemen* do not end here. Instead of the Bundren family hauling Addie's corpse through the piney woods to Jefferson, this new incarnation

depicts the four misfits paddling upriver after their "borrowed" tractor breaks down. No one drills any holes in Addie's face here, but the scalping of Many-birds by a jealous and enraged "bohunk barber" adds the same touch as does Vardaman's auger. And as the enticements luring the members of the Bundren family to Jefferson are quite various, so each of these more northerly pilgrims has his own personal mission. The boy goes to inform his lunatic mother of his father's death; Many-birds seeks further libidinal pleasures with his scalper's wife, who has turned him out; Fine-day, the aged Indian who cannot forget the death of his son twenty years ago, finds a surrogate son in the boy; and Jack Cann, the revivalist preacher and guardian of the boy, ultimately walks off to be sacrificed in the place of the unregenerate miscreant, Many-birds.

The conscious parallels with *As I Lay Dying* create a problem in evaluating *The River Horsemen*, because they are not used for parody or burlesque, but seem only to be imitative. The problem is the more serious because *The River Horsemen* is otherwise an accomplished and insightful piece of prose — its characterization is brilliant, its language rhythmic and in tune with the vernacular. The voyageurs, both Indian and white, ring true, and in spite of (or because of) the outrageous events that befall this unlikely foursome, the characters remain as patently human as do Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha originals. *The River Horsemen* creates an enduring and substantial image, both of these pilgrims from Depression-ridden Saskatchewan and of the larger human spiritual condition. In short, the entire created world of Williams' novel is solid. *The River Horsemen* might best be seen as an ingenious metamorphosis of *As I Lay Dying*, transforming the sultry Mississippi milieu into one of unmistakably Canadian origins.

The granite-ribbed Shield country of Manitoba's wilderness areas provides the physical background for many of the poems in Tallosi's *The Trapper and the Fur-Faced Spirits*, but occasional verses sweep as far north as the District of Keewatin. A clean and elegant simplicity characterizes Tallosi's style, bringing careful observation of the land together with a poetic insight that infuses an elemental significance into what he observes. A harmonic chord runs through his images of the natural universe and its people, an organic unity common in pastoral and romantic poetry, but such an integrated vision of man and the unsettled landscape is not often encountered in Canadian writing about the northern wilderness, where one more often finds man struggling against a hostile environment. Tallosi's focus, however, falls on the beautiful and mysterious integration of this world, not on its harshness. In "The North," for example, "the people / speak / a language / made of rivers, smoke and trees / fires, flesh and feathers / their breaths / are little / winds." In "A Song for the Northern Lights" the aurora is not the ominous symbol of impending doom that frequently appears in fiction, but becomes an image of creation and birth: "A son of sky, I am a Magyar — / Born of my mother, a woman, / and the Bird-Lover. . . . From her womb is born / the green and dancing light."

Elsewhere the northern lights create an illusion, causing a trout to jump "thru a green reflection / mistaking stars / for fireflies upon the surface." Like the Trickster figures Nanabozho and Wisakedjak of Indian mythology, the natural universe is simultaneously benefactor and deceiver, not only to man, but to all the creatures who are a part of it. In another poem, the lore and cunning of the trapper's occupation elevates him to a similar ambivalent stature: he becomes a "trickster / making scents of entrails and

essences." Tallosi observes and interprets the events of the land. There is, in fact, a strong bond between the dissembling trapper figure and the poet, who is himself an illusionist. In "The Sandhill Stag" stars are transmuted into flying sand, the stag's antlers into "leafless scrub oaks." Elsewhere, the poet describes eskers that "lay / like / mountainous / sand snakes / stretching / into the tundra." Acting in the role of shaman, the poet transforms what he sees, deceiving his readers and thereby showing them what they had not been able to see.

Throughout the volume Tallosi returns to an image of "dancing" objects — the sun, the northern lights, the hills, the mice. This rhythmic motion extends not only to the objects themselves, but to the choreography of the shaman as he chants and conjures, and to the poet's own dance as well. In "Totem" Tallosi writes that "My flight is a dance / and my voice travels / as my flight," effecting this complete synthesis between poet, shaman, and the natural universe. This is Tallosi's first book of verse; it surely will not be his last.

RICHARD C. DAVIS

ORIGINAL ANCESTORS

LESLIE MONKMAN, *A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature*. Univ. of Toronto Press, \$25.00.

WE ALL KNOW THAT INDIANS have figured in English-Canadian literature from its earliest days; what is surprising is that until now no one has compiled a detailed and comprehensive survey of the various roles and stereotypes that have been thrust upon these literary Indians. Leslie Monkman's new book covers an impressive range of material, drawing on minor as well as major works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although many of his observations will hardly astound

teachers and students already interested in the subject, it is both refreshing and useful to have so much information or so important a topic cogently summarized and systematically organized.

From Monkman's study emerges the irony that at many moments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries writers have presented simultaneously conflicting stereotypes of Canada's native peoples. At the same time as the Indian was vilified as a brutal savage, he was praised as a noble child of nature; he was seen as an unregenerate heathen (fit only for conversion) and also as a practitioner of natural religion superior to corrupt Christianity. Indians have been viewed as both a nation doomed by the natural progress of civilization and a people whose demise testifies to the white man's guilt; they have been portrayed as a group without a history, and have also supplied identity-hungry white writers with indigenous historical heroes.

Works and literary figures discussed in some detail include *Wacousta*, *Beautiful Losers*, *The Double Hook*, *The Wabeno Feast*, *The Vanishing Point*, *Riverrun*, *Tay John*, *Surfacing*, *The Studhorse Man*, *Gone Indian*, the Manawaka novels, poems by John Newlove, Al Purdy, and Don Gutteridge, the historical fiction of Rudy Wiebe, the Indian plays of George Ryga, the Indian poetry of Crawford and D. C. Scott, and Pauline Johnson and Grey Owl. Especially interesting are Monkman's ventures into some of the narrower byways of our cultural history. He indicates that the depiction of Indians was shaped by social and political events in the writer's world when he discusses the appeal of Tecumseh to anti-American nineteenth-century authors and of Louis Riel to modern writers. His observation that in 1939, 1940, and 1941, Governor General's awards went to works venerating the Jesuits draws a suggestive parallel between support for seventeenth-century

warriors against "savagery" and the contemporary struggle against Nazism. He demonstrates that the modern appropriation of the Beothuks as an image of the fragility of our own civilization was preceded by earlier literary interest in the extinct Newfoundland tribe, and that the figure of the dying Indian child is a recurrent motif in recent English-Canadian fiction and poetry. I also enjoyed the several pages devoted to the response of nineteenth-century writers to Indian place names and to the season known as Indian summer.

One of the major problems confronting the author of a study spanning more than two centuries and referring to scores of literary works is organization. Should he proceed chronologically, often creating rather artificial time periods and risking needless repetition of recurring themes; or should he proceed thematically, tracing the development of separate ideas and attitudes, but then missing the chance to analyze in depth eras which are particularly distinctive? Monkman has chosen the latter, presenting his themes as they appear historically, but within each section jumping over decades and sometimes centuries. It is indeed interesting to see how certain themes like "Death of the Indian" or "Indian Heroes" have modified over the years, yet one misses an inclusive discussion of, for example, the differences between early twentieth-century and post-1960 views. The structure of the book is admirably suited to Monkman's emphasis on the continuity between past and present, a basic premise underlying his thesis that "white writers have repeatedly found in the confrontation of native and non-native heritages a unique focus for the exploration of their own concerns and culture." However, it also allows him to leap back and forth from the interest in the Indians expressed by nineteenth-century writers to that of writers of the 1960's and 1970's, without hav-

ing to account for the relative absence of native peoples from the mainstream of English-Canadian literature from World War I to the decade of the Canadian centennial. Monkman covers this gap with Klein, Pratt, and O'Hagan, as well as many fairly obscure writers and works (e.g., a serialized novel by W. O. Mitchell from the mid-fifties), so that the reader hardly notices the scarcity of references to most of the central writers of the period.

Some aspects of this study suggest that Monkman may have been working under rigid constraints imposed by his publisher. With only 165 pages of text, the book is very short, considering the magnitude of its subject, and sometimes terse to the point of awkwardness, as if graceful transitions and leisurely reflections had been sacrificed in favour of solid information. Description prevails over analysis, telling us who wrote what when, but risking few conjectures as to why. A piece of sound preliminary research, *A Native Heritage* should prove to be a valuable basic text which lays the groundwork for further investigation and signals new directions for imaginative critical inquiry.

CAROLE GERSON

IN DRAFT

DENNIS COOLEY, ed., *Draft: An Anthology of Prairie Poetry*. Turnstone Press and ECW Press, \$9.00.

TO REVIEW A BOOK OF POEMS by a single author is one thing; to tackle an anthology of work by a large number of poets is another. The single author is putting poems together to form a statement which is informed by his instincts and conscience, a statement inseparable from the poetry itself. An anthology, though, can be assembled according to any number of designs. *Draft*, edited by Dennis Cooley and produced co-operatively by Turn-

stone Press in Winnipeg and ECW Press in Downsview, is a collection of poetry by prairie writers and quite simply aims to represent the best work in a variety of forms by a group of poets who share a strongly-felt, distinctive geography. The book is fascinating, challenging, and successful.

Cooley is acutely aware of the special problems of the anthology. For instance, although he has included his own work, he has done so in a unique and imaginative way. His poem "Draft," a poetic examination of the word, appears as an epigraph to the collection. This neatly overcomes the complications courted by an editor who enjambes the roles of poet and editor by posing as an "objective" judge of the work of others while implying similar qualifications in selecting his own poetry. Cooley's uniquely personal statement also undercuts — with winning humility — the notion of editorial "omniscience" (which can creep into the strangest places) by making his function as editor a personal one. He avoids both extremes — he is neither a demigod choosing the poetic elect nor an editor abusing his privilege. Instead, the entire anthology is openly acknowledged as a personal vision, or "anthology not as canon" as Turnstone's brochure puts it. This is Cooley's selection and he's not afraid to admit it. As "Draft" points out, drafting itself is a process of change, new poets following old, old poets who

snuck onto the raft
when I wasn't looking
with new stuff in their pockets

and no two anthologies are ever the same.

Cooley has ensured that the material included in *Draft* spans a wide range in theme and genre. Many of the names will be familiar to those who've watched with interest the coming-of-age of prairie poetry and the growing respect which is accorded to it. The anthology is full of

the powerful influence of a bizarre, surreal human landscape. Kristjana Gunnars describes the transformation of human will into something like "Fate"; through a process of quiet but graphically-represented violence, human agency transforms itself into a type of the death to which it must itself succumb, and which relentlessly haunts it at every moment. This, too, is part of a landscape which contacts its inhabitants at all points, on its own unforgiving terms. Peter Huse, whose material left me largely unmoved, is nonetheless master of a striking, idiosyncratic power with great potential. Brenda Riches' work has a stunning visual quality; somewhere there must be an artist who could put her poetry on canvas. Australian-born Craig Powell, who outshines almost everybody else in *Draft* — in a delicate, understated way — creates a human landscape through a form of direct image-making which transcends the normal limitations of context and attains total contact with the emotions:

I want to see your
body shake with light on
your fingers as they
move apart snow

fall like sailors
off the edge of the world
I need to hear
your body in its sleep

in its cold drifts

Helen Hawley and S. Padmanab both show an appreciation of the musical potential of words. Hawley in particular writes searching lines full of personal mythology expanded through language to majestic proportions. Padmanab is sensitive to the appearance of words and lines on the page and the hypnotic rhythms become a rhetorical device, aiming at our understanding. Jon Whyte's "Pitch 'n' Toady" is a long, whimsical monologue whose strength lies in its euphonic readability:

Listenname, listenname
wudja believe
I wouldn't believe
you've gotta believe
it's all the same believer's game
now for the first time
high time prime time
lady, if you don't buy
won't try can't try bug off
I haven't got time to waste on thrillseekers
billseekers, chillseekers, daredevils or fair
devils
OK.

(All right, I confess; a lot of "Pitch 'n' Toady" bewildered me.) Strongly felt also are Myron Turner's elegance and Douglas Barbour's subtle but rigorous intelligence.

Draft is an excellent anthology. Its success stems not so much from the fact that it attains its own unique aims as from the general success sought by any anthology. The mark of distinctive landscape is certainly there, but then again, an honest and intelligent sensibility can refine pure poetry from any set of circumstances. Suffice it to say that it is difficult to assemble any volume whose real success lies in an intelligently-managed diversity. Maybe successes like *Draft* are few because editors like Cooley are so rare; I don't know. I like to think there are more like Cooley out there, waiting to make their statements. We need them. Meanwhile, I'm having *Draft*.

ANDREW BROOKS

BETWEEN CULTURES

BYRNA BARCLAY, *Summer of the Hungry Pup*. NeWest Press, \$14.95; pa. \$7.95.

MARK MEALING, *Coyote's Running Here*. Pulp Press, \$4.95.

THE ATTRACTION OF Byrna Barclay's first novel, *Summer of the Hungry Pup*, lies in the author's attempt to structure a multi-faceted presentation of her theme. On several complementary levels, the

novel deals with both the frustration and the fertility that come from the meeting of two cultures. Annika, a young white Canadian woman, nurses a dying Cree while the "Old Woman" recounts her memories of the late 1800's, when the Crees who participated in the Riel rebellion fled to the United States. On one level, the action of the novel is Annika's effort to absorb Cree wisdom and use it for revitalizing her own life. On another level, the challenge is for the Crees to find "a new way to live" as the terms of existence increasingly become dictated by the whites, the two races finding each other equally contemptible and inscrutable.

Misunderstanding between the races is mirrored by the constant problem of translation between the two languages. A treacherous translator who exploits the language barrier receives almost as much contempt as a pimp who delivers Indian girls to white soldiers.

Both physical and verbal intercourse finally transcend the barriers. Old Woman's memories climax in an understanding sexual relationship with a white soldier, just as the narrative in the present climaxes with Old Woman's story fertilizing the life and soul of Annika. The Cree wisdom at the core of this novel is that misunderstanding debilitates as surely as slow starvation ("summer's hungry pup"). In truth, everything is "apart but also a part" of everything else. The same medicines cure us all: Old Woman may prefer foxglove tea to the doctor's pills, but both remedies contain digitalis.

Barclay's theme lends a special urgency to her effort to bring to the attention of mainstream Canadian readers the history and culture of a people who have too long been "apart" more than "a part." The novel's weaknesses, however, erode the impact of this vision.

Annika's growth is thematically crucial, but she fails to become a living character

in our eyes. She repeatedly announces that hearing Old Woman's story is an important learning experience for her; she *has* to tell us, for we would never guess otherwise. We know too little of her needs and feel nothing of her reality. *Summer of the Hungry Pup* closes with an embarrassingly unconvincing description of Annika dancing through the woods in ecstasy, while we uncomfortably reflect that she has never been anything but a creaky literary device.

A further problem is the linguistic barrier that the author throws up between the reader and Old Woman's story. Barclay, a student of the Cree language, decides to deliver Old Woman's memories in an English imitation of Cree, the main feature of which is the omission of the definite article ("first light of new day is grey and air is cool"). At first, this decision annoys the reader as an affected "me-Tarzan-you-Jane" primitivism. Three hundred pages later, the style is merely tiresome. Trudging through the prose of Old Woman's memories is a leaden experience. Whatever may be the status of the definite article in Cree, the English ear accepts its systematic omission only in poetry, not in prose. In her final death vision, Old Woman soars into poetry and, for the first time, the truncated style seems appropriate.

The British Columbia poet Mark Mealing succeeds in avoiding the very pitfall that traps Byrna Barclay. A third of the poems in *Coyote's Running Here* are reworkings of Indian texts on the Coyote-Trickster theme. In a preface, Mealing declares that he aims "to present stories in largely inaccessible native languages and in aesthetically awkward translations in such a way that they do not jar upon the hearer/reader." These recreations are only the first step in assimilating the Trickster legends to mainstream consciousness. A second group of poems are his own creations in imitation of the au-

thentic legends, or, as he coyly describes them, "stories 'not yet' traditional." The remaining works in the "suite" are "personal poems — the writer's immediate confrontation with Coyote."

This three-way approach — recreation, imitation, and personal assimilation — is both a thoughtful and a useful approach to native legends. It is thoughtful because it may well reflect the steps necessary for mainstream culture to come to terms with native cultures. It is useful because it allows the poet flexibility and variety that make the reading of *Coyote's Running Here* an exuberant experience.

A key aspect of the Trickster in his various incarnations around the world — Reynard the Fox and Br'er Rabbit are perhaps more familiar examples — is his elusiveness: "lotsa tracks / no HIM though." At heart, this is a moral slipperiness:

Coyote does all those bad things
all those good things too
good & bad together
he REALLY isn't straight

Coyote is a Creator — he creates everything from menstruation to mortality — but he is a Creator without the ethical burden of the Old Testament God. He is a Creator who sticks his tongue out at the universe, reveling in the bravado of phallic boasting. He is a Creator, in short, more human than divine. He has all of humanity's moral ambiguity, and Mealing plays this potential for all it is worth. The book swings from two-and-a-half pages of scatological insults (an instant classic in the curse genre), to a stunning Indian parable of a man who turns himself into a monster by eating his own flesh, to Mealing's resonant "personal" readings of the Trickster figure as an existential hero come to tell us that our own home is the centre of the universe and the stars spin around us.

Above all, Coyote is a talker and a singer. He creates by naming — a quint-

essentially human activity — and when we take up the wooden mask of Coyote, we too become makers of our own world.

Remembering IS Making
Singing IS Remaking
Telling IS Finding

Mealing finds, remakes, and makes a vision of the world through the Indian mask of Coyote. He remembers and tells and above all, he sings: the rhythms of Mealing's poetry are as sure-footed as Coyote on a good day. *Coyote's Running Here* is boisterous, ribald, witty, always surprising, and often profound. It makes a major contribution to the enrichment of Canada's culture through the recovery of native culture.

BRUCE PIRIE

MOTHERS & OTHERS

AUDREY THOMAS, *Real Mothers*. Talonbooks, \$7.95.

STANLEY K. FREIBERG, *Nightmare Tales*. Borealis Press, \$16.95; pa. \$10.95.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, *The Lure of the Wild*, ed. John Coldwell Adams. Borealis Press, n.p.

AS THEIR TITLES SUGGEST, these are three very different books: Audrey Thomas' *Real Mothers* includes ten highly readable stories written in a predominantly realistic mode; Stanley Freiberg's *Nightmare Tales* also contains short fiction, but in this case we find a forced and ultimately unsuccessful blend of strained lyricism, gothic cliché, and naturalistic heavyhandedness; *The Lure of the Wild* comprises the three "final" animal stories that Charles G. D. Roberts wrote forty-three years after he published "Do Seek Their Meat from God" in 1892.

Audrey Thomas is often described as an experimental writer who employs Post-Modern techniques in an attempt to render female consciousness and convey fem-

inist views. Such a description might be applied to her novels, but it does little to convey the refreshing conventionality of her short stories. In *Real Mothers*, as in *Ten Green Bottles* and *Ladies and Escorts*, most of the fictions develop in a fairly straightforward, linear manner. The narrative viewpoint in *Real Mothers* seems intentionally detached: Thomas is in her characters' worlds, but she has chosen to remain outside their consciousness, so that we are provided with a potent blend of authorial involvement and withdrawal that makes the stories rich in implication, subtle in design.

The book's title is ironic. The "mom and apple pie" woman pictured on the cover (she sports an apron imprinted with red hearts) does not exist; the mom and apple pie daughter we see (a miniature of her mother) is not "real." But Thomas' stories are concerned with more than a failed mother-and-child ideal: they explore the relations — social, sexual, or intellectual — that debase traditional values and make it hard to find anything "real."

The title story frames the collection in terms of the irony I have mentioned. Here the mother, whose marriage has recently collapsed, abandons every sense of responsibility conferred by her so-called role. A curious metamorphosis takes place as her children begin to take care of one another while "Mommy" and her new-found lover barricade themselves in the bedroom to "Make love, do dirty things." "Out in the Midday Sun" exposes the selfish expectations of a professor bent upon seducing the women in his class. In "Ted's Wife," middle-aged Phyllis Keeping is shattered to learn that the recent widower she wants to romantically befriend is passionately involved with a much younger woman whom he eventually marries. "Harry and Violet" suggests the conflicts between a child's frustrated desire for attention and an adult couple's

frustrated attention to their desires. Here, as in "Galatea" and "Timbuktu," the broken dreams are recognizable enough to be called mundane. But for Thomas the mundane is special because it remains so unknown. Though the stories are set in such diverse places as Africa, France, and Canada, their purpose is consistent: to dwell upon the ordinary; to explore the nuances of self doubt; to show compellingly how "real people" live, love, misunderstand each other.

In *Real Mothers* the nightmares seem authentic. This cannot be said of *Nightmare Tales*. Freiberg seems unable to decide on a form appropriate to his vision. This is because his vision is so confused. Freiberg wants to be a gothic writer evoking houses of "cavernous dimness" amidst "the threatening, oppressive dark." He wants to tell us that people are "completely at the mercy of the elemental powers of ice and darkness." He wants us to think of rural buildings as "scars and tumors of decay among the leafless, scarecrow trees." On the other hand, when he wants us to believe that people and nature are inherently magical and good, he resorts to crude romantic diction and alliterative overkill: "Arbutus, ivy, and tall ferns cover cool forest floors where small birds, swift and colored, sing from bough to bough." This kind of language is hard to justify in a book replete with malignant dreams, folkloric devils, and bizarre deaths. Those who want to experience a "horrific world of the imagination" (the book jacket quotes John Moss) should look elsewhere, for they will not find a genuinely nightmarish "world of inner darkness" in the "prosaic plants" and "jungle of debris" cluttering Freiberg's landscapes.

It's a long way from Thomas and Freiberg to Charles G. D. Roberts' animal kingdom. As John Coldwell Adams points out in his intelligent introduction to *The Lure of the Wild*, Roberts lived for poetry

and by prose. His fiction had to address the demands of a popular audience caught between Darwin and Decadence. Even in 1935, when he completed these three stories, Roberts remained preoccupied with the notion of natural selection and was still relying on the anthropomorphism spurned by many modern critics. I've always found this criticism hard to explain. In these stories, as in his early ones, Roberts persistently suggests that animals and people are alike. Roberts' realistic impulses lead us to resist calling his stories fables. But his strength in prose lies precisely in his ability to create stories that animate the concerns of his age. Although the subject matter of the early and late stories remains much the same, one does note a shift in this collection towards more anxiety-ridden imagery, as when Roberts tells us of an owl capable of "searching the spectrally lighted expanses of the waste." Yet faced with this waste, Roberts' animals are still capable of "falling in love"; they still want "to melt the fair one's heart." Such contradictions — and there are many of them in both form and content — provide Roberts' prose with some curious tensions that remain to be explored.

ROBERT LECKER

DE LA PERSECUTION

ROCH CARRIER, *Les Fleurs vivent-elles ailleurs que sur la terre?* Stanké, \$6.50.

ROCH CARRIER, *La Céleste Bicyclette*. Stanké.

"REVER C'EST ECOUTER l'enfance attardée dans l'homme." Déjà dans son charmant conte "Le Jour où je devins un apostat," Roch Carrier, romancier et homme de théâtre estimé au Québec comme à l'extérieur, nous avait fait ressentir les merveilles de l'imagination enfantine. Ce même thème domine dans les deux ou-

vres en question. Selon le rêve, si l'homme se laissait emporter vers la fantaisie comme l'enfant, sans aucune contrainte, "toutes les magies deviendraient possibles." La triste vérité, cependant, s'annonce autrement. La société ne permettra jamais à l'homme de s'affranchir; ce qu'elle accorde à l'enfant devient chez l'adulte une déviance. Il risque, en s'exprimant, de perdre sa liberté même. Mais pourquoi l'homme prendrait-il un tel risque? "Ecouter le ciel," vaguer vers l'inconnu lui permettent de rejeter les bornes du réel, de se trouver soi-même et d'aller à la rencontre de la réalité. Pour certains, c'est l'invitation à la prise de conscience.

Comme nous le suggère son som, Prudent B. (Boniface) Pépin, le personnage principal du roman, *Les Fleurs vivent-elles ailleurs que sur la terre?*, a toujours vécu modestement, même timidement, se laissant guider par "les lois de la probabilité." Cet homme, à qui rien n'arrive, qui préfère l'effacement à la renommée, subit, un soir, un tatouage transsidéral. C'est ainsi que le mutisme et la sécurité (important pour un agent d'assurance) feront place au cri et au risque dans sa vie. Dès la première phrase du roman ("Rien de cela n'aurait dû lui arriver") le lecteur se rend compte que les événements qui s'ensuivront n'apporteront ni bonheur, ni vraie renommée à Prudent. Dans ce propos métaphysique, Carrier démontre que le monde civilisé n'est ni prêt, ni capable d'accepter l'illogique: "Quand arrive à un homme un événement que la société ne peut expliquer, elle envoie l'homme à l'hôpital, à la prison ou à l'échafaud."

Le drame se joue sur deux plans: les événements qui mènent P. B. Pépin à se dévoiler, même s'humilier publiquement; et les questions universelles (en italique) qui se posent sur la vie en société. Ces dernières, si vérités elles sont, expriment des banalités typiques d'un être à son premier réveil: "Des choses et des gens

nous paraissent inutiles dans la vie; c'est que nous sommes trop ignorants pour en soupçonner l'utilité." Petit à petit Prudent trouve le courage de vivre avec audace, mais, en regagnant ce merveilleux talent qui permet de voyager au-delà de lui-même et de son milieu, il perd sa vie d'homme et sa crédibilité; toute rédemption devient impossible.

Ce que Carrier avait si bien réussi dans *Les Enfants du bonhomme dans la lune*, un monde de l'enfance animé par l'émerveillement et l'imagination au fond du cœur de chacun, ne reste ici que propos mal intégrés à un personnage peu intéressant, même, il faut le dire, ennuyeux.

Le rapport entre personnage et lecteur/auditeur, que Carrier ne réussit pas à établir dans son roman, est une des grandes réussites de la pièce, *La Céleste Bicyclette*. Je me sens toujours émue, même un an après, par la représentation d'Albert Millaire dans le monologue d'un acteur enfermé dans un hôpital psychiatrique. Le spectateur est invité à un procès privé où toute la vie du malade glisse à ses oreilles par une sorte de monologue intérieur. Combien de fois l'acteur dit-il: "Je suis content de vous voir"! Le plaider du seul témoin, qui est aussi l'accusé, oblige le spectateur à se poser des questions sérieuses sur la réalité et la fiction. Bien qu'il déclare: "Je n'oserais pas me mentir," l'acteur invente-t-il une vie fictive et une expérience illusoire? Cherche-t-il à réveiller la sympathie ou simplement l'oreille de son auditoire? L'acteur joue-t-il le rôle d'un acteur jouant un rôle ou d'un malade vraiment angoissé? Ces ambiguïtés irrésolues engagent l'auditeur au drame du personnage.

Comme Prudent B. Pépin, l'acteur a subi une expérience céleste — en rentrant à bicyclette après une représentation, il s'est senti transporté vers les étoiles: "Je montais, je montais. Je n'étais plus fait d'os et de chair, mais j'avais été transformé pour me mieux mélanger à l'es-

pace." Comme il ne doute jamais d'avoir vécu cette attirance vers l'inconnu, ses amis, ses collègues et sa femme l'abandonnent aux psychiatres qui veulent étudier son obsession. L'absence de certitude devant cette folie/innocence (après tout, "la folie et la raison se ressemblent") ajoute à la richesse de ce personnage qui, tout en reconnaissant les limites de l'imagination, accepte que "ce qui apparaît extraordinaire ne l'est peut-être qu'à cause de notre ignorance."

Même si Prudent réussit à s'échapper de l'hôpital, sa mission de révélation, d'évangélisation aboutira à l'échec. Par contre, bien qu'il soit emprisonné, en pyjama, et qu'il ait une jambe dans le plâtre, l'acteur peut tenter son auditeur en lui offrant la délivrance spirituelle: "Accepterez-vous de venir avec moi? Nous monterons très haut, mais n'ayez pas peur. Si vous venez, vous allez enfin naître."

ESTELLE DANSEREAU

DEATHTRAP

DORIC GERMAIN, *La Vengeance de l'original*. Prise de Parole, \$7.75.

HUGUETTE LE BLANC, *Bernadette Dupuis ou La Mort apprivoisée*. Le Biocreux, \$9.00.

CLAUDE BOISVERT, *Tranches de néant*. Le Biocreux, \$9.00.

DOES DEATH START STALKING US as we approach our fortieth birthday? Born in 1946, 1943 and 1945 respectively, these authors certainly seem to be much preoccupied by murderous Mother Nature, by dreadful bodily decay, and by the inscrutable unhooking of the mind.

In Doric Germain's "The Vengeance of the Moose," the Great Ontarian North swallows up two unscrupulous, vainglorious, and greedy American game and gold hunters and their Francophone helicopter pilot. Huguette Le Blanc, in "Tamed Death," dissects the last winter in the lives

of Bernadette and her quadraplegic husband Edmond and performs a haunting autopsy on the ruins of their old age, of their expropriated house, of Edmond's rat-eaten corpse and of Bernadette's body as it wilts quickly in an old folks home. Death lurks finally in the recesses of the mind and reduces Being into "Slices of Nothingness" in Claude Boisvert's work.

An astonishing non-survival trilogy which proceeds from the archetypal "men for moose" revenge motif to an interiorized, visceral revolt against a society of land registries and surveyors, to a cerebral *danse macabre* full of mental legerdemains! Of the three texts, Doric Germain's fable is doubtless the simplest, as black-and-white in its moral as the snows of Mammamattawa and the flies of Lake Pitukupi. He who defies not only article 17, paragraph 31 of the hunting and fishing code forbidding shooting game from the air, but also the moral intent of a \$5,000 fine in order to continue raping the wilderness of its treasures, will vanish and die unlamented in the limitless domain of the moose. With its trappings of an adventure and gold rush story, this fable makes nevertheless for pleasant reading. Its real significance, however, may lie elsewhere. It is one of roughly two dozen literary works published since 1974 by a Sudbury publishing house whose name is also a programme: Speaking Up. Not much has so far been heard from French-Canadian authors outside Quebec (Doric Germain has received a mention in *Lettres Québécoises*, volume 22), with, of course, the notable and overshadowing exception of Acadia's Antonine Maillet. Yet there are many mutually beneficial experiences to be shared through creative interchange and critical experiences between Franco-Ontarians, Acadians, Franco-Manitobans, etc. Doric Germain's is an ingenuous kind of writing, pure as the waters of the Kenogami River and free of the complexes which often plague

Acadian literature. It is not without its own problems, however. Because of the gentle ecological-moral and professorio-didactic warp of his approach (he teaches French in Hearst), Doric Germain traps himself in sermonizing (with footnote glosses) and in a curiously disharmonious use of French: Philip Dagget from Detroit

n'avait vraiment pas eu de chance. La journée même de son départ, Lavoie venait de trouver la première pépète [d'or]... Alerté, Collins [from Boston] accourut... [il] oscillait entre la joie... et le découragement... Il fit part de ses réflexions à son associé...

whom such urbane proceedings around the planning dish do not disturb at all. In this stiffness Doric Germain resembles his protagonists after their first full day of canoeing; in future works his literary strokes will no doubt be smoother.

It is sheer poetic power which prevents Huguette Le Blanc's apocalyptic deathrite from sliding into the sunset sentimentality of a Golden, albeit irreparably polluted, Pond, or into subcultural ruminations about Far-Eastern philosophies of cosmic rebirth. From the tender to the brutal, from the sublime to the abject, she chooses with sensitivity and honesty the colours and tones of her verbal palette to describe the love, revolt, hope, hallucinations, defeats, and victories of her heroine:

Leurs étreintes avaient dépassé le geste et le mouvement, elles étaient dans la connaissance, dans la lecture de leurs corps, dans la calligraphie de leurs flétrissures... [Bernadette] s'écoulait... Le mûrissement de son corps laissait éclater et jaillir un tel dépouillement qu'elle voyait poindre une éclatante liberté de reprise de soi. C'était l'émergence de la liberté.

Not *A Sleep Full of Dreams* but a wake devoid of tears, this book does not seem to have received the attention it deserves.

Tranches de néant is Claude Boisvert's second collection of "nouvelles" (*Paren-*

doxe, Hull: Asticou, 1978). It is a clever book of fourteen mental and verbal magic acts. Appropriately, it begins in a circus ("Londres, comme si vous y étiez") and ends on a stage ("Tranche de néant"). Under the tent, the spectator finds himself in the heart of London, but the next morning both the city and the circus have disappeared. In the theatre, a Dr. Flamel conjures up a black column of nothingness into which vanish forever a gawker's hat and then the magician himself.

Some of the contents of this frame are slightly more disquieting. In "Diable!" a latter-day Faust sells his hide for sex, money, and power and is promptly and literally skinned. And "Vis donc, esclave!" is an amateur philosopher's sarcastic command to humankind whose members can only exist as long as they think one another:

tu n'es vivant que parce que je . . . te matérialise à chaque instant où je te parle, où je te pense, où tu me parles.

Claude Boisvert (see *Québec Français*, 41, pp. 14-16) dedicates his book "à l'humanité, dont je suis, hélas!" Such a disposition leads potentially serious thinking ("L'Escalier") into cynicism, and more light-hearted musing into flippancy. The "croissez et multipliez-vous" ("be fruitful and multiply") of Genesis becomes "croassez . . ." ("croak . . .") in the mouth of Christ whose followers take faithfully to the air and abandon the rebel to the crowd-control brigades ("Le Prophète"). In "Tel est pris qui croyait prendre," God creates Woman and then cannot help making Himself Man.

There is much stylistic virtuosity in Claude Boisvert's collection, from the nominal staccato of "Londres" to the expansive theorizing in "Esclave" to the singing rhythms of "La Ballade des assassins." However, when the game ends and the last magician has exited, the waiting for a glow of human sympathy continues.

HANS R. RUNTE

GREAT PLAINNESS OF SPEECH

W. J. KEITH, ed., *A Voice in the Land*. New West, \$16.95; pa. \$8.95.

SERIOUS READERS CAN NO LONGER afford not to listen to Rudy Wiebe's voice. That is the message of this collection of essays by and about him. For too long, responses to his fiction have, it appears, suffered from negative attitudes toward so-called religious novels and toward the fictional representation of minority groups such as the Mennonites, the Métis, and the Indians Wiebe has written about. Yet to consider him narrowly as a crusader for people's rights and Christian values is morally and aesthetically wrong-headed. Wiebe is no literary evangelist, no Ralph Connor; he is an accomplished language- and myth-maker. It is of course natural that transferences and analogies between novelist and dedicated Christian, between art and religion, should constitute a central issue in this collection — as its manipulative title already suggests: "a voice in the land."

With few exceptions, the twenty-three contributions to this volume deal with the phenomenon of authorial voice and with directly related terms or concepts such as language, myth, typology, prophecy, translation, *translatio*, or metaphor; and they do so from various angles of interpretation. The contributions consist of eleven essays by Wiebe, five interviews with him (all mercifully free of the conversational fill so characteristic of that popular form of criticism) and seven critical pieces, two of which — Magdalene Falk Redekop's "Translated into the Past: Language in *The Blue Mountains of China*," published here for the first time, and David L. Jeffrey's "A Search for Peace: Prophecy and Parable in the Fiction of Rudy Wiebe," an expanded

version of an earlier study on Wiebe — are substantial articles.

W. J. Keith has effectively organized the contributions, whose publication history ranges from 1964 to 1980, in order to document Wiebe's growth as a novelist. Autobiographical essays on Wiebe's Mennonite background are followed by items focusing on *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, *The Temptations of Big Bear* and *The Scorched-Wood People* and by a final chapter on "Wiebe and the Art of Fiction." This arrangement and Keith's helpful introduction to each contribution give the book a welcome sense of continuity and unity rather than, as is often the case with similar editions, the arbitrary form of a bunch of essays. The arrangement is flexible enough, though, to encourage the reader to make his own connections among the interrelated biographical, historical, and critical pieces. The resulting sense of involvement between editor and reader, between Wiebe and his critics, as well as between contributors and reader makes this edition a stimulating and informative one.

Wiebe's own essays together with the interviews are indispensable here. With the exception of Shirley Neuman's "Unearthing Language: An Interview with Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch," they have all appeared in print before, yet only few of them in well-known periodicals. They provide essential information on Wiebe's Mennonite background, his home region of the prairies, his admiration for Faulkner, Grove and other writers, his reservations about the cocksure variety of bestsellers, his concern with languages, and his sense of calling as a novelist who believes that "all great art has a profoundly moral purpose if in no other sense than that it purges us from pettiness, from smallness of mind and outlook." While accepting such indirect didacticism in fiction, Wiebe firmly rejects novels as a means to preach any kind of prefabricated

doctrine. One is reminded here of other Christian novelists in North America such as Flannery O'Connor, who once said that a Catholic novelist may be a Catholic but has to be an artist, and Mary Gordon, who made the same point in a recent interview in *Notre Dame Magazine*.

A first-rate example in this collection of the contentiousness of what constitutes a good religious novel is Herbert Giesbrecht's learned yet dogmatically Christian review of *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and Wiebe's reply, "An Author Speaks About his Novel," in which he defends the book on aesthetic as well as moral grounds.

In a wider North American context, the relation between Wiebe as a Mennonite and as an artist parallels the relation between the puritanical tradition and the artistic achievement of, for instance, Hawthorne and Emerson. To a large degree, these relations result from conflicts between Puritans and Mennonites as covenanters and their artists as inevitable individualists, strengthened rather than inhibited by their religious traditions. This is why, in their own minds as in the minds of their readers, such writers may assume the functions of seers, makers, tellers, and prophets who contribute to the rise or fall of their societies. With specific reference to the state of contemporary Canada, Wiebe thus wonders, "Where, Lord, were our fictions inadequate to sustain us?"

Wiebe's role as prophet, in the biblical tradition of the term, is argued impressively in Jeffrey's essay, whereas Ina Ferris stresses that "despite the depth of his own religious convictions, Wiebe's imagination is essentially secular and novelistic." Such disagreement is constructive, since it reflects the complexity of Wiebe's achievement, his multi-levelled meaning and technique. In fact, Wiebe disagrees with himself on a related matter, the

always equivocal question of autobiographical content in novels — facts, fictionalized facts, fiction: "To write the kind of stuff that I do you have to write out of yourself, genuinely" (1973); "Up to now I haven't been that interested in writing out of my own" (1977).

The concept of *translatio* in all its literal and figurative meanings makes one see such differences as complementations rather than misrepresentations. The significance of this concept in Wiebe studies becomes quite evident when Redekop transliterates the German *übersetzen* (to translate) as to *overset*, a simple but ingenious step allowing her to illuminate Wiebe's use of Low German, High German and English as metaphors and his juxtaposing of times, places, voices and actions. Through *oversetting*, word and deed in his fiction form analogies. Awareness of *translatio* also underlies Ferris' mainly structuralist study of *The Blue Mountains of China*, and it is constructive in Jeffrey's examination of the same novel as well as of *The Temptations of Big Bear* and *The Scorched-Wood People*. His hermeneutical approach encompasses formalist, Jungian, and above all, biblical methods to reveal the richness of Wiebe's art. The advantages of *translatio* to give meaning to the nature, the continuity, the variations, the techniques, and the speaker's voice in Wiebe's novels are convincing in this collection. The disadvantages of such a classic rhetorical concept — especially the encouragement of academic heaviness and quasi-automatic respectability through biblical and classical association — remain negligible, partly because of the critical astuteness of the major contributors and partly because of the full measure of Wiebe's work. It seems inevitable, though, that academic criticism is occasionally accompanied by burdens of diction, if not of interpretation, that should bother tutored or untutored readers alike. A good example is

Jeffrey's point that in *The Blue Mountains of China* "the dialogic technique is the rhetorical methodology of Isaiah." Such matters aside, the contributors' complementary assessments of Wiebe's fiction impel the reader towards his own appraisal of that fiction as major literature.

Thus a reader may be tempted to waive his duty to scrutinize the considerable linguistic, biographical, and historical realities that characterize Wiebe's writing of fictional lives like the Reimers' and the Friesens', and fictionalized lives like Big Bear's and Riel's. He may perhaps be wise not to distinguish between Wiebe's fictions and researched facts, but to leave such distinctions to the author. However, I hope he will retain enough self-reliance and skepticism to hear Wiebe as only one of many voices in the land.

The land bears the detailed solidity of the Great Plains, but it is really anywhere humans dwell. So nationalist minds should not pause unduly over Wiebe's Canadianness or over the prefatory note to the collection, "Manufactured in Western Canada." Should one pause over the cover that shows Wiebe with beard, sunglasses, modified Stetson, and with an ambiguous expression of either anger or laughter? Perhaps. The picture becomes a kind of Whitmanesque metaphor when linked with Eli Mandel's final remarks in his interview with Wiebe: "I suppose it's too much to claim, but as writers I suppose finally we'd like to be known as Almighty Voice. Almighty Voice Rudy Wiebe. How about that?" Wiebe's reply begins, "No. No. No one should ever attach that to himself . . . but, you know. . ."

All in all, the collection is indeed what its editor wants it to be, "a prerequisite for an intelligent appreciation" of Wiebe's fiction. The book's critical value, however, goes further than that; it is an excellent volume for anyone interested in the *oversetting* of history into life and of life into art.

K. P. STICH

SINCERE, ALIVE

FILIPPO SALVATORE, *Suns of Darkness*. Guernica Editions, \$5.00.

MARIANNE MICROS, *Upstairs Over the Ice Cream*. Ergo, \$4.95.

JAROSLAV HAVELKA, *Reflections and Preoccupations*. Ergo, \$7.95.

LUCIEN FRANCOEUR, *Neons In the Night*. Trans. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. Véhicule Press, \$4.00.

IT WOULD BE TEMPTING to approach these works as further evidence of Canada's rich and energetic cultural mosaic. This sort of thing usually goes over very well, despite its unfairness to the writer, and allows the reviewer the luxury of not hurting anyone's feelings. A more productive approach is to simply evaluate them in terms of their success or failure as art. In this regard, I recall a definition once dropped by Canadian artist, Ron Bloore: art is anything you can get away with. I always liked that. Applied here, one book makes it and three don't.

Filippo Salvatore's *Suns of Darkness* is sincere writing from a man with a true feeling for the peasant. He details an Italian immigrant's passage to and arrival/survival in the new world and, in *Ulysses* fashion, the present is seen to pale next to a heroic past. Much of the rhetoric can be excused here, as the book attempts to be epic in scope: the tragic history of an exile. The problem is it's not poetry — at least Salvatore's own English translations aren't — it's prose broken up into mechanical lines ("you who long to kiss / and grasp another young body on Saturday / nights and are content by easy / pleasures and volatile emotions." There is no music, the images are boring, and the insights are clichéd. The Italian originals which appear on each opposite page might be more impressive as they're marked with complex rhymes, but I don't see how the content can significantly

change. Salvatore comes close to something beautiful on one occasion, however; "Nous Les Rapailles," to Gaston Miron, is a perceptive and moving portrait for four stanzas before Salvatore again gets carried away with being epically oratorical.

Marianne Micros' *Upstairs Over the Ice Cream* comes highly touted by John Newlove on the back jacket ("A rare and sensitive exploration delving into the poet's past and illuminating her present. It sets the everyday world of a small town against old world images of haunting and mythic beauty") and by Hugh Hood in the publisher's blurb ("The work is a remarkable effort in collage, where all the details, and particularly the striking period photographs, work to reinforce the final effect, which is as if one were eating a very rich slice of apple pie cut whole, in one moist chunk out of the multiform life of a quarter-century"). It's certainly in the Alice Munro tradition of a young girl growing up with a very personalized sense of history, and the Greek grandmother's scrapbook (a 4-page collage of items) is effective, but this book is more autobiography than art. Most of the poems could just as well have been written as paragraphs with only a few exceptions. Micros has a nice ear for the spoken language, though, apparent in comments by the Chinaman and Uncle Don, and has good success with humour when she allows it in. This is the poet's grandmother:

When asked if she could read and write in English, she answered, "What do you mean? I can't even read write Greek!" She signed her X boldly.

The book's closing poem, in which the return to Greece is finally made, is also very effective. There is genuine talent here, but it is only occasionally evident and Micros should have been made to sweat considerably more over this volume

before letting it out. A more demanding editor and a little less praise would be appropriate.

Jaroslav Havelka's *Reflections and Preoccupations*, as a collection of meditations, aphorisms, and insights into life, is in a category of its own which does not try to be art. The introduction by John Orange suggests we "Find a pleasant, quiet spot, open to any page and ponder an entry for a few minutes." Havelka must have cringed when he read that; unfortunately, it's appropriate. I found 17 of the 236 entries (arranged in 7 sections) worthwhile; this might serve as an example:

It is dark outside. I want to look through the window into the darkness of night. Instead, I see my reflected image on the glass. Again my ego interferes.

Most of these entries, however, are not the products of wisdom — a number are not even informative ("Even the mosquito, like us, never knows whether his buzzing is more true in the daylight or during the night") — and only a very few are so hauntingly well-phrased as to be aphoristic. The sentences are all lean, but there are too many of them assembled to say very hackneyed things: we let our egos get in the way of our really savouring life; we should all aspire to be at one with nature and the rhythms of the universe; after death, we return to where we came from or, failing that, we get a rebirth. I don't mean to be too cynical, but anyone who knows Havelka's *The Nature of the Creative Process in Art* (The Hague, 1968) would have expected more. As it is, we have before us a number of nicely-worded, but usually clichéd, observations illustrated by Romantic metaphors (sparrows, trees, roses) that any street kid would call bourgeois. The situation is not improved by Havelka's easy acceptance of the Creator myth which repeatedly becomes the foundation for the happy thoughts in the book's last sec-

tion, "Death as Beginning." I keep picturing a wreck on the freeway, blood on the pavement.

In many respects, Lucien Francoeur and Jaroslav Havelka are opposites. For one thing, Francoeur's work is usually without intellectual content. For another, it's not unusual for Francoeur, a Québécois rock and roll singer, to include a frontal nude picture of himself in a book. *Neons In the Night* is a selection from six previous collections of Francoeur's "poetry," and it is superbly translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood.

I hesitate to say it, but some of this writing is really good: alive, usually playfully alive, almost always sexual:

you vicks vaporub yourself so mentholly mint
to my hysteriform nostrils
that I somersault cock-eyed
up against the walls of your lozenge

Francoeur celebrates life like a street Walt Whitman; there's juice in these lines. The poet's "lush green girl" becomes a "redhead in rouge boots," "an ingenue in neon" ("Softspoken"), while in heaven "while God shaves / and drinks his cologne / sonny smiles at flesh" ("TV Flesh"). Everywhere, "the beat goes on" ("Via Dolorosa"), and Francoeur is after it. In her introduction, de Lotbinière-Harwood describes this as "the pursuit of intoxication," and I think she's got something. The pace of the book itself is fast, though it is sometimes not clear whether Francoeur is in quest or simply being driven. What is clear is that the man's a poet, though by the last section, *Les Néons Las* (1978), he begins to finally settle down making an earlier poem at last appropriate:

as nymphs fade away
a naked alley-rimbaud wearies
a living-room verlaine gives him shelter
("A Smog Rush").

Happily for Francoeur, his translator is often able to improve on the original:

particularly difficult, because so much of this work is imagistically and inspirationally right out of rock and roll.

DAVID O'ROURKE

WRITERS & CRITICS

DAVID HELWIG, ed., *The Human Elements. Second Series*. Oberon, \$15.95; pa. \$7.95.

JON PEARCE, *Twelve Voices*. Borealis, \$21.95.

WHAT A DELIGHT TO READ an entire collection of critical essays free of jargon, pretension, or pomposity, and what an achievement for editor David Helwig to have collected them. As Helwig suggests, other elements may link these essays, but what first struck me about *The Human Elements* was the consistent clarity of style. One sets aside this volume with the sensation of having read for pleasure rather than for knowledge, insights, or challenging ideas, although, in fact, these, too, are attained.

A further attractive aspect of this collection is the diversity of topic and perspective, cutting across disciplines to include not only the expected essays of literary criticism but also essays on painter Jack Chambers, film maker Pierre Perrault, and theatre director George Luscombe; concert pianist William Aide uses musical analogies to write of Margaret Avison's poetry; Peter Harcourt refers to historian J. M. S. Careless as he traces the course of Edmonton's Citadel Theatre.

George Woodcock sets a high level for the volume in the first essay, "Casting Down Their Golden Crowns: The Novels of Marian Engel," the first in-depth study of this important contemporary novelist. Terming Engel's novels "small books, as unupholstered as Shaker furniture," Woodcock illuminates Engel's works with references to writers from Defoe and Aphra Behn to Gide and Camus. This

essay is a delight to read, both for its perceptive comments on an unjustly neglected writer and for its felicitous style.

Each essay has its own distinctive attraction. Barry Lord's detailed appreciation, "Jack Chambers: Five Late Drawings," carefully outlines the way in which Chambers in his last illness infused the light and life which characterize his best work into subject matter found on a sick-room table. In Peter Harcourt's study, "Pierre Perrault and Le Cinema Veçu," I was struck by parallels with English-Canadian literary concerns. Harcourt's reference to Quebec film makers, song writers, and poets transforming their land into a landscape of the mind recalls Sinclair Ross's use of landscape which Laurie Ricou explores in *Vertical Man/Horizontal World*. And Perrault's demonstration in the second film of his *Ile aux Coudres* trilogy of a family returning to France, the land of their ancestors, only to realize that their roots are no longer there, echoes a recurring English-Canadian motif, of which Margaret Laurence's Morag in her journey to Scotland is possibly the best known example. Much like Harcourt's careful explication of Perrault's art, George Vogt's essay, "The Politics of Entertainment: George Luscombe and the TWP," demonstrates Luscombe's brilliant production techniques. Luscombe reminds me of Joan Littlewood, so I was not surprised to learn that he worked for three years with Littlewood's company. Vogt outlines a number of instances of Luscombe's fresh and unconventional use of the artificiality of the stage to achieve a sense of reality. Brian Arnott's less happy account of theatre, "Memories or Monuments: The Citadel as a Popular Theatre," traces the ups and downs of The Citadel via its artistic directors, from the high hopes with which it began to its attempts to cope with the economic difficulties of the 1970's.

Two of the essays deal with poetry. George Bowering's "Metaphysic in Time: The Poetry of Lionel Kearns" explores theme and language in Kearns' poetry in what seems to me the first serious attempt to come to grips with Kearns' art — an elusive art, as Bowering points out. "Kearns' sense of form cannot entail completion," Bowering tells us, as he links Kearns' attitude to poetry and his "Hegelian sense of form" with his career as a teacher of linguistics. The second essay on poetry, William Aide's on Margaret Avison, strikes me as highly impressionistic. Aide, who says that a strictly literary criticism is inadequate for dealing with Avison's strongly religious subject matter, is more satisfactory in his dealing with her two later less complex volumes than with her first.

In the final essay of this collection, "Bushed in the Sacred Wood," John Moss testifies to his defection from thematic criticism as he calls for an urbane and cosmopolitan approach to Canadian literature. Moss skirts the soapbox as he seeks to explain the reasons for the genesis and popular acceptance of thematic criticism, and is as critical of those who somewhat pompously and righteously complain of thematic criticism while offering little in the way of alternative. When Moss asks, "What chance has anyone else but to be considered below Wordsworth on a Wordsworthian scale; what chance a Canadian in comparison with those from whose achievement the scale is made?" he calls to mind an objection of feminist critics: women writers are judged by criteria set by men and based on writings by men. Moss advocates replacing the thematic approach with an explicative and evaluative criticism which seeks to appreciate art as art, an approach which I endorse but to which many might object as a return to the New Criticism.

Not only Moss' essay but the collection as a whole questions the adequacy of

present Canadian literary criticism. Helwig points out in his introduction that the artists dealt with, except for Jack Chambers, are "not usually considered central." This volume indicates, as Helwig hints it might, the narrowness of a tradition that does not have room for a Marian Engel or a Margaret Avison. These essays draw attention to artists usually ignored, little understood, or spoken of dismissively. *The Human Elements, Second Series* points to the need for a third series to treat more of our serious artists in depth, in the same jargon-free and unpretentious way — writers such as Jane Rule, Matt Cohen, Hugh Hood, Miriam Waddington, and Audrey Thomas, to name a few.

On the other side of the coin, *Twelve Voices* allows writers to speak for themselves. Jon Pearce interviews Elizabeth Brewster, David Helwig, Dennis Lee, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Tom Marshall, Susan Musgrave, John Newlove, Michael Ondaatje, P. K. Page, Raymond Souster, Miriam Waddington, and Tom Wayman. Some time ago George Woodcock noted that many poets also write criticism of fiction, and I find it interesting that most of these poets have written fiction as well.

The questions put to the twelve poets are the expected ones: influences, writing habits, the genesis of a poem, intended audience. Answers are at times surprisingly similar, at times just as surprisingly contrary. One comes away from this text with the conviction that Canadian poetry has come of age. Most of the younger poets speak of the influence of other Canadian poets rather than foreign poets. Al Purdy and Irving Layton are most often mentioned, although P. K. Page, Patrick Lane, A. J. M. Smith, and James Reaney also receive credit. Most also refer to the encouragement and helpfulness of fellow poets, and display a much keener awareness of the interest in poetry being written in Canada than in that emanating from the United States or Great Britain. To

some extent Wayman is an exception. Having spent some years in California, Wayman learned from American as well as Canadian poets and, while most of his fellows believe that better poetry is being written in Canada than elsewhere, Wayman believes that American poetry is better crafted, although it has a corresponding lack of content.

The interviews convey the impression that the poets gave careful thought to their replies. Jung and Freud come in for some serious discussion. Conversations concerning the genesis of a poem reveal a dichotomy between those like Musgrave, Page, and MacEwen who say that the poem, or part of it, presents itself to the poet — the poet is by some likened to a medium — and those like Wayman who consider that only rarely is a poem given, that writing is a job; one sits at the desk each day to write.

Most interesting is Dennis Lee's interview which Pearce acknowledges Lee himself rewrote. Lee explains what he tries to do with poetry by examining his poem "The Death of Harold Ladoo," which he terms "a meditative quest." Lee's essay is titled "Enacting a Meditation" and, as he explains, the poem "*embodies* a particular stance or condition, by speaking a particular voice. It *enacts* a trajectory of meditation, by moving from one voice to the next, and then to the next, and the next." In his search for a flexible medium, Lee seeks a voice "that can metamorphose endlessly from moment to moment — to slangy humour, to lyrical delicacy, to direct personal statement, to rich churning philosophical exploration, and so on." Lee's essay provides an interesting parallel with Bowring's essay on Lionel Kearns in *The Human Elements, Second Series*.

This text is well written and the poets often provide thought-provoking answers to Pearce's appropriate questions. Portraits, photocopies of manuscripts, and

brief outlines of the life and works of each poet are included. The book is clearly a student text, appropriate for the level to which the OISE tapes of poets reading their works are directed. Pearce mentions in his introduction having talked to "forty or so" poets, most of whom were enthusiastic about his project. His reasons for choosing the particular twelve are somewhat vague: geographical location, subject matter, and "other such matters." If geographical location is a factor, where are the Maritimers? My only complaint is that many of the poets included here have discussed their poetry elsewhere. There are others I would like to hear from, and as with the critical essays I'll name a few — Andrew Suknaski, Joy Kogawa, Stephen Scobie, Seymour Mayne, and Gary Geddes.

LORRAINE MCMULLEN

LOCAL HISTORIES

SHIRLEY E. WOODS, *Ottawa: The Capital of Canada*. Doubleday Canada, \$19.95.

GOTTLIEB LEIBBRANDT, *Little Paradise. The Saga of the German Canadians of Waterloo County, Ontario, 1800-1975*. Allprint Co., Kitchener, n.p.

PATRICIA E. ROY, *Vancouver. An Illustrated History*. James Lorimer, n.p.

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *A Picture History of British Columbia*. Hurtig, \$18.95.

JOHN THEBERGE, ed., *Kluane. Pinnacle of the Yukon*. Doubleday Canada, \$35.00.

THESE FIVE "LOCAL HISTORIES" have been selected according to criteria that only book review editors understand and they confirm that it is now almost impossible to write a history of Canada that is coherent and adequately reflects the diversity of local experience.

Judging by some of the lines quoted by Shirley Woods the capital runs Toronto a very close second as the object of critical

comment. Lord Dufferin called it "a wilderness of shanties spread along either side of long, broad strips of mud"; Laurier, who grew to like the place, said that "Ottawa is not a handsome city and does not appear destined to become one either." Setting out to challenge the impression that Ottawa is a dull civil service town, Woods highlights the more colourful and exciting elements of its past — the canal builders, timbermen, and the conflicts of French and Irish — and he has produced a curious hybrid, a cross between the travel guide and the historical column of the local press written to show that a lot of interesting history has happened here. He is an insider, a splendid raconteur who takes nothing for granted and cannot resist a digression. Buildings, monuments, even empty lots and the water works system become alive with historical associations. He seems to know everything — the occupants of the old Roxborough apartment building right down to the ill-tempered parrot in the bar; that the first telephone hook-up connected Alexander Mackenzie's office with Rideau Hall and, despite the Prime Minister's objections, was maintained because Lady Dufferin enjoyed having an official sing to her guests over the line; that the first book published in Ottawa denounced the spiritual dangers of democracy, that in the twenties one of the city's growth industries was the production of business forms. Accounts of the design of the parliament buildings, the protocol of the Rideau Club, or the pleasures of a visit to the Central Experimental Farm are equally rich in anecdote. All this has its charms no doubt, but episodes and anecdotes do not add up to a coherent picture of the development of a city; nor do they convey an adequate sense of the distinctive atmosphere of the place. This shortcoming is partly due to the method; it is also a consequence of the deliberate downplaying of what to an outsider seems

rather important — Ottawa as political capital and civil service centre.

Gottlieb Leibbrandt's compendium of information on the German-Canadians of the Waterloo area is the kind of local history that has given the whole genre a bad name. Focussing on the people of German origin rather than the Mennonites, he parades the personal histories of the successful (names italicized) as models of "*hard work and thrift*"; chronicles disputes about teaching the German language in the schools; and describes the history of the ethnic press, churches, singing societies, concluding with the inevitable catalogue of contemporary cultural organizations. Though pride in the real achievements of this small community and the accomplishments of outstanding individuals — Adam Beck, the advocate for Ontario Hydro or Augustus Stephen Vogt, the founder of the Mendelssohn Choir — is understandable, the format is all too predictable. The result is a storehouse of detail, the raw material for history. Yet this clumsy chronicle takes on a certain eloquence for it conveys a sense of the past from within the perspective of the people whose history it celebrates. For Leibbrandt the golden age of German-Canadian culture was the late Victorian age when it was possible to reconcile a sentimental attachment to the new Germany with a loyalty to Canada, whose queen had married a German prince. This divided loyalty was symbolized by the monument erected in 1897 to Kaiser Wilhelm I in Victoria Park, Berlin, and the addition of one to Queen Victoria in 1910. This balance of attachments was destroyed in 1914-1918 and these "dark times" become in Leibbrandt's narrative the central, tragic event in the history of this community.

Patricia Roy's profusely illustrated study of Vancouver is a volume in The History of Canadian Cities Series which aims to relate the inner histories of individual

communities to the more general patterns of urbanism. Where Woods and Leibbrandt seek to communicate a feeling of place through anecdote, her analysis centres on economic growth, civic politics, population and ethnic relations, industrial-labour relations, the urban landscape, and social and cultural life. Though compressed and somewhat schematic in organization this fine study is especially effective in accounting for the emergence and consolidation of distinct class and ethnic districts, and in tracing Vancouver's evolving metropolitan relations to the B.C. interior and the prairies. As one would expect from her previous work, she writes with authority on the development of urban transportation and race conflict; she qualifies the general impression of the port as a hot-bed of labour radicalism, even in 1919; and she gives a most informative account of civic finance and taxation that makes sense of the single tax experiment and takes into account the special problems arising from Vancouver's role as a refuge of migrant, unemployed labour.

As for the distinctive personality of Vancouver, Roy's is a picture of contrasts — cosmopolitan, with a tradition of racial exclusiveness; a post-industrial centre set amid great natural beauty, yet dependent upon resource development. These impressions are amplified by George Woodcock who, in summing up his pictorial history of the province, comments that it remains "a region where space and mobility are important," where people are still bound to the "primal realities" of land and sea. "The wilderness," he adds, "... is still a reality in our lives: ... to go north is still a way to prove oneself."

That may be so, but to go north — imaginatively — to the St. Elias Mountains and the foothills of the Kluane Ranges in the southwestern Yukon is more an experience in humility. The sixteen scientist-writers who have contrib-

uted to this stunning volume on Kluane describe its geological history and glaciers, its living things — plants, animals, and fish — and the few men who touched it and left behind only rotting log cabins. It seems at first a place which has no past; but its history is longer and more complicated than that of any human community. John Theberge has been faithful to the spirit of all these essays when he reminds us that Kluane is itself a living thing of immense complexity — and fragility. Why is it that the most beautiful and moving of these "local histories" is a book that makes human history seem trivial?

CARL BERGER

FIVE POETS

KATE BITNEY, *While You Were Out*. Turnstone Press, \$6.95.

SHERRY DEMING, *Not Tonight*. Box 302, Erin.

DOROTHY FARMILOE, *Words For My Weeping Daughter*. Penumbra, \$5.95.

BRENDA RICHES, *Dry Media*. Turnstone Press, \$6.00.

BARBARA SAPERGIA, *Dirt Hills Mirage*. Thistle-down, \$14.00; pa. \$6.95.

WORDS FOR MY WEEPING DAUGHTER by Dorothy Farmiloe is a small volume in which the poems are addressed to the speaker's daughter who has been widowed soon after her marriage. The book is divided into two sections. In the first the poems are concerned with the immediate shock, the funeral, and the anger that follows. Mother searches for words of comfort and finds she has little to offer "when it's / his arm you want around you / not metaphors." However, in the second section, "letters" to the daughter (who has moved to a new city apartment) offer the timeless comfort of continuity in nature and in human experience. Dorothy Farmiloe writes in straight-

forward direct statements with a clear-sighted use of everyday occurrences as the source of her metaphors. In reviewing the tragedy, she finds one image that overshadows all others:

what i see are potatoes
the potatoes you peeled and
left sitting in water waiting his
hi what's for supper.

As she begins to look forward, a metaphor emerges from work in her garden — a wall she plans to construct of rocks blasted from the path of a new road, a wall on which she hopes her daughter will work with her. The rocks are the “bones of this land” which strengthen her; in a cairn or wall they support one another as mother and daughter do; building the wall together will impart greater meaning to the construction. Despite one reference to the violent grief of a young neighbour at the death of his wife, these poems are about the community of women.

community begins with two
the old myth-makers
knew what they were doing when
they entrusted continuity
to a mother and her daughter

questions like
who was Persephone's father
didn't enter into it.

There are no new insights into grief or how to deal with it in these poems; there is, rather, a mature and assured voice reiterating with admirable simplicity and convincing sincerity the universal comfort of love and the passing of time. Drawings by Peter Schwarz add to the pleasure given by this book.

Not Tonight by Sherry Deming is almost the complete antithesis of *Words for My Weeping Daughter*. While Farmiloe writes of a specific event and builds her imagery on very tangible detail, Deming's poems are crowded with abstractions. In a description, “Stavros/Spr/80,” a phrase

such as “the best of such an intricate being” and words such as “charm,” “pride,” and “mystery” do not bring that individual to life. The reader is told Stavros is “a strange person” and that the speaker feels “strongly” for him, but that is all. And that is the failing of many of these poems: too often Deming says she is bored, anxious, angry, lonely, in or out of love, but the poems fail to capture the sensation in an image or in sounds and movement of language which might make the reader a participant in the emotion. Too rare is a simile such as “Silence. / like a round room / with no echos [sic] / listening to itself,” and even this is undermined by the next line, “in the essence of calm.” Some poems end with lines that should have been omitted: “something I can love. / My pillow.” turns a fair poem into one that sounds more like the work of a young adolescent; similarly, “such an unpleasant / sound / your footsteps” adds nothing to the twelve line description of “the sloppy slide / of the flat / of your shoes / with your crooked heels...” Taken as a whole *Not Tonight* is not impressive, but Deming has insight — “Don't cry from your heart / if the sorrow / is in your mind” — and with more mature judgment and editorial advice, perhaps her second book will avoid some of the pitfalls in which the first traps itself.

In capturing the people and events of her secure and happy childhood, Barbara Sapergia avoids those traps in her first published book of poems. *Dirt Hills Mirage* is a coherent work in which the narrative perspective shifts over the four sections from that of a child, who tries to fry eggs on the metal of a playground slide and who understands only intuitively adult tensions and sorrows, to that of a young woman, who is aware of the land and its past and who has been touched by death. Each of these poems links event

and mood and conveys them with authority. Events of childhood — arguments with other children, her brother's reaction to inspecting the site of a plane crash, a series of accidents — are placed in context so that as one closes the book, one feels as familiar with Moose Jaw's Robin Hood Mills, the slaughter house, and the grandfather's ranch as one is with the family itself. It is difficult to single out particular poems for praise as most are highly successful, but "Arranged Marriage" captures the family's Old World background, its adaptation to New World custom, the girl's developing sense of herself as a woman-soon-to-be, and the gentle humour with which the author views her own past. Almost twelve, she meets a Romanian boy at the roundup at her grandparents' ranch. He writes to her "to say, he guessed we'd be / married soon" and sends her a hankie:

i could just hear my mother saying:
*you must have done something
 to encourage him.*

The episode seems to pass unnoticed, the letter is burned and the hankie hidden "so well/ i still haven't found it," but one day "grandpa came to town / & spilled the beans." The boy's father has tried to arrange a marriage and has talked of how many cows and sheep she is worth and her dowry:

my mother gave firm instructions
 i was not for sale
 grandpa looked a little sad —
 it had sounded like a good deal
 & he didn't like to offend old friends

there were no more letters
 no hankies, no rings, no offers
 i was not blamed
 i was only a little girl, after all

soon i couldn't remember
 the letter or the words on the hankie
 only the weight of his brown arms
 & hot dry dust on his skin.

Barbara Sapergia's eye for detail similarly enriches all the poems of this attractively

presented book. *Dirt Hills Mirage* is to be recommended.

Kate Bitney's world is a very different one from Sapergia's. It is inhabited by black leather clad lesbians, mad women, promiscuous young women surviving on mean men's favours; the imagery is frequently drawn from nightmare visions. The volume's first poem is "The Anger of Ghosts" in which the former inhabitants of a deserted TB ward who were tortured by their beautiful surroundings return to haunt the writer who chose the spot for its peace. The poem gives its title to the first section of the book and it establishes the mood for the following poems of age, death and disillusionment. In the book's second section, "Perhaps We Are Wounded," a number of love poems share the tone of "Mistrust The First Amour" in which the poet advises:

Drink the blood out
 retract your teeth
 leave the corpse
 retreat

When you have this fever
 you must let it do its work
 It will cleanse
 or kill you.

In "Snow" as in other poems, yielding to love is not achieved without tension:

But love tortures
 my hands
 begs me to come
 down from this crystal

But when love and desire are admitted, images of fire and glitter convey sensuous joy:

my body showers
 to earth
 glitters in your hair
 melts softly
 on your speaking
 lips your hands are full
 of me mutating.

Bitney's perspective is urban even when a poem is about the land. "I Am Shown

the Land" records a vision in which the tension and power of nature are conveyed in words such as "rakes," "devours," "flailing," and "twisted"; the poem ends with the injunction, "Stop motor bikes, cars / erase oil // put all the gravel back / to where it was. // Return electric / to the exciting air." *While You Were Out* is a tough-minded and wide-ranging collection of poems distinguished by its original and often disturbing imagery.

In *Dry Media* Brenda Riches also employs disturbing, even chilling images, but this collection of poetry and brief prose pieces reveals a greater range of styles than any of the other four books here reviewed. "Demeter's Daughter" is a cruel vignette in which third person narrative description of a mother's abhorrence of her daughter alternates with the daughter's stream of consciousness. In three and a half pages Riches conveys a very ugly rivalry in which the already alcoholic mother has no chance of survival. "Persimmon" shows a different side of Riches' talent — the ability to turn a love of words and word play into hilarious satire. A photographer named Ambrose tries to seduce Virginia: "*Come with me, my little tangerine, and see what develops*. No kidding. His opening words to her. . . ." Three pages of puns and Ambrose trying to get Virginia to pose for ludicrous "arty" photographs leave a reader giggling quite helplessly as do the two "Amanda Pieces" in which proverbs and clichés are twisted into brief tales of Amanda and her Grannie. In the first Amanda learns why one is warned against trying to teach Grannie to suck eggs. These pieces, a rather chilling brief prose piece, another disturbing story of violent imagination, and a quite beautiful prose poem describing changing light in a room make up less than half the book. The rest continues in similar dazzling diversity

with the addition of a few highly polished poems. A definition of shadow ends:

I lie your shadow
under you moving
you move me to become
the darkness your body makes

Dry Media is the most original of all these books, frightening, funny and fascinating, and too varied to appreciate in one reading.

PEGGY NIGHTINGALE

CHOIX DE METAPHORES

MICHEL BELIL, *Greenwich*. Leméac, \$12.95.

NORMAND ROUSSEAU, *Le Déluge Blanc*. Leméac, \$12.95.

DEUX JEUNES ROMANCIERS QUEBÉCOIS; deux personnages aux destins problématiques. *Greenwich* de Michel Bélil et *Le Déluge Blanc* de Normand Rousseau, tous deux publiés chez Leméac, décrivent, de manière omnisciente, la survie difficile de deux héros tourmentés.

Greenwich, titré d'après le prénom de son personnage central, est marqué par le poids intransigeant du temps. Il gravite constamment de la réalité à un univers de souvenirs accablants. Quelques événements à la portée retentissante provoquent chez lui une culpabilité profonde qui l'atteint même physiquement par une maladie étrange qui le fait vieillir prématurément.

Le récit est construit par une alternance de deux temps: le présent, qui est une fuite vers l'exil et l'oubli et le passé, malgré tout omniprésent. En effet, fuyant vers d'autres lieux, Boston, Drumont en l'occurrence, *Greenwich* ne sera pas guéri du mal qui l'habite puisque le quotidien est prétexte à des associations d'idées qui le relancent dans le monde des souvenirs de ceux qu'il nomme ses "quatre fan-

tômes." "Blottis quelque part, ses quatre fantômes se tiennent cois." Il est obsédé à la fois par des réminiscences vives de sa vie avec son frère Goliatte, mort prématurément, du suicide de deux amis de jeunesse: Renard et Château Brillant et finalement par la fin brutale de sa relation avec Calypse. La culpabilité provoquée par ces événements aura des retentissements lors de son exil à Boston lorsqu'elle sera concrétisée par une véritable descente aux enfers, manifestée par une invasion de sauterelles qui immobilisent la ville.

La narration, bouleversée chronologiquement par le recours constant au procédé des annales, soulève parfois des problèmes de compréhension à la manière de *Evadé de la Nuit* de André Langevin. En effet, les bonds constants de réel au monde des souvenirs qui brouillent la trame du récit, pourraient rendre nécessaire une relecture. Le récit est constamment narré au présent, rendant par conséquent difficile la distanciation des temps, le réel étant obsédant parce que parsemé de signes qui le catapultent rapidement au cœur du souvenir.

Greenwich, atteint par cette "maladie du temps," porte le nom du méridien, référence horaire internationale. Son père est horloger, il porte deux montres. De plus, hors ces détails extérieurs et le désordre chronologique de la narration, le récit lui-même bat le pouls du temps par le recours fréquent de l'auteur à des phrases courtes, hachurées, elliptiques. "Les draps. Les oreillers. La nuit."

"L'Ennemi c'est le temps. Il hante toute ce qu'il touche. Il encercle l'homme."

En réalité, tout s'est arrêté puis enchevêtré au moment de la paternité interrompue. A l'instant où le premier mot du roman est posé, tout est déjà consommé, une conscience se faisant jour et révélant l'aspect douloureux du passé et en particulier de l'avortement fatal de Calypse. Greenwich n'aura pas pu sauver à temps

son "héritier" et en gardera une profonde culpabilité justifiée par l'accueil tiède qu'il lui réservait et par "les quatre microbes qui gangrenaient sa vie." Sa relation avec Calypse est amplifiée par le verre déformant du souvenir et de la culpabilité. En effet, cette relation routinière, parsemée de conflits, est devenue douloureuse au moment où Calypse annonce sa grossesse amorcée. L'incompréhension de Greenwich entraîne l'avortement puis la mort inutile de celle-ci.

D'autres morts pèsent bien lourd, Greenwich subissant également la présence obsédante de ses autres "fantômes." Son frère Goliatte, à qui il avait accordé la présence illusoire d'une paternité, inhibée par une mort précoce, indice d'une impuissance à réaliser dans l'épanouissement la paternité et les suicides de deux amis, une fils brimé et un poète incompris, maudit par la société, Renard et Château Brillant.

A la toute fin, il se laissera vaincre par l'illusoire, mettant tous ses espoirs en son fils, ressuscité en son esprit.

Un culpabilité se fait également jour dans le roman de Normand Rousseau mais cette fois sous la forme d'un rat qui "hante" la demeure du personnage principal, Orval. Celui-ci est seul dans sa maison depuis peu, sa femme venant de le quitter. Une tempête fait rage à l'extérieur, au cœur du printemps, interrompant les cours de paléontologie qu'il donne à l'Université. La tempête annihile peu à peu le monde extérieur, le recouvrant de blanc, perçu dans l'oeuvre comme signe de mort. Un rat manifeste sa présence par des bruits de grignotement graduellement obsédants. A mesure que s'intensifie la présence de ce rat, l'isolement de Orval devient un véritable gouffre; il devient le "Noé de la fin du monde."

Au creux de la conscience de Orval sont tapies des révélations qui tardent à se faire et qui sont camouflées par le

leurre qu'il maintient presque tout au long du récit. Une fuite fréquente hors du réel accablant s'opère tout comme dans l'oeuvre de Michel Bélil. Une fuite en arrière est exécutée sous forme d'annales mais uniquement pour se tourner vers les souvenirs les plus tolérables.

Le début s'amorce dans le cadre sécurisant d'une petite maison de banlieue. L'augmentation de la vivacité de la tempête et des grignotements du rat intensifient l'acuité dramatique du récit tout comme dans une nouvelle. D'ailleurs, l'appellation de roman est probablement un peu faussée, cette oeuvre possédant beaucoup des caractéristiques d'une nouvelle. En effet, tous ces éléments tendent vers le dénouement, le récit étant parsemé de signes annonciateurs de celui-ci; tout est centré sur un effet à produire. La présence quasi-invisible du rat ne trouvera son retentissement concret qu'à la fin de l'oeuvre. Le récit est d'ailleurs maîtrisé efficacement en fonction de son aboutissement bien que de nombreux passages répétitifs gagneraient à être retranchés. En effet, un récit plus court aurait certainement produit un effet dramatique plus soutenu.

Le tempête extérieure qui "rongeait peu à peu ce qui n'était pas blanc" est présente à l'intérieur de la maison sous la forme de ce rat "invisible." Celui-ci ronge comme un remords tout ce qui entoure Orval. Ces accès de remords, on le remarquera, sont provoqués par des événements extérieurs qui lui remettent en mémoire ce qu'il aimerait tant oublier. En effet, la présence du rat coïncide souvent avec des souvenirs qui tentent de se faire jour à la surface de la conscience; le bruit interrompt les pensées et oblige les souvenirs douloureux à replonger aux tréfonds de l'être, là où ils ne peuvent être connus.

Cette présence du rat comme un remords s'exprime également par la culpabilité qui le cerne d'un halo de mystère.

Une voisine de Orval, le sachant seul, vient lui offrir son aide. Celui-ci, dans un accès de pudeur ou de culpabilité tente de la chasser ayant une peur immense que la présence du rat ne lui soit révélée. L'univers de Orval est contaminé par le maléfice de la présence du rat et par l'horreur surnaturelle qu'il provoque.

A la toute fin, un indice majeur est fourni pour la lecture de l'oeuvre: "le rat n'existait peut-être que dans sa tête mais il en mourait." Les inhibitions provoquées par des événements antérieurs à la narration semblent vouloir cesser de se dérober à la conscience.

Le refoulement du réel accablant est donc un processus dynamique, Orval empêchant les événements insupportables de la rupture avec sa femme et de la relation illusoire qu'ils ont vécu, de parvenir à cette conscience au moyen de la présence du rat. Ce processus entraîne une dépense d'énergie extraordinaire qui l'entraînera même dans la mort.

Le rat sera présent au sein d'un délire chronique, d'une frénésie. La conservation de la clarté et de l'ordre dans la pensée contribue à rendre vraisemblable la présence du rat.

Il est à noter qu'il existe une curieuse correspondance entre les thèmes du délire et de ceux de la littérature fantastique.

Malheureusement, malgré l'efficacité du récit, un point reste faible: l'écriture. La recherche des mots frise souvent la naïveté; les fleurs de rhétorique abondent. *Greenwich* déçoit également par la surabondance des métaphores faciles qui surnagent dans le récit.

"En cette fin d'automne, les feuilles mortes roulaient, sèches, tordues, bossues comme celui de Notre-Dame. . . ."

Les noms des personnages (Boucane, Li-quide . . .) également empreints de facilité sont farfelus et uniquement descriptifs. Ils ne possèdent pas la qualité dénomminative de ceux des personnages de Ducharme.

Chez Bélil, l'écriture de contes pour enfants laisse une trace constante quant aux choix des métaphores fleuries. Un récit plus bref pour Rousseau aurait permis un choix de qualificatifs plus sobres, la répétition des descriptions étant diminuée.

En définitive, il s'agit de ce type de romans où, fermant les yeux sur les détails qui agacent parfois, le lecteur peut arriver à se divertir. . . .

LISE ROCHETTE

ON DISPOSSESSION

The Spice Box, An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing, selected by Gerri Sinclair & Morris Wolfe. Lester & Orpen Dennys, \$16.95.

"WHEN THE SUN SETS on Saturday night (ending the Sabbath), devout Jews console and fortify themselves by inhaling the fragrance of the family spicebox." So Gerri Sinclair and Morris Wolfe explain the choice of title for an anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing. Wishing to avoid a false stereotype of the Jew, as their original title, *Rags, Bones, Bottles* seemed to evoke, they accepted their publisher's suggestion of *The Spice Box*, because

the spice box is a longstanding reminder of the bittersweetness of Jewish life, for not only is it an object of ritual art (and a collector's item) but it plays an important part during "havdalah," the ceremony which concludes the Sabbath.

There is unacknowledged irony in this title for, as Sinclair and Wolfe state, the anthology is arranged to reflect an increasing sense of dispossession and uncertainty in the Jewish voices of this country. For these modern Jews, the spice box is certainly no longer a source of consolation or fortitude, but a relic, a collector's item only. The final selection in the book,

Avrum Malus' poem, "I am a Modern Jew" says it sadly and clearly:

I do not put on 'tefilin'
I run each day
...
around and around the track I go
a modern Jew
on running shoes
limping and flying

The selections range over the Canadian Jewish experience regionally and ideologically. We begin in a Polish shtetl of long ago, with a tale by Solomon Ary written in Yiddish, in a style and tone far removed from the modern, and translated. "The Pact" is a bitter tale of the downfall of a beautiful young Jewess who transgressed the strict moral code of the time. The editors seem to feel that the three Yiddish writers, Ary, Rochl Korn and J. I. Segal, with whom they open the volume, establish the tone and sense of place from which English-speaking Canadian Jewish writers take their departure. Korn's evocative soul searching poetry has long been recognized in the Yiddish speaking world and deserves a wider audience.

In the remaining short stories, excerpts from novels, essays, and poems set in Canada, we share the immigrant experience, urban and rural, familiar scenes in Montreal and Winnipeg, lesser known ones in the prairie flats. Eli Mandel commemorates the Jewish cemetery in the farm community of Hirsch:

ann is taking pictures again
while I stand in the uncut grass
counting the graves: there are forty
I think

(Near Hirsch a Jewish Cemetery)

Robert Currie responds to Mandel with an elegy on "Diaspora Lipton, Sask."

The Jewish farmers wandered here from
Russia
rode like dust upon the wind
they came for land and freedom
came to stay awhile

Sammy Bateman
son of Markus
broke the land and worked the fields
Israel Cohen
Louis Reich

Two generations later, the Hebrew on the epitaphs puzzles and mystifies these pioneers' descendants.

A sense of loss reverberates through *The Spice Box*. A few lone voices, such as A. M. Klein, bespeak a depth of Jewish knowledge and commitment (though the editors could have chosen Klein poems shadowed by doubt). The holocaust haunts survivors whether they were there or not. Abraham Boyarsky in "The Birthday Party" recounts a sixth birthday party for the one remaining son of two survivors in a D.P. Camp in the early fifties while awaiting immigration to Canada. Amid the festivities, friends weep for their own lost children, and the father ends the day exacting a promise from the child to avenge the dead when he grows up. How remote from the childhood of Erna Paris, a "Canadian Jewish Princess from Forest Hill" who grew up insulated from the outside world and made her "first real connection" with "the collective past of every Jew" in a tour of the concentration camps at age twenty-two.

Irving Layton pays tribute to the necessary self-reliance of "Israelis" — "It is themselves they trust and no one else." Others ponder the meaning of Jewishness in Canada or the meaning of the Jew in the modern world. Richer's seminal story of Mortimer Griffin reduces the Jew to "an idea." The Jew becomes less particular, more symbolic, an Everyman. To Mark Sarner the promise of his youth "seemed to be that we would grow up and in the process would be relieved of what was inconvenient and burdensome about being Jewish." Like Malus' persona, limping and flying in his running shoes, Sarner speaks for a large segment of the post-war generation:

There is ambivalence and there is frustration, and a sense of atrophy that is internalized and inarticulate. And there is the habit of survival that keeps the ideal and the possibility of a resolution alive like a dim, flickering light.

The Spice Box is a timely collection. Now in one volume, a reader can sample the richness and diversity of the Canadian Jewish experience presented by Klein, Richler, Cohen, Wiseman, Mandel, and many more known and hitherto little known writers. Like most anthologies of its type, it cannot offer depth in one or two selections per author. There are a few weeds, such as William Weintraub's "Sport in the Old Testament," a weak imitation of Richler satire, and there are the inevitable omissions, such as David Solway's poetry.

The editors attribute the tone of recent writing to the effects of declining prejudice and growing assimilation. Yet even in recent months, there has been an upsurge of anti-semitism in North America and increasing world abandonment of Israel. Canada has never had as many Jewish children receiving parochial school education. We will have more indication of the Canadian Jewish future when this newest generation finds its voice.

LINDA SHOHEET

CANDID ACCOUNT

MARY MEIGS, *Lily Briscoe: A Self Portrait*. Talonbooks, \$8.95.

IT IS RELATIVELY RARE that books by non-Canadians get washed up on our quixotic shores for their publishing baptism. We may occasionally get a simultaneous appearance with a volume seeing the light of day in Britain or the U.S., but we usually play second fiddle to both super-power publishing places. In the case of *Lily Briscoe*, an autobiography by the cur-

rently Quebec-based painter, Mary Meigs, we can consider ourselves fortunate for an unusual chain of circumstances leading from love and lesbianism to a Vancouver publishing house.

The late Edmund Wilson, arguably the most distinguished American literary critic so far this century, had broadcast the genius of a young Québécoise novelist, Marie-Claire Blais, in his book, *O Canada*, and the young woman duly turned up in Wellfleet, Mass., where the venerable man of letters lived. Now it so happened that Wilson was a friend of Mary Meigs who was then living with another woman, a political activist and feminist named Barbara Deming.

Eventually our author split up with Deming, and after a stormy time with Marie-Claire Blais and some intermittent collusion with another woman, moved with Marie-Claire to Quebec where they both, apparently, still share a home.

Now lest my concertina'd account of co-habitation give the impression of promiscuous farce, I should add forthwith that *Lily Briscoe* is one of the most morally saturated accounts of life I have read for a long period and as such is both a refreshment and a challenge.

As the author makes clear — perhaps too clear, to the point of onerous self-consciousness — she is a product of eastern U.S. gentility where penury was never a personal problem. However, the absence of poverty provides a plethora of problems of quite a different kind: from the impact of loveless Presbyterianism and the deification of duty, to an abhorrence of sexual heterodoxy and all those challenges to homosexual liaison which arise from the lack of any external cement to relationship. Outside, that is, the will and determination of the two participants to make a success of their psychological and romantic coupling.

And it is, indeed, in these areas which in their ultimate application are human

rather than exclusively sapphic concerns, that Mary Meigs' autobiography offers extraordinary riches. That her insights on moral issues, courage in self-searching, and hard-won wisdom in some peculiarly opaque quarters of life, are couched in an elegant prose, is a bonus that at first sight may appear supererogatory.

I do not think it is. I believe there is a struggle for spiritual discipline revealed in this autobiographical account, an elegance sought from the egotistical, anarchic mess which all self-centred people know, which quite naturally reveals itself in an ordered and fortuitous language.

It is a particular boon of this book — which reads almost as a novel in its insistence on a moral evaluation of acts and in descriptions of character and characters — that we are free of the cloying self-pity which disfigures so much of the subjective romanticism which passes for human communication in our time and place.

For this reason alone I would suggest that *Lily Briscoe* be compulsory reading in every Creative Writing Department across the country, and contend that there are really few Canadian practitioners of either poetry or fiction who would not stand to benefit from an absorption of its 260 pages.

Indubitably there are weaknesses, even passages that are boring and risible (as when Ms. Meigs reduces Christianity into something so Americanly upper-crust and Vassarly as "proper behaviour"). And the self-conscious peering into the murk of her own creativity sometimes surfaces as a whine and sometimes, for the reader, as an embarrassment.

But with all that said, the reservations stated, there is a moral vigour to this candid personal account of a well-born Lesbian and her friends of all sexual complexions, which only demonstrates how enervated and vacuous so much of our contemporary literature is — and by that

I mean not only personal writing but that which is both creative and Canadian.

DAVID WATMOUGH

PHILOSOPHERS, NOT KINGS

LESLIE ARMOUR and ELIZABETH TROTT, *The Faces of Reason: An Essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada, 1850-1950*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, \$17.00.

BY NOW THE IDEA OF THE Philosopher King is as much discredited by history as Shelley's vision of poets as the unacknowledged legislators of the world. It is recognized that both philosophers and poets work through ways other than those of political power. Yet the presence of philosophers is certainly one of the criteria by which we tend to assess the importance and the vitality of a national culture. England (and Scotland, too, in its own rights of Hume and others), France, Germany, Italy, Russia, China, India: all of them have been the homes of great philosophers and of philosophies that have been much more than merely speculative: that in important ways have influenced the patterns of human behaviour.

But there seems a limit to the permutations of thought that increasingly inhibits the production of great original philosophic systems. I have always found an analogy in music, where the number of composers at the same time innovative and ultimately satisfying has decreased over the generations since the death of Haydn, until we have reached the stage where few composers have both the originality and the substance — the sheer staying power — to seem likely candidates in a musical equivalent of Stendhal's lottery — to be heard (rather than read) in a hundred years. Yet even where music no longer plays a dominant and originative role, as it did in eighteenth-century Aus-

tria-Hungary, or philosophy as it did in sixth-century BC Ionia or nineteenth-century AD Germany, no culture can really be thought of as complete that has no expression in music and no extension into philosophy.

But if there are no great originative philosophers at work, if no new seminal systems of thought are introduced — what, one may well ask, is the function of such philosophers as appear? Because it gives some sound answers to this question, *The Faces of Reason*, by Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, seems to me one of the most interesting and important Canadian books that has yet appeared in the history of ideas.

It is essentially cultural rather than philosophical history that *The Faces of Reason* offers, and in such a context, I suggest, Armour and Trott are correct in placing the little-known figures who have served Canada as its philosophers. Up to now their works have — with a few eccentric exceptions like Richard Bucke, the disciple of Whitman — been little read outside university philosophy departments. They figure in the chapters on "Philosophical Literature" in the *Literary History of Canada*, which most readers skip, and one can reasonably assume that few even among Canadian writers know much about James Beaven or William Lyall or George Paxton Young. The thinkers in this book who are reasonably well known outside the world of academic philosophy are either the brilliant birds of passage who had already made their names elsewhere, like the great French teachers Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson who taught briefly at the University of Toronto, or men who entered philosophy from some unaccustomed direction, like Harold Innis. Indeed, so far as contemporary Canadian philosophic attitudes are concerned, one can safely say that they owe more to economists like Innis, or historians like Creighton, or

critics like Frye, or even novelists like MacLennan, than they do to the professional philosophers.

Yet the philosophers, and the academic activities over which they presided, had an important role in shaping the dominant culture of English-speaking Canada. They represent in an almost extreme intellectual form the influence of Scottish and Loyalist traditions on our schools of theology and philosophy and, through them, on our whole academic tradition. Such influences are permeative, and it is not an exaggeration to say that a knowledge of how John Paxton Young's philosophy was influenced by the theological conflicts within Canadian Presbyterianism helps one understand the states of mind Hugh MacLennan explores in novels like *Each Man's Son*.

The Faces of Reason is a large (more than 500 pages) and thorough book. It deals in some detail with eighteen Canadian philosophers (almost all of whom came originally from Scotland or England) and with the two great French expatriates. But just as important as the discussion of what each philosopher said (and often they had a fresh way of stating truths that were not especially original) is the sense of an intellectual continuum emerging in which the philosophers play their parts, either in naturalizing exotic trends of thoughts to a Canadian environment or in giving a rational shape to native drifts of opinion that would otherwise lack shape and direction.

I doubt if many readers will go back, after reading *The Faces of Reason*, to study — say — James Beaven's *Elements of Natural Theology* or John Clark Murray's *Handbook of Christian Ethics*. But it is still helpful in seeking to understand how Canadian culture has developed if we know how important the subjects of such books were in the emergent phases in what we now see as the growth of a Canadian consciousness. And the great

merit of *Faces of Reason* is that it always sees philosophy, and the teaching of philosophy, within the wider context of the general culture, so that one is constantly finding cross-references that are immensely helpful not only in understanding the philosophic concepts that found their way into Canadian novels and poems, but also in determining the principles that, however falteringly, have shaped Canadian scholarship and, ultimately, the Canadian way of life.

Faces of Reason is made accessible to readers outside the area of philosophic study by the lucidity and liveliness of the writing. The subject may not be intrinsically engaging, but the fluency of this unusually felicitous team of writers enables them to guide one skilfully and even wittily through a forest of potential boredom. They summarize effectively, paraphrase clearly, and all the time relate appositely to the historical and cultural context. I do not think I have encountered, since Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, a book in this field so open to the layman interested in the links — within the general cultural ambience — between philosophy and letters.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

SCARED?

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO and MICHAEL RICHARDSON, eds., *Not To Be Taken At Night, thirteen classic Canadian tales of mystery and the supernatural*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, \$16.95.

ANYONE WHO WATCHES the universe unfold with Knowlton Nash at 10 p.m. weekdays or reads a newspaper is likely to have a fairly high tolerance for the bizarre and bloody. Perhaps that is why this collection of thirteen little tales selected by Canada's renaissance anthologist and an English expatriate friend falls flat. *Not To Be Taken At Night* is a curi-

ous book which tells us more about the polyglot state of our life and literature than it does about the paranormal.

One of the most interesting things about the book is the writers who are left out. Why are P. K. Page and Ethel Wilson, who are not represented by their best work, the only women here? Where are Audrey Thomas and Alice Munro, whose adventures with African gynecologists and rural ants are just as spine-tingling as any adventure in this book? Where is Sinclair Ross? Granted, you can't include everyone, but *Not To Be Taken At Night* runs to only 184 pages, slim even by today's standards, and hardly enough for more than one or two moonlight dips.

What these stories tell me is that there are few classic Canadian tales of mystery and the supernatural, probably because we haven't yet evolved a folklore and possibly never will, because it takes a homogeneous mythic experience to develop the archetypes for this literary and social genre. This is not true, of course, of our native people, who have passed down by word of mouth wonderfully well constructed stories of the supernatural, which became flesh and endured because the people who made them had a common social and spiritual life with their audience.

There are two main problems which weaken short stories. One is lack of structure which leaves the story amorphous and meaningless, and the other is obviousness of craft, where structure and coincidence are pushed too hard and credibility is lost. Both sins are manifested in the weaker stories of *Not To Be Taken At Night*.

An example of the former is "The Lice" by Wilfred Watson, the story of a miracle in a Catholic church in Edmonton. This story is developed horizontally in nine short chapters as the bishop asks for a sign of the failure of his congregation to submit to the will of God. First

the crucifix and then the priest are infested with lice as Watson explores corruption within and without the church. Unfortunately, the power of this symbol is lost in what I would have to call a perversion of the short story form. Though I must admit I had second thoughts when I saw two flies cavorting on the cross over the altar in my own church this morning, as I kneeled smug and full of Christmas pud at the communion rail.

A story that pushes the parameters of belief is Al Purdy's "The Undertaker." This tale has possibilities but comes off the wall when Purdy has his undertaker consummate an innocent high school romance in necrophilia at the, pardon me, climax of the story.

Robertson Davies' "The Cat That Went to Trinity" also groans with structural and coincidental obviousness. This gothic tale is an adequate bedtime treat for the fellows at Massey, I assume, but hardly a "classic."

Some of the stories don't go anywhere at all, not even to Trinity, and they exist in the fog that passes for mystery. Among these are "The Village Theatre" by Graham Petrie (a pale shadow of Thomas Mann, who also used the theatre as metaphor for life in short stories), "The Death of Arthur Rimbaud" by Lawrence Mathews, and P. K. Page's "The Woman."

I'm not going to say anything about Michel Tremblay's "The Thirteenth Wife of Baron Klugg." Perhaps it suffers in translation.

Take heart, there are a few classics, although one of the best is "The Sight," written by an Irishman about a New Yorker. Brian Moore's story is a sensitive description of a lonely man facing cancer and the premonitions of his Irish housekeeper, who comes from a culture with the right blend of religion and superstition for good storytelling.

"The Barren Field" by Yves Theriault is the story of a modern-day Demeter of

the Canadian prairie who must sacrifice a man to grow wheat in a barren field. This tale simply and beautifully illustrates the hunger of the soul which nurtures superstition. It takes blood to make lilies grow in the field. Western culture is based on that premise.

This story, Moore's, and Andreas Schroeder's "The Late Man" make this volume worthwhile. "The Late Man," set on the coast where "fishing boats lay strewn about the beach like broken teeth," draws the line between man and God, what is known and what is merely guessed at, right at the edge of the sea. It is a story that transcends reality and nationality and speaks to the soul. Surely there are more like this around.

LINDA ROGERS

*** DONALD A. SMITH, *Long Lance: The True Story of an Impostor*. Macmillan, \$16.95. Doubtless as many people as were taken in by the books of "Grey Owl" were convinced by that vividly written narrative of a prairie Indian life, *Long Lance*. Perhaps some of them hesitated over the tales of buffalo hunts as late as 1890, but probably most of them decided that the sense of time of an Indian born in the wilds would not be so accurate as that of a clock-dominated paleface. Now, in a well-documented biography by Donald Smith, we learn that the real "Long Lance" was a North Carolinian of indeterminate Indian ancestry, Sylvester Long. Even before his death by apparent suicide in 1932, there were those who suspected that "Long Lance" was the guise of an impostor, but it was never publicly proved. Here, for the first time, all of Long's cumulative deceptions are recorded, and a strange tale they make, almost as strange as the fictional narrative we now understand "Long Lance" to have been.

G.W.

dian historian, and exasperated the less thinking Canadian nationalists by convincingly arguing that the conquest of Canada by the British in 1760 had no important influence on the social, economic, or institutional structures of Québec, and that it was later generations, moved by political developments into a defensive position, who created the idea of the "trauma" of conquest. It is, whether or not one agrees with its ultimate conclusions, a superb piece of reasoning from a massive base of factual evidence. But who is the translator? One suspects, since he wrote the Postscript, that it is Allan Greer, but neither he nor anyone else says so, which is unfortunate, for the Englishing of Ouellet's book is a massive and finely accomplished task that deserved much more ample acknowledgment than this printing accords it.

G.W.

*** JOHN BUCHAN, *Sick Heart River*, reprinted with an introduction by Trevor Royle. Oxford, \$12.95. In his brief five years in office, John Buchan was the first Governor General to tour the far North, and out of that expedition in 1937 he gathered the impressions that led to his only Canadian novel, *Sick Heart River*, now reissued with a rather fulsome introduction by Trevor Royle. *Sick Heart River* was written at the end of Buchan's life, and published posthumously in 1941; one has the feeling that the novelist's own premonitions of death played their part in this strange story of an English lawyer who, after receiving a death sentence from his doctors, goes into the North to find a vanished businessman and ends his life ministering to a band of Indians threatened by famine and *accidie*. It is a novel worth rereading; the passages of action are excellently done and the look and feel of the mountain country of the Yukon-British Columbia borderlands are well evoked, though the hero's thoughts and motivations are presented with a rather Edwardian ponderousness.

G.W.

**** FERNAND OUELLET, *Economic and Social History of Québec, 1760-1850*. Carleton Library No. 120; Oxford, \$12.95. This is the first translation of Ouellet's *Histoire Économique et Sociale du Québec, 1760-1850: Structures et Conjunctures*, which appeared in 1966. It established Ouellet as a major Cana-



THE CASE OF ROSS'S MYSTERIOUS BARN

WHEN DISCUSSING SINCLAIR ROSS' "One's a Heifer," most readers seem drawn to essentially two considerations: why Vickers would not allow the boy to look into the stall and what he kept there. Over the years one popular explanation has emerged to the exclusion of others — namely, the boy was denied access to the stall because Vickers kept there the girl who used to visit him, and that she was possibly dead, but more probably confined as a prisoner. In my opinion this explanation is totally unsatisfactory, for the very good reason that the whole story of the girl is nothing more than a fiction in Vickers' mind. I see no grounds for believing that the stall contains anything or for rejecting Vickers' own explanation of his conduct: "There's a hole in the floor — that's why I kept the door closed. If you didn't know, you might step into it — twist your foot."

The clues that Vickers' girl is purely imaginary may be found in both what Vickers tells us about the girl and his behaviour in the light of what he has said. Our suspicions ought to be aroused by the very first mention of the girl ("Last summer I had a girl cooking for a few weeks, but it didn't last. Just a cow she was — just a big stupid cow"), and, if not, then certainly by the account of her performances at the checkerboard: her inability to make decisions ("I had to tell her every move to make"), or remember ("she'd forget whether she was black or red"), or even speak ("This one... couldn't even talk like anybody else"). What puts the issue beyond doubt is the

description of Vickers playing checkers with himself:

Most of the time he played checkers with himself, moving his lips, muttering words I couldn't hear, but once I woke to find him staring fixedly across the table as if he had a partner sitting there. His hands were clenched in front of him, there was a sharp, metallic glitter in his eyes. I lay transfixed, unbreathing. His eyes as I watched seemed to dilate, to brighten, to harden like a bird's. For a long time he sat contracted, motionless, as if gathering himself to strike, then furtively he slid his hand an inch or two along the table towards some checkers that were piled beside the board. It was as if he were reaching for a weapon, as if his invisible partner were an enemy. He clutched the checkers, slipped slowly from his chair and straightened....

It was a long time... then suddenly wrenching himself to action he hurled the checkers with such vicious fury that they struck the wall and clattered back across the room.

The change that Vickers undergoes, the impression he creates of playing with "an invisible partner," someone he is angry with, the final description of the game, the consequent release of tension — all of these things call to mind what Vickers has previously told the boy of his games with the girl, in particular that "If she didn't win she'd upset the board and go off and sulk." Significantly Vickers would always sit rigidly before the checkerboard, staring fixedly before him, his eyes not on the door but the window. The reason for this is obvious: his "visitor" never came through the door but always "appeared" in the window, and when she "appeared" was unmoving: "night after night she'd be sitting there where you are — right there where you are, looking at me, not even trying to play." Such odd behaviour, it is worth pointing out, does not escape the boy. After the game has been disrupted and Vickers has calmed down, the boy sums up the episode with the observation, "I relaxed gradually, telling myself that he'd just been seeing things."

Clearly the most important cause of these "appearances" is the extreme loneliness of Vickers' life. As Vickers himself explains in one revealing passage, "You don't know how bad it is sometimes. Weeks on end and no one to talk to. You're not yourself — you're not sure what you're going to say or do." Worst of all is apparently the summer ("it's worse even than this in the summer. No time for meals — and the heat and flies"). Evidently this is when Vickers feels loneliness the most; by no coincidence, it is also the time the girl has "stayed" the longest. Significantly, the girl disappears when Vickers goes to town and has social contact: "I went to town for a few days — and when I came back she was gone." Solitude, then, is a primary factor in Vickers' condition; but it is not the only one. Another would seem to be Vickers' belief in the need for a feminine presence to handle the domestic work. As he says, "You get careless living alone like this. It takes a woman." So strong is this sense that in the absence of a woman he himself takes on a feminine role. This tendency comes out in a number of small ways, most notably perhaps in the scene where Vickers is helping the boy dress ("He [Vickers] held my sheepskin for me while I put it on, and tied the scarf around the collar with a solicitude and determination equal to Aunt Ellen's"); its culmination of course is the girl's "appearance" for given periods of time. So it is, I think, that in Vickers we may find a rather sharp portrait of a schizoid personality, whose duality is expressed in the title of the story ("One's a Heifer"), which itself is excerpted from the boy's description of the calves ("Yearlings . . . red with white spots and faces. *The same except that one's a heifer and the other isn't*" — my italics). There is a nice symmetry to this — this equation between the calves and Vickers: the boy does not find the two almost identical calves that he is looking

for, but in Vickers, particularly when the "big stupid cow" of a girl appears, he happens upon a striking human parallel; and in both matters, identification of the calves and analysis of Vickers' behaviour, the boy misinterprets what he sees by a wide margin.

As I see it, the business of the barn, what might or might not be there, is not only unimportant but is even an impediment to any appreciation of what the story — a study of illusion — is about. Interest in this matter only arises when the reader is seduced into an unwitting acceptance of the values and opinions of a narrator who believes in Vickers' guilt but whose judgments throughout are unfortunately unreliable. For such an elementary critical error there can be no excuse. We are told explicitly that the boy is only thirteen; we know that he has not been away from home all night before and never visited these parts; we can see from his reactions on the way to Vickers' place, as his disappointment at not finding the calves mounts and his sense of alienation increases, that he is highly impressionable; and what is more important, we cannot escape the fact that in charging Vickers with theft of the calves he is simply wrong. Given this, I find it surprising that any reader would entertain the boy's suspicions seriously. Aunt Ellen obviously knows better.

F. H. WHITMAN

JACOBITES IN CANADIAN LITERATURE

IN HIS ARTICLE "Angles on Saxons: A Study of the Anglo-Saxon in Quebec Fiction" (*Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 25/26), Roman Hathorn counts the character of Archibald de Locheill among the

Britishers who, in numerous novels published since *L'Influence d'un livre* (1837), have become stock types in French-Canadian novels. Although Hathorn mentions that Arché is "a chivalrous and duty-bound Scot," and not an Englishman, he does not sufficiently underline the fact that de Locheill's very special background as a Jacobite provides him with the prerequisite for his acceptance in the d'Haberville family. Thus, Hathorn confirms the simplistic notion of the "two solitudes." This concept has contributed to overlooking significant ethnic, religious, and linguistic nuances in the Canadian mosaic, nuances which are rarely self-explanatory in isolation and can appear in numerous combinations with others. One such characteristic, e.g., religion, may completely change the chemistry of a given group of people in their interaction with another. As a result, the Glengarry community in Connor's novel objects to Yankee Jim less because he is American than because he is Methodist, and Quebec families were often more willing to let their daughters marry Irish officers because they, too, were Roman Catholics.

Jacobites assumed a particularly privileged role among the groups whose beliefs and ethnic background made them akin to both the British and the French. At Culloden in 1745, the followers of Prince Charles Edward had suffered a defeat similar to that of the Quebecois on the Plains of Abraham, a parallel underlined by the fact that Murray and Wolfe were present at both battles. The Stuarts were Roman Catholics and, having been educated in France, spoke French, besides their native Gaelic. Their linguistic versatility led to confusing encounters during the Battle on the Plains of Abraham where a group of Highlanders, taken prisoner, is reported to have been frightened by a "gigantic French officer" who addressed them in Gaelic; "they concluded

that his Satanic Majesty in person was before them" (John Murray Gibbon, *Scots in Canada* [Toronto: Musson, 1911], p. 78). Arché's status in Aubert de Gaspé's novel is further enhanced by the fact that he is the descendant of one of "Bonnie Prince Charlie's" most loyal followers, namely Donald Cameron, the "gentle Lochiel" of Jacobite lore, and of Dr. Archibald Cameron who is the subject of an affecting episode in which, shortly before his execution, he writes a letter to his son advising him "to service God, honour King James, abstain from late and heavy suppers, and avoid drinking and whoring" (John Prebble, *Culloden* [London: Secker & Warburg, 1961]). The letter remained unfinished because the pencil broke and there was no knife in Cameron's cell to sharpen it. Thus, Aubert de Gaspé has made considerable efforts to choose an "Anglo-Saxon" for his novel who is acceptable to his French-Canadian hosts on many accounts, not the least being the affectionate humanness surrounding his family.

Arché is the literary prototype of a Jacobite character who appears in a number of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century historical novels in Canada. This type is not only significant in helping us to correct the theory of the two solitudes, but also in contributing to formulate a distinctive Canadian voice. A number of the novels to be considered in this context experiment with point-of-view techniques aimed at doing justice to the multiple loyalties of the characters involved. In her books *The Curious Career of Roderick Campbell* (1901) and *A Diana of Quebec* (1912), Jean McIlwraith uses the perspectives of a gruff Scotch soldier and of a worldly-wise Scotsman respectively to relate her story. Her choices allow her to resensitize issues which had already become set descriptions and attitudes in the historical romance. Captain Mathews, for instance,

can be allowed to make surprisingly critical remarks on the state of the conquered city of Quebec, because his background allows him to say, "I have no personal feeling against the French whatsoever. . . . They were the ancient allies of my forebears, and stood by us in our wars with England" (*Diana*, p. 9). In other historical romances of the time, Quebec City is romanticized and frequently seen from a glorifying distance (see André Duval, *Le Québec romantique* [Montreal: Boréal, 1978]), a stereotype contrasting sharply — and revealingly — with the disdain generally expressed for the French-Canadians living in it (see, for example, *The Man from Glengarry*). Descriptions of Quebec like the following by Mathews were generally considered anathema because their realism might have confronted the English reader with the physical and psychological consequences of the conquest even in the escapist world of the romance: "We . . . were making our way up Mountain Hill, avoiding, as far as it might be, the pitfalls of ash heaps, soot, and filth of every kind which the citizens had deposited without their dwellings despite the most stringent orders to the contrary. Refuse from the Lower Town was to be placed on the beach in certain places at low tide; that from the upper Town was to be taken through Palace Gate and deposited on the shore near the Intendant's Palace" (*Diana*, pp. 7-8). Despite Mathews' candidness, it would be exaggerated to call McIlwraith a realist writer; later on in the novel, after the Captain has fallen in love, his descriptions of Quebec — and other scenery — become as idealized and distantly hazy as those in contemporary romances, so that his earlier frankness makes more of a comment on his own gloominess than on the social reality of Quebec.

Whereas Mathews' versatility is deliberately limited to a general sympathy with Québécois, McIlwraith has created in

Roderick Campbell and Hugh Maxwell of Kirkconnel characters who exploit, to the full, the adaptability of the Jacobite. Roderick, an amiable turn-coat who enters symbioses with every imaginable faction in the Old World and the New (in *The Curious Career of Roderick Campbell*), for the love of life and of his nephew Gilbert, is a wanderer by necessity as well as by choice: a true *picaro*. Kirkconnel in *The Span o' Life*, however, is a professional soldier who suppresses personal emotions for the sake of politics. McIlwraith co-authored *The Span o' Life* with William McLennan who, one may assume, wrote the first part, "Maxwell's Story," while McIlwraith contributed "Margaret's Story." The dryness of Maxwell's narrative is offset by "feminine" emphasis on descriptive detail and conventional responses to natural scenery in the second part. The bridge between Maxwell's and Margaret's perspectives is provided by the presence of M. de Sarnes, whom both characters initially despise as a "well-bred Canadian." Sarnes takes revenge by ridiculing their ignorance of the Canadian landscape.

Kirkconnel is modelled on the historical Chevalier de Johnstone whose fictionalization in McIlwraith's and McLennan's novel may be regarded as the climax of Canadian literary and historical interest in him. The vicissitudes of the Canadian research conducted on him during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century again illustrates the fact that the Jacobites belong to the worlds of both the English and the French. In Johnstone's first appearance in Canadian literature that two-facedness is translated into metaphorical terms. In Richardson's *Wacousta*, Leslie is teased by his fellow soldiers because his ancestor was a "traitor to England." As a consequence, Leslie distinguishes himself repeatedly through outstanding valour, in an attempt to compensate for Johnstone's

and, within the framework of the novel, for Wacousta's unethical behaviour. Wacousta's life story is modelled on that of the Chevalier de Johnstone who took part in the '45, fled to France, and joined the French on the Plains of Abraham. Wacousta's motivation is blind revenge, Leslie's the pursuit of his family's rehabilitation in the esteem of the English. Among the many problems attending the New Canadian Library edition of *Wacousta* is the fact that this carefully planned balance between revenge and rehabilitation has been destroyed through eliminating episodes concerning Leslie Johnstone. Richardson must have been familiar with one of the first English editions of the Chevalier's *Memoirs of the Rebellion in 1745 and 1746* which were published in London in 1821 and 1822; the Historical and Literary Society of Quebec only printed excerpts in 1866 and 1887. For years, Johnstone, in a typically Jacobite fashion as we have seen, confused historians with respect to his mother-tongue. James LeMoine, who wrote the introductory notes to both the 1866 and 1887 editions, commented on Johnstone's English as "not remarkable for orthography or purity of diction; either Johnstone had forgotten or had never thoroughly known the language" (Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, "A Dialogue in Hades: A Parallel of Military Errors, of which the French and English Armies were guilty during the Campaign of 1759, in Canada," in: *Manuscripts Relating to the Early History of Canada* [Quebec: 1868]). Only in 1915 did the Society publish the *Mémoires de M. le Chev. de Johnstone* in the original French, after P. B. Casgrain, one of the ex-Presidents of the Society, had located the Journal in the original. The confusion over, and the continued interest in, Johnstone's life (see the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979]) as well as Johnstone's own

analysis of the campaigns at Culloden and the Plains of Abraham, made him a valuable historical source for both the French and the English, and a medium for non-chauvinist historical fiction trying to formulate the multiple human perspectives necessary in approximating the historical truth.¹

NOTE

- ¹ Although there appears to be no novel of the quality of McIlwraith's describing the fate of the Jacobites who became United Empire Loyalists, a similar case can be made for them. Whereas the arrival of Prince Charlie in Nova Scotia is only wistful legend (narrated in Percy E. Hart, *Jason-Nova Scotia: Founded upon a Romantic Legend of My Native Land* [N.Y.: Bibelot, 1903]), Flora MacDonald did emigrate to North Carolina where she and her family became strongly involved in the struggle of the Loyalists; on her return to Scotland, she briefly stayed in Halifax. The loyalty of the Jacobites to a monarchy responsible for their expulsion from Scotland puzzled their American compatriotes; yet, as Morven in Robert Sellar's novel *Morven* (1911) explains, revenge on the French who had deserted the Scots in their hour of need was sweet, besides the fact that any monarchy appeared more legal than the democracy the revolutionaries proposed to establish in America. Again, the actions of the Jacobites defy facile explanations.

EVA-MARIE KROLLER

QUATRE VERSIONS D'UNE LEGENDE CANADIENNE

LE 16 AVRIL 1542, Jean Laroque de Roberval quitte le port de La Rochelle en France en route pour le Canada avec trois navires et la commission du roi François I de fonder une colonie française dans le Nouveau Monde. Pour des raisons de politique européenne la colonie sera "très catholique" et aura le but ostensible de

porter la foi chrétienne aux sauvages. Jacques Cartier, qui avait déjà fait deux voyages au Canada, participe à cette mission à titre de navigateur.¹

A cause des délais dans les préparations de Roberval, Cartier avait quitté la France avec cinq navires un an plus tôt que Roberval, le chef officiel de l'expédition. Quand Roberval arrive à saint-Jean, Terre-Neuve, au mois de juin 1542 il y rencontre Cartier par hasard. En dépit des ordres directs de Roberval de retourner avec lui au pays d'Hochelaga, Cartier, qui avait déjà décidé d'abandonner la tentative de coloniser le nouveau pays, quitte Saint-Jean à couvert de la nuit pour rentrer en France avec ce qu'il croyait être de l'or et des diamants du Nouveau Monde. Roberval continue son voyage par le détroit de Belle Isle, et arrive à Charlesbourg-Royal, maintenant Cap Rouge, où Cartier avait passé l'hiver de 1541-42. A son tour Roberval aussi passe un hiver misérable et l'été suivant il abandonne sa mission de fonder une colonie française. Toute la colonie rentre en France en 1543 avec les navires ravitailleurs. C'est-à-dire, toute la colonie est rentrée, à l'exception bien entendu des gens morts au cours de l'aventure et à l'exception d'une dame exilée sur une île déserte par Roberval.

Le récit de cet exil a vite suscité de l'intérêt en France où la première version publiée était celle de Marguerite de Navarre, dans *l'Heptaméron* imprimé en 1558, quinze ans seulement après le retour de Roberval.² La composition de la nouvelle soixante-sept de *l'Heptaméron* a dû suivre de près le retour de Roberval, en 1543. Marguerite de Navarre avait commencé la rédaction des nouvelles pour son *Heptaméron* vers 1540 et n'avait pas terminé la composition de ce que l'on suppose aurait été un recueil de cent nouvelles avant sa mort en décembre 1549.

D'autres versions de la légende de la dame exilée par Roberval ont très vite été

créées, et chaque siècle depuis l'incident nous a fourni plusieurs nouvelles créations littéraires basées sur la légende.³ Les historiens aussi font souvent allusion à l'exil de Marguerite de Roberval, tout en signalant la qualité légendaire du récit.⁴

Quels sont les éléments de base du récit, consacrés par la légende? Selon la tradition, parmi les colons de Roberval se trouvait une jeune dame, Marguerite de Roberval ou de Nontron, qui était sa soeur ou sa nièce. Quand Roberval découvre Marguerite en flagrant délit avec un jeune artisan pendant le voyage au Canada, il décide d'exiler la jeune dame et son ancienne nourrice sur l'île des Démon. L'action de Roberval serait inspirée à la fois par sa jalousie et par son désir de prendre possession lui-même des territoires considérables de Marguerite. L'amant de Marguerite se sauve du navire à la dernière minute et rejoint Marguerite et sa nourrice sur l'île.

Les exilés s'adaptent tant bien que mal à leur nouvelle vie, mais ils sont mal préparés pour l'hiver. En effet, le mari et l'enfant que Marguerite a mis au monde trouvent la mort pendant le premier hiver; le mari dans un accident de chasse, l'enfant après seulement quelques jours de vie. La servante meurt aussi au commencement du deuxième hiver de l'exil, mais Marguerite continue à vivre seule sur l'île jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit sauvée par des pêcheurs bretons, vingt-neuf mois après le commencement de son exil. Les pêcheurs bretons ont eu de la difficulté à reconnaître la forme humaine dans cet être sauvage qui les interpellait de l'île des Démon. Marguerite quitte l'île un peu à regret, car elle y a enterré tant de ses proches.

Le développement de la légende est trop compliqué pour examiner en détail ici; il suffira de remarquer que les premiers à raconter l'incident ont dit avoir connu Roberval et Marguerite.⁵ Ce contact personnel entre les écrivains et les

principaux du récit était bien possible, même probable, et cela suggère l'authenticité de l'incident, malgré quelques contradictions dans les détails trouvées dans les premières versions. Mais la question complexe de la part exacte de vérité historique est secondaire, finalement, à la considération de l'attrait persistant que cette légende a exercé sur les écrivains et les historiens. A cette fin nous proposons ici une comparaison de trois versions canadiennes contemporaines et de la première version publiée pour démontrer quelques aspects de cet attrait, et pour signaler des contrastes frappants visibles dans les versions comparées.

L'émission télévisée en décembre 1979 de "Marooned in the Land God Gave to Cain" au réseau anglais de Radio-Canada nous a donné la version la plus récente.⁶ Le film, tourné par Barry Pearson et Peter Rowe en 1979, exploite assez bien les aspects les plus évidents de cette légende, car le récit incorpore admirablement le thème de la confrontation avec l'inconnu dans le Nouveau Monde. L'accent est mis sur Marguerite, qui dans cette version, est accompagnée seulement par son amant. Le contraste est développé entre Marguerite qui s'adapte physiquement à la terre et François qui passe son temps à compter les jours et à guetter le bord de la mer pour un vaisseau qui les sauvera. Pendant que Marguerite herborise pour des plantes comestibles, fait de la chasse, construit la cabane, et se fait des vêtements avec des peaux d'animaux, François construit une croix et une tour pour mieux signaler les navires, et se scandalise du comportement sauvage de Marguerite. Presque inévitablement François est tué par accident dans le piège à ours, car il est resté prisonnier de sa mentalité européenne.

L'échec final de François est prédit par l'échec de sa première tentative de contacter des pêcheurs. Quand il voit les pêcheurs, François insiste que Marguerite

s'habille correctement dans sa robe avant d'aborder le bateau, et dans leur hâte et leur maladresse d'habiller Marguerite sur la plage ils font peur aux pêcheurs qui les croient des démons. S'ils avaient été moins soucieux de respecter les conventions sociales, ils auraient attrapé sans doute le bateau. Ce n'est que deux ans plus tard que Marguerite verra encore un bateau. Cette fois l'action est l'opposé de la première rencontre: Marguerite a nié son identité européenne et se promène déguisée en animal. Quand les pêcheurs se sauvent de ce démon, Marguerite revient à elle et commence à prier et à pleurer. Les hommes reconnaissent les mots de la prière et voient finalement la femme et non pas le démon.

"Marooned in the Land God Gave to Cain," créé pour le grand public, continue, donc, la tradition littéraire populaire commencée par François de Belleforest et André Thevet au seizième siècle.⁷ Le contexte historique sert de cadre au développement d'un drame de la confrontation de l'inconnu, un drame d'aventures physiques et psychologiques.

Tout autre est le soixante-septième conte de l'*Heptaméron* où l'accent est mis sur la foi chrétienne de la femme. Quand son mari est condamné de trahison par le capitaine, la femme propose que Roberval les exile au lieu de donner la mort à son mari. Dans leur exil la femme lit incessamment le *Nouveau Testament*, tout en aidant son mari à construire un logis et à les défendre des bêtes sauvages. Elle sert de médecin et de confesseur à son mari qui meurt à cause des "eaux qu'ilz buvoient."⁸ Après la mort de son mari elle continue sa vie "bestiale" de corps mais "angélique" d'esprit, et elle passe son temps "en lectures, contemplations, prières et oraisons." Pour récompenser la foi et la vertu de cette dame, Dieu fait que les navires de Roberval repassent par cette île pendant leur voyage de retour en France.

La critique a généralement accepté cette nouvelle comme un éloge sans ironie de la vertu féminine et de la puissance de Dieu. Dans la discussion du récit par les conteurs de *l'Heptaméron*, Simontault, un personnage militaire et misogyne qui a offert cette nouvelle comme preuve de sa bonne foi envers la femme, insiste que l'incident est un exemple frappant de la vertu de la femme. Longarine renforce la louange de l'amour de la femme pour son mari et de sa foi en Dieu. Mais à un autre niveau, Marguerite de Navarre critique obliquement le comportement de Roberval dans l'incident, car elle rend la femme exilée complètement innocente d'un amour coupable et la dote d'un amour noble et chrétien. Dans le contexte plus grand des autres nouvelles, Simontault se montre un homme qui approuverait vite les actions de Roberval envers une femme infidèle à son maître, mais ironiquement dans cette nouvelle c'est Simontault qui loue les vertus et la foi de l'exilée. Par cette technique Marguerite de Navarre a renversé, pour ainsi dire, le contenu anecdotique de l'incident que Roberval lui-même lui a sans doute raconté.⁹ Là où Roberval a vu une trahison personnelle par une femme entêtée, Marguerite de Navarre nous donne une louange de vertu et les signes irréfutables de la bénédiction divine de cette femme.

L'accent inattendu sur la religion que l'on trouve dans la version de Marguerite de Navarre se retrouve aussi dans la version contemporaine de George Woodcock, où la religion est peut-être encore moins attendue. *The Island of Demons*, une pièce de théâtre en vers libres, publiée en 1977, présente le drame dans un cadre rétrospectif car l'action commence avec le voyage de retour en 1545.¹⁰ Le dramaturge développe brièvement l'intrigue amoureuse et les raisons pour l'exil, en se servant d'éléments traditionnels: l'intrigue amoureuse du jeune couple précède le voyage, et la colère de Rober-

val est inspirée par la pauvreté du prétendant ainsi que par le projet secret des amants. Mais l'exil proposé par Roberval devient ici une punition poétique de la révolte des jeunes gens: "You and your lover planned to run away / Into the green shades of the wilderness. / There is your wilderness — that demon's island." Roberval leur promet tout ce dont ils auront besoin physiquement, mais il leur rappelle l'absence de civilisation: "Food of the flesh you shall not want / But in the spirit you may starve." Avant tout il évoque l'absence de l'Eglise dans leur paradis pour confirmer leur mariage, la naissance de leur enfant, et leur mort éventuelle. Et finalement à leur idée de paradis, il oppose l'idée de regret: "And if no visible demons rend your peace / Do not forget the demon named Regret."

Les démons du titre de la pièce seront donc des forces intérieures qui démontreront la folie de cette tentative de trouver le paradis dans le Nouveau Monde. Les pulsions intérieures à l'homme, le Doute, le Désaccord, et le Regret, sont présentées comme des personnages allégoriques qui vont présider au déroulement de l'action et à la destruction du rêve de paradis: "Doubt, Discord, Regret — thought, action, consequence! / We always work together, a trinity of negation." Le récit sert, dans cette perspective, d'allégorie de la condition humaine: "Any island / Is an Island of Demons, and any mind, for that matter. / We are not always active. Long we lie latent; / A moment's impulse calls us back to life."

Ce sont le Désaccord et le Doute qui commentent la mort de Michel, et de l'enfant prématuré. Leur présence à la fin de cette scène souligne leur présence aussi dans l'action de la pièce, où Marguerite et Michel se sont querellés au sujet de la chasse et de leur exil volontaire.

Le Regret est plus important, bien sûr, après la mort du mari et de l'enfant. Marguerite avoue amèrement: "Better a

lifetime as my uncle's prisoner / Than the grim joys that liberty has brought!" Marguerite accepte la perspective chrétienne de Marie et de Roberval sur le monde physique: "We thought the wilderness would be an Eden. / If it's an Eden, then the Fall came first. / Lend me your cross, Marie."

Le vrai débat est entamé avec les démons après la mort de Marie. Marguerite confronte ouvertement le doute qu'elle ne sera jamais sauvée, ses sentiments de haine envers Marie, Michel, et Roberval causés par des désaccords passés, et elle s'adresse à ses regrets de ne plus voir le pays de son enfance. Ces trois démons de Doute, Désaccord et Regret la supplient de maudire Dieu, mais Marguerite est sauvée par l'apparition divine de la Vierge Marie: "I am Marie, but another Marie also. / I rise from within you. Your own cries called me forth, / And in that instant when you denied denial / You forged your freedom. Demons and protectors / Alike are bred within the human hearts, / And man in his own will makes under Heaven / His free way to destruction or to glory. / Look to the sea. Marguerite: The ship sails in from the east like a great white bird / And all the voices of the island are silent."

A l'encontre du film "Marooned in the Land God Gave to Cain," *The Island of Demons* s'oriente vers l'abstraction d'un débat intellectuel. Le refuge de la foi chrétienne est opposé au chaos des relations humaines: libéré des entraves de la civilisation l'homme se trouve menacé par des forces intérieures qui risquent de le détruire. La quête d'un paradis terrestre que l'on voit dans la légende de Marguerite de Roberval sert, dans cette re-création par George Woodcock, à nous rappeler que la nature humaine rendra toujours ce paradis terrestre difficile, si non impossible.

Par une coïncidence intéressante, Anne Hébert écrit une deuxième version dra-

matique de la légende en 1977-1978.¹¹ Tout comme le titre de la pièce de George Woodcock indique bien sa préoccupation avec les démons, le titre de la pièce d'Anne Hébert nous révèle son noyau central: *L'île de la demoiselle* se concentre sur une étude de la femme.

L'action de la pièce se divise également entre le voyage et l'exil. Pendant le voyage l'auteur nous présente des exemples du comportement féminin traditionnel dans un monde où l'homme, dans la personne du capitaine Roberval, est "maître après Dieu." La femme séductrice se présente dans la dame de qualité: cette femme bigame fuit la France pour éviter la situation fâcheuse créée par l'existence de ses trois maris bien vivants. Mais dès le commencement du voyage elle essaie de séduire Roberval pour s'établir au Canada. Tout en signalant à Marguerite que Roberval est sa chasse gardée à elle, la dame de qualité rend Marguerite sensible aussi aux pouvoirs de l'attraction sexuelle que la jeune femme exerce inconsciemment sur tous les hommes à bord le navire. Tout est permis en amour, et pour se débarrasser de sa jeune rivale pour les attentions de Roberval, la dame de qualité accuse Marguerite de sorcellerie. Bien pratiquée dans les arts féminins, la dame de qualité sait bien que l'accusation de sorcellerie est un des moyens les plus efficaces de se servir de la beauté d'une rivale pour la détruire.

Le piège de la dame de qualité ne réussit pas, cependant, car la servante de Marguerite est aussi pratiquée dans les arts féminins et elle a su exploiter l'amour ressenti par Roberval pour sa nièce afin d'obtenir des faveurs du capitaine. C'est son amour pour Marguerite qui pousse Roberval à ne pas croire l'accusation de sorcellerie, et à pardonner à sa nièce son amour pour Nicolas si elle vient mourir avec lui dans le naufrage qui les menace.

Au milieu de tous ces courants sentimentaux, la jeune Marguerite reste éton-

namment naïve et innocente. Elle croit toujours au but ostensible du voyage de fonder la colonie très catholique. Elle répond franchement aux avances physiques du jeune homme sympathique qu'elle rencontre à bord le navire, et lui donne son cœur sans arrière pensée. Et elle avoue cet amour à son oncle sans se rendre compte des conséquences de cette insulte à son rang et à son amour pour elle.

Mais avant tout Marguerite est remplie d'un désir de vivre. Face à l'invitation de mourir de son oncle, elle dit simplement qu'elle doit vivre: "Hélas, M. le Commandant, j'ai grande pitié de vous, mais je ne suis pas libre de mourir avec vous. Il faut que je vive avec Nicolas." Des trois exilés, il y a seulement Marguerite qui refuse d'accepter la mort malgré la difficulté de sa vie. Elle se révolte à la suggestion de Charlotte que la mort de son enfant est la volonté de Dieu, car elle ne veut pas que son fils soit un ange au paradis, elle veut qu'il vive avec elle sur terre. Elle demande justice et réparation et jure de vaincre le grand oiseau noir de la mort. Pendant son hibernation solitaire dans la grotte elle lutte pour vivre en confrontant, dans des songes, toute sa formation européenne de jeune fille bien éduquée. En dépit des principes de gentillesse et de passivité féminines, énoncés par la voix d'une religieuse, Marguerite passe à l'action et enduit son corps de graisse pour se protéger du froid, et songe à tuer Roberval pendant qu'elle dessine l'image de son oncle meurtri sur le mur de la grotte. Elle accepte de devenir quelque chose de primitif afin de vivre: "Je ne suis plus une femme, ni rien de convenable. Ce que je suis devenue n'a pas de nom en aucune langue connue."

Cet être primitif effraie les pêcheurs au premier contact, mais les Bretons réussissent à reconnaître une femme dans cette apparition sur la plage. En l'honneur de

cette femme qui a gagné une victoire sur le monde inhabitable de l'île des Démons, ils renomment l'endroit "l'île de la Demoiselle." Un dernier signe de sa victoire se trouve dans la nouvelle de l'assassinat de Roberval que Marguerite accepte comme un signe que la justice qu'elle a tant voulue lui a été accordée mystérieusement.

Les trois versions canadiennes contemporaines de la légende sont une preuve de l'intérêt toujours vif inspiré par l'incident obscur du seizième siècle. Mais au lieu de développer le drame de l'intrigue amoureuse et familiale, ces recreations modernes se concentrent sur d'autres aspects du récit. Le film de Barry Pearson exploite, à un niveau populaire, le thème de la confrontation du pays et de l'adaptation par la femme seulement, pour suggérer un certain féminisme dans son interprétation. Nous avons vu des éléments de féminisme aussi dans l'interprétation religieuse de Marguerite de Navarre, mais c'est Anne Hébert qui exploite d'une façon plus détaillée ce thème de féminisme. Cela se voit dans la division de la pièce entre une description des comportements traditionnels de la femme dans la société européenne, et la création d'une nouvelle manière d'être femme dans la deuxième partie de la pièce. Cette image de la femme victorieuse fait partie intégrante de l'oeuvre d'Anne Hébert, car Marguerite fait écho lointain aux *Tombeaux des Rois*. Mais bien que les interprétations d'Anne Hébert et de Barry Pearson se placent tout à fait dans les courants contemporains de féminisme, le conservatisme de l'interprétation de George Woodcock, où l'accent est sur un débat philosophique, me semble, par contre, un phénomène plus inattendu.

NOTES

Une version plus courte de cet article était présentée le 24 mai 1981 aux réunions de l'Association des Littératures canadiennes et

québécoise pendant le congrès des Sociétés savantes à Dalhousie University.

- ¹ Voir Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France I. Les Vaines Tentatives. 1524-1603* (Montréal: Fides, 1963), pp. 124-75 pour de plus amples détails.
- ² Cf. Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Michel François (Paris: Garnier, 1943), pp. 392-95. Les premières éditions datent de 1558 et 1559. La version de Marguerite de Navarre est restée dans l'oubli jusqu'à la mention par l'historien canadien Henry Harnisse, dans *Notes pour servir à l'histoire, à la bibliographie et à la cartographie de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris: Tros, 1872), pp. 278-79. Cf. Stabler, p. 5.
- ³ Voir Arthur P. Stabler, *The Legend of Marguerite de Roberval* ([Pullman]: Washington State Univ., 1972). Stabler étudie le développement de cette légende à travers les siècles. La première version canadienne, selon Stabler, est celle de George Martin, le poème *Marguerite or the Isle of Demons* (Montreal: n.p., 1887), suivie de près par la pièce de John Hunter-Duvar, *De Roberval, a Drama* (Saint John: J. & A. Mc-Millan, 1888), et le roman historique de Thomas G. Marquis, *Marguerite de Roberval* (Toronto and London: T. F. Unwin, 1899). Robert LaRoque de Roquebrune s'est intéressé aussi à l'histoire, et a publié des articles dans le *Dictionnaire de Biographie canadienne / Dictionary of Canadian Biography*; voir sous "Marguerite de Roberval" et "Jean LaRoque de Roberval."
- ⁴ Voir Stabler, pp. 64-78; Trudel, p. 155; et Robert Lacour-Gayet, *Histoire du Canada* (Paris: Fayard, 1966), p. 48. Les historiens modernes préfèrent tantôt celle de Thevet.
- ⁵ Marguerite de Navarre connaissait Roberval à la cour de son frère. André Thevet prétendait avoir visité Marguerite de Navarre après l'incident, et se disait un intime de Roberval. (Voir Stabler, pp. 12, 38.)
- ⁶ Barry Pearson, "Marooned in the Land God Gave to Cain," 30", couleur; directeur: Peter Rowe, Rosebud Films, Toronto, 1979. Emission, CBC-TV, le 28 décembre 1979, dans la série "The Spirit of Adventure." Je remercie Barry Pearson et Peter Rowe de la copie du scénario qu'ils m'ont empruntée.
- ⁷ Voir François de Belleforest, *Histoires tragiques*, 5 (Paris: Hulpéau, 1570, 2^e édition 1572), et André Thevet, *Cosmographie Universelle* (Paris: P. l'Huillier, et Paris:

G. Chaudière, 1575), et la discussion de ces auteurs dans Stabler.

- ⁸ *Tales from the Heptaméron*, ed. H. P. Clive (London: Univ. of London, Athlone Press, 1970), p. 156. Toutes les citations seront de cette édition.
- ⁹ Nicole Cazauran remarque sur le contraste entre la version de Marguerite et celles de ses contemporains: "A comparer ce conte dévot, si austère de style comme de schéma, aux autres versions du XVI^e siècle on peut voir combien Marguerite de Navarre s'est détournée du romanesque qui s'offrait, qui s'imposait presque, pour une telle aventure." *L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1976), p. 189.
- ¹⁰ George Woodcock, *Two Plays: The Island of Demons; Six Dry Cakes for the Hunted* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977), pp. 9-55.
- ¹¹ "L'île de la demoiselle" (texte original 1977-1978), *Les Ecrits du Canada français*, 42 (1979), 9-92.

D. W. RUSSELL

"LA DAME" DE ROCH CARRIER

LA DAME QUI AVAIT DES CHAINES AUX CHEVILLES est le huitième roman de Roch Carrier.¹ Il est alors naturel d'y retrouver des thèmes que l'auteur a déjà traités dans ses œuvres antérieures. On n'est ainsi pas surpris de voir les militaires et les religieux ridiculisés comme dans *La Guerre, Yes Sir!*² On est encore moins surpris de retrouver la veine surnaturelle — pour ne pas dire fantastique — qui avait déjà été amplement exploitée dans *Les Fleurs vivent-elles ailleurs que sur la terre*³ et dans *Jolis deuils*.⁴ Violence extrême, amour bestial, religion impitoyable et croyances ridicules: les éléments du drame Carriérien sont bien réunis ici en une synthèse à la fois moins rabelaisienne que *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* et moins délicate que *La Céleste Bicyclette*.⁵

Mais au fond ce qui distingue ce roman des œuvres antérieures c'est sa forme et

j'entends par là simplement le style et la structure narrative.

Au niveau stylistique le lecteur peut être facilement découragé par l'accumulation des lieux communs et des répétitions, même si les uns et les autres doivent représenter les tâtonnements de personnages plutôt simples d'esprit. Un exemple suffira à illustrer ce point: "Virginie tu es triste comme si c'était l'automne, mais c'est betôt le printemps." Cette phrase revient trop souvent et le seul effet qu'elle puisse produire sur le lecteur c'est la lassitude. Il me semble que l'itération stylistique n'avait été avant *La Dame* qu'un pêché véniel chez Roch Carrier.

La structure narrative ne suit pas l'ordre chronologique des événements évoqués et permet au lecteur de s'accrocher au récit. Tenant à la fois du discours mythique, de l'occulte, de l'énigme policière et du nouveau-roman, *La Dame* constitue un effort plus que louable en ce qui concerne la grammaire narrative. Ainsi les cent premières pages contiennent de nombreuses allusions au "grand malheur" mais la nature de ce dernier n'est que progressivement révélée pour être enfin complètement dévoilée à la page 108: "— Cet homme, dit-elle, a tué mon enfant."

Cependant la structure narrative de *La Dame* mérite une attention particulière car elle est constituée de deux récits et des nombreuses relations que l'auteur établit entre ces derniers.

Il y a tout d'abord le récit de *La Dame*. Il s'agit d'une légende que l'on raconte au Pays de Québec. Dans le Vieux Pays une Dame tue son mari pour se venger de la mort de son enfant dont elle rend cet homme responsable. Après un long emprisonnement *La Dame* saisit l'occasion de recommencer sa vie. Elle monte sur un voilier qui la conduira au Pays de Québec.

Il y a ensuite le récit de Virginie: l'heureuse épouse de Victor, jusqu'au jour

du "grand malheur." Par une nuit de tempête Victor perd le bébé dans la neige. A partir de ce moment-là Virginie s'enferme dans un douloureux silence et médite sa vengeance. Un beau jour elle finit par empoisonner Victor pour ensuite confesser son crime à un moine. Virginie sera jugée au Tribunal de Québec. Rebondissement inattendu: Victor n'est pas mort après avoir bu le café de chicorée empoisonné que lui avait préparé Virginie. La libération du couple s'accompagne de la naissance d'un nouvel enfant. Comment peut-on expliquer cette insolite affaire? Bien que l'auteur laisse planer un certain doute il ne s'agirait ni plus ni moins que d'un cas de possession:

Mais cet homme dans la tempête n'était pas Victor, et cette femme dans la forêt n'était pas Virginie. Dans la forêt errent des âmes condamnées. Elles cherchent des corps comme des bêtes affamées. Ces âmes ont envahi leurs corps. Elle n'était plus Virginie. Il n'était plus Victor. Cet homme qui n'était plus Victor a tué un enfant. Elle qui n'était plus Virginie a empoisonné l'homme qui n'était plus Victor. C'est à cause du vent dans les arbres que tout est arrivé.

Tout cela pourrait sembler plutôt simpliste si au niveau symbolique ne se dessinait pas une certaine métaphysique de la narration. Ainsi la légende de *La Dame* est une sorte de matrice, de formule générale. Ceux qui prendront connaissance de cette trame narrative seront peut-être tentés de l'appliquer à leur propre vie. Le pouvoir de suggestion semble ici très fort et l'on pourrait affirmer que l'on n'est en présence ni de la mimesis ni de la sémios. En effet, ce n'est pas la littérature qui imite la vie et c'est encore moins l'art qui est indépendant de la réalité. Ce que Roch Carrier suggère serait plutôt que la vie imite la littérature:

Virginie n'a plus de regret, elle n'a pas peur, et elle sait des choses qu'il faut des centaines d'années pour apprendre. Elle vivra dans un cachot et ses chaînes traîneront longtemps derrière elle. Un jour, elle errera,

elle aussi, dans les histoires du temps passé que l'on racontera de génération en génération et que les enfants écouteront, hypnotisés. Une nuit, l'une de ces enfants connaîtra un grand malheur. Alors, dans le vent, elle se souviendra de l'histoire d'une Dame. . . .

La fin du roman peut sembler optimiste, mais une phrase du narrateur indiquerait plutôt que la possession peut être intermittente. En effet, Victor, qui semble avoir retrouvé son âme, se met à rire et l'auteur précise "La méchanceté qui marquait son visage est revenue dans son rire." De tels détails semblent suggérer qu'à tout moment les âmes légendaires peuvent s'emparer des corps présents pour revivre leurs haines.

La Dame qui avait des chaînes aux chevilles est donc une nouvelle exploration des liens mystérieux que Roch Carrier ne cesse de voir entre la vie et la mort. Ce qui semble intéresser l'auteur c'est en quelque sorte le rite de passage, les cérémonies que son imagination engendre. Elles ne sont pas inutiles car elles constituent ce qu'il y a d'essentiellement humain et attachant chez un être qui refuse de ne pas croire à la vie — celle du moment, comme celle de l'éternité.

Dans ce cadre l'on peut affirmer que sa pièce *Le Cirque Noir*⁶ prolonge l'exploration entreprise avec *La Dame* et que cette exploration ouvre au moins la porte sur un espoir, aussi ambigu soit-il. Ainsi l'au-delà de Roch Carrier a le mérite de ne pas être étouffant, comme celui que Jean-Paul Sartre présente dans *Huis Clos*, par exemple. La mort pourrait après tout être bonne. Comme Montaigne, comme ses personnages, Roch Carrier sait "marcher avec cette idée comme si elle était une musique."

NOTES

¹ Roch Carrier, *La Dame qui avait des chaînes aux chevilles* (Montréal: Stanké, 1981).

² Roch Carrier, *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1968).

³ Roch Carrier, *Les Fleurs vivent-elles ailleurs que sur la terre* (Montréal: Stanké, 1980).

⁴ Roch Carrier, *Jolis Deuils* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1964).

⁵ Roch Carrier, *La Céleste Bicyclette* (Montréal: Stanké, 1980).

⁶ Roch Carrier, *Le Cirque Noir* (Montréal: Stanké, 1982).

ALEXANDRE L. AMPRIMOZ

LOWRY'S ALLUSIONS TO MELVILLE IN "LUNAR CAUSTIC"

LOWRY DESCRIBES AN EARLY DRAFT of *Lunar Caustic* as being "among other things, about a man's hysterical identification with Melville."¹ The setting for this novella is a mental hospital and, as L. E. R. Casari points out in "Malcolm Lowry's Drunken Divine Comedy," "the insane asylum is theoretically a place where a diseased man could be purged of his lunacy."² However, the therapeutic promise remains unfulfilled. Despite Lowry's Dantean plan to write "a trilogy entitled *The Voyage That Never Ends* . . . with the *Volcano* as the first, infernal part, and a much amplified *Lunar Caustic* as the second, purgatorial part . . .,"³ he equivocates in the use of the clinical metaphor in the novella. Repeated allusions to Melville's "Billy Budd" and *Moby-Dick*, in effect, suggest that the very clinical framework from which any putative cure might emerge is inadequate, fraudulent, and perhaps even destructive.

By naming the psychiatrist in *Lunar Caustic* Dr. Claggart, Lowry makes an overt allusion to "Billy Budd." The boy Garry correlates with Melville's hero, "Billy Budd."⁴ Like Billy Budd ("so popular with the men"⁵), Garry is widely

liked ("everyone's fond of him"⁶). In a symmetrical reversal of Billy's speech impediment, Garry is voluble. The most significant parallel between the two characters is a quality of murderous purity. David Benham argues in his essay "Lowry's Purgatory," that "in each case the innocent and honest . . . is accused by duplicity (the two Claggarts); the innocent is left literally or figuratively speechless, and can only express himself in violence."⁷ Billy Budd kills Claggart with a blow to the forehead in response to a charge of mutiny; analogously, Garry cuts a child's throat with a broken bottle because "she chalked on the pavement that I and my mother and father were bad people who should be in hell." By deliberately echoing Melville, Lowry does not merely explicate Garry's presence in the insane asylum: like Billy Budd, Garry in his brief instant of rage protests against a corrupt social order that victimizes innocence.

Lowry's Dr. Claggart lacks the innate evil of his namesake; nevertheless, strong parallels exist between the doctor and Melville's master-at-arms. In "Billy Budd" Claggart is one whose moral perversion is not sensual in nature but "dominated by intellectuality."⁸ This form of evil, which "folds itself in the mantle of respectability," is something that "civilization . . . is auspicious to,"⁹ according to Melville. In *Lunar Caustic* Dr. Claggart, with his intellectual cast of mind and with the authority conferred by his official position, acts like the master-at-arms. Despite the psychiatrist's benign intentions, he corresponds to Melville's Claggart in slandering the innocent: Dr. Claggart unwittingly collaborates with (and *corroborates*) the child's view that Garry "should be in hell" by his professional insistence that Garry remain in the hospital, that is, in hell, a "doleful" place that is "the foul core" of the world.

Lowry uses the allusions to Melville to

question — even to deny — the asylum's therapeutic function. Dr. Claggart, in seeking to make Garry accept social reality, negates his interior world of infantile fables, destroys his Adamic innocence.¹⁰ Within these stories of Garry there is, in the mind of the narrator (William Plantagenet, an English jazz musician), an impulse affirming life: "I don't know, it's funny how people want to create, and do, in spite of everything — order and chaos both." Plantagenet sees the fables of the boy as akin to the creativity of Rimbaud, the aesthetic vision disclosed by madness.¹¹ Lowry's narrator anticipates R. D. Laing's perspective that "Madness need not be all breakdown. It may be breakthrough. It is potentially liberation and renewal. . . ."¹² Plantagenet confronts Dr. Claggart with the question, "Don't you see buried in all that wreckage his craving for freedom?" The psychological claims for Garry's liberation are rejected by the psychiatrist (as a projection of Plantagenet's own neurotic concerns), just as the political claims implicit in "Billy Budd" (the ship named after Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*) are rejected. Like Melville's petty officer, Dr. Claggart appears hostile to individual freedom in his "duty of preserving order."¹³

Such an order, both Melville and Lowry imply, is doubly false, an epistemological as well as a moral fraud. The setting of *Lunar Caustic*, an insane asylum, exposes the human inadequacy of rational categories, particularly as the boundaries separating the sane from the crazy shift and blur in the manner articulated by Melville in "Billy Budd":

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colors, but where exactly does the one first blendingly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity. In pronounced cases there is no question about them. But in some supposed cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the

exact line of demarkation few will undertake though for a fee some professional experts will.¹⁴

Dr. Claggart, for example, does not see any ambiguities whereas Garry does not see any categories at all in a radical vision of "disaster encompassing not only himself but the hospital, this land, the whole world." Plantagenet, who voluntarily entered the hospital because of his alcoholism, represents an intermediate position, a blending of sanity and irrationality, but he sides with Garry in collapsing the rational distinction between the insane asylum and the external world. Thus, Plantagenet wonders "if the doctor ever asked himself what point there was in adjusting poor lunatics to a mischievous world over which merely more subtle lunatics exerted almost supreme hegemony, where neurotic behaviour was the rule." Even though Dr. Claggart comments derisively, "The 'so-called' sane world, I suppose you think?" — thereby recognizing Plantagenet's criticism — the psychiatrist fails to dismiss effectively the conflation of madness with normality. As a result, the purgatorial impetus behind the clinical metaphor falters. The hospital, instead, becomes a symbolic microcosm of the external social order that should seek renewal. It is precisely this theme that is central to "Billy Budd" and *Lunar Caustic*, along with Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. All three works illustrate how social order excludes naive goodness; by showing how such innocent figures as Gary, Billy Budd, and Prince Myshkin are social misfits, the writers reveal paradoxically society's need for regeneration.

Allusions drawn from another work by Melville, *Moby-Dick*, equal those taken from "Billy Budd" in their shaping importance for the meaning of *Lunar Caustic*, and touch the consciousness of Lowry's hero Plantagenet more directly. Before entering the hospital he identifies himself with "Ahab stumbling from side

to side on the careening bridge, 'feeling that he encompassed in his stare oceans from which might be revealed that phantom destroyer of himself.'" The novella's preoccupation with vision, suggested by the title,¹⁵ centres on Plantagenet "looking for his sight": he is an Ahab without the lucidity of monomania. But like Ahab, he risks self-annihilation in his quest.

Plantagenet's initiation into the realm of madness is a symbolic rejection of logical restraints, and is consistent with Ahab's claim that "Truth has no confines."¹⁶ In this context Garry merges with Pip who was "carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes."¹⁷ By choosing to enter the insane asylum, Plantagenet undergoes a similar disordering of experience, glimpses like Rimbaud's *voyant* a chaotic world beyond rational categories, and relates his confused vision to Melville's ambiguous image of the white whale.¹⁸

Lowry uses the malevolent connotations of whiteness set out in *Moby-Dick* to create an epiphanic moment in the psychiatrist's office, one in which Plantagenet experiences bafflement instead of illumination. Prior to this interview episode, references to the *Pequod*¹⁹ and to *Moby-Dick* have given the word "whiteness" an allusive function in *Lunar Caustic*, evoking Melville's discussion in his chapter, "The Whiteness of the Whale":

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way?²⁰

This meditation on the "colorless, all-color" nature of whiteness partly explicates the following passage from *Lunar Caustic*:

"I — what," said Plantagenet, looking around him, bewildered. He couldn't find the doctor among the phantoms, for the

curtains, blowing in at that moment, made one whiteness with his robe.

Plantagenet's baffled condition, disorientation and anxiety in the midst of phantom whiteness, echoes Melville; rational order, personified by the psychiatrist, vanishes. When Dr. Claggart, a few moments later, tacitly defends society's values and order, Plantagenet's sense of dislocation becomes dizziness, in a way that is analogous to Pip's "ringed horizon"²¹ as "The Castaway":

the room, the whiteness, spun around him with a jagged dazzle; he closed his eyes a second: where was he?

Lowry, by alluding to Melville's treatise on "whiteness," not only conveys an ambivalent attitude towards the white-robed doctor and the therapy he represents but also communicates, through Plantagenet's physical response to vertigo, the baffling ambiguities of life that lie outside any narrow, clinical perspective.

Near the end of *Lunar Caustic* all the scattered and elliptical references to the white whale coalesce in the appearance of "that phantom destroyer of himself" that Plantagenet-Ahab had long dreaded and searched for:

A seaplane was gliding whitely past, and now it was turning, to Plantagenet suddenly it had the fins and flukes and blunt luminous head of a whale; now it roared straight at the window, straight at him.

The foreshadowed catastrophe occurs not in the form of physical death but as a kind of psychological disintegration:

There was a furious crash of thunder and simultaneously Plantagenet felt the impact of the plane, the whale, upon his mind. While metamorphosis nudged metamorphosis, a kind of order, still preserved within his consciousness, and enclosing this catastrophe, exploded itself into the age of Kalowsky again, and into the youth of Garry, who both now seemed to be spiralling away from him until they were lost, just as the seaplane was actually tilting away, swaying up to the smashed sky. But while that part of him only a moment before in possession

of the whole, the ship, was turning over with the disunion of hull and masts uprooted falling across her decks, another faction of his soul, relative to the ship but aware of these fantasies and simultaneities as it were from above, knew him to be screaming against the renewed thunder and saw the attendants closing in on him, yet saw him too, as the plane seethed away northwards like the disembodied shape of the very act of darkness itself, passing beyond the asylum walls melting like wax, and following in its wake, sailing on beyond the cold coast of the houses and the factory chimneys waving farewell — farewell —

Plantagenet's consciousness re-enacts the destruction of the *Pequod*. The imagery of a ship "with disunion of hull and masts uprooted" pictorializes the narrator's mental wreckage. His experience of madness contains the ambiguities which Melville discloses in his novel, and which R. D. Laing would later articulate theoretically: counterbalancing the sense of helplessness (unable to resist external force, "the attendants") is the explosion of temporal and spatial boundaries (Plantagenet's metamorphoses into his fellow patients, Garry and Kalowsky) in an instant of cosmic perception.

In the context of the *Moby-Dick* parallelism, the long passage just quoted shifts dramatically Plantagenet's identification from Ahab to Ishmael. Lowry ironically structures Plantagenet's farewell to the hospital within this experience of madness, and connects this moment of release, both physical and psychological, to Ishmael's moment of salvage. Standing outside the insane asylum, Lowry's protagonist feels no Dantean joy of salvation, "only inquietude." In his confused survival Plantagenet, like Ishmael, merely acts as the single available consciousness from which can flow the narrative of destruction.

NOTES

¹ *Selected Letters*, eds. Harvey Breit and Margerie B. Lowry (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1961), pp. 24-25.

- ² (Ph.D. Diss., University of Nebraska, 1967), p. 282.
- ³ *Selected Letters*, p. 63.
- ⁴ Herman Melville, "Billy Budd, Foretopman," in *Selected Writings of Herman Melville* (New York: Modern Library, 1952), p. 837.
- ⁵ "Billy Budd," p. 862.
- ⁶ *Lunar Caustic*, eds. Earle Birney and Margerie Lowry (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), p. 56. (Reprinted in *Malcolm Lowry: Psalms and Songs*, ed. Margerie Lowry [New York: New American Library, 1975], pp. 259-306.)
- ⁷ *Canadian Literature*, no. 44 (Spring 1970), p. 37n.
- ⁸ "Billy Budd," p. 842.
- ⁹ "Billy Budd," p. 842.
- ¹⁰ The psychiatrist, by placing the need for social order before the importance of an individual, parallels Captain Vere in "Billy Budd"; however, Dr. Claggart, unlike Captain Vere, shows no tragic awareness of these antithetical demands.
- ¹¹ "Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens." *Arthur Rimbaud* by Enid Starkie (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 123.
- ¹² R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 110.
- ¹³ "Billy Budd," p. 830.
- ¹⁴ "Billy Budd," p. 87.
- ¹⁵ "Lunar caustic" is a painful medicine once used by doctors to clear an infant's sight.
- ¹⁶ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. 221.
- ¹⁷ *Moby-Dick*, p. 530. In *Lunar Caustic* Pip also has affinities to the inmate Battle, a figure that Beverly Rasporich argues is like "the stereotyped black minstrel of the American theatre." "The Right Side of Despair: Lowry's Comic Spirit in *Lunar Caustic* and *Dark As The Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid*," *Mosaic*, 10, no. 4 (1977), p. 56.
- ¹⁸ It should be noted that the phantasmagorias created by Plantagenet's alcoholism prepare for this visionary experience.
- ¹⁹ The patients can see through the barred window a derelict coal barge that mirrors

their situation and evokes the doomed *Pequod*:

between the two wharves and fast against the poverty grass before the hospital lay the coal barge, sunken, abandoned, open, hull cracked, bollards adrift, tiller smashed. . . . (p. 12)

²⁰ *Moby-Dick*, p. 263.

²¹ *Moby-Dick*, p. 530.

KEITH HARRISON

ON THE VERGE

**** PATRICK A. DUANE, *Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier*. Douglas & McIntyre, \$16.95. Canada is a country of minorities, for if one divides people of British origin into their various national groups, none has ever reached the 50 percent mark. Nevertheless, because of historic links, the English have existed in popular myth as the dominant and most powerful group. And this makes it all the more curious that the English should be the Canadian minority that has attracted least attention among scholars and writers. Studies of the Québécois, the Acadians, and even the Métis abound; so do books on the Scots and the Irish and even on relatively small minorities like the Doukhobors. But books on the English, and particularly general studies of the English as an element in the growth of a Canadian society, have been surprisingly few. This is why Professor Duane's *Gentlemen Emigrants* is so particularly welcome. It is frankly class-bound in its interests, dealing with the sons — and much less often the daughters — of the English gentry who played such an important and often such an eccentric part in the settlement of rural Canada from the Eastern Townships westward to British Columbia. These were the people who were perhaps more responsible than any other group except the Québécois for giving Canada a political and social and cultural image so different from that of the great neighbour to the south, and they deserve a celebration. Indeed, there is obviously so much more to be said about them that several of Professor Duane's chapters, and notably that on the Remittance Men (much neglected as a subject by social historians), contain the germs out of which whole books might in the future be written.

G.W.

**** JARS BALAN, ed., *Identifications: Ethnicity and The Writer in Canada*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Univ. of Alberta (distrib. Univ. Toronto Press), n.p. This book collects the papers and provides a transcript of the panel discussions that took place at a conference on "ethnic" Canadian literature, but what emerges is a tremendous battle over the term "ethnic." The papers themselves are personal (Henry Kreisel on the immigrant's experience), scholarly (David Arnason on Stephan Stephansson and other Icelandic writers), and generally sedate. But a great brouhaha breaks out among the lively panelists — Rudy Wiebe, George Ryga, Maria Campbell, Myrna Kostash, Maara Haas, Andrew Suknaski, and several others — praising particularity, denouncing "hyphenation," praising self-possession, denouncing balkanization and political hegemonies. What is important about the book is that it provides a chance to listen in on these debates, and therefore on ways in which language is changing. These changes are happening *because* there are writers in "un-official" languages warranting close appreciation, and because there are writers using English and French who are implicitly challenging their static form and their often ill-understood political biases.

W.N.

**** GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Ivan Eyre*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$40.00. Woodcock begins this splendid appreciation of the painter Ivan Eyre by remarking on his own belief in the *correspondances* between the visual and the verbal, and proceeds by trying to find the words to express the moral understanding, the conceptual perspective, which lies behind Eyre's fine-line acrylic landscapes, his abstracted and symbolic angular delineations of men and human structures, and his repeated designs of a severed head or a suspended body against a vivid screen of vegetation. By turns biographical and critical, Woodcock records various details of Eyre's family history and artistic growth (appendices of exhibitions are attached) and comments on the apparently paradoxical explorations of intense colour and equally intense absences of colour: of green and winter, of the radiant and the sinister. Always, in clear prose, he seeks the "philosophic" dimensions of Eyre's work — an interaction between Platonic forms and a personal sense of tradition and change, a connection between an almost mediaeval vision of myth and a Borgesian ability to externalize by introspection. But the eye wanders away from the

words into the many magnificent paintings here reproduced, and the mind realizes slowly the implications of the low aerial perspective: the viewer is suspended, away from the earth and apart from the rest of mankind, godlike, but is able — perhaps even begged — to make connection with the dreams and nightmares he watches through the window of his own imagination.

W.N.

**** JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, ed., *Poems of the Inuit*. Oberon, \$23.95; pa. \$11.95. The indefatigable Colombo, with the able assistance of several librarians, has assembled here a moving collection of poems and a substantial testament to the creative power of the word ("The poet, as a shaman, is a spirit-maker"; the singer, the drawer of breath believes in "the power of words to transform attitudes, if not realities") among the peoples of the Arctic. There are incantations, poems about the hunt, life and death, and daily life — together with notes and a bibliography. No poem is more evocative of the power and plight that a poem can convey than Umahaq's song: "I was idle / When the season turned again to spring. / My fishhook, since it pulled up nothing, / I was idle // I was idle / When the season turned again to summer. / My husband, since he caught no caribou, / I was idle."

W.N.

*** LIZ & JACK BRYAN, *Backroads of British Columbia*. Sunflower Books, n.p. All across Canada, there are small presses producing valuable and useful books on local travel and local culture. This is one of them, in a revised edition, handsomely illustrated and clearly worded. It is a guidebook to 25 "backroads" — those gravel routes that can take an adventurous driver off the speedway into wilderness and history.

W.N.

** BO CURTIS and J. A. KRAULIS, *Canada from the Air*. Hurtig, \$29.50. Kraulis's aerial photographs are at their most ordinary when they attempt to portray places and at their finest when they delight in sheer visual pattern: the roofs of Datsuns, the whorls of a harvester's trail, the ripples and ragged edges of water and ice. The text provides a serviceable accompaniment. This is a splendidly conceived book, but it wanted one more editorial eye to shape it into a splendidly executed one.

W.N.

AMONG RECENT REPRINTS are several of some interest, including Jay Macpherson's brilliant *Poems Twice Told* (Oxford, \$6.95), a gathering together of *The Boatman* and the unduly ignored poems of *Welcoming Disaster*; James H. Gray's *The Roar of the Twenties* (PaperJacks, \$7.95), a cultural history of the prairies; Mavis Gallant's *The Pegnitz Junction* (Macmillan, \$7.95); Gilles Archambault's *Le Voyageur distrait* (Stanké, \$8.95), which won the 1981 Prix David; and three various titles in Fides' "Bibliothèque québécoise," with critical comments and bibliographies appended: Patrice Lacombe's *La Terre paternelle* (1846), Eugène Cloutier's *Les Inutiles* (1957), and Louis Fréchette's collection of sketches and tales, *La Noël au Canada* (1900). Alfred Bailey's Collected Poems, under the title *Miramichi Lightning* (Fiddlehead, n.p.), brings together a substantial number of poems published (many in journals only) between 1932 and 1981; these are poems which reveal Bailey's wit, his reflective intellect, and his bright skill with words and rhyme. Bailey has never fit within any of the standard groups of twentieth-century Canadian poets; nor does the personal vision he plainly records draw undue attention to itself. But in the collection one discovers a public record of a private mind and a quality of accomplishment warranting a closer look. George Bowering's *West Window* (General, \$9.95) is a selection of the author's poetry, a useful reminder of his wit and his skill with public and runic language; as Sheila Watson points out in her preface, Bowering is "his own man . . . , attentive . . . to language which is waiting to speak . . ." His "essentially political poems . . . describe nothing, explain nothing; they present and evoke." And they focus back intently on his own contemporaries. Margaret Doerkson's *Jazzy*, a Peace River romp, is available from PaperJacks (\$2.95). And three major novels are now available in translations: *Au Service du Seigneur?* (Fides, n.p.) takes Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* into French, in Louis-Bertrand Raymond's translation; Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie*, translated by Philip Stratford, brings the author's Prix Goncourt-winning novel, about her Acadian legacy, into an abundant English (Doubleday, \$17.95); and in a new, though still-flawed translation (this one by Alan Brown), Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'Occasion* returns as *The Tin Flute* once more (McClelland & Stewart, boxed set, \$35.00). As John O'Connor has pointed out elsewhere, Brown corrects the most extreme of the errors in the Josephson translation (where the word for "blizzard" in Chapter 12 is translated as a

munitions factory explosion) but occasionally omits whole phrases and sentences.

Among standard reference works, *Contemporary Authors*, 103 (Gale, \$68.00), features Al Purdy interviewing Milton Acorn; *Contemporary Authors*, new revision series vol. 5 (Gale, \$68.00), contains biocritical notes on Earle Birney and Robert Sward; and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 6 (Gale, \$68.00), includes critical excerpts on Malcolm Lowry (22 pages) and D. C. Scott (18 pages). *Canadiana*, the National Library of Canada's authoritative list of each year's publications, is now available for 1981; each year it undergoes improvements (this year it lists foreign publications of Canadian interest, and its index is a kind of librarian's bibliographical guide) but each year I am frustrated by its organization: it desperately needs a detailed table of contents, for without one, the various alphabetical sequences, which the computer may be able to tell apart, blend into each other in a bewildering fashion. Maria Calderisi's *Music Publishing in the Canadas, 1800-1867* (in two languages; National Library, n.p.), by contrast, is splendidly clear. Both historical and bibliographical in nature, the book is a welcome contribution to the history of Canadian taste, and adds to the detail of information in Kallmann's *Encyclopedia*. Data on publishing figures like Octave Crémazie and John Lovell, periodical and sheet music distribution, and on mission society activities punctuate the story of fashion, enterprise, and the growth of copyright conventions. But one of the chief delights is the reproduction of many title pages: including "The Merry Bells of England," "Le Dépit Amoureux," "Beautiful Venice, a Popular Ballad sung with much Applause by Mr. Humphreys," "Polka Mazurka des Etudiants en Médecine," and "Canadian Band March introducing the Popular Air Old Piney Woods, by Woodlawn."

Reference works from Quebec include many of interest. Jean Carrière's *Atlas Monde Canada Québec* (Centre Educatif et Culturel, n.p.) is a secondary school atlas, focussing on Quebec resources, land use, and "régions administratives et traditionnelles." Three books from the Editeur officiel du Québec provide more detailed historical and cultural data: Yolande Lavoie's *L'Emigration des Québécois aux Etats-unis de 1840 à 1930* is an illustrated statistical and historical account of shifting life styles and patterns of emigration; René Bouchard and others have compiled a fascinating guide to the sources of the nomenclature of towns and rivers between Québec and Montréal, in *Itinéraire toponymique du Chemin du*

Roy; and in Jean-Yves Dugas's *Répertoire de gentils du Québec*, we can find the Official Adjectival Terms to describe the people of particular Quebec towns (in Westmount live the *Westmountais*, in Thetford Mines les *Thetfordois*). Renée Legris's *Dictionnaire des auteurs du radio-feuilleton québécois* (Fides) is a valuable guide to writers and broadcasts, with helpful commentary. And *Le Métier d'écrivain* (Livres d'ici/Boréal Express) provides practical advice for those who want to write professionally in Quebec.

Less standard guides include the Softwords *Complete Guide to Punctuation* (Porcépic, n.p.); *The Telidon Book*, ed. David Godfrey and Ernest Chang (Porcépic, n.p.), an analysis of the system and a clear guide to the processes at work and the availability of the machinery; and George Woodcock's *Taking It to the Letter* (Quadrant, \$7.95), which is a series of letters Woodcock wrote while editor of *Canadian Literature* and hence constitutes a guide both to his own travels and to the unfolding directions of the first eighteen years of this journal.

Another substantial group of works from Quebec is aimed at children. Included are works of several kinds — textbooks, picture books, game books, myths. All the illustrations are first class, and often in full colour; I would single out for particular praise the drawings of Daniel Sylvestre for Bertrand Gauthier's *Un Jour d'été à Fleurdepeau* and Marie-Louise Gay for *De Zéro à Minuit*. But sometimes the pictures dominate, as in *Le Hibou qui avait avalé la lune* by Bernard Clavel (Fides) or *Les Saisons* (Les éditions la courte échelle) by Raoul Duguay, and appear designed more for the adult eye than for the child's imagination. The drawings of Sylvestre and Gay both appear in delightful works published by Les Éditions La courte échelle. *Un Jour...* is full of lively, detailed, entertaining, *active* illustrations — of crowds and banquets and events, all recorded in a lively text as well, a text about the summer day of a town with a *maïresse* named (marvellously!) Lili Coptère. *De Zéro à Minuit* is a simple counting book. Another in the Court échelle series, *Crapauds et autres animaux*, is a series of animal poems with much more static accompanying designs. Punning, both visual and verbal, is a feature of three other books, Nelcy's *Nogaud ou le dragon qui voulait apprendre à vivre* (Les Éditions la courte échelle), Darcia Labrosse's *Où est le chat?* (Pierre Tisseyre), David Lord Porter's *Histoire de l'ô* (Hurtubise HMH). Porter's book, designed around line drawings of an "O," tells of the simple adventures of a

hippopotamus and a seagull; Labrosse's hides cats in a series of playful drawings, while the text tells of a *chapiteau*, a *chameau*, a *chapeau*, a *château*, and *Chagall* and teases the reader with sounds; Nelcy's is a delightful (and satiric) story of a gentle dragon who seeks friends and a place to live. (An Oz-like Professor at one point thunders: "L'Univers-Cité, ç'avait été un beau rêve, rien de plus. Un dragon qui veut apprendre à vivre n'a rien à faire là.") Three books from Ovale Éditions retell classic Quebec tales — Johanne Bussièrès' *Les Feux Follets*, Robert Piette's *La Sirène de Percé*, and Suzanne Piette's *Le Chien d'or*. I liked the last of these best, both for the adventure of the story and the boldness of France Lebon's illustrations. Several other books, all from Centre Éducatif et Culturel, are deliberately designed for classroom use. Twenty small pamphlet-books in the "Collection Soleil" series, with simple sentences by Jean-Yves Dufour, and simple drawings by Louise Blanchard and Robert Bigras, are of Golden Books quality, more colourful in concept than in execution, more functional than memorable. Several workbooks by Jean-Luc Picard, by contrast (*Autour de moi*, *En passant par chez nous*, and *Moi et les miens*, each with a separate teacher's guide), are splendidly clear and colourful (and imaginative) introductions to French vocabulary and language usage. Here function is recognized as invention as well as exercise.

Other recent publications include three that will be of interest for students of Indian culture. One journal, *Tawow* (now entering vol. 8), is devoted to the subject, and is available from the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs (Ottawa) at \$1.50 an issue; vol. 8, no. 1 is devoted to the prison experience of native people, exploring various topics — from the System to the history of confrontation (including references to Almighty Voice). A prison diary, poems, and drawings are also included. *The Malahat Review*, no. 60, is devoted to the West Coast Indian renaissance, and integrates new works with old myths — with the verbal icons on myth by Michel Butor. *Carriers of the Dream Wheel*, ed. Duane Niatum (Harper & Row, n.p.), is a handsomely illustrated anthology of contemporary, "Native American" poetry — which closes at the border and reveals its Americanness as much as its Indianness, perhaps unintentionally.

W.N.

LAST PAGE

WITH THIS ISSUE, we start what we hope will be a regular new feature of *Canadian Literature*: selective surveys of significant recent developments in writing outside Canada which bears some relation to Canadian writing. I stress the word "selective"; we will try to note new publications in various fields, as circumstances permit, but cannot predict what directions the coverage will take.

A number of recent books to come this way all draw attention to traditions in the short story and to recent breaks from national convention. New Zealand's writing offers an example. The two stars of the tradition are of course Katherine Mansfield and Frank Sargeson. Penguin's recent *The Stories of Frank Sargeson* provides an updated introduction to the latter author, who died earlier this year. After Mansfield's accounts of the undercurrents of female life, Sargeson turned New Zealand writing along a different course — sketching a world of maleness that came to be accepted both as reality and as the national identity. A recent anthology — *All the Dangerous Animals Are in Zoos* (Longman) — goes a long way to disputing this illusion. Often the writers collected in it are so concerned to attack the national myths of safety and egalitarianism (probing images of violence, wars between the sexes, childhood cruelty, and dreams of evil) that they sacrifice art for message. (Peter Hooper's *The Goat Paddock and Other Stories*, from John McIndoe, does much the same thing.) But in the best of the new writers in the anthology — Russell Haley (who has another excellent story, "Fog," in *New Directions* 44), Ian Wedde, and Patricia Grace — there is a lively experimentation with anti-realistic form; by their new methodology, these writers evoke the changing values of the culture they represent: the idealistic values which they perceive as almost lost, and at the same time, the surrealist values which they see creeping in to take their place.

If there is a surrealist morality in the work of the man who may be New Zealand's finest contemporary man of letters, Vincent O'Sullivan, it is usually lodged outside the country, in the America (the New York in particular) of, for example, *Dandy Edison for Lunch* (John McIndoe). But here these are the weakest stories, struggling for a voice and a vocabulary not quite heard aright. In stories like "The Witness Man" or "Some Who Came to the Wedding" or the title story, by contrast, all is authentic: subtle shifts in point of view

give an edge to the apparent realism, and while the author revels in a quietly caustic irony, he also reveals a gentle-hearted clear-sightedness about the contradictory motivations that patch together modern life. "For that is what we are," one character muses, watching someone die; "we are machines for pain, for these last days of dissolution and denial, as though the sun had never shone on us, as though everything we ever took from family or God whatever it might be, must now be paid for with words like that, the indignity of denying what we always loved." Admirers of Mavis Gallant will find much to admire here as well.

W.N.



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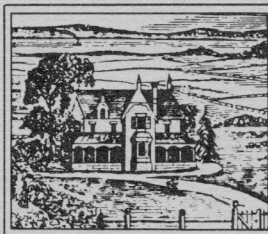
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