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CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 29

Summer, 1966

APPRENTICESHIPS IN DISCOVERY

Articles

BY GEORGE BOWERING, WILLIAM H. NEW, LILA STONEHEWER, DESMOND PACEY

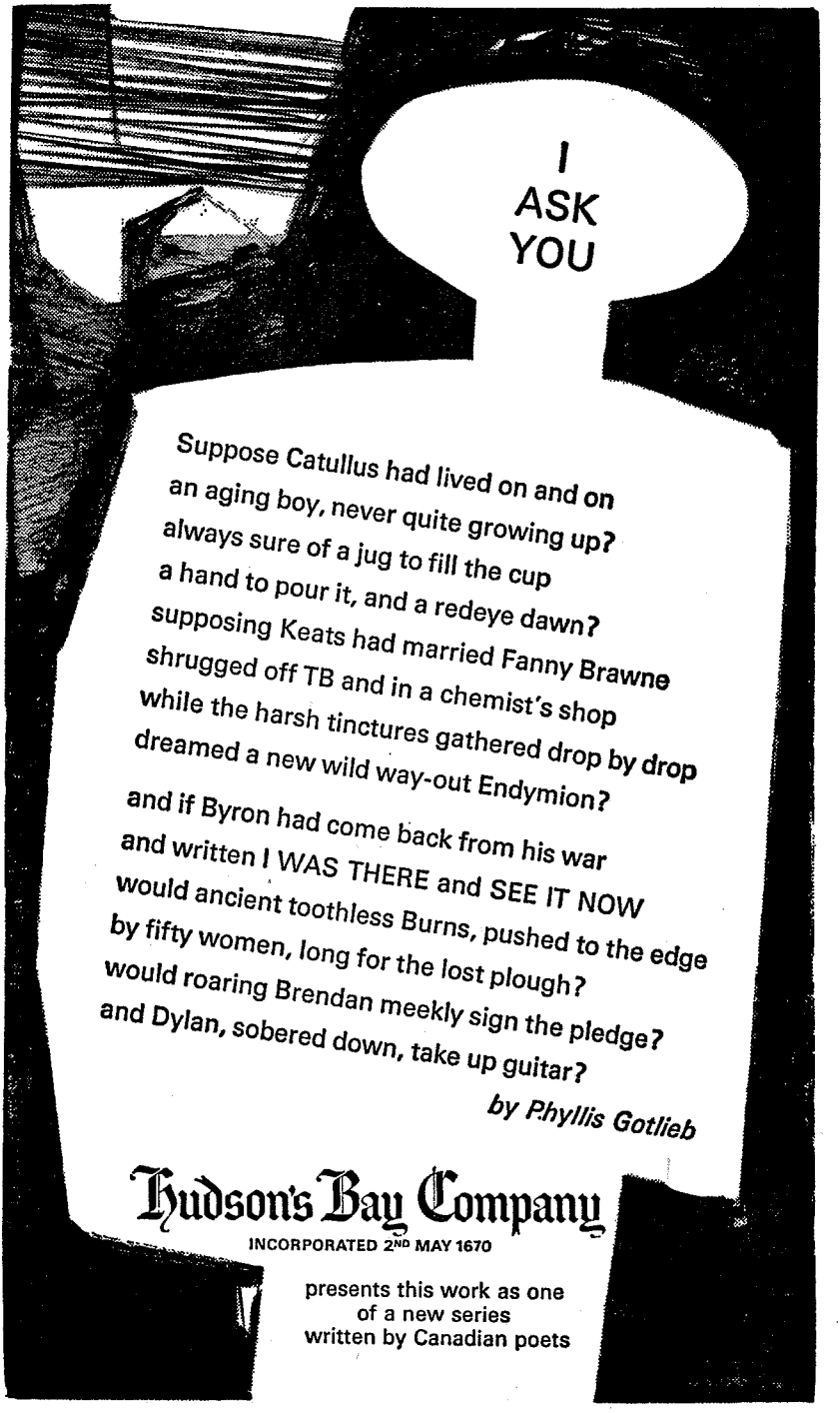
Controversy

BY WARREN TALLMAN

Reviews

BY HILDA THOMAS, JEAN-ETHIER BLAIS, E. B. GOSE, C. H. MOORE, D. G. JONES, ELDON GRIER, A. W. PURDY, GEORGE WOODCOCK, NORMAN SHRIVE, R. W. DUNNING, J. A. MACDONALD, CARL F. KLINCK, AUDREY HAWTHORN

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW



Suppose Catullus had lived on and on
an aging boy, never quite growing up?
always sure of a jug to fill the cup
a hand to pour it, and a redeye dawn?
supposing Keats had married Fanny Brawne
shrugged off TB and in a chemist's shop
while the harsh tinctures gathered drop by drop
dreamed a new wild way-out Endymion?

and if Byron had come back from his war
and written I WAS THERE and SEE IT NOW
would ancient toothless Burns, pushed to the edge
by fifty women, long for the lost plough?
would roaring Brendan meekly sign the pledge?
and Dylan, sobered down, take up guitar?

by Phyllis Gotlieb

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contributors

GEORGE BOWERING, a frequent contributor to *Canadian Literature* who teaches English at the University of Alberta, was one of the group originally associated with the verse magazine *Tish*, in Vancouver, and has since published several books of verse, of which the most recent, *The Man in Yellow Boots*, is reviewed in this issue.

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DESMOND PACEY, the first serious historian of writing in Canada, needs little introduction. His piece on Ethel Wilson's first novel will eventually be included as a chapter in the book which he is preparing on that novelist.

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editorial

PAPERBACKS AND RESPECTABLE PICKPOCKETS

UNASSUMINGLY, BUT SURELY, the softcover movement has been working its way into Canadian publishing. It is true that in the paperback cellars of our bookshops there are long shelves packed densely with American and British publications, and small corners thinly filled with Canadian. But this is due largely to the fact that all the broad fields of general interest are encompassed much more economically by the mammoth and well-established publishing houses of the larger countries. Who would sell the paperback rights for a book on, say, Carthage or the Lost Land of Mu or the rackety life of Mrs. Aphra Behn to a Canadian publisher, when Penguin Books or, even more profitable, Signet is there, with Meridian in the background for the esoterica and Evergreen for the erotica? The Canadian paperback trade is, generally speaking, a trade in Canadiana, literary or historical, and this is what makes its survival and its growth such interesting phenomena. Obviously there are enough readers now not merely to make it profitable to publish the regular hundred or two hardcover books of "Canadian interest" that appear with native publishers every year, but there is also — which there was not a decade ago — an increasing middlebrow and middle-income public ready to buy cheap editions of books by Canadian authors. Admittedly, libraries buy up a large proportion of the hardcover copies, and students are often captive customers for paperbacks in Canadian history and literature. But neither of these concentrations of customers is in itself enough to sustain not merely the ordinary book trade along traditional lines but also, parallel with it, a whole variety of paperback series and projects.

The most vigorous of all the Canadian paperback publishing houses is McClelland & Stewart. They run, to begin, two of the four real paperback series in

Canada. The New Canadian Library, devoted to nineteenth and twentieth century literary classics, with a few anthologies of criticism and verse, now has 59 titles. The most recent batch of six includes, almost predictably, an inferior Stephen Leacock (there are already seven others in the series), but also two modern novels of the richest excellence, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* and Mordecai Richler's *Son of A Smaller Hero*, together with one work of The Ham-handed Master, Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh*, which makes one wonder, as always with Grove, how a novelist with so much sensibility and so much power could write so uncouthly. The other McClelland & Stewart series, the Carleton Library, run in collaboration with Carleton University and subsidized by the Canada Council, has a solid look and is designed with a rather deceptive dulness; it is mostly devoted to reprinting works of Canadian historical, economic or sociological scholarship with, once again, a few anthologies thrown in, and it has now reached its 29th volume. Some of the books are excessively specialized; some, like O. D. Skelton's *Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt*, are merely bad — in this case the model anti-biography. But the series must not be dismissed as all academic dryness; some of the books it includes are sparkling examples of their own type of scholarly or repertorial writing. I, for one, am grateful that the six most recent volumes include André Siegfried's brilliant study from a continental French viewpoint of *The Race Question in Canada*, John Bartlet Brebner's *North Atlantic Triangle*, a massively impressive study of Canadian-British-American relations over the past two centuries, and Tom McFeat's *Indians of the North Pacific Coast*, an ably done anthology of normally inaccessible writings on the most fascinating of all Indian cultures, from part of John R. Jewitt's story of his imprisonment by the Nootka, through the classic accounts by Franz Boas of Kwakiutl ceremonials, to the records of mid-twentieth century anthropologists.

McClelland & Stewart have notably furthered the paperback movement in Canada not only by such series, but also by adopting a very considerable programme of simultaneous hardcover and paperback publication. This has been done with topical books like *The Comfortable Pew* and *The Case of Steven Truscott*, which by this means have run into what in Canadian terms are enormous editions, but also with less rapidly selling items like books of new poetry, so that it has been possible for readers to buy the works of our most vital contemporary poets immediately on publication at ordinary paperback rates; this, no doubt, has contributed greatly to the relative popularization of modern Canadian verse among the students, whose predecessors ten years ago were almost com-

pletely ignorant of what was being written or what had been written in this country.

I confess I have not gone deeply enough into the question to say who in Canada originated this custom of publishing expensive and inexpensive editions of a book simultaneously, but it is spreading quickly and other publishers than McClelland & Stewart are taking it up. Some of them — often small new houses — are using the technique to attract readers to quite experimental work. An example is John Robert Colombo's *The Mackenzie Poems*, published by the Swan Publishing Company; the paperback editions costs only 75¢. These are what Colombo calls "found poems". The idea arouses among those of us who lived through the Surrealist age the same feeling of nostalgic *déjà vu* as did the neo-dadaist constructions which were the fashion among young painters two or three seasons ago. The surrealists were always looking out for "objets trouvés", and Mr. Colombo is doing precisely the same, "finding" poetry in unlikely places, in this case in the speeches of William Lyon Mackenzie, reproduced with even their commas intact, but rearranged into verse patterns on the page so that their rhythms and relationships are more evident. A game no doubt, but an intelligently played one. Perhaps before long we shall go all the way back to the telephone directory poems.

To return to the generalities of paperback publishing, most established houses are now, in a rather sporadic way, bringing out in soft covers the Canadian classics for which they still hold copyright, and there are at least two notable series in addition to those I have already noted. The Clarke Irwin paperbacks started off encouragingly, as pleasantly designed books with a varied list of titles; the last batch we received included Emily Carr's *Klee Wyck*, Robertson Davies' *Tempest-Tost* and Bruce Hutchison's well-researched but desperately over-written *The Fraser*. Recently no more books in this series have been reaching us; we hope it has not come to an end. Certainly Toronto's Canadian University Paperbacks is very much alive, reaching up to a total of 50 titles. The virtues of this series, unexpected in a venture by a University press, are its variety and unpredictability, and particularly the inclination of its editors to turn up just the kind of half-forgotten works which interest an omnivorously voracious reader. The series includes such memorable works as *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and George Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada*, and at least one of this age's most unreadable books, Innis' *The Bias of Communication*, but every now and again there appears one of those modest works crammed with the kind of information which sustains the inveterately curious mind; the most recent of these is Edwin C. Guillet's *Pioneer Travel in Upper Canada*.

The paperback revolution seems to have dug into permanence, and one can only welcome its survival. It benefits publishers; otherwise they would not continue to follow it. It benefits readers, and in some ways it benefits writers, who earn a little extra out of their paperback royalities and are doubtless helped, mentally as well as materially, by the atmosphere of heightened interest in literature and in books as objects-to-be-possessed, that it arouses.

So much for what in general we must regard as a positive trend in the world of literature. Now, from the writer's point of view, for a just complaint. Last year, when artists and entrepreneurs of the arts laboured together at Seminar 65 under the genial eye of Mr. Maurice Lamontagne to produce a group of resolutions intended to foster the arts in Canada and to better the situation of artists, the literary sub-committee drew the government's attention to the fact that, under present Canadian laws, libraries can pick the pockets of authors with impunity. A book is sold, let us say, for $5.00, and the author earns, under normal contracts, 50¢ in royalties. He expects that the purchaser and perhaps only one or two friends or members of his family will have the use of this copy of his book, at least until it passes into the second-hand market. But libraries make nonsense of such calculations, and it is always a matter of chagrin for a writer wandering along the stacks to pull out one of his books, to find that thirty or forty people have taken it out, which means that fifty people have probably read it, and that he has earned only the same 50¢, just about 1¢ per reader. The publishers do nothing to curb this imposition on their authors, since they themselves are not losing and the libraries are good customers. The only solution lies with the government. Sweden has passed a law obliging all libraries to compensate authors for the royalties they lose through the circulation of their books, and has worked out a satisfactory way of collecting and distributing the dues. I gathered when I was last in West Germany that a similar scheme is going into operation there. So far the Canadian government has done nothing to correct this injustice to authors, which might be remedied either by legalizing a levy on libraries, or by making the matter a public charge and allowing authors special deductions for tax purposes from their book royalty income.

AND THE SUN GOES DOWN

Richler's First Novel

George Bowering

> *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.*

IN MORDECAI RICHLER'S FIRST NOVEL there is a Jewish American businessman who has changed his name from Lazarus to Larkin. That leaves no Lazarus to be raised from the dead; he will go about the process of mouldering along with nearly everyone else he meets in America and Valencia, the sad worn-out sacrificial portion of Spain, Europe, and the world that is the setting for *The Acrobats*.

In 1957, an interview with Richler appeared in the *Tamarack Review*, in which he referred to people "living in a time . . . when there is no agreement on values . . . there has been a collapse of absolute values, whether that value was Marx or God or Gold [All three treated disconsolately in the novel.] We are living in a time when superficially life seems meaningless, and we have to make value judgements all the time, it seems in relation to nothing." Richler is here talking about his problem, and the problem of André Bennett, the young Canadian painter acrobat adrift in the city of Valencia during fiesta time, April 1951, a decade and a half after the bell tolled for Robert Jordan, alone and dying on a mountain trail soon be be trod by Franco's fascists.

André sits at the cafe tables in the Lost Generation of his mind, stuck behind the wrong World War that he was too young to enter or understand, "so he came to Spain — Valencia, where the killing had started in a way and maybe they could explain it." But Ernest Hemingway is not there; neither is the Spain of Hemingway's books. Through the work of Hemingway, from the beginnings in the first short stories to *The Old Man and the Sea*, there is a growing

sense of commitment, not necessarily of man to cause, but of man to men. This is the painfully learned realization of the constantly aging Hemingway hero, that as the world of the twentieth century becomes more huge in its anti-human machinery, the people under the machines must reach out more generously to one another. "No man is an island" is the motto set to Hemingway's novel of the Spanish war, where the members of the Lost Generation find at least each other under the bombs of the twentieth century's least human machine — Fascism. In 1951 Spain, Richler's anti-hero demonstrates the disappointment in the notion that such a painfully made commitment was to be invalidated by the ensuing victory of the World War, and the subsequent transformation of men to smaller machines, servants to the master robot.

In fact, Richler sometimes seems to sacrifice his art to a love-hate attitude to Hemingway's works, especially to *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* In the beginning of *The Acrobats* there is a noticeable Hemingway influence, in the artificial dialogue, in the sentence order and length:

> In the summer they would take us out in the boats, and we would jump overboard and swim. The water was very cool, and there was always the taste of salt in our mouths. The priests said it was evil because we all swam and played together and we were often naked. My father laughed at the priests. He said they had filthy minds. At night there was always dancing on the quays, especially when there was a good catch. That night there was only the noise of the shooting.

Sometimes André Bennett thinks, perhaps consciously, as if he were Frederic Henry:

> *Love,* he thought. That is one of the words that is no longer any good. *Like courage, soul, beautiful, honour,* and so many others. Words that have become almost obscene because of hack writers.

Doubly sad for André, because at least Frederic Henry had a world war to blame. It is not only Richler who has Hemingway on the mind. At least part of the time André's resentment, his feeling of being trapped in the wrong disillusioning time, is turned against Hemingway's Spanish experience:

> "As a matter of fact," André said, "I'm not really a painter at all. I came here to study life in its entirety. One day I hope to write a book about it. You know, like that *Who do the Bells Toll For.*"

But this is Richler's first book, and as often happens in first books, the young author's literary ghosts are difficult to allay. So that later, when André is preparing in his drunkenness to poke his fist at the Nazi Kraus, Richler sees him through

the literary trick (Hemingway's word) that comes via Hemingway's "Up in Michigan" from the advice of Gertrude Stein:

> André laughed. He laughed and laughed and laughed. He laughed because Chaim was a useful man and he laughed because Kraus was a brute. He clutched the banister and doubled up laughing. He laughed because Ida was dead and he laughed because probably he did not love Toni. He laughed because he was drunk. He laughed and laughed. He laughed because he was feverish and he laughed because the doctors said he would go mad. Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he laughed.

All the directionless bar scenes of *The Acrobats* are like expatriate *The Sun Also Rises* scenes, but without even the desperate gaiety of the Jake Barnes crowd — rather with a soft and aimless self-hate. When André is invited into a tryst with Jessie, the wife of sad American tourist Larkin, he goes along, saying only, "Okay, I guess," and again, "Okay." Later, when Jessie tries to get his clothes off in the hotel room, he simply mopes around till her embarrassing husband appears, and it is too late.

THE ACROBATS OF THE NOVEL are also sad clowns, wearing sad faces under their sad faces of make-up. The world is a big-top where the same tired music grinds every day, and the variety act appears monotonously every afternoon, every night. In Valencia, it is festival time, the loud drunken blaze of colour and fire that comes every year to use up whatever small flames may still lick in the bellies of the citizens, inheritors of the worn earth tramped for centuries by armies of Araby, France, the Vatican, and latterly, Franco, and now the also defeated foreigners from two continents.

In Richer's eyes, the place where the killing began is still an ugly disaster area, where the centuries-shattered survivors pick their way among the rubble of each other. The wanderings of the foreigners take place among constant images of beggars, cripples, forced prostitutes taken by police for protection, not only the war-blighted of Spain, but of this focus of Europe and the world. This is the post-Hemingway world, the post-*For Whom the Bell Tolls* world, where the sermon from Donne takes on a grim cast. The language of Richler and his characters is also post-Hemingway, with all rapture gone, all romanticism sifted out. The (anti)hero's girl is not brave Maria in a sleeping bag, but the pregnant

prostitute, Toni, not the rebellious Pilar of the mountains, but the city-slum girl tired of revolution and war, who can say of Spain only:

> "—pooh! There has always been poverty. You can do nothing, do you understand? Nothing! Why? Wh- - What is the use of talking? Kill and kill and kill. Me, I would rather live on my knees. Now I have said it!"

Almost all the people in the novel are tired and disappointed. André is a man in his twenties, a young artist, with little responsibility, but his disappointment is the largest. It is enough to bring him to his own miserable end. His disappointment is the largest, and the least understandable — it is a kind of symbolic disappointment, where the figure of the man stands head-bowed between the stories of the pre-war West, and the actual bomb-broken buildings of 1951.

The young artist's opposite number is the ex-Olympic athlete, Reinhold Kraus, the Nazi for whom the present Spain is another kind of disappointment. Fascism is not the success it had seemed to be after the Civil War in which Kraus had been Hitler's man there. Now the country is lax, disorderly, semitic, effeminite, undermined by the Communist underground.

In the triangle of André - Toni - Kraus there is a kind of allegory. In many instances Toni, the postwar girl of the bars and streets, speaks for war-weary Spain, expressing the desire to get out of the ideological war, and seeking means to survive. When André says that he is in Spain to find out what mid-century is all about, he knows that his attempts to make a loving relationship with Toni are infibulated by the guilt he carries about the abortion death of the Jewish girl he had slept with in college-Montreal recent past. For Kraus, Toni is important because she is carrying his child. At one point Kraus is seen writing in his diary, linking in his thoughts the rebirth of Nazism and the child of infiltration in Toni's womb. Eventually the two rivals meet on a bridge over the tired Spanish river, and worn-out old athlete kills worn-out young artist, and a group of impoverished postwar citizens descends on the loser, stripping him of his raiment, and hiding the naked body in a cave.

Barney Larkin is the disappointed Jewish American tourist, who began as a poor boy, got rich in a kind of mid-century American dream, and has now found out that riches have not made him charming and sought-after, especially not by his wife, Jessie. Jessie, a Gentile, married Barney (Lazarus) Larkin for his money, and in her disappointment, finds that money cannot buy back her time, or his virility.

Brooding behind all the personal disappointments is the failure of the social

revolution, the shock that came with the victory of tyranny and poverty. Though some revolutionaries like Guillermo still wander about Spain, in and out of Valencia, and André's life, they are bitter, as if regretting the failure of the revolution, not looking forward to its coming. Pepe and Mariá are seen at times in the novel. Pepe, the poor husband out of work, has seen the failure of the revolution, has still the simple faith to admire André's paintings — he has not been entirely embittered by the failure. He is married to the Catholic Mariá, who is at last pregnant after many disappointments. Pepe is a nickname for José, so they are Joseph and Mary, an example of Richler's early obvious attempts at symbolism. But Pepe is cynical about the chances for the child of Joseph and Mary:

> "... Why should I be pleased, ... If he is any good, they will get him like they got the others. And if he is going to be bad I do not want him."

In *A Farewell to Arms*, those who oppose their humanity to the great machines of gods and men perish young. In *The Acrobats*, those characters who try to struggle for a cause that is perishing or is hiding within them, die (André, Guillermo), while the ones who accept defeat and disillusionment live on and pass to new times and places (Chaim, the wise and hounded Jew; Juanito, the gentleman turned pimp; Derek, the Civil War Republican poet become dissolute alchoholic and homosexual).

Pretty obviously, Richler intends in this first novel to show his own disillusionment in a postwar world he never made nor even had a hand in destroying. The form of the story shows that. While André Bennett, self-exiled young Canadian artist in Spain, is the character with whom the author most closely identifies, *The Acrobats* is not his story alone. The book is made up of shuffled scenes, the searching spotlights shift from acrobat to acrobat, lighting now Barney in his frightened New World foray into a blunt Spanish whorehouse, now André lying in his rat-infested room beside an unfinished painting of woe, now Kraus in his Nazi sex-problem, unable to cope with women or intellect. The lights probe all over Valencia in the present, but also into the past of Montreal and Madrid and Businesstown, U.S.A. The different people cross each other in different places, the whole acrobatic routine, and snippets of knowledge are exchanged with handholds. We watch not the performance of one man's life, but the tumbling pattern of the human condition. Each player hides his own version of guilt, secret from the rest. The recent past in each case haunts the present, and promises no good future — for any of the characters of the novel, for Spain, for mid-century World.

Doggedly, the Valencians burn their traditional exorcistic *fallas*, and Derek says of that futile diversion:

> "Perhaps in all of us there is some evil, and we're just too weak to burn it. So we build evil toys and dance around them. Later we burn them, hoping, perhaps, that it will help."

BUT STILL WE RETURN to André. He is not the centre of the world, but his disillusionment and failure are special, of a particular kind. He is the only character whose experience does not include the war of the Thirties and Forties, except in the way he remembers, the child's participation in wartime mottos and propaganda formulas. If somehow Toni represents Spain, André represents the postwar consciousness of the West.

Chaim, the Jewish bar-owner, is a kind of wandering Jew, and like Jung's wise old man, he offers the wisest words on André's problem. Chaim has been hounded from country to country, various ideologies at his heels, and fully understands that no "cause" holds the promise for (a) man's salvation. It is curious to note that his name may be a pun. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, said, "Within yourself lies salvation." Chaim, the founder of Chaimism, says, "But there is no cause that saves us all. Salvation is personal."

André realizes the hopelessness of the war-fraught twentieth-century causes:

> Often it appeared to André that he belonged to the last generation of men. A generation not lost and not unfound but sought after zealously, sought after so that it might stand up and be counted, perjuring itself and humanity, sought after by the propagandists of a faltering revolution and the rear guard of a dying civilization. His intellectual leaders had proven either duds or counterfeits — standing up in the thirties to cheer the revolution hoarsely, and in the fifties sitting down again to write a shy, tinny, blushing yes to capitalistic democracy.
>
> Nobody could quite believe again that he had grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in men shaken. There was going to be another war all right — their war. The old gods, newly cleaned and pressed, were being gleefully handed down to them.

But he is, despite his sophistication, a product of the middle of the twentieth century, and the inheritor of its debts. Chaim, a man who seems to have seen all generations, knows, that, "The fun will be for André's and Toni's generation. They will have to pay the unpaid bills of the past, account for the dishonesties, the vag-

rancies. . . ." But Chaim knows also (as André seems not to) that there is always a time after the wars; and now that it is fifteen years after the Spanish war, and six years after the World War, it is time to quit looking over one's shoulder:

> "It is that he knows and understands all the things that he is against but he still doesn't know what he is *for*. André has the temperament of a priest, but none of the present churches will do. That makes it very difficult."

André, walking around Valencia, the scene of dogged celebration of the past, the ancient peoples of Spain, is also haunted by his own past, his share, perhaps, of a world guilt. There is an implied connection between Kraus' Nazi past and the guilt carried in André — he made a Montreal Jewish girl pregnant, and she died after her abortion; and when André went to see her family, the father told him to go away and leave them alone, ethnically. André hit the old man, knocking him down, carrying away with him that added guilt. At the point when he finishes telling this story to Toni, he finds himself looking into the Nazi eyes of Kraus. Now the dead girl stands or lies always between André and Toni. (As Nazi Kraus stands in the shadows, watching them.) Toni, the traditional prostitute looking for love, knows that André's ability to love is smothered by guilt:

> And she felt fear, because she loved him with a hopeless beautiful love, knowing — always knowing — that he could not love, that something ugly and bitter within him would always stifle any love he felt for her.

And it is Andre's inability to love that is his grief and failure, because an inability to love is an inability to believe. Guillermo, his Communist friend, refuses to believe that André's salvation is personal:

> "I remember when you were ill," he said, "when all you knew was despair, and all you did was drink. Do you know why, André? Not because of the girl and her father. That is only incidental. It is because you are without hope or reason or direction. You are *sin centimo*. If you are a humanist there is only one place for you. You must join us."

André has at least the self-knowledge required to refute Guillermo's solution. But that leaves him looking into a void:

> I guess my crime is that I haven't chosen, he thought. I wonder what my punishment will be. And who will be my judge?

Further, he knows that which Chaim suggests:

> "It is the man who is unusual — the man who rises above the restrictions of his own class to assert himself as an individual and humanitarian. It's pretty damn

> elementary to be aware of social injustice and poetic truth and beauty, but to be capable of empathy, to understand the failings of a man — any man — even as you condemn him, well — Look, every human being is to be approached with a sense of wonder. The rest is crap, or incidental."

Empathy — the quality of being able to feel another's joy or woe; André knows that his great sin is in not being committed to anyone outside himself. He still hears the old man saying leave us alone. But André is not in love with himself. In fact he seeks his own destruction. He is disgusted by his own failure of commitment — it is with disgust towards his own failure that he allows himself to say to Guillermo, "Everything is a joke. It has to be." And he feels uneasy before his father-figure when Chaim asks him what postwar youth believes in, and he replies with the facile formula, "I guess more than anything else we believe in not believing."

However, André is more interesting than that. At least his is an odyssey, slow-moving as it may be. He is looking for a grail without knowing what a grail is. We see him trying to make some act of commitment, even if it is an unsavory sexual one with Barney Larkin's wife, or a shameful drunken one in which he fecklessly punches Kraus and gets beaten up by that reluctant destroyer. Chaim at one point recognizes that in his wish to be committed, André carries at least the potentiality of his salvation. In fact, at one point Chaim speaks perhaps like an indulgent father who does not care to discourage his son:

> "But I like you, André, because you are not bored. You are not intellectual and uncommitted. You are always taking part, even if not always intelligently. The earth is in your hands and you are dirty."

It is not the truth, of course, but it is a recognition of André's predilection toward goodness.

But in his search, André gets lugubriously drunk, glamourizes his situation somewhat by calling his drunkenness madness, and walks through the Valencia streets of sordid escape. On his way towards whatever he is approaching, he hears a drab and drunken hopeless Spanish song of patriotism, love, and religious faith:

> *Por mi patria y por mi novia*
> *y mi Virgen de San Gil*
> *y mi rosario de cuentas*
> *yo me quisiera morir.*

— traditionally honourable things to die for (and we know by now that André is on his way to dying), but all three things already dead inside André. In his

pocket he has a thick wad of Chaim's money, money that promises to buy them escape, freedom in Paris, but he meets a mad whore, and throws the wealth on her bare belly, feeling a mysterious release as he does. This is one of the best realized scenes in the novel, largely because it is one of the few that cannot be well interpreted or understood, because the manipulating intellect of the author is not obvious; it is like most good parts of a novel — only the feelings respond, the wish to intervene, the shock of sympathy for Chaim, whose chances seem to flutter to the floor with his Spanish money.

At the same time, we see André's growing haze of what he feels is insanity, and it wars for his mind against his desperation to be committed to anything, as long as the man can make an act, a gesture that is not escape or evasion. Once again it is a confrontation with Kraus that seems to give him that chance. And once again Kraus pummels his antagonist, finally picks him up and hurls him off the bridge they meet on. André lies smashed on the rocks below, and in his last conscious thoughts, is trying to be committed at least to his own death:

> He felt a lump in his throat but only dimly, as consciousness was slipping from him. He was sobbing. *No. No. All I ask is that I know what's going on. That's all. Never mind the cigarette. Just knowing. Or feeling.*

But at the moment that Kraus threw André from the bridge, the big final *falla* was exploding, so that we are reminded that André's way out is as much an evasion and a mollification as the Spanish indigent's yearly dazzlement.

Some critics have pointed out (and correctly, to a certain extent) that the people we meet in *The Acrobats* are stock characters. André is the young aesthete, lost and in exile, searching for meaning in a confused world. Toni is the innocent prostitute, the traditional wry comment on a whole society that has sold its innocence for quick, mortal and illusory rewards. Chaim is the perennial wise old wandering Jew and father figure to those who have lost all their own fathers. Barney is the rich boorish American abroad, hiding secret fears of his own sexual inability behind an aggressive social manner. And so on.

Probably more to the point is that in this first novel, Richler has not yet, as he has in his later books, submerged the techniques of writing below the surface of the story as we are allowed a look at it. A reader notices this in the first few

pages, in which André is introduced to the Americans. The scene-setting conversations around the sidewalk tables of Valencia are filled with obvious attempts to show that the writer is not simply reporting dialogue. Someone says something; then someone lights a cigarette; then someone says something. Or:

> Derek lit a cigarette. He tossed his head back with studied abandon and blew a big puff of smoke into the still air. I shouldn't have come back, he thought. It was wrong.

Or "Jessie smiled brightly," then said something. "Jessie puckered up her cherry lips impatiently," then said something. "Jessie applauded," then said something.

On the other hand, or perhaps still with the too-obtrusive first hand, when Richler attempts some impressionistic writing, he is usually clumsy. An exception is in the scene of André's death, but this may be because few people are prepared to offer their knowledge in criticism of an experience they have not come away from yet. But when Richler offers an "impressionistic" picture of the festival streets, his plan is so obvious as to render the familiar techniques inadequate to the goal, the pen of the writer scratching in the ear.

Much more authentic and accomplished are the lyrical catalogues, of André's childhood experiences, of the political evils of mid-century, or of the sordid Valencia streets. Once Jessie loses her way in the backstreets of the Valencia markets, where:

> The heat was redolent of rancid food, children with soiled underwear, uncovered garbage, venereal diseases, sweat and boils, pimpled adolescents with one leg and a stump for another, remedies exchanged across washing lines, cheats, cross-eyed whores, dirty persons, and no privacy.

Richler has a very good reporter's eye, and an equally good ear, especially for the individual rhythms and accents of speech. The wise, kindly, ironic Chaim is very well realized — Richler's best moments come when he gets Chaim's speech down, or the dialogue of any of his characters, American or Spanish, Nazi or Jew. Conversely, he is weakest, usually, when he goes after interior monologue; there he tends to go maudlin or hokey, sometimes unconvincingly clichéd.

Another point for Richler is his ability to take a basically negative character and to draw a sympathetic picture of him, as of the bourgeois Barney. This is a feat that Arthur Koestler rightly said should be accomplished by the good novelist. Critics will say, and have said, that Richler's characters are portrayed to be "undeserving of compassion" (Nathan Cohen in the *Tamarack Review*, Winter 1958), but I believe that the young Richler scored a coup in this novel, in arous-

ing compassion for characters who would superficially seem to be the enemy — Barney and Kraus the best examples. In this way, Richler speaks not to the smug liberal intelligence, but to the compassionate human being who may be lurking behind that mask. No author who speaks that way can hope to write an "accomplished" novel. But the book reaches at least determinedly beyond accomplishment toward the place where a man is forced to ask himself where he is, and how he feels. And there the sun also rises again.

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THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DISCOVERY

William H. New

THE PUBLICATION of Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night* make 1959 one of the important years for recent Canadian fiction. The two works seem at first to be strangely paired. One is a pungently ironic comedy, the other a serious metaphysical study that verges at times on the sentimental. Richler relies on a sprawling picaresque method, and MacLennan on a muted allegory. Even their flaws are different. The tendency to verboseness that afflicts the end of MacLennan's book is nowhere found in Richler's, but Richler will sacrifice the overall balance of his novel for the sake of big comic set scenes. Fortunately his novel survives because his wit is successful, just as MacLennan's work succeeds because the reader becomes sympathetically involved in the reality which the author has created. Yet for all their differences, the two works have the same basic situation. The discovery and habitation of a new land becomes a metaphor for an attitude of mind, and that attitude is at the forefront of present literary thought.

Richler's novel is concerned with the apprenticeship, the voyage, as it were, that ultimately takes Duddy to a new world and gives him the power to create there a recognizable individuality. His childhood position is analogous to that of Jerome Martell in *The Watch that Ends the Night*. While Jerome has known no father, Duddy at the age of fifteen has been unable to find in his father the qualities he wants to admire, and he invents an extra brother Bradley to satisfy this need. While Jerome has not experienced the ordinary expressions of love from his mother, Duddy has not known his mother and is therefore unsure of ever having experienced that love himself. He "couldn't bring himself to risk" asking about this, a key phrase, considering what he will risk, for his incomprehension either of love or of relationship awaits his discovery of an acceptable self. Like

Jerome he has a journey to go through part of life, not only inevitable but necessary.

Exactly where the journey should aim and should end is Duddy's problem. When he was only seven, he had been told by his grandfather: "A man without land is nobody. Remember that, Duddel." To find and own land becomes in time, therefore, equated in Duddy's mind with the identity for which he also seeks. But to be a somebody is more than this; to be a somebody is to be adult, not only in the self, but also recognized as being adult by a world to which the self bears some relationship. Maturity does not occur with the discovery of a new world, for this tends not to be a satisfactory end in itself. The dimensions of the new world are greater than the old identity can fill out, and there must be a realistic matching between an individual's potentialities and the place he can occupy. Duddy notes that "South America . . . could no longer be discovered. It had been found." But in re-enacting not only the Canadian but also the twentieth-century conflict, he can find a smaller niche elsewhere.

The humour that pervades the book is not gentle, and it serves a quite different purpose from that in, for example, Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*; there is no necessity here to prevent sentimentality from repelling the reader. Duddy moves through a complicated but essentially extra-human sequence of events which, because incongruous, excites laughter. The laughter is directed at an outsider to the ordinary human predicament whose conflict is yet typical of it, and because he can surmount his difficulties in unorthodox and cumulatively extravagant ways, he wins, like Donleavy's Ginger Man, a sort of admiration without respect, a sufferance without approval, an attraction without sympathy, and an attachment without involved concern. At once more than the conventional society and an inherent element in it, Duddy follows a course of life in order to locate an appropriate pattern for it. Though this is pursued in iconoclastic — but innocent, and therefore laughable — terms, it illustrates a growth to maturity which is fundamentally parallel to the serious situations involving MacLennan's George Stewart. The changes that take place in Duddy prepare him for the discovery of Lac St. Pierre, and the discovery is an essential step in his growing up.

Duddy is a comer; he pushes his way to success not by having any idea of a reasonable means to do this, but rather by not having any idea and so using every means as though it were a reasonable one. The losses he incurs in a crooked roulette game stem from his naïveté, and they recall his earlier loss of a much smaller capital invested in a stock of obscene comic books. His earlier reaction had been to burn the stock for fear of being caught with it; the reaction at Ste.

Agathe is to run away; yet both are childish in a way that Duddy cannot be if he is to emerge from his apprenticeship in his own terms. The novel has its limited success because the reader will let Duddy have those terms; they reverse standard values, but they become values in themselves.

BECAUSE HE IS a comic figure, a sort of latter-day *picaron* seeking ruthlessly and ultimately successfully for social promotion, Richler must not cultivate for him the reader's pity. If there were a total identification between the reader and the central character, the comic effect would be destroyed, for it is the sense of apartness, of differentiation between the character perceived and the concept the reader has of himself, that is part of the ironic comedy. Duddy, that is, must remain innocent even in success, even though he moves through his failures to a triumph that he does not fully comprehend. The identity that he finally achieves, successful in spite of its disregard for social convention, is both typical of the society he has been scorning and yet beyond it. The "maturity" he reaches by the end of his apprenticeship is a recognition of a place in relation to society that will probably through time generate social acceptance as well; at that time, perhaps, reader and character could move closer together, but not until. His solution is distinct, then, from that found within a social code by George Stewart, though it is related to the individual one formulated by Jerome Martell.

Duddy's childishness concerning the comics and the roulette must be avoided not because it is socially irresponsible but because it does not contribute to the self for which he aims. Because he has been reared in the St. Urbain Street world of Montreal, a sort of Jewish enclave of low average income, he has been brought up to expect defensive protection as necessary. Several choices are open to him as routes to success: immersion in the Gentile world with concomitant loss of identity, continuation of the St. Urbain Street world of his childhood, participation in the establishment of the new Jewish state of Israel, or the achievement of an independence that will let him be himself in any situation. An attempt to achieve independence, however, makes Duddy uneasy and suspicious because he is insecure. The very defences that protect against any envelopment by the "alien" culture preserve the St. Urbain Street childhood identity as well. Duddy's brother Lennie removes those defences in his contact with the Westmount Gentiles, but that society only consumes him. He thinks he finds there a freedom that his own

deliberate childhood existence did not supply: "They're just themselves and glad of it. Nothing scares them. . . . *They're young.*" But Duddy voices the truth later when he says: "It's hard to be a gentleman — a Jew, I mean — it's hard to be. Period."

To achieve independence in the Gentile world, Duddy assumes he needs money. When he was a child, the identity he had wanted was bound up with his appraisal of Jerry Dingleman, the Boy Wonder, the Mr. Big of a narcotics underworld. "Duddy wanted to be a somebody. Another Boy Wonder maybe. Not a loser, certainly." But the Boy Wonder is exactly that, a *boy* wonder, because in spite of his power in a localized area and in spite of his wealth, he does not achieve recognition by the Westmount world. Before Duddy recognizes that the Wonder is "only famous on St. Urbain Street", he is used, unaware, to smuggle heroin. Dingleman says of him: "The boy is innocent. He's perfect." The innocence that Dingleman sees in Duddy is a naïveté perfect for being exploited. Because the boy seeks to masquerade in an imagined sophistication, he will avoid questioning what he does not understand when questioning would be the very act that would bring him real knowledge. To come out of apprenticeship, Duddy needs not only to discover truth in the world in which he wants to live but also to know what to do with truth. Dingleman can be defeated not by confronting him with fact (which he has known and disregarded all along) but only by an independence that can afford to disregard him. Duddy's various schemes for achieving the wealth to purchase Lac St. Pierre give him a measure of the experience he needs to be independent of Dingleman; what he needs also, in the way of position, achieved through a recognition by self and by others, he has yet to find out.

Duddy must both extend trust and be extended trust before he can achieve recognizable adult status. For this to be part of any development in him in Richler's comic terms as well, it must be his extension of trust that brings him knowledge of the nature of this relationship but the extension of trust to him that in fact brings with it the success that is maturity and mastery. Duddy's grandfather, Simcha, is an adult of the old order; he merits trust in his neighbourhood and is given it, and it is a measure of his position. But for Duddy the estimation of that world is insufficient, and though one of his plans in securing Lac St. Pierre is to please his grandfather, this must ultimately give way to the more basic need to fulfill himself. He cannot live in Simcha's world; no more can Simcha live in his. The final recognition of their separate identities is prefigured when early in the novel Abramovitch says to his father: "this is modern times."

When Duddy trusts others, his comic naïveté takes him into situations that

more experienced persons would avoid, but it is simply because he is naïve that he can emerge unscathed, though more knowing, developing cunning in the process. He lets Dingleman use him for smuggling heroin, for example; he unknowingly lets Peter John Friar make *avant garde* films of a *bar mitzvah* ceremony for him; he purchases Lac St. Pierre in Yvette's name, saying, "A friend is a friend. You've got to trust somebody. . . ." But it is his central and significant relationship with his brother that the difference between intelligent trust and foolhardiness crystallizes for him, that he learns he must make a choice of enemies. Lennie had tried to become part of Westmount society and in so doing was gulled into foolhardy action; he is a promising medical student, and yet he jeopardizes his career by performing — and botching — an illegal abortion, and then running away childishly, to hide from the act. Duddy, however, can not only diagnose the cause but also prescribe the cure: "Don't you know better than to go bareback?" If mature life is a healthy self-possession, then the life lived prior to maturity must be based on self-protection. When Duddy then takes Lennie's problem from him and solves it, earning Lennie's trust, he has achieved part of the relationship that will ultimately give him his final position. Lennie finds his own identity by breaking with Westmount and participating in the building of Israel, by taking his doctor's capacity for healing to a new world that he can inhabit; but Duddy's place remains in the Gentile world. His is therefore different from Cohen, who says: "We're two of a kind, you know. . . . A plague on all the *goyim*, that's my motto." He is different because, for Duddy, this is not a satisfactory guide; he cannot choose to align himself on religious terms. When his film of Bernie Cohen's *bar mitzvah* shows "the pregnant moment, the meeting of time past and time present, when the priest and his initiate reach the *ho'mat*", and shows it, in a hilariously funny scene, by techniques of symbolism and montage, the orthodox apprenticeship to position within the religion is contrasted with Duddy's unorthodox but vigorous apprenticeship to an identity all his own.

THOUGH THE STORY is related in terms of a Jewish boy's rise to adult status, its implications go beyond the strictly racial-religious extension. Duddy's Uncle Benjy is wrong when his estimation of the boy begins and ends here: "Because you're a *pusherke*. A little Jew-boy on the make." What Duddy comes to and in fact must come to if his apprenticeship to life is to be successful is *a* self rather than *the* self. He cannot accept an order that is established for

him by race or religion or duty or family, and when Benjy leaves him a letter — which Duddy must be ready to read, somewhat like Nick Adams or Ike McCaslin having to be ready to fish or hunt — the warning it contains to the boy must even yet undergo seachange within him before he can become a man: "You've got to love [the family], Duddel. . . . A boy can be two, three, four potential people, but a man is only one. He murders the other." The relationship of family love is only valid for him up to a point. Inheritance of family ties — in individual or even in political terms, for the "ghetto", for Montreal, and for the Canadian society of the story — must not interfere with the establishment of individual identity. Lennie and Riva find their "God's Little Acre" in Israel, but though this satisfies them, it cannot become *ergo* a necessary reason for Duddy's embracing the same solution. His own little acre lies at Lac St. Pierre, neither in Israel nor in St. Urbain Street, and love that enmeshes him elsewhere than in that self deprives him of his full potentialities and ends by being no love.

He has to become a Somebody, and for this to occur, the demanding love that had attempted to form the child's identity must be exchanged for a trust in the identity that the adult forms for himself. Lennie has to trust Duddy in the matter of the abortion; Max has to trust him with a thousand dollar loan; Benjy has to show his trust by willing Duddy his house. Duddy's particular personality causes a change when the comic reversal of intent takes place; not only does he avoid all other selves in his master of one, but he also turns to his own development the trusts that are placed in him by others. The abortion affair leads to his business ventures with Hugh Calder of Westmount, for example; the house that Benjy leaves him, tied up as it is by legal limitations so that Duddy can only own the legacy and not profit in his own cash terms by it, he empties of its furniture in order to raise money anyway and invest it in the acquisition of his own land. What Yvette will not willingly give him is the opportunity ultimately to be adult; she wants a cessation of imaginative investment and practical energy which is objectified in her care for the paralytic Virgil. Whereas Duddy finds himself by expending, Virgil remains fearful and in need of protection by trying to save intact a bequest that has been left to him. When Duddy sacrifices that tradition to his own effort, he brings the traditional world — albeit weak and by now impotent: Simcha, Dingleman, Virgil — into opposition against him. But when he is recognized as the Owner of the new world, his apprenticeship of discovery is over. He is given a trust that makes him at last the Somebody he wants to be ("That's all right, sir. We'll mark it.") adult, individual, and master in his own terms in his own land.

Success is therefore possible in Richler's fictional world, though his ironic eye builds it only out of breaking traditions. This seems at first to be so partial as to deny adequate scope to the novel, and in Richler's other works this is essentially true. The acrimony of *The Incomparable Atuk*, for example, makes that work merely repellent instead of provocative. *A Choice of Enemies* and *Son of a Smaller Hero* offer only fragmentary views of society, and hence the reader never quite believes in their reality. But the world of Duddy Kravitz is whole, and Duddy himself, while not particularly likeable, is very much alive. He wins readers to his side, moreover, because his reaction to traditions is a positive one. The control he wants, the mastery to which he is apprenticed, is a valid aim. His iconoclasm is of value not for itself, but because it is a route towards inhabiting a new world and fulfilling a social individuality. As he is a comic figure, his apparently destructive tendencies can paradoxically be a means for constructing life, but the fictional tone and technique are necessarily different for depicting this than they are for showing a comparable process of discovery in *The Watch that Ends the Night*. MacLennan's study is of the crossing of political and metaphysical frontiers and it ends in peace, whereas Richler's novel, of a different kind, ends in a comic triumph.

By the end of Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Duddy has come to own an individual property; he has located a new land that he has yet to inhabit. Though the novel implies that Duddy is both highly individual within society and yet highly typical of it, the concept is made by no means as explicit as it is in Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night*. Each man here must be exactly that: each man. The separation of individuality is basic to both these works. For MacLennan, however, each man in fulfilling himself as an individual becomes Everyman as well, which is a tenable position only as long as the fundamental separation is acknowledged and accepted. Inevitably this moves into metaphysical spheres, and that the conflict should be resolvable here in a profound and moving peace is an indication both of the health that the author sees to be an achievable end, and of the human and humane balance possible for the individual even though conflict and illness persist. Part of the contrast between the peace discovered in this book and the iconoclastic volatility in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* can be related to the age of

the authors in 1959, the year both books were published. Richler was 28, MacLennan was 52. That they should vary in their approach is an indication of markedly different backgrounds; that they should be concerned with such similar questions, however, is an indication of the attitudes and interests that by this time had become the focus of the twentieth century. Both of the two men who are central to MacLennan's work, Jerome Martell and George Stewart, must make voyages of discovery, and, when they have found their new lands, they must continually modify themselves in order to shape an appropriate life and order for their place and time. The book equates the mature life with creative separation, and it differentiates this from defeatist resignation, from aimlessness, and from apathy.

The Watch that Ends the Night is a large and complex book, by no means flawless, which I nevertheless regard as one of the finest accomplishments in recent fiction in English. One of the flaws is paradoxically one of the great strengths of the book — a set piece concerning the boyhood and the first voyage of Jerome Martell that is superlatively written in itself and yet seems insufficiently subordinated to the whole work. It is, however, thematically and structurally related to the concerns of the novel and serves as a key to an understanding of the development that takes place. Jerome is the fatherless son of a loose-moralled cook in a New Brunswick lumber camp. When he flees this environment, his action is typical of that which people in search of a new land undergo, for the search itself begins in escape. Yet in escaping, Jerome is moving from the scene of his mother's murder to a life elsewhere, and his motive is therefore distinct from that of the killer, whose aim in flight is merely to avoid the responsibility that the murder has placed upon him. In escaping, too, Jerome becomes aware of a new life that is almost like resurrection; it comes when all the skills which he has developed in boyhood are brought into a concerted effort to achieve an end beyond that boyhood. But the new innocence is not yet an end, for it does not make use of Jerome's full potentialities.

Jerome serves as a sort of catalytic agent in the novel, for the characters with whom he comes into contact are allowed to mature because of their relationship with him, and yet he, too, changes through time. His initial journey down river becomes a microcosm for the development in both of the major characters in the novel. Immaturity precedes the change, for Jerome's first canoe is boy-sized and he is not allowed into the main current which would sweep him irrevocably away. But here there is no father to give him a name, and he must ultimately move. The "entire world" seems to open up as he heads towards Moncton, but when

he is found there and adopted by Giles Martell, his world is still childish and prepared for him. No matter how well he fits it, he cannot merely inherit it if another part of his nature remains in conflict with it. The two pictures that are hung on his bedroom wall in Martell's Halifax home foreshadow further change, therefore; one is Reynolds' "*Age of Innocence* and the other was a sailing ship in a storm." The contained metaphor indicates that Halifax is only a temporary harbour in the quest for a larger new world.

The Martells' world is one of faith, an acceptance of accepted religion, and it satisfies Jerome only until the First World War. Religion then seemed to sanction hate, and when guilt after participating in the war only forces him to seem hypocritical to himself, such a religion as a guide for life is no longer valid. That innocence is comfort for an older order — exemplified here by the people and towns of the Canadian Maritimes — an order that has grown "old without ever growing up". His own child life is like part of a nameless and half-asleep New Brunswick town. Jerome says: " 'Kids who looked like me were a part of the landscape'." When Giles Martell then says to the boy he has just adopted, " 'You'll be proud of Halifax, for it's a fine town, a fine place to grow up in and — well, even for a grown man it's not too bad a place,' " he merely underlines the content he feels in his life and which he offers the boy. The war changes Halifax, however, a phenomenon that MacLennan was concerned with in his earlier novel, *Barometer Rising*, and unless the old order adapts to the change, it has nothing to offer the new generation. The innocence that has been known before is disrupted; for the young people, therefore, the old identity no longer serves, and out of the world they then enter, intending to inhabit, they must fashion a new self. Jerome is hollow after the war — placeless and Godless — and hope lies only in finding a self that will relate him both to infinity and to mortality.

THE VOYAGE that George Stewart takes to find God and self, from childhood to full maturity, is the major development of the novel. Because his background is different from Jerome's, he is not forced as early into feeling a need to escape. Born into an old order, he has an identity ready-made, waiting for him merely to inhabit it. But like the Halifax establishment, this, too, is only a boyhood in which his age of change will not allow him to remain. The summer he meets Catherine, for example, is the time of his first attempt to move in a

pattern distinct from the established one. Childhood "is a garden", but they are both from then on outside it. Both belong to the "English-speaking garrison of Montreal . . . in the heart of the French island in North America", but neither of them fit it. They must leave if they are to come to terms with the island of self in the midst of an apparently foreign world. Their "Fern Hill" of childhood, as it were, and the "dappled green" of youth, must be exchanged for a world that lies, as it does for Steinbeck's Adam Trask, east of Eden. Together and alone, they are apart from the old order of innocence that instinctively knew its God. Catherine has said to George: "Grow up and go", but he has not yet the ability to withstand tradition. Unlike Duddy Kravitz with Yvette, he cannot bring himself to love Catherine physically and thereby discover a new world. The "frontier" of knowing that love is related to death awaits his crossing, and in his overlong adolescence his rôle as a news interpreter is ironic when he has no recognizable identity himself. By the implications of allegory, George is Canada, but he is not limited to this; MacLennan's control over his method here — as opposed to its control over him in such bad novels as *Two Solitudes* or *The Precipice* — gives the work a much greater scope than a rigid one-to-one correspondence would allow.

Like Duddy Kravitz, George and Jerome must grow around the restrictions imposed by a past culture. As Duddy also has to strive against his social income level, so George and Jerome must fight the world-wide depression of the nineteen-thirties. Each of them is at once part of this phenomenon and yet not typical of it; attitudes of the time become theirs, yet this is only a transient stage in the development of their selves. It is during this period that George and "millions of other young men" undergo the change that came to Jerome during the First World War: "I lost my faith in religion; I lost my faith in myself; I lost my faith in the integrity of human society". The initial change, however, must take place not in the social system, but in the self. Jerome's support of schemes of social union is merely a charade of life. He is trying to escape his guilty self, and when he heads to the Spanish Civil War as a doctor, he is trying to expiate his participation in the earlier one. But it is also part of the encounter with death that is apparently necessary for his coming-of-age. His daughter Sally cannot appreciate his action, for it has not been necessary for her, and later she says to George:

> . . . he really fitted in and symbolised that whole awful period. Those appalling adolescent he-men like Hemingway and all those naive idealists thinking they were so terrific because they went to bed with each other to prove the capitalist system stank.

To a large extent she is right, for it is only after the depression is over that George and Jerome can grow up completely.

During this period, they and their generation had reacted in varying degrees inwardly upon themselves even when they seemed most to move outwards into the world. Knowing themselves to be alone and empty, they sought love desperately and futilely. Hence Catherine ultimately says to George: "Love can be such a terrible torment. . . . People break loose into sex because it's so direct and simple". Like politics, it is an escape. When a minor character, Norah Blackwell, invites George to join the Communist Party — " 'stop running away. Become one of us!' " — she unknowingly invites him only to further flight. Immersion of the self in a political system becomes a sort of suicide, an attempt to substitute a theoretical responsibility for others for an actual responsibility for self. Because Jerome can never be fully absorbed into political activity, he must ultimately face himself and either accept his identity or find a means of destruction. "The canoe in which he had issued from the forest had now taken him out into the ocean . . . with a hurricane rising. Jerome, Myself, Everyone." Only years later when George must go through a comparable discovery is the problem formulated rationally. When a child has grown to middle age, he writes, the father's rôle of approval is left vacant. In the Thirties, "we tried to make gods out of political systems, and worship and serve them"; like logic, ability, success, wife and children, they do not abide, and then "comes the Great Fear". Such thoughts relate both to individual development and to social history during the twentieth century, and they read like a commentary upon *Lord of the Flies*.

For George, Catherine and Jerome are the parent-substitutes and the escape from the self:

> I have never seemed mature to myself. The young seem more so because they know nothing of the 1930s. The young have the necessary self-confidence and ignorance to feel mature, and that is why I like them so much better than I like my own generation. Was there ever a crowd like ours? . . . Was there ever a generation which yearned to belong, so unsuccessfully, to something larger than themselves?

George is behind both Catherine and Jerome in his development; his adolescence is prolonged beyond the time when both the others have perceived their relationship to a reality they find unpleasant, and yet have chosen to accept. George's teaching job is an attempt to regress to the stable world that existed before change: "Nothing in this world is so permanent as a school. . . . Forty years on is

today when you return". Even Catherine is attracted by such a view: " 'It would have been so much simpler and safer to have kept the old rules.' " But to avoid progressive change is like suicide, and when George accepts his move, he begins "to grow up. The depression was over at last so far as I was concerned, and I came out of its deep freeze. . . ." His marriage to Catherine when Jerome is presumed dead, however, is not yet a facet of maturity. A necessary reappraisal of his position in relationship to others he only gets from his next contact with Jerome.

JEROME IS A DOCTOR, and it is allegorically suitable that it should be through contact with him that George should find the health that is maturity. The muted allegorical implications that run beneath the story are specifically Canadian, and it is not surprising that the concept of the Frozen North should enter into the imagery of the book. The imagery is patterned, not random, and it contributes to a comprehension of the concept of identity. The winter imagery is connected with youth and innocence, and the snow of a northern land is a sort of primeval and almost archetypal childhood that any person encountering twentieth-century life has long since left behind. The passing of this former time must be admitted, just as George must accept that the winter world of his own childhood has gone. George is a product of old Montreal as well as of the depression, and it is the old order of the city that appears as a child-like world, a child's dream society, the embryo of a utopia never realized. This must give way before adult health can be achieved.

Even after the depression is over, the old order still attracts George. The cold air "had come down from the germless, sinless land", and George enjoys it. Torn by the desire to retain the memories of his youth, by a feeling that it would be better to forget and merely to live in the present, and by an apparent inability to forget, he is faced at this time with Jerome's return. In disruption he realizes that his happiness with Catherine is only a temporary new world, and his insight takes him into another discovery. Even his city becomes the potentially threatening environment, and he writes:

> I kept staring at that ocean of light that was Montreal. Then fear came back to me. . . .

> Then a man discovers in dismay that what he believed to be his identity is no more than a tiny canoe at the mercy of an ocean. . . . Little man, what now?

To show an empty man where fulness lies becomes Jerome's task as friend and as doctor. His medicine aims not, like Richler's Virgil, to preserve life, but rather to help people to look at life more as Duddy Kravitz does and "to get the most out of what life they have".

Through the course of the novel, Catherine is slowly dying, and as George recognizes his relationship to her he feels that he is dying as well. Jerome, too, exists in him, but Jerome has been as it were resurrected from the dead. In reconciling these identities George comes to find that death is a part of life just as decay is a part of new growth or as mortality is a part of immortality. Jerome had once said: " 'The only immortality is mankind.' " When he comes back and ministers to George, he extends the idea. Full acceptance of the self involves acceptance of both the infinitude and the edges of self; to be equal to individual fate is to be equal to the knowledge that the limits of individuality are the limits of fullest meaning and yet that because the patterns of identity are common to all, individuals can know love. In the self lies the potentiality of combating the forces of negation. As George can at last write: "I say again that this mysterious thing, which creates, destroys and recreates, is the sole force which equals the merciless fate binding a human being to his mortality." In conversation with George, Jerome brings him to an acceptance of the self that can be vital, the self that through passion comes to know both creation and destruction and can, because of this, face time and yet live. Tragedy is wrought to its uttermost only when the individual accepts that he is living his own death. If he thinks of his life "as lived", then there is nothing left to fear. He can be aware of a relationship with men without this being an escapist union; he can know the continuity of self in all mankind in spite of mortality and the end of fear because of the knowledge of immortality. He can then emerge from isolation with a sufficient separateness. Any struggle necessitates endurance, but endurance alone will not satisfy human dignity, will not be a vital mode of existence, until the struggle appears worthwhile. George says: "All of us is Everyman and this is intolerable unless each of us can also be I." When the struggle moves within, the capacity to endure becomes the ability to face time knowledgeably and to achieve peace thereby, forever.

For Richler's Duddy Kravitz, the discovery of a new land and an individual tradition is not specifically related to a Canadian search for identity. For MacLennan's George Stewart it is. But it is more than this; it is struggle of men any-

where, beyond the boundaries of politics but not beyond the boundaries of time. In a land that changes in an age of change, the search for identity, for the distinctiveness of self, becomes a search for an emerging maturity, and the converse quickly becomes true as well. Such a poem as Earle Birney's "Case History" is based upon the concept of Canada being an adolescent land, the child of a loveless wedlock, struggling for maturity in an unstable home. What MacLennan does with the theme is to take it beyond the regional borders, to apply it to the universal question of man experiencing change in the twentieth century. His solution is not to accept the traditional source of stability; nor does he sanction flight into union with another. Maturity lies in the ability to remain one self, yet know the self at the same time to be not less than the whole world. Change that happens to the self, therefore, is not merely part of a greater change but in fact is that greater change, and mature man is both self and all.

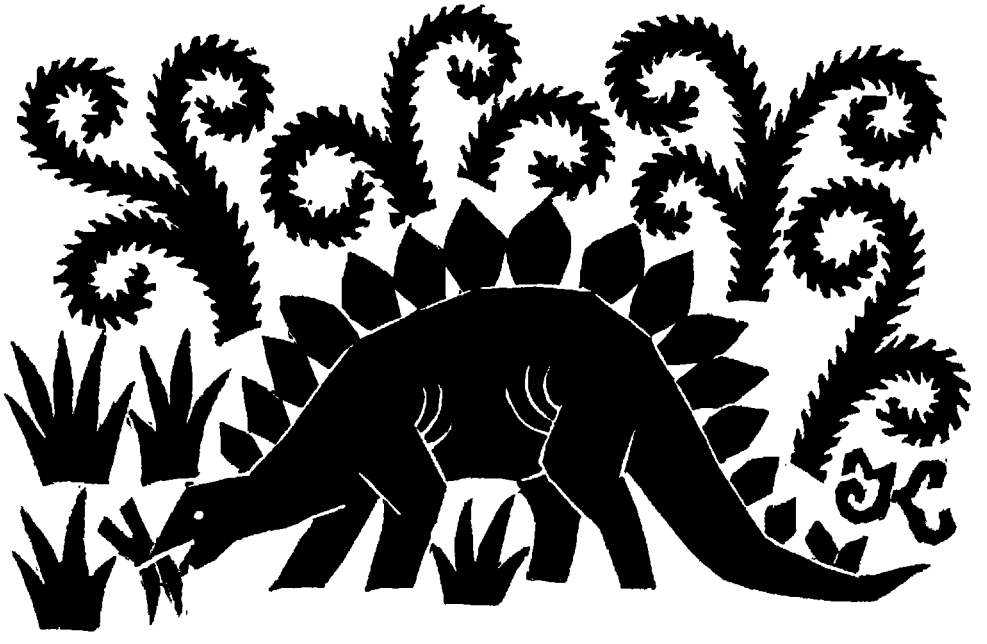
George's childhood had been that of a winter city, but as change takes place in the century, so it takes place in the city itself. In spite of the old controls exercised over it, it is turning "into a real world city". Only this will make it mature. No longer controlled from outside its own rules, no longer hiding from the world behind the isolating mask of an identity only as a land of snow, the land can reveal what makes it individual and what makes it vital. The rules that the city knows itself, that govern its intricacy and have kept it alive, that give it cohesiveness in spite of the variegation within, that make it one and yet many at the same time, can at last be accepted as a feature of life germane to itself and necessary to its own continuance. Like man discovering he is Everyman, the city and the society discover that their comfortable security is taken from them and that they are still apprenticing. The masks of tradition or even of isolationism had seemed to satisfy a need, but they were only artificial gods in a time of change. Then comes potential dissolution, the great fear, and George writes: "in the last two years of the 1940s . . . the whole world went over a frontier. . . . In the bleak years we at least were not alone. . . . The bell which only a few years ago had tolled for all, now tolled for each family in its prosperous solitude." Obviously the apprehension of rules by a society of individuals is an ideal, yet it is an ideal within the capabilities of man to achieve. Though the mosaic pattern may not be any more difficult to create effectively than a monochrome perceived in isolation, and though it is subject to much greater chance of disintegration, it is a more pleasing art form.

What remains in man to combat the potential disruption is the will to live, and to love life is to love in the face of time and in the knowledge of separateness.

Though every man lives in his solitude, in his individual identity, two solitudes can (to use, as MacLennan does, a quotation from Rilke) protect, touch, and greet each other. In this, love consists. The solitudes must remain, but because man knows himself to be Everyman as well, he can approach another not as supplicant to god but as lover and friend. Knowing immortality in mortality, George can accept death because he can accept his own life, and he can write of Catherine at the end: "What if the ocean of time overwhelmed her? It overwhelms us all." The boy in the canoe has at last grown up and can inhabit his last new world.

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DISCOVERY is a recurrent theme in recent fiction, and though Richler's comic treatment of it in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* differs in many respects from MacLennan's use of it in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, the two novels can still be fruitfully compared. MacLennan's work lacks the vivacity of the other, but it aims for and achieves an entirely different tonal effect. It has been criticized for being autobiographical, yet, if so, it goes far beyond this to create an independent world of its own. George Stewart has been called pedestrian, but he makes a believable narrator. The author has been called old-fashioned, but his ideas and his allegorical technique are abreast of fictional trends elsewhere in the world. One must admit that the ending of the book is weak. Catherine's turn to painting is a sentimental cliché, and a tendency to wordiness accompanies MacLennan's difficulty in voicing the paradox of which he has become aware. Yet the novel is outstandingly successful partly because that paradox has meaning. The author has at last blended a control over technique not only with the reality of credible characters but also with a pattern of thought that gives substance and dimension to his book. Its people and ideas refer both to Canada and to the twentieth-century world, and its scope will let it therefore be as readable and as involving outside Canadian national boundaries as it is within. For both MacLennan and Richler, the mastery to which the apprenticeship leads necessitates a recognition of the self both by the individual and by others. Where MacLennan's book goes beyond that of Richler is in the equally emphatic insistence on the recognition by the self of its identity as Everyman. This does not deny the other self, the I, for John Donne's concept of man as a piece of the continent is no longer applicable. For MacLennan, man

remains an island forever, but an island in position, as it were, as a part of an archipelago; the experience of the one is the experience of all, and each part functions both as an entirety for all and as an entirety in itself. It is here that he captures the essence of contemporary thought and shows himself at last to be a novelist of substantial merit.



ANATOMY OF CONFUSION

Jack Ludwig's Evolution

Lila Stonehewer

TO SAY THAT OUR AGE is confused is a truism. Authors have been saying it with depressing frequency since the 1920's. Generally speaking, the consensus of opinion seems to be that civilization is damned and that our guilt-ridden despair will drive us to inevitable destruction — and the sooner the better. Jack Ludwig denies this negative approach and sounds the cry of positivism both in his short stories and in his first novel *Confusions*. He is an unashamedly didactic writer and his problem centres on evolving a vehicle to express his point of view. While most of his work deals with a specific segment of society, the American-Jewish community, his view has been gradually enlarging in scope until in *Confusions* he includes all of North American society. This expansion of view is bound up with the evolution of his style, which is best seen by relating his short stories to his novel.

The evolution of Ludwig's style is closely linked with the development of his leading themes. He asserts that the prime symptom of this century's malaise is confusion. The source of this confusion constitutes the two major themes running through the stories and the novel. The first is the double condition of man, who wishes and pretends to live by a moral code while in reality behaving according to the law of the jungle. This condition leads to the second theme, which is the universal tendency to confusion as to the nature of reality. The North American manifestation of this type of confusion is the pursuit of "success", which is regarded as synonymous with material wealth. Once material success is achieved, the confusion becomes more acute than ever, for then one is brought face to face with the problem of what purpose such materialism serves.

Often it ends only in waste, as is shown in Ludwig's story, "A Woman of Her Age", whose central character, Doba Goffman, is a crusty 75-year-old ex-radical

turned Orthodox Jew. Using the setting of the Montreal Jewish community, Ludwig juxtaposes the immigrant district of St. Lawrence Main and its inhabitants, who cling to the old traditions and customs, with Westmount, the district of successful second-generation tycoons who lack tradition and reject old customs. It is evident that something of basic importance has been lost in the long climb up the mountain. Doba Goffman, set in matriarchal splendour atop Westmount by her devoted sons, is in reality a captive shut away from the teeming life of St. Lawrence. Each week she makes a trip back to the markets of this area, searching for what she has lost. As we follow her movements through the day, we realize that she is haunted by the sense of a continuity in which she has no part, and which is expressed in her frustrated hope for grandchildren. One of her sons is sterile, the other dies childless. It is on Jimmy, the dead son, that Doba's tragedy centres. He was a clever lawyer, personable and virile, but he lived according to the creed of waste, and his mother characterizes his life in these words:

> America's imbecility, galloping after success while life runs off right under his feet.

Doba sums up her view of what material success without purpose means by reflecting, "how easy it was in America to buy everything you didn't want". What does she want? She wants to continue the line, to have grandchildren and perhaps even great-grandchildren to mourn her when she dies; she wants to feel part of life, to feel that she has contributed something to humanity. In short, she wants to justify her existence. Yet she shows a touch of heroism, for, fully conscious of the waste of her life, she still exhibits a kind of jaunty tenacity and humour.

> As Josef turned into the driveway Mrs. Goffman touched her sulking nose with a powder puff, dried her eyes, made her old face smile. When there was hope it was o.k. to despair, but now hope was gone, what was the point of it? She winked at herself.

The structure of "A Woman of her Age" — with the narrative divided into eleven short and largely self-contained parts — tends to limit the author's mobility. At the same time, the story illustrates his moral values and also exemplifies one of his recurrent devices, the domination of the action by an anti-heroic figure. Paradoxically, in Ludwig's hands such figures in the end reveal a human dignity of heroic proportions. They take positive attitudes, as in Doba Goffman's resolution to live — even beyond despair — her wasted life to its full realization. This kind of positivism is "living" in the full sense, as opposed to "existing". It derives from the attitude of the protagonist to the situation in which he finds himself.

The exploration of such an attitude sends Ludwig in search of a new style and form for his work, and the search takes him back in time. Thus, in another story, "Requiem for Bibul", we observe the emergence of a picaresque hero and of a structure echoing the chivalric conceptions of the middle ages.

"Requiem for Bibul" is a nostalgic short story set in Winnipeg before the Second World War. Bibul, the picaresque central character, is a high-school student who tries to earn money for rabbinical training by selling second-class fruit and vegetables after school hours to the rapacious housewives of the slum district known in Winnipeg as "The Island". Here we encounter again the themes of man's duality and of his confusion as to the nature of reality. Bibul is sincerely religious, yet he is not above disguising his over-ripe and bruised produce in order to make a sale. He will serve Mammon for a time in order to devote his life to Jehovah. His forays into the "Island" to do business with the life-scarred matrons of the slums are described in the terms of mediaeval warfare.

> Bibul was a lone guard defending his fortress from desperate pillagers; ubiquitous as Churchill, many-handed as Shiva, he had to be compassionate at Schweitzer.

The battle takes place on two levels. Foremost is the physical level, with Bibul trying to defend his imperilled produce which the housewives try to pocket or to pinch and bruise in the hope of making meagre budgets go farther. But counterpointing this is a spiritual battle in which the housewives pour out their hearts to Bibul, unfolding every type of human failing, eliciting Bibul's compassionate tears while at the same time he "would free an apricot from a fist already stained with cherry." The housewives

> prayed God to give Bibul good enough ears to hear out their incriminating bill of particulars against the human race, bad eyes to miss seeing what their energetic hands were doing; and they cursed fate when Bibul's unaffected eyes snapped them from filching.

The theme of the confusion of reality is exemplified in this story by the contrast between Bibul and his fellow students. Bibul is linked with a group known as "the kings" of the school because of their academic prowess. This group, with typical adolescent fervour, feel they can save the world by dealing with abstractions. The opposition between Bibul and "the kings" pivots on the nature of reality. "The kings" see reality as centred in the world of abstraction.

> . . . . we sharks, all hot for culture, oozing idology, long on judgments, short on facts, turned our abstract faces toward Bibul.

Bibul sees reality firmly rooted in "The Island" and the ancient laws of an ancient creed. The difference between them is stated succinctly; "the sharks vaguely yearned for a Higher Life; Bibul alone had a concrete goal." There is an affinity between Doba and the high school "kings", for they both yearn for abstract "success". Doba learns too late what success means. Bibul is never in doubt of it. "Peddling had forced him to see, hear and judge." He represents a middle way between the concrete world of suffering common humanity and the world of intellect and abstraction. He accepts life as he finds it, neither condemning nor praising.

From "Requiem for Bibul" two elements emerge which will be taken up and expanded in *Confusions*. The first is the structural pattern which binds the story together. This echoes the mediaeval chivalric code. The street urchins are described as "knights" carrying on "jousts" with pilfered garbage can lids as "targes". Bibul's goal can be likened to the prize of the tournament.

> Every knightly thrust — parry with an unqueenly schnorrer, every cull of orange he sold, every bruised apple brought him that much closer to Yeshiva.

To reinforce the mediaeval parallel, Bibul, his horse and wagon, are described in Quixotic terms. Bibul, of course, is analagous to Quixote, and in the same way as the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance he represents a vanishing breed.

The mediaeval structure is supported by a deliberately heightened diction. "I write this requiem for Bibul, for his face, for his Cause, his tic, his wave, his 'Aaaa'." "In love and the joy of remembering, I sing you this Bibul and all that's past and passing but not to come." In the same way as the structure is nostalgically mediaeval, so the diction at times assumes a lyrical quality. There is of course an implied humour in the ludicrous contrast between the mediaeval and lyrical elements in the story and the substance of the plot, which is immigrant and Jewish. It is here that the story's weakness lies, for the contrast seems contrived rather than organic, and the analogy is not wholly convincing.

If "A WOMAN OF HER AGE" introduces the two major themes of Ludwig's work, and "Requiem for Bibul" heralds the emergence of a new structure, it still remains to discuss the third important quality of his work which reappears in *Confusions*; that is the element of mythic dimension. "Orlick Miller and Company" illustrates this quality very well. The setting is vague, but it is

clearly both lower class and Jewish. Ludwig once more tackles a world which claims to live by one creed, but which acts according to another; this time, however, the implications are on a cosmic scale. "The world talks about soul, spirit, but what *means* truth in the world is body and face." Orlick deals in "remnants". His "remnants" are human beings, ungainly women who have been by-passed in the matrimonial scramble. Orlick Miller is a match-maker; his business is creation, and his partner in creation is, of course, God. Ludwig suggests that creation is an evolutionary process which is unending and vital, but that the divine plan needs human assistance. "His Creation isn't finished. It's a foundation; it's four walls, all bare. Finishing is for Orlick Miller." Because man and his world are essentially dualistic, the process of creation requires adjustments and "patching up". Just as Bibul disguised his second-class fruit, Orlick Miller must sometimes resort to lies to patch up his raw material. "But Orlick Miller's lies are full of the highest truth — who sees that?" The highest truth is, as in "A Woman of Her Age", the continuance of the human race as the *raison d'être* of existence.

In this story the plot is less important than the character. Orlick mysteriously appears out of the night to suggest a marriage to Solomon, who has been deserted and divorced by his beautiful wife. Orlick describes himself as "a guardian angel — working at night." The sad truth, he informs us, is that marriages are not made in heaven "except for those who are born rich, tall and beautiful. Orlick Miller & Company looks after the remnant." There is no real climax or solution to the plot; Orlick consumes quantities of Scotch, philosophizes about life and disappears into the night with the promise that he will return with a match for Solomon. The important factor is the character sketch of Orlick. While he is conscious of his divine mission as an agent of God, he is not above maudlin self-pity, telling half-truths, and a little cheating on the side. He is given a mythic quality by his appearance—

> Tiny in stature — wall-eyed. Water stained brown derby, wing tip collar, heavy satin paisley tie with a diamond stick pin, suit (inherited from a dead cousin) too large and bulging at every pocket with address books, greying envelopes. . . . Rich brown goatee. . . .

— but even more by the manner in which he lives. "No one has ever seen him eat. He is rumoured to exist on tea and Scotch. Tea by day — Scotch by night." The author does not, however, fully draw out the story's mythical implications. Orlick has feet of clay. He is neither fully whimical or fully farcical, but a strange hybrid somewhere in between. It remains for *Confusions* to provide a genre where the mythic qualities come to fruition.

In the three stories under discussion we have seen Ludwig experimenting with various attitudes; the tragi-comic based on emphatic characterization, the framework of a past age through which one can say something pointed about our own, and the mythic approach. These directions lead Ludwig quite naturally to a reappraisal of an old genre, the mock epic. One element of the mock epic which must undoubtedly have appealed to Ludwig is its particular emphasis on the central character. As we have noted, strong characterization has dominated Ludwig's work, and all the characters have one quality in common; they perform the function of a middle man. For example, Doba, the living projection of the malaise of a materialistic society, is half way between the poor immigrant and the second generation tycoon, and in this way she tragically illustrates the cost of success. Bibul stands between the abstract-minded intellectuals of the high school and the realistic world of the slums. Orlick is a middle man in creation. He takes the human remnants and patches them together so that they become part of society. In *Confusions* the protagonist follows the pattern of middle man, but his function is expanded to that of an epic hero, whose fate mirrors to some extent the fate of a nation or race. In the mock epic, however, the protagonist tends to be anti-heroic, and the projection of the anti-hero on the implied image of the epic hero gives the work its satiric flavour. Joseph Gillis/Joe Galsky is not only a middle man but also a kind of Everyman as well. A lecturer at Harvard, he is the epitome of the human race in its academic guise. He states specifically, "My confusions are the culture's schizophrenia." The confusion in Gillis's case is the antithesis of two cultures. They are the Jewish-American culture which stands for individualism, emotion and joy, and the Ivy-League culture which represents an abstraction of individualism in the interests of general conformity to the hierarchical structure of society. In this coupling of the Jewish-American and Anglo-Saxon-Puritan cultures, *Confusions* differs from Ludwig's other works and demonstrates the expansion of his viewpoint to include all society.

A further element of the mock epic which appears in *Confusions* is contained in the ludicrous contrast between the novel's trivial situation as a university lecturer pursues his adventures in the wonderland of Academia, and the grand frame of North American society in the twentieth century. This contrast is particularly suitable to Ludwig's style because it allows him to be didactic, while at the same time giving free rein to a satiric bent which he has not fully unleashed in his short stories. The expansion of viewpoint, mirrored through Gillis-Galsky in the guise of epic hero ready to save mankind, tends to involve the reader and thus bring him face to face with the recurrent twentieth-century problem which we have

seen exemplified in Ludwig's short stories and which in the novel is succinctly described as the credo of "Second Things First". These are such things as "status-establishing, career-making and image projecting." This is the credo that led Doba to her plight; the credo that made the world of abstraction in which the high school "kings" existed at a mediaeval distance from the cold real world of the slums; it is living by the credo of Second Things First that creates confusion and results in the inability to separate the real from the unreal.

The plot of *Confusions* modernizes the Faust myth. Joseph Gillis/Joe Galsky is being tested. At Harvard he meets the Devil, who makes him a proposal. Gillis is to write a satirical exposé of human weakness and viciousness, and in return the Devil will assure him "endless weeks and months on the Best Seller lists." Opposed to the force of evil is the force of good in the person of an old Hasid. The Faustian theme of good versus evil is played out against the background of a California campus, for in true epic tradition, in order to be tested Gillis/Galsky must leave the Parnassian heights of Harvard. In California he meets the dragons of the faculty who incorporate all the twentieth-century failings, and he is drawn into a game of one-up-manship. The ensuing struggle comes to a climax through a student's illness; faced with real tragedy, Gillis-Galsky realizes that man's problems with confusion amount to mere play-acting. This revelation, in turn, leads to another when he realizes that the Devil is really himself at his worst, and that, further, he is "this age's worst self. Paranoid, full of Either/Or." That is, he discovers that the worst part of man is nihilistic, wanting to reduce the world to utter chaos — its state before Creation. The Hasid, on the other hand, symbolizes all that is best on man, focussing on his creativity, through which he is able to impose order on the chaos around him. The hero is thus "saved" by the realization that man's capability for good or evil lies within himself.

WHEN WE RECOLLECT some of the standard characteristics of a mock epic, we realize how suitable they are to Ludwig's style of writing. The mock epic must begin *in medias res*. This beginning in the middle of the action allows Ludwig the mobility for his free-wheeling rhetoric which the short stories tended to cramp; the epic hero suits Ludwig's bent for strong characterization; the epic journey, battle and trip to the underworld present a ready-made framework within which he can use his talent for allusion, pun and satire; and the intercession of supernatural machinery allows him to introduce the mythic dimen-

sion which gives the work universality. The most interesting facet to emerge from this new version of an old genre, however, is the style. The diction mirrors the duality of theme, high and lyric for the abstract vision of our existence, and low and colloquial for the cold reality of everyday life. Ludwig uses a combination of traditional epic diction ("O, ye Brooklyn muses, who inspired the higher theme, abandon me not in Royce unreality! Hail, Urania, and thy daughter, California, sustain this my sad return to second things first!") and colloquial language which often descends to vulgar expletives. This is the culmination of the style which appeared in embryonic form in "Requiem for Bibul". The language now, however, is crisper, surer and often brilliant in the use of allusion and pun; it tends to delight, to titillate and to shock.

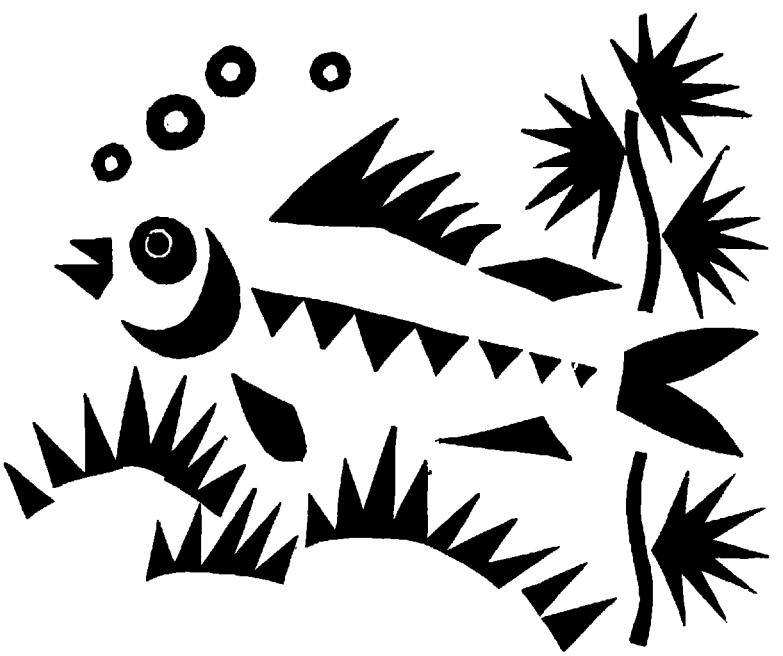
Ludwig's highly developed sense of the ludicrous comes into its own in *Confusions,* where it serves a didactic purpose. There is, for example, Tim Jolliffe, a Greek scholar, who is brilliant, handsome and elegant; yet worries about atomic fall-out and insecticides in consumer goods, and propagates the thesis that this is the "worst of all possible worlds". The hero himself has grand pretensions, he wants to be "the prophet of the computer age", the saviour of mankind, but all he can tell us is that our confusions have nothing to do with reality. We should change what we can change and not worry about those things over which we have no control. We should get on with the business of living.

One thing that is clear from *Confusions* is that satire is Ludwig's particular forte. The light humour, with mere overtones of satire, of the short stories now emerges as hard-hitting crisp satire, and it is almost classic in form. Ludwig wants to change us, and he leaves us with hope.

> Desire nothing in this world but time to do your work, love, kisses, serious talk, laughter, great works of art, and a white Jaguar so you can get these things more quickly.

Ludwig's novel is the culmination of an experimental technique which looks back in time and which leads him to attempt the re-establishment of a traditional genre, the mock epic. But, however freely one may borrow the characteristic devices of the mock epic, such as the journey, exile and battle, the success or failure of the form depends on the narrative style. We have seen in the short stories foreshadowings of a lyrical expression which in *Confusions* breaks forth in profusion. The language tends to sweep the reader along on a wave of rhetorical bombast reminiscent of Ben Jonson. Jonson, however, could achieve a great variety of effect in the medium of verse, while Ludwig is shackled to the more

pedestrian pace of prose. His problem is how to sustain a heightened prose style without becoming tiresome, how to achieve variety without bathos. But, though he uses all the tricks of the writer's craft — allusion, pun, simile, hyperbole — he does not always succeed in sustaining the necessary tension. It is possible that the novel is too unwieldly a vehicle for mock epic; on the other hand, the short story is not substantial enough. Jack Ludwig, it would seem, is still reaching for an effective and distinctive style.



ETHEL WILSON'S FIRST NOVEL

Desmond Pacey

Hetty Dorval is the kind of first novel we might have expected its characteristically modest author to write. It is short — only just over a hundred pages, the pages small and the print comfortably large; it is, on the surface at least, simple and straightforward in both plot and characterization; and its tone is one of gentle wonderment at the vagaries of human nature. Above all, it is a book that can either be read in a few hours as a pleasant diversion, or studied intently as a subtle consideration of some of the more profound questions of psychology and ethics.

Read merely as light entertainment, *Hetty Dorval* commends itself to us as a mystery story. It records the reactions of a young girl, Frankie Burnaby, to an older and reputedly wicked woman, Hetty Dorval. Frankie is only twelve years old when the novel opens, and Mrs. Dorval appears as a strange new inhabitant in the small British Columbian town of Lytton where Frankie goes to school. At first Frankie is dazzled by Hetty's beauty, but gradually she begins to have doubts about the woman's character.

Wherever Frankie goes — in Vancouver, where she is sent to a private school, on shipboard on the Atlantic Ocean, in London — she keeps encountering Hetty, and on each encounter she is both attracted and repelled. Always in the background are vague rumours of some horrible secret in the life of Mrs. Dorval, and it is only near the very close of the novel, when she appears to be on the point of marrying the young Englishman whom Frankie has come to love, that we learn of her illegitimate birth and of her involvement in a series of unsavoury affairs with rich and powerful men. Enigmatic to the end, Hetty at the close of the novel gives up all claim to Frankie's young man in order to marry a wealthy German, Jules Stern. Whether she does this out of concern for Frankie's feelings or Rick's welfare, or out of pure selfishness, is left to our speculation.

Even if we look no deeper than this, there is much to admire in *Hetty Dorval.* As a thriller of the less sensational variety it is very well managed. Almost always we are shown rather than told: we get a series of dramatic scenes, each clearly lit in the foreground but with intriguing shadows in the background. The opening scene shows us Frankie and her girl-friend Ernestine watching the arrival of Mrs. Dorval's furniture at the railway-station, and mistaking Hetty's housekeeper, Mrs. Broom, for Hetty herself. The second main scene describes the first meeting of Frankie and Hetty; the third the arrival of the supposed *Mr.* Dorval; the fourth the town fair; and so on, until the final confrontation of Frankie and Hetty when the latter decides for Jules Stern rather than Rick. The point is that each of these scenes is a unit in itself, a satisfying and self-contained encounter, and yet that each points forward to the next and backward to its predecessor. There is a closely linked sequence of dramatic episodes in each of which a moment of time is clearly and perceptively limned, and in each of which the level of narrative interest or suspense perceptibly rises.

An example may make clear how effectively Mrs. Wilson manages this narrative level of her work. Here is part of the opening scene:

> The day that Mrs. Dorval's furniture arrived in Lytton, Ernestine and I had gone to the station to see the train come in. It was a hot day. The heat of the sun burned down from above, it beat up from the ground and was reflected from the hot hills. Mr. Miles, the station agent, was in his shirt-sleeves; the station dog lay and panted, got up, moved away, lay down and panted again; and the usual Indians stood leaning against the corners of the wooden station (we called it "the deepo") in their usual curious incurious fashion, not looking as though they felt the heat or anything else. The Indians always looked as though they had nothing to do, and perhaps they had nothing to do. Ernestine and I had nothing much to do, school was out and supper wasn't ready and so we had drifted over to the station. Neither of our mothers liked us to do this every day; but we were not absolutely forbidden.
>
> When the train clanked in, a number of the stifling passengers got out seeking coolness in the bright glaring heat of the station platform. Ernestine and I watched these passengers with experienced eyes and saw that there was no one interesting to us. We did not find grown-ups interesting, but were always on the look-out for other children or for dogs. And sure enough there at the end of the train was a large dog, perhaps a Newfoundland, hot in his hot coat. The train men had got him out of a freight car, and then they heaved and pushed and lifted out a huge crated object that might be a piano, and then they got out packing case after packing case.
>
> Directly the great dog stood upon the platform, looking sadly and nobly about him, a woman moved up to him and said casually, "Well, Sailor," and you might

> almost say the dog smiled. His thick bell-rope of a tail swung and he moved up to the woman who patted him lightly but gave her full attention to the crates and packing cases that the train hands and station hands deposited upon the platform. Ernestine and I had seen this woman before in the Lytton main street, but she was really the kind of woman that you don't notice. You might see her in a village, or in a big city, or in a street-car, or on a train, and you would never notice. Nevertheless, we now saw that she had authority. She was dressed in dark grey. Her hair was dark grey too, and was taken straight back from her plain strong face. Suddenly she began to be interesting to Ernestine and to me, because she belonged to Sailor the dog and to all the new packing cases.

The very first sentence of that passage suggests one of the strongest elements in Hetty Dorval's appeal for Frankie: Frankie is a girl living in a town so small and so isolated that the arrival of the daily train is an event, and to her simple mind Mrs. Dorval represents the exotic, the sophisticated, and the mysterious. The whole of the opening paragraph suggests oppressive boredom — the heat, the panting dog pointlessly moving from place to place, the leaning Indians, the idly drifting girls — and makes us long for something to happen. The last sentence of the first paragraph prefigures what is to be one of the main tensions in the plot — that between the innocent freedom of a child's response and the suspicious restraint of a parent's.

In the second paragraph, the appearance of the Newfoundland dog and of the piano crate and other packing cases heightens the effect of something strange, mysterious and almost monstrous intruding into this sleepy little way-station. And when, in the third paragraph, we see the woman go up to the dog and call him Sailor, we at once jump to the false conclusion, as do the girls, that this woman is Mrs. Dorval and that, having a huge dog with such a name, she is a woman of the world and a woman of strong will.

There are other things in these opening paragraphs that might be commented upon — they reveal, for example, Ethel Wilson's talent for selective and suggestive description of landscape, her fascination with animals and with people's gestures, and the deceptive simplicity of her style — but what I wish mainly to remark here is the sheer cleverness of them from the point of view of arousing suspense. Almost every sentence makes a statement but at the same time raises a question. Who is Mrs. Dorval? Will she be on the train? Is this dog hers? Is that a piano? Her piano? Is that woman Mrs. Dorval? Why had the girls not really noticed her before? And so on.

To initiate and sustain suspense on this level, and yet never to deviate into melodrama, is not easy. There are, it is true, in this first novel one or two scenes that

come near to melodrama, the chief one being that in which the housekeeper, Mrs. Broom, introduced as the woman in dark grey, reveals that she is in fact Hetty Dorval's mother. If one is reading the novel merely for its lively plot, that scene may be accepted as a melodramatic fragment coming appropriately enough at the climax of the action; but if one is reading the novel a little more seriously, one may see that it is a cunningly constructed link in the whole narrative chain. It is, in fact, one of those scenes from which we get the shock of recognition. For, from the very first, we have seen Mrs. Broom protecting and directing Hetty with a truly maternal solicitude, and it has only been Mrs. Wilson's narrative skill that has diverted us from asking why a mere housekeeper should so long and so stoutly defend such a woman from the world. Mrs. Broom's dark grey has been a shade in the background which has been waiting all along for Mrs. Wilson to illuminate it. And what prevents the illumination from being really melodramatic is the very steadiness of the beam when it finally does shine out. There is no vague rush of uncontrolled emotion, but a disciplined delineation of physical detail denoting psychological strain. There is no wild waving of the arms, but rather "fingers short and square-tipped pressed down hard upon the table."

BUT THERE IS MORE to *Hetty Dorval* than a plot which is intricately woven and cunningly controlled. First of all, there is evident here, as in all of Ethel Wilson's work, an inspired sense of place. I do not mean only, although this is part of it, that Mrs. Wilson is a superb regionalist. Certainly she does give us a very vivid sense of what it is like to live in the British Columbia which has been her home since childhood. She is not one of those authors who are afraid of naming their places, who seek to give a kind of vague universality to their settings. When she wants to describe the Thompson River she calls it the Thompson River, and proceeds to describe it as she has seen it:

> Anybody looking out of the front windows of Mrs. Dorval's bungalow could look down on to the racing Thompson River. Perhaps the water was emerald, perhaps it was sapphire. It is both. It is neither. It is a brilliant river, blue-green with lacings of white foam and spray as the water hurls itself violently along in rapids against hidden or projecting rocks, a rapid, racing, calling river. The hills rise high and lost on each side of the banks. These hills are traversed hardly at all. There is no reason to climb, to scale the top, to look down. In the sunlight the

> dun-coloured gorges of the blue-green river look yellow and ochreous, and in some places there are outcroppings of rock that are nearly rose red. Large dark and solitary pine trees give landmark and meaning. As evening comes on, the hills grow dove grey and purple; they take on a variety of surprising shapes and shades, and the oblique shafts of sunlight disclose new hills and valleys which in daylight merge into one and are not seen.

That is good regionalist writing, for it catches the distinctive qualities of that region: the speed of its rivers, its high, lonely hills, its dark and solitary pine-trees. But it is more than that: the description is an organic part of the atmosphere of the whole novel. The tumultuous river is symbolic, to the young girl Frankie, of Hetty Dorval herself — something powerful, mysterious, almost monstrous, but at the same time very beautiful. And the mysteriousness of the hills at evening, their "variety of surprising shapes and shades", "the oblique shafts of sunlight" disclosing "new hills and valleys", suggests the multifaceted mystery of Mrs. Dorval, whose effect upon Frankie is slightly different if equally baffling every time that she sees her.

Mrs. Wilson's descriptive gifts not only extend to the landscape of her home region. In this novel she makes us feel the reality not alone of British Columbia but also of the Atlantic Ocean, of the Cornish coast, of London, and of Paris. And she can catch the essence of a human scene as accurately as that of an inanimate one. Here, for example, is her description of a country fair:

> I went to the fair with Ernestine and her father and mother. We walked through the dark quiet Lytton street under a night of stars towards the garish lights and music. The prancing excitement that Ernestine and I felt was all mixed up with the greasy smells from the hot-dog stand; the sudden light and the sudden darkness; the cacophony of sound; motion revolving horizontally, vertically, passing and repassing; drifting town and country people; darting children; barking dogs; all happening together, noise, flare, smell, motion, and the small crowds standing with upturned faces gazing at the picture in front of the lighted booth of Torquil the Lobster Boy.

That conveys very well the excitement that a youngster of twelve feels at such an event. And again it does not stand alone, but is cleverly woven into the total fabric of the novel: having been warned by her parents to stay away from Hetty Dorval, Frankie is "much subdued" when she leaves for Lytton, but the "prancing excitement" of the fair gives her the courage to call again upon the mysterious stranger.

A sensitivity to landscape and to human gatherings is not unusual in a novelist.

A rarer gift, which Mrs. Wilson possesses, is the ability to convey the essence of animal and bird behaviour. *Hetty Dorval* is not as distinguished in this respect as some of her later novels, but even here we see signs of unusual perceptiveness. Perhaps the most striking description of animated life in *Hetty Dorval* is this account of the flight of wild geese:

> She could not see as quickly as I could that out of the north came a thin long arrow, high in the sky. Then her eyes picked up the movement of the fluid arrow rapidly approaching overhead, and the musical clamour of the wild geese came more clearly and loudly to us. The valley of the Fraser lay broad below, lit by the September afternoon, and the geese, not too high, were now nearly overhead, travelling fast. The fluid arrow was an acute angle wavering and changing, one line straggling out far behind the other. It cleft the skies, and as always I felt an exultation, an uprush within me joining that swiftly moving company and that loud music of the wild geese. As we gazed, the moving arrow of great birds passed out of sight on its known way to the south, leaving only the memory of sight and sound in the still air. We drew a long breath.

Even if this were merely a set-piece of description, it would be highly effective, for so often the phrasing strikes us as just right: the "fluid arrow", the "musical clamour", "an acute angle wavering and changing" all reveal that Mrs. Wilson has looked and noted and found the exact word in which to record her perceptions. But again we must notice that the passage is *not* merely a set-piece of description. The wild geese are a symbol of Hetty Dorval, who like them longs to be free to move without encumbrance. The flight of the wild geese, indeed, becomes one of the chief thematic motifs in the novel. When Frankie is first told by her parents of Hetty's notoriety, she cites Hetty's love of wild geese "as a proof of her innocence". Later, when Frankie tells Mrs. Dorval that her parents will not let her see Hetty again, the latter says that she had thought she could trust Frankie because of their mutual love of wild geese. When they meet again in a London restaurant, Hetty reminds Frankie of "the wild geese going overhead"; and in their very last scene together Hetty recalls the flight once more.

The wild geese symbolize not only Hetty's own love of wildness and freedom, but all the redeeming features of her character: like them she is a kind of spontaneous natural force, with her own way of being. And the character of Hetty, together with the complementary character of Frankie, constitutes the core of this novel. In one sense, *Hetty Dorval* is still another version of the classic confrontation of innocence and experience. It would almost be possible to treat the novel as an allegory, in which Innocence meets Evil in the disguise of Beauty, is tem-

porarily enchanted thereby, is made wise by Parental Wisdom, and succeeds finally in cheating Evil out of another victim. But although there is just enough of this element in the novel to make such a summary possible, and to set up interesting analogies with Spenser's *Faerie Queen* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the summary grossly oversimplifies the moral and psychological subtlety of the book.

I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED that one of the chief thematic motifs is the flight of the wild geese. The other, slightly more important, is the well-known quotation from Donne's meditations which serves as the novel's epigraph:

> No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde.

This epigraph is picked up at intervals throughout the book. When Frankie is in Cornwall, she thinks about Hetty in these terms:

> Any positive efforts that one could discern on the part of Hetty were directed towards isolating herself from responsibilities to other people. She endeavoured to island herself in her own particular world of comfort and irresponsibility. ("I will *not* have my life complicated.") But "No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe;" said Mother's poet three hundred years ago, and Hetty could not island herself, because we impinge on each other, we touch, we glance, we press, we touch again, we cannot escape.

And that last phrase, "we cannot escape", of course, calls to mind the other contrasting thematic motif, that of the wild geese — who can, it seems, escape, who can leave for the south whenever it gets unpleasant in the north.

The novel, in other words, seesaws between two opposed views of the human condition, views which we may label responsibility and irresponsibility, discipline and license, communalism and individualism. Swayed by her admiration for Hetty, Frankie leans to the wild goose view of life; reproved by her parents, she veers to the sense of communal responsibility. Responsibility triumphs in Frankie: when she becomes aware of the destructive influence which Hetty threatens to

exercise on her Cornish friends Rick and Molly, Frankie rejects Hetty (symbolically trying to push her out of her bed). But though responsibility triumphs in Frankie, Hetty clings throughout to the wild goose way, and Frankie cannot quite eliminate a rebellious, reluctant envy of her freedom:

> Although I had fought her and driven her off, and would fight her again if I had to and defeat her, too, she was hard to hate as I looked at her. She made a gesture of good-bye and went down the stairs. (*Mrs. Broom, to what a bleak morning you awoke all alone.*)
>
> As I watched with satisfaction Hetty going down the narrow stairs, I knew that before she had taken three steps she had forgotten me, and she had forgotten Richard. She was on her way.

The italicized sentence, reminding us of Hetty's callous desertion of her mother, is there to call to our minds the suffering to others which is involved in the individualist's relentless search for personal liberty. On the other hand, there is no mistaking the slightly envious tone of the last sentence: "She was on her way."

The only words that follow that sentence, which comes on the last page of the novel, are these:

> Six weeks later the Germany Army occupied Vienna. There arose a wall of silence around the city, through which only faint confused sounds were sometimes heard.

This final paragraph makes intelligible another quotation from Donne which occurs in the epigraph, below the Island passage: "And makes one little room an everywhere." The story, in its modest way, is being held up as a microcosm of the whole human world prior to the Great War. The rampant individualism of Hetty Dorval, multiplied a million times, precipitated that conflict. And since no man is an island, that conflict destroyed not only the individualists but the communalists as well.

The foregoing discussion, however, suggests that the novel is much more abstractly moral than it really is. Moreover *Hetty Dorval* is most satisfying not on the moral but on the psychological plane. The seesaw of conflicting moral philosophies is there, but it is not nearly as fascinating as the seesaw of conflicting personalities.

AT FIRST READING, the most interesting character in the novel is Hetty Dorval herself. The process by which she is gradually revealed to

us through the eyes of Frankie is subtle and delicate. At first merely a strange visitor, she comes to seem in time a beautiful and gracious hostess, probably the innocent victim of malicious gossip, a wicked temptress, a weak woman grasping at happiness, and a *femme fatale*. She is elusive and chameleon-like, and Frankie is never sure just what she really is: to the very end she remains an enigma, disappearing for reasons which she alone knows into the silence of war-time Vienna.

Frankie's first sight of her comes when she meets her on horseback, when they are both riding towards Lytton on a Saturday afternoon. What impresses Frankie on this occasion is Hetty's beauty, kindness, purity, and innocence:

> . . . Pure is perhaps the best word, or spiritual, shall I say, and I came to think that what gave her profile this touching purity was just the soft curve of her high cheekbone, and the faint hollow below it. Also the innocence of her slightly tilted nose, which afterwards I called in my mind a flirt's nose, and the slight droop of her mouth whose upper lip was perhaps a little over-full.

But the first little crack in this image comes a few moments later, when Mrs. Dorval uses the word "God" as an expletive. To the child's mind, this spells wickedness:

> I was brought shockingly to earth. I was quite used to hearing the men round Mr. Rossignol's stable, and other men too, say "God" for no reason at all. And it goes without saying that the Rev. Mr. Thompson said "God" in church, as it were officially, and that we all sang about God with nothing more than ordinary church-going emotion. But never, never, in our house (except once or twice, Father) or in Ernestine's house or at Mrs. Dunne's or in any of our friends' houses (unless we were saying our prayers) did people ever mention God.

Hard on the heels of this perception comes the realization that Mrs. Dorval is literally "two-faced":

> We remained standing there and gazing at the empty sky. Then Mrs. Dorval turned her face on me and I realized all of a sudden that she had another face. This full face was different from the profile I had been studying, and was for the moment animated. Her brows, darker than her fair hair, pointed slightly upwards in the middle in moments of stress and became in appearance tragic, and her eyes which were fringed with thick, short, dark lashes opened wide and looked brilliant instead of serene. The emotion might be caused by pain, by the beauty of flighting geese, by death, or even by some very mild physical discomfort, but the impact on the beholder was the same, and arresting.

When, during Frankie's first visit to Mrs. Dorval's bungalow, the Reverend Mr. Thompson comes to call, Frankie realizes that Hetty is also two-faced in the

moral sense of that phrase. She is gracious and apparently friendly to the minister while he is there, but once he has gone she tells her housekeeper, Mrs. Broom ("Mouse"), that she will not have callers:

> "Now Mouse," said Mrs. Dorval, "I will not be called upon. I will not have my life complicated here . . . people coming in like this! I do not propose to spend my time paying attention to all kinds of people. You know perfectly well that I can't have people running in, and you must stop it." (It might have been Mrs. Broom's fault.) "All I ask of anybody is to be left alone and not be interfered with. I'm sure I always leave people quite alone and interfere with nobody."

Frankie leaves this first interview with Mrs. Dorval with mixed feelings. Her beauty of face and voice (Mrs. Dorval sings for Frankie after the minister has left) charm the girl: "As for me, a country child, I had come under a very fancy kind of spell, near to infatuation." And yet she cannot help feeling that "there was something somewhere that was not quite right", particularly when Mrs. Dorval's last admonition to her is to keep the visit secret:

> Whatever she had asked me, then, I would have agreed to do, and this seemed a small thing to promise, so I did. But it passed through my mind that it would be a funny thing if I came to this house and my mother couldn't come, that is, even if she wanted to. But I was only twelve, and was under a novel spell of beauty and singing and the excitement of a charm that was new, and I went away almost in a trance.

We have followed the development of Hetty Dorval's character far enough to make clear the subtle and delicate way in which it is managed. What makes the process doubly interesting is the interplay of Frankie's character with that of Hetty: it is not so much what Hetty is that intrigues us, as what she appears to be to the innocent but perceptive beholder. Frankie serves the function in this novel of the innocent eye in whose gaze everything has its own wonder and mystery of being. Indeed on a second reading of the novel one is apt to find Frankie's character even more intriguing than that of Hetty. Whereas the development in Hetty's character is of the sort that consists only in the growing realization of what has actually been there all along, Frankie's character does change as the novel progresses. At the beginning she is a completely innocent and ignorant country girl of twelve, so naïve that a visit to the station to watch a train come in is an event; by the end of the novel she is a young woman of nineteen who has been to school in Vancouver and in England, who has lived in London and Paris, and who is sophisticated enough to entertain her friends in a fashionable London restaurant. But the change is not merely this relatively commonplace one, from

childish naïveté to adult sophistication. Frankie's innocence is not quite spoiled but it is certainly strained by her relationship with Hetty. Frankie indeed takes on some of the characteristics of the company she keeps. She hides her visits to Hetty from her parents; on one occasion she plays the part of a peeping Tom, spying through Hetty's window; and in the last scene of the novel it is suggested that Frankie has become almost as selfish and self-indulgent as Hetty. In words which inevitably recall Mrs. Dorval's speech to Mrs. Broom after the minister's visit, Frankie says to Hetty:

> "I don't want you here again! You muddle up my life too much. Please, Hetty, look after your own affairs but keep away from me. I've got my own life to live and I don't want ever to see you again — *ever*."

As if to underline the similarity of attitude, Mrs. Wilson lets Hetty reply.

> "I understand *exactly*. I feel for you. It is preposterous the way other people clutter up and complicate one's life. It is my own phobia, Frankie, and I understand you . . . so well."

THE STYLE of *Hetty Dorval*, apart from a few passages of brilliant landscape description, is simple and unobtrusive. There are very few metaphors and similes, although the few that do occur are characteristic of Mrs. Wilson in that they draw analogies between human and non-human beings. Frankie thinks of herself as a goldfish: "But I lived in a glass goldfish bowl where the behaviour of each fish was visible to all the other fishes, and also to grown-up people outside and in the vicinity of the glass bowl." Hetty appears to Frankie as a cat:

> Hetty Dorval was a human cat in some ways, and yet cats have sometimes malice, and they sharpen their claws. But Hetty had no malice. She was as incapable of bearing malice as of bearing resentment. She simply shed people, and I only once caught a glimpse of her claws.

A group of Indians at the fair are compared to birds: "The Indians, in small groups, moved always together, as by some inner self-protective compulsion, like certain birds, with their own particular kind of awareness."

The most outstanding characteristic of the novel's style is its clever modulation of tone. Sometimes the modulation is so subtle as to be scarcely noticeable, as in

this scene where the Reverend Mr. Thompson has called upon Hetty at her bungalow:

> "Then you are English," continued Mr. Thompson.
>
> "Well . . . no," said Mrs. Dorval.
>
> "Is your husband English? Or I should say, was your home there?"
>
> "No," said Mrs. Dorval.
>
> There was a pause.
>
> "I hope your husband will be able to join you here," said Mr. Thompson.
>
> "Oh, I *do* hope so," said Mrs. Dorval. She spoke little, but her words did not come snubbingly as Mrs. Broom's would have done, but gently.
>
> "A reader, I see," said Mr. Thompson.
>
> "Yes," said Mrs. Dorval.
>
> Mr. Thompson got up and evidently went over to the bookshelves where I had seen a lot of yellowish paper books.
>
> "Ah, you read French!"
>
> "Yes, I read French."
>
> "I should like you to meet my wife. She would be very glad to call upon you, she is a reader too."
>
> "Call?" said Mrs. Dorval vaguely and sweetly. "Oh, not call, you have no idea . . . Oh, you are so kind, but at present . . ." and she looked tenderly at Mr. Thompson.
>
> Mr. Thompson murmured something about "restored health" and then after a little more unsatisfactory conversation, said what I had been waiting for him to say, "And now shall we have a word of prayer?"
>
> "Oh," breathed Mrs. Dorval, sitting motionless.

Almost every sentence in that scene is ambiguous and ironic, and we are invited to react to each remark and action in three ways at once — to sympathize with the curiosity, shock, and simple piety of the minister, to sense Mrs. Dorval's desire to fend the minister off and yet not truly offend him, and at the same time respond to the scene with all the bewilderment that Frankie feels as a spectator of it. There is an intricate interplay of piety, sophisticated boredom, and childish innocence, so that what seems at first glance so simple a style of utterance is actually functioning in a very complex manner indeed.

Sometimes the modulation of tone is more obvious. In the last scene, Hetty spends the night in Frankie's room, and goes to sleep in her bed. As she looks at the sleeping Hetty, Frankie is once more impressed with her tender innocence, and feels for her a rich compassion:

> There is that in sleep which reduces us all to one common denominator of helplessness and vulnerable humanity. The soft rise and fall of the unconscious

> sleeper's breast is a miracle. It is a binding symbol of our humanity. The child in the lost attitude of sleep is all children, everywhere, in all time. A sleeping human being is all people, sleeping, everywhere since time began. There is that in the sleeper that arrests one, pitying, and that makes us all the same. The rise and the fall of the frail envelope of skin that contains the microcosm of wonder, is the touching sign. If one had an enemy, and if one saw that enemy sleeping, one might be dangerously moved in pity of spirit by what lies there, unconscious. I looked at Hetty, sleeping; but that did not prevent me from prodding her and saying, "Hetty, *move* over, I've got to get to sleep!" There was a murmur, "Oh, *poor* Frankie," and she moved luxuriously nearer to her edge of the bed and I lay down and turned off the light.

Just as the passage is threatening to become sentimental, Mrs. Wilson modulates the tone to one of natural human irritation, and the scene is saved.

But the passage just quoted may also serve to illustrate another feature of Mrs. Wilson's style, and this a less laudable one. She is rather too prone to adopt the old-fashioned device of authorial comment, to intrude into the flow of her narrative little chunks of personal philosophy. Usually there is a flavour of irony in these remarks which helps to make them palatable, but they do sometimes offend. However, there is very little that is offensive in *Hetty Dorval.* It is quiet and unpretentious, but for all its apparent simplicity, it offers us contrasting views of the human condition and embodies them in two extremely interesting characters.

review articles

LOWRY'S LETTERS

Hilda Thomas

HARVEY BREIT and MARGERIE BONNER LOWRY, Editors. *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*. McClelland & Stewart. $12.00.

THOSE READERS "who esteem the work of Malcolm Lowry" and to whom the volume is in part dedicated, will surely find it impossible to open the *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* without a feeling of hope: hope that Eridanus has withstood the flames, and that the Consul has been saved, after all, as Lowry intended that, finally, he should be. For although the protagonist of *Under the Volcano* can stand alone as an autonomous creation, it will never be possible to see Lowry without seeing too some aspect of his daemon-haunted hero. And Geoffrey Firmin was indeed, it seems clear from the letters, a projection of the spirit which possessed Lowry, and with which he wrestled in all his creative work. In a letter to his editor, Albert Erskine, dated 1953, he wrote:

> I have willed one thing and the daemon has decided another. . . . I can master booze, my bad temper, my self-deceit, and to some extent my other myriad bad habits, but I have not yet learned how to master that bugger. And if he was a good one it would be different. But he is slow, confused, paranoiac, gruesome of mind, as well as being completely implacable, and he seems to have some vices unknown even to me. And in *Gabriola* [the novel which Lowry was in process of revising at the time of his death] he has turned what set out to be an innocent and beautiful story of human longing into quite one of the most guilt-laden and in places quite Satanically horrendous documents it has ever been my unfortunate lot to read, let alone have to imagine I wrote.

The letters provide an intimate view of Lowry's continuous struggle to survive, both physically and "in that part used to be call: soul." They are filled with the noise of weeping and wailing and breaking of bones which attended the Lowrys in their battle against poverty, against the elements ("the elements are following us around," he wrote, after a particularly appalling winter at Dollarton), against a nearly incredible series of personal misfortunes: lost letters, crossed wires, disastrous falls and fires, and the ever-present threat of eviction ("We evict those who destroy!") from their home. And in the background that other daemon, fittingly christened by Paracelsus (*al kohl* — alcohol) sounds its sardonic "ha ha".

The *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* (which, according to the Preface

by Editor Harvey Breit, contains two-thirds of the available letters, "selected with an eye to creating a continuity") is divided into twelve sections, arranged in chronological order. A Biographical Chronology, an Appendix of supplementary material and an Index of names and titles are also included. In the letters, the growth of Lowry as a man and as an artist, which was not achieved, however, without some plummeting in the abyss, is clearly recorded.

Part One covers the period 1928-1940, beginning with the naïve and touching letter to Conrad Aiken: "I have lived only nineteen years and all of them more or less badly." This section is understandably rather skimpy, but it does offer a glimpse of the Mexican experience which provided the material for *Under the Volcano*. Part Two marks the beginning of the Dollarton period, which was rendered less than auspicious by the burning down of the Lowrys' first house and the rejection by no fewer than twelve publishers of *Under the Volcano*. By the fall of 1945, however, the house had been rebuilt — "I feel somewhat like a Prometheus who became interested in real estate and decided to buy up his Caucasian ravine" Lowry wrote to Conrad Aiken — and the fourth and final version of the novel was completed. Part Three (1946) contains the invaluable letter to Jonathan Cape, written from Mexico, in which Lowry defends the underlying structure and offers a chapter-by-chapter analysis of *Under the Volcano*; a letter which is of the utmost importance to all students of Lowry's work. Also in this section is the statement made to a California attorney in connection with the Lowrys' disastrous encounter with officialdom during their "holiday" in Mexico. The wisdom of including this statement is questionable, for it is not properly a letter at all, and although it does convey a sharp and lucid impression of the bureaucratic horrors which Lowry loathed so much, and which, like the elements, seemed to follow him around, it adds little to the portrait of Lowry himself. This last criticism might also be levelled at the long letter to Maxwell Perkins, then chief editor at Scribner's, in connection with Mrs. Lowry's detective novel *The Shapes That Creep*. The extraordinary confusion which resulted in Mrs. Lowry's work being published *sans* final chapter is an interesting tale in itself, but the letter interrupts the continuity of the far more vital correspondence between Lowry and Albert Erskine, the editor of *Under the Volcano*.

Lowry was captivated by the thought which he found expressed in Ortega y Gasset that "man is a sort of novelist of himself." This idea, which seems also to have invaded the mind of many another modern novelist — vide Proust, Gide, Kafka — accounts for the fact that the cycle of six or seven novels which he planned, of which the *Volcano* was to have been the pivotal piece, was continually being revised and expanded to include, by a kind of back-stitching or spiralling process, the author's experience. The letters written after the publication of *Under the Volcano*, and up to the end of the Dollarton period (1947-1954) reveal not only something of the basis in fact of the material later used in *Hear Us O Lord*, but something also of the struggle Lowry underwent in his effort to perceive the tragic, and comic, structure beneath the chaotic surface of his existence, and to invest it with a more than personal significance. But Lowry

was not entirely preoccupied with his own artistic problems. Another aspect of his character — his deep humanity and generosity of spirit — is displayed in the long appreciation of Conrad Aiken, in the perceptive discussion of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* and in the warm and encouraging letters to Downie Kirk, David Markson and others. Oddly enough there is little to suggest the passionate feeling he had for "Eridanus", the beach house on the shore of Burrard Inlet, which is so beautifully and tenderly conveyed in "The Forest Path to the Spring". That feeling appears only later, in retrospect, in the letters written from the White Cottage just before his death to Harvey Burt and to Jimmie Craigie, the Manx fisherman from whom Lowry learned the hymn "Hear Us O Lord".

The *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* are a welcome addition to the catalogue of Lowry's published works. In addition to their intrinsic merit and the contribution they make to the critical biography of Malcolm Lowry, they serve, as they were undoubtedly meant to do, to whet the reader's appetite. The list of Lowry's unpublished works is still far too long, and it is to be hoped that the letters will be followed speedily by a *Collected Poems*, and by an edition of the novel "October Ferry to Gabriola" which is so tantalizingly held up to view in the *Selected Letters*.

THE ROLE OF LITERATURE

Jean-Ethier Blais

GERARD TOUGAS, *History of French-Canadian Literature*. Ryerson. $10.00.

PROFESSOR GERARD TOUGAS' *History of French-Canadian Literature* is not the first one of its kind to appear. But it is the first which has been conceived in a true academic fashion and not entirely along the drab lines of a mnemotechnical textbook. This is the reason, I suppose, why it is at the same time the best History of its kind *and* the best textbook. I have used it myself as a reference volume; it has never misled me. On the contrary, after having found what I was originally looking for, I realized that I was reading some of Professor Tougas' literary or historical discourses, for the sheer pleasure of discovering what he thought. This does not mean that one should agree with all of Professor Tougas' pronouncements. But they are worth their while in themselves, in the continuity of an exceedingly readable narrative, and as the expression of an intelligent and perceptive man's thinking. It is politic that Professor Tougas' analysis should now appear in English. There is no other way of discovering who the French-Canadians are, and what a French-Canadian is, except through some knowledge of our literature. We have produced not a single towering author (except per-

haps, debatable as it is, for Nelligan); but there exists a continuous flow of writing, at a certain level of artistic desire, in French Canada, which has served as a permanent catalyst for our emotions, our dreams, the realities of our unconvincing historical life. In that sense, our literature is premonitory. French-Canadian writers have been motivated in depth by the certainty that they were speaking for the whole of their inarticulate people. There is not a single one who does not write, as it were, from a pedestal. The role of literature in our national life has been to try and fill the psychological and spiritual void created by the absence, over two centuries, of truly representative French-Canadian elites. Our poets, our novelists, our historians have reacted to this absence, however unconsciously, by themselves serving as guides. They were, and still are, the French-Canadian elite. I stress this point because it does not appear as such in Professor Tougas' book; but it will become evident to those who read it through in order to find out the dynamic orientation of French-Canadian literature. This is also why I do not think that "a new, even revolutionary approach," to French-Canadian literature was necessary at this stage of our development. The novels, essays, poems written by French Canadians today are but the normal continuation of a tradition. Fréchette knew Victor Hugo about as much as Miron Pilon knows René Char; we do not, on the whole, write better, or more worthwhile things, than did our predecessors. But we think we do, and there lies the rub.

One thing which comes out well in Professor Tougas' book, is the inner cohesion of French-Canadian literature. It exists as a whole and French-Canadian writers have viewed themselves, from one generation to the other, as taking part in a collective opus. This is especially significant with regard to the "novel of the soil". Professor Tougas writes that, after *Maria Chapdelaine*, "Laberge, Ringuet, Germaine Guèvremont and Felix-Antoine Savard, each in his own way, have carried on from this success of Hémon: Laberge and Ringuet in furnishing the second part of the *habitant's dyptique*, that of his slow and complete disintegration; Germaine Guèvremont in choosing among the great number of daily doings which make up the life of a farmer those which clearly define him; Felix-Antoine Savard in forging a prose of his own by grafting a selected French-Canadian vocabulary on to a style already personal." To my mind, this conclusion is not nearly enough. Here, in a single generation, we can witness the workings of the global French-Canadian literary mind, each writer, according to the needs of his personality, adding another aspect to the total image of the French-Canadian peasant. However, we are not necessarily confronted with a system, or even a school of writing. Professor Tougas well underlines the fact that each writer sought in the art of the novel to define a personal experience. But again, we cannot help witnessing the emergence of a solid literary bloc in a given domain. Today, a similar example can be noted among young French-Canadian poets. Ariadne's thread is again apparent. Whether this phenomenon be conscious or not is immaterial. What counts is this inner conception of literature as symbol (and agent) of national self-expression. I might add that it is also a very French view of literature.

Whether rightly or wrongly, this con-

ception is intimately linked in the French-Canadian mind to the notions of religion and patriotism. I have the distinct impression that Professor Tougas would prefer these two realities to be absent from our literature. He takes a particularly dim view of nationalist writers and adopts the fundamentalist one that French-Canadian nationalism and racism are by definition twin-brothers. In the case of Abbé Lionel Groulx, this amounts to gross unfairness, an unfairness which can have nothing whatsoever to do with literature. The first duty of a historian (and this, I suppose, applies to historians of literature) is to look at facts. And it is a fact that French-Canadian literature is, on the whole, of nationalist origin and outlook. It is possible to construe it into something else. But I suggest that the present nationalist poetical explosion could have been better interpreted by Professor Tougas if, in a general fashion, he had not let himself be carried away by preconceived views about the meaning of nationalism in French Canada. For example, Professor Tougas writes of Jules-Paul Tardivel (who appears in the *Index* under the name Jean-Paul Tardivel): "Jules-Paul Tardivel (1851-1905) was the first novelist to prostitute these two sources of inspiration (religion and patriotism) and may be regarded as the precursor of the racist and separatist novel." This cannot do. It is flightly. Especially, since Professor Tougas adds: "It will be necessary to wait for Abbé Lionel Groulx for the nationalistic novel to attain the refinements of which it is capable." Surely, Professor Tougas does not mean that *L'appel de la race* is a direct continuation of the reactionary anti-French visions of *Pour la patrie*. It is sheer nonsense to harp forever on pseudo-

definitions of the word "race" according to the gospel of Gobineau, or Chamberlain, and then to apply them to the works of Abbé Lionel Groulx and end with the usual appropriate denunciations. It is worse than nonsensical. It is petty. Literature and ideology (especially when it appears to rest on scanty knowledge) are separate domains. One does not necessarily have to be a separatist to think that Jacques Renaud's *Le cassé* is a novel of great brilliance and profound insight. I wish Professor Tougas had subtracted from this revised edition his feverish concern with political and ideological problems, especially since they are irrelevant in the context of æsthetic historiography. If somebody agrees with Professor Tougas' views about Canada and religion, does he not stand a better chance of being a fair writer than if he does not? Translations are also meant to give the occasion of eradicating such examples of human failure. I find it disturbing that Professor Tougas has not taken full advantage of this one.

Finally, two remarks. It is the current fashion (imported no doubt from the Americans) not to refer to authors by their pseudonyms. For instance, Pro-

fessor Tougas does not introduce François Hertel as François Hertel, but as Rodolphe Dubé; Claire Martin as Claire Faucher; Bertrand Vac as Aimé Pelletier. This practice might be useful to police officers. In the French realm, one can imagine a reader ironically asking in a library for the works of Emile Herzog or for those of Louis Farigoule; is this conceited finickism really useful? I doubt it. From a purely literary viewpoint, I think it is being rather nasty to the authors. They, after all, have chosen to become either François Hertel, Claire Martin, André Maurois or Jules Romains. I understand that even passports recognize this fact, which is part of the imaginary world of writing. There is such a thing as historical preciosity and this insistence on birth-names is a typical example of it. My second remark is this. It might have been a worthwhile venture for Professor Tougas to use the circumstances of this translation to bring his book perfectly up to date. Is it enough to say that one has written a work of "Heraclitian conception"? For example, it is not a debatable point whether M. Guy Robert is a "distinguishable manifestation" in the field of literary criticism. He is not. The same, to a large extent, applies to M. Gérard Bessette. But such instances of amity are touching; so why not bow to them?

Be that as it may, Professor Gérard Tougas' *History of French-Canadian Literature* more than serves a purpose.

Undoubtedly, Professor Tougas meant it as a self-sufficient intellectual unit. He has succeeded in writing a book which a lot of people will enjoy, even if they do not necessarily agree with him on every count. But then, I suppose Professor Tougas would not necessarily agree with *them*. I think that, as an introduction, it is a masterly book; as a symbol, it will endure.

OF BEAUTY AND UNMEANING

E. B. Gose

LEONARD COHEN, *Beautiful Losers*. McClelland & Stewart. $6.50.

THE FIRST THING to be said about this novel is that it is well written. The style is various, authoritative, compelling. The second thing to be said is that many middle-class readers will not get past the first dozen pages; these contain a slightly above-average number of the four-letter words and deeds which are one obvious indication of the book's colloquial and down-to-earth, up-to-heaven aim.

The three large divisions of the novel are traditional (a long section in the first person, another long section which is a letter to the first person, a short final "Epilogue in the Third Person"), but within them are such recent devices as reproduced advertisements, stream-of-consciousness passages, a series of poems (to the Virgin, composed from a Greek conversational phrase-book), a separate footnoted poem, several sections of

"pointless" monosyllabic dialogue, and several — how shall I say? — drama scenes. The latter include an expressionistic rendering of a popular song, and a charming verbal rendition of a Charles Atlas advertisement, the cartoon strip *Hero of the Beach.*

These devices give the novel vigour, interest, and often humour or excitement. They are not Cohen's discoveries, but he uses them well, just as he uses well his two most obvious borrowings — Allen Ginsberg's exaggerated fantasies, often intended as ironic overstatement, and William Burroughs' homosexual fantasies (again exaggerated to humour), both aiming to condemn a nightmare America at the same time as they hopefully work out their authors' incipient paranoia.

The first-person narrator has apparently known his friend and mentor, later cuckolder, since the two were homosexual partners in a Catholic orphanage. The difference in their natures is evident almost from the beginning. The friend, called F., sends off for the secrets offered by Charles Atlas; he cultivates the physical in his efforts to cope with reality. As an adult he accuses the narrator of "the sin of pride" for not having followed his lead, for having preferred mental fantasy to physical fact. Twisting the narrator's arm, F. insists,

> —You wanted to be the Superman who was never Clark Kent.... You wanted SOCK! POW! SLAM! UGG! OOF! YULP! written in the air between you and all the world. To become a New Man in just fifteen minutes a day meant absolutely nothing to you. Confess!
>
> —The pain! The pain! Yes, yes, I confess. I wanted miracles! I didn't want to climb to success on a ladder of coupons! I wanted to wake up suddenly with X-ray Vision! I confess!

F. has pursued into adulthood the implications of physical strength and potency implicit in the strong-man ad. He has loved an endless stream of women, muttering "Who am I to refuse the universe". He has gone to Parliament as a French Separatist. He has by various devices of physical manipulation, made Edith, an offspring of the nearly extinct Indian tribe of A—, into the desirable creature whom the narrator marries but cannot find happiness with.

F. has at the same time encouraged the narrator's interest in Catherine Tekakwitha (1656-1680), an Iroquois convert of the Jesuits who achieved saint-hood after a life of self-sacrifice and self-scourging.[1] Advising the narrator to "go down on a saint," F. also keeps him baffled and frustrated by continually undercutting their own relation, by keeping the narrator continually off balance on the high wire of life. The immediate result is that the narrator is a loser (presumably along with Catherine and perhaps Edith, one of the Beautiful Losers of the title). The long range aim of F.'s programme is evidently that the narrator should somehow break through into his own reality, into some sort of control over experience.

Such a break-through is denied to Edith and F., who are over-mastered by the Danish Vibrator they had thought to make minister to their exhausted sensualism. But a break-through is achieved by Catherine in her death and by the narrator at the end of the novel. His relation to Catherine is not, however, so simple as it sounds. She emerges as part religious dupe, part triumphant loser.

Although individual Jesuits are treated

1. Cohen appears to have introduced some incidents of his own into a fairly accurate historical picture of her life.

sometimes with superiority, sometimes with sympathy, the values of the Church emerge as the prototype of the white man's wilful and violent appropriation of the continent.[2] The latter is humorously characterized in the rape of Edith: as an Indian, at thirteen she is taken by five whites to "a stone quarry or an abandoned mine, someplace very mineral and hard, owned indirectly by U.S. interests." Cohen seems to be saying that Western institutions have ruined man's relation to nature, the universe and God; at the same time he leaves room for the individual somehow to triumph over the faulty patterns for living charted by our culture.

Early in the book Cohen has F. repudiate the liberal humanists of the 1920's by insisting that the narrator "connect nothing." The narrator's state at the time provides an important context for F.'s repudiation: "my needle pierces it all, and I myself, my greedy fantasies, everything which has existed and does exist, we are part of a necklace of incomparable beauty and unmeaning. Connect nothing: F. shouted. Place things side by side on your arborite table, if you must, but connect nothing."

I would like to push the opposition between the two further (though with a consciousness that I may distort the novel: F. and the narrator are, in fact, *alter egos* who coalesce at the end). F. with his reality sense is a little like Freud, just as in his insistence that he "*showed it happening*!" he is also like certain contemporary poets who insist that there are "no ideas but in things." The narrator with his indulgence in fantasy is a little like Jung, just as in his sliding off into rhetorical flights he is like certain other contemporary poets who believe that the imagination does not have to limit itself to dealing with sense data. As a contemporary saint, a holy loser, the narrator is finally pushed to the edge of physical existence. Perhaps as a result, he suddenly breaks through to mastery at the end of the book, in a few pages which marvellously blend mundane reality and fantasy.

Not wanting to give away the ending, I will add only that it moves into Science Fiction, as did the important earlier scene with the Danish Vibrator, humorous and disgusting in the Burroughs' manner. Although Burroughs does good vignettes, his novels do not come off for me, because they are too obsessive or not integrated into enough of a plot. Since Burroughs is one of the originators of F.'s advice to "place things side by side . . . but connect nothing," it is perhaps unfair, and certainly old fashioned, for me to complain that his fiction lacks unity and coherence. Nevertheless, I do complain and consequently praise Leonard Cohen who deals with material almost as upsetting, who is often as funny and disjointed, but who finally is affirming something in or behind the pain and chaos of experience.

2. Or the Nazi rape of Europe (see p. 196). The man whom I have called Charles Atlas, Cohen refers to as Charles Axis. Hitler, in hiding in Argentina, takes over at the end of the depravity scene between F. and Edith.

A CRY TO BE HEARD

C. H. Moore

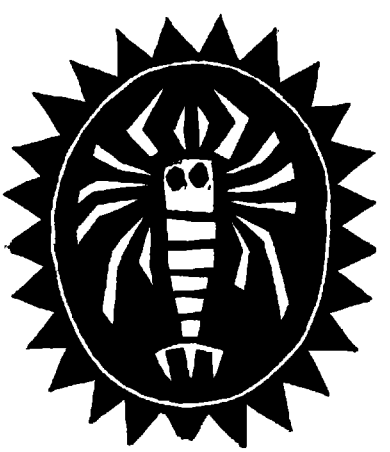
HUBERT AQUIN, *Prochain Episode*. Le Cercle du Livre de France. $2.50.

WHEN THE AUTHOR of a "first" novel has already been as active a writer as Hubert Aquin, it is difficult not to situate his novel among earlier writings such as his political essays in *Liberté*, of which he was a founder and editor, or his memorable film-script propounding a philosophy of dangerous sports, which appeared on CBC-TV. When the author has been as prominent a revolutionary Separatist as Aquin — briefly leader of a political party, panelist touring Canada to present the separatist viewpoint, and more recently inmate of the Montreal Prison because of his revolutionary activity — it is impossible not to consider his novel's social background and implications. As the narrator of this story says of the confessional monologue which he is writing in prison and which forms the present novel: "Sa signification véritable ne peut être dissociée de la date de sa composition, ni des événements qui se sont déroulés dans un laps de temps donné entre mon pays natal et mon exil".

That is to say, the story has documentary actuality in spite of the narrator's romantic idealism, social alienation, and revolt, echoing the literary "mal du siècle" of the Byronic and Balzacian heroes with whom he frequently identifies himself. His own sense of malediction and force is authentic. He belongs to that post-war generation of Quebecers whose youthful anxiety and ferment, doubled with doubts of national identity, found in Europe not the land of their roots or aspirations, but a third state of exile. Here, their dreams of freedom and self-identity took the painfully nostalgic form of a homeland like themselves — suffering, powerless, incomplete: Quebec. Within themselves they soon knew that the convenient, traditional image proposed to them by compatriot "poètes du terroir" was a strip of their own flesh to be torn off, if they were to find their true selves. Even as they heard the bitter song of revolt sung by a handful of illustrious compatriots already in permanent exile, some of them knew within themselves that they could pursue their dreams only in what the narrator of this story terms "la terre meurtrie et chaude de notre invention nationale". On their return to Montreal or Chicoutimi, offspring of a "peuple inédit", their escape from ethnical anonymity appeared as a personal imperative to invent, in the present void of their lives, the movement, rhythm, and style of their own nonexistent history. "Cracher le feu, tromper la mort, ressusciter cent fois, courir le mille en moins de quatre minutes, introduire le lance-flamme en dialectique, et la conduite-suicide en politique, voilà comment j'ai établi mon style," says the narrator of his own invention. Inevitably, such self-genesis risked becoming a programme of

action for its own sake and, hence, of wild violence, excluding the revolutionary ideals of absolute love and freedom in the new-born nation which itself justified the action. Condemned to the ever distant future, the absolute ideals of the revolutionary dream in turn condemned social and political action to gratuitousness and sterility, its proponents to terrorism and isolation. The inventors of identity became prisoners of their own invention.

"Où es-tu révolution?" "Où es-tu mon amour?" What has become of liberty? The prisoner-narrator of *Prochain Episode*, recalling, reliving, and recording memories of the revolutionary dream, adventure, and failure, writes his novel. Through these daily, interrupted sessions of self-nourishment, examination, and embellishment, the mind in confinement keeps itself alive, drugs its despair, walks the narrow line between lucidity and hyprocrisy, and seeks, gropingly, a way out of the past and present into some future beyond defeat. "Voilà un roman d'action," advertises the book-jacket. To be sure, the characters seem to be from the world of James Bond and the plot



races through Switzerland at the speed of an international sports-car rally; but the pursuit of "H. de Heutz," a counter-revolutionary of unknown identity, by the narrator, a revolutionary agent of the FLQ, winds and unwinds in concentric circles around a single, forever unaccomplished act: the assassination of the elusive "H. de Heutz" in time for the narrator's rendezvous with "K", blond muse of the revolution, "femme absolue" with her promise of absolute love and freedom. Although the symbolical nature of characters and plot permits, by its very mystery, the most outrageous turns of events, the action takes place less in the cloak and dagger chase around mountain curves than in the involved spiral patterns that whirl the narrator's mind in and out of the luminous waters of Lake Leman, in and out of the depressing darkness of its Montreal prison, back and forth through merging décors of childhood, literary recollections, real and imaginary travels, fears and compulsion, mental and emotional worlds preceding, accompanying, and following defeat.

As the action of this "spy story" is situated in these repeated attempts of the narrator-prisoner's mind to save itself by the spontaneous recomposition on paper of all the lines of his life and, in this intricate design, to decipher the sign of his own identity, so too the mystery of the story lies in the unravelling of the Gordian knot of his own personality. In that sense, whether waiting in an empty castle to kill the mysterious enemy named "H. de Heutz" or waiting in vain for "K" to come or waiting in an empty cell for the day of his own judgement, the narrator can say as he composes his story: "Je n'écris pas, je suis écrit . . . L'imaginaire est une cicatrice. Ce que j'invente m'est

vécu; mort d'avance ce que je tue". For, all along, "H. de Heutz," vague enemy of the revolution-to-be who escapes, and "K" who disappears, taking love and freedom with her, existed — so the reader may deduce — as obsessive figures invented by the narrator's mind to people the sterile world of action for its own sake and to incarnate the destructive goals of a revolutionary dream. Extended to the level of "notre invention nationale," the programme of action and revolution mask the equally compulsive wishes for national self-genesis and self-destruction. Here is a "spy tale" in which the defeated hero triumphs by courageously unmasking himself and his own cause.

Through the narrator's constant identification of himself with his "peuple inédit" and its search for identity ("Je suis le symbole fracturé de la révolution du Québec"; "Je suis un peuple défait"), his story dictates an autobiographical and historical interpretation. However, it cannot be confined to that dimension. At the outset, the narrator states: "Rien n'empêche le déprimé politique de conférer une coloration esthétique à cette sécrétion verbeuse; rien ne lui interdit de transférer sur cette œuvre improvisée la signification dont son existence se trouve dépourvue et qui est absente de l'avenir de son pays". That is not to say that *Prochain Episode* in any way resembles a traditional novel. The narrator's systematic exploitation of his own "incohérence ontologique" gives to the story the intemporel scope of Lautréamont's *Chants*, Kafka's *Castle*, Camus' *Fall*, or Robbe-Grillet's *Marienbad*. As in the "nouveau roman," time divisions collapse before the onslaught of the narrator's dream and memories; external realities and relationships fade into a universe of things, "cette galerie d'emlèmes oniriques" described and quizzed at length; words dissolve along with casual logic into the dynamic language of baroque imagery. However, if we use Moravia's definition of the "nouveau roman" as "a programme novel, a planified solution" of the post-Joycean crisis, the originality of *Prochain Episode* would seem to be in its very refusal of external organization and technical structure. Its originality is to be found in the narrator's resolution: "Infini, je le serai à ma façon et au sens propre".

This novel, like the story of Quebec's unquiet revolution, lacks a final chapter, a next episode. Unfinished, it is a living page of a young generation's history and of its author's paraliterary career. From the novel, from the past of unfettered action, from the silence of the narrator's isolation, and from the dream of the absolute, future event, arises the same, intensely eloquent, convincing cry: "Mon pays me fait mal." It should be heard across the country.

books in review

LANGUAGE OF OUR TIME

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN, *A Breakfast for Barbarians*. Ryerson Press. $3.95.

THE LANGUAGE is strange, but as much the language of our time as pop art. With *A Breakfast for Barbarians* Gwen MacEwen has presented us with poems whose originality, coherence, and representative range or power are unmistakable.

What might appear to be an unholy mixture of peanut-butter and dragons, motorcyclists and strange gods, is in fact a kind of Grimm picture of man in a consumer's society. Thus, even while Miss MacEwen tells us she is concerned with a hunger that is not for food, she suggests it is to be answered by "an arcane salad of spiced bibles" and "tossed dictionaries." Everything, intellectual as well as material, has become a consumer good.

Of the ideal of such a society, Hanna Arendt has remarked:

> Painless and effortless consumption would not change but would only increase the devouring character of biological life until a mankind altogether 'liberated' from the shackles of pain and effort would be free to 'consume' the whole world. . . .

Miss MacEwen's picture is more dramatic:

> we will sit around our hewn wood table
> until our hair is long and our eyes are feeble,
> eating, my people, O my insatiates,
> eating until we are no more able
> to jack up the jaws any longer —
> to no more complain of the soul's vulgar
> cavities,
> to gaze at each other over the rust heap of
> cutlery,
> drinking a coffee that takes an eternity —
> till bursting, bleary,
> we laugh, barbarians, and rock the universe
> and exclaim to each other over the table
> over the table of bones and scrap metal
> over the gigantic junk-heaped table:
>
> by God that was a meal

The Gargantuan laughter here is ambiguous, for the object is ultimately to escape from the table, from the endless devouring process of nature. For the vicious character of life conceived in terms of that process becomes clear as the poems proceed, as is suggested in the epigraph to "The Sperm King," which comes from *Moby Dick*, "That mortal man should feed upon the creature that feeds his lamps . . ." or, most universally, in the title of the prose poem, "Ultimately, said the Saint, we are all of us devouring each other."

But Miss MacEwen is not satirical; she addresses herself to these colossal breakfasts with something of the spirit of Blake's aphorism that the fool who persists in his folly will become wise. No ascetic, she insists that the "intake, the refusal to starve" is important, but it is the way the world we consume is transformed and works its way out "into fantastic things" that is finally significant.

The magician, like the poet, appears to be a master of transformations but is finally trapped in the prison of his own flesh. The escape artist, Manzini, gives the appearance of a victory over his own body as the ropes, like his own entrails, are left "white upon the floor." But it is a victory more emblematic than real. Only through the Messiah, the mythical third man, "a wild and white chaperone,"

do we escape from ourselves and find a communion with others.

We are led from the groaning table into an almost bare landscape. "Finally left in the landscape is the dancer." He is the "cipher of movement/ a terrific code." He belongs in "The Garden of Square Roots," where things grow from inside out. It is in that garden that we escape from the natural cycle and discover instead the "unspeakable wheel" which keeps us "green with sleep." It is there rather than in the natural process that we shall discover the pattern for the specifically human city.

Without the third dimension of myth, men "cannot breathe or speak because they are too/ close together, because their bodies occupy/ the same dark and troubled area." In that third dimension we discover ourselves, those "natural aristocracies" that are not of nature. And it seems less a question of discovering the self than of being discovered by the self — as by some blue-limbed god.

It is a question of participation in

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some mythical body of man. As reluctant to give up the sensual as she is anxious to embrace the mythical, ideally Miss MacEwen would like to be able to say to her love, "The body of God and the body of you/ dance through the same diagonal instant/ of my vision." These poems, often circular in structure and invocational in mood, are exercises in that double vision. And it is in this spirit that Miss MacEwen has gone to Egypt, literally as well as symbolically.

D. G. JONES

EMOTIONAL POSTCARDS

GEORGE BOWERING, *The Man in Yellow Boots.* Ediciones El Corno Emplumado.

AFTER *Points on the Grid,* George Bowering's first book of poems, a second book should be something of an event, and a second book with collages by Roy Kiyooka, complete Spanish translations, excerpts from eight of the writer's letters, specially designed jacket, etc., would seem to be headed for artistic breakthrough. *The Man in Yellow Boots,* however, is neither an important book of poetry or a significant collaboration between a painter and a poet. The fact that it was printed and published in Mexico for Mexicans is, for me, its most exciting aspect.

I liked *Points on the Grid.* Reading it I had a physical impression of size, a bear-like strength stretching cheerfully in the latest and roomiest of poetic zoo cages. Here was a poet with lyric *and* dramatic power, a technically articulate poet not through erudition but through a kind of pressure to be avant garde — to expand.

It now appears that Bowering has lost a great deal of that first drive and energy, at least temporarily, and that furthermore there has been a considerable shift in the direction of his work. Says the Editor's Note, "*Points on the Grid* was written when the poet's concern was largely involved with the techniques of poetry, handling the language . . . this new book deals with more meaningful concerns . . . with direct emotions: politics, love, etc." Now "direct emotions: politics, love, etc." has a very familiar sound. It most surely defines a great mass of Canadian poetry produced in the last twenty to twenty-five years, liberating, but because of emotional shallowness, debilitating at the same time. No real poetry I contend is primarily concerned with direct emotion. It is only (sometimes) triggered by it. We have been writing emotional postcards rather than poems.

The fifteen or so smaller poems in *The Man in Yellow Boots* are inclined to be slack and diffuse. Bowering's lyricism separated from "Black Mountain" influence is still a most viable quality as in the fine mirror image of the eyes in "Poem For My Wife Angela" or in the gently Layton-esque "After Breakfast." The casting of the old lady in "Her Act Was A Bomb" is an expert touch and there is something genuinely disturbing in the last four lines of "Canadian Cafe":

> The lonely Canadian cafe
> at four in the morning
>
> is where I sit
> long after the second coffee,
>
> six cents in my pocket,
> wind blowing snow round outside.

I keep coming back here
anywhere in the country,

looking for a dead friend
who pretended to love this place.

Alas for a squib in the Canadian tradition, "The English Teachers", and a poem on a Renoir painting, "The Swing", which is an affront to "direct emotion" as well as to Trager, Sapir and Charles Olsen. If there is any common characteristic to this group it is due to those stubborn native variations on the sound and intention of William Carlos Williams.

In "Vox Crapulous" (ten stanzas) Bowering lets himself go with great effect over the frog-like figure of J. Edgar Hoover. There is richness and nostalgia in the rather predictable long poem, "The Descent", but there are also moments of horrific sentimentality. For instance in stanza twelve he asks wonderingly, "What happens to old cars?" Old cars, as everybody knows, end up on pedestals in the Museum of Modern Art. "Old Time Photo of The Present" has a sharp staccato line which almost convinced me that the poet meant to

. . . clamber out filthy
from the wreckage
of collapsing universities!

The poetry must have posed few problems for the translator, although such specialized Americanisms as "I'm on" can't be adequately expressed by the Spanish "me libero." Just how the Spanish version will be received is hard to say. The social emotion of Latin American poetry with its surrealist base is a long way from the spare individualism of *The Man in Yellow Boots.*

Kiyooka's collages are witty and visually articulate in themselves. But Lord, those horrible black ovals on the white page. There must be another way . . .

ELDON GRIER

LEVELS OF EXCITEMENT

FRANK DAVEY, *Bridge Force.* Contact Press. $2.00 softbound, $3.00 hardcover.

EUGENE MC NAMARA, *For the Mean Time.* Gryphon Press.

SEVERAL YEARS ago Milton Wilson said of an earlier Frank Davey book that he (Wilson) did not look forward to seeing the author's next book. At that time I agreed with Wilson: but through sheer dogged persistence Davey has left his out-and-out bad poems behind, and writes very capably now in this latest book.

Not that he has broken free of "influences" and found his own distinctive voice, even if a "distinctive voice" is thought desirable. Besides, the Black Mountain "method" he champions tends to produce poems that look as if each of those poets were peering over all the other

poets' shoulders while they were writing their agreed-on masterpieces.

As will be evident, my feelings about him are mixed. His new poems make use of geographical environment, mountains, Vancouver, the people he knows and their inter-related reactions. He states in the blurb: "Thus I tell what I know, and speculate, never". Yet in the book's first poem, referring to the Lion's Gate Bridge, he says:

> does it know anything of loyalty
> to whom?

And more in the same obviously speculative vein in the same poem.

Sometimes indeed Davey strikes me as being primarily a speculative poet, one who takes pleasure from quiet reverie and contemplation. The paradox is that he uses actual "things" in a speculative manner. Look at this second verse from "Ross Bay II" — referring to a previously mentioned seascape:

> Watch
> that scene
> that is think about
> around it:
> each wave's trough
> sucking from the ocean floor
> yards of water to the crest
> smashing them at the blinded
> RIP's

(To be niggling, that last word looks to me like the plural, not the possessive.) He says "think about/around it". And in the next poem he refers to people's thoughts: "Poetry/they might say" — again speculation. I don't deny the "thinginess", but he's actually making "things" perform the function of thoughts (quite a feat), and that I term speculative.

There is no single moment of excitement, compulsion or any very strong emotion in the book. This I think is lamentable. As if a man lived a life without raising his voice above a whisper; or, as Layton does, rarely lowering it beneath a shout. I think Davey would play down any emotion:

> and darling
> I would walk a white line for you

Gee whiz, the girl must be thrilled to death at this ardent demonstration of undying passion! But whatever else he may be, Davey has a self-deceiving honesty. I'm not sure that's enough — in fact it isn't enough. But it will have to do for the present.

Eugene McNamara is obviously a different kettle of boiled mackerel from Frank Davey. Compare this bit about his feelings towards a girl to Davey's on the same subject (though presumably not the same girl):

> or your hands
> curved to net sparrows
> or hawks
> or touch
> my raging heart
> mean the same

At least McNamara's heart manages to rage, though I don't find that particular passage very believable. It's nice, however, to note that some of us are still volcanos of emotion.

This book seems to have deliberate organization. The first poems talk about love and all that. But in the end McNamara swings around to time and contemplation of death. Though love makes him "fierce as eagles", he is considerably tamed in the book's last poem:

> All we are given is now
> All for this time
> or any other.
> this space between
> two silences.
> This is enough.
> I will not have more
> or less.

McNamara seems to me a rather erudite poet, without that quality being too intrusive. He ranges from Marilyn Monroe to Botticelli, which is ambitious foraging. One poem called "Fish Story" has a wonderful idiomatic tone and freedom, about a whale swimming into the poet's kitchen. "Sort of an Epiphany" describes a rebirth in a bar, which seems a good place for it.

But I find it difficult to talk about these poems. I think they are good but I'm not wildly interested or vastly entertained, and I doubt if McNamara was when he wrote them. I have the impression that he's walled into a university somewhere, teaching the things he writes about.

A. W. PURDY

CONSOLATORY CRITICISM

PAUL WEST, *The Wine of Absurdity: Essays on Literature and Consolation.* Pennsylvania State University Press. $6.00.

PAUL WEST, who for several years taught at the Memorial University of Newfoundland and contributed often to Canadian journals, including *Canadian Literature,* has now published his fifth volume of criticism. In the past, in his books and essays, West has ranged over wide fields — Byron and Robert Penn Warren, Canadian poets and modern novelists in general. In *The Wine of Absurdity* he gathers, under the sub-title "Essays on Literature and Consolation", a group of studies which consider how the works of various contemporary authors reflect a desire to come to terms with the absurd, considered in more or less existentialist terms.

The selection seems at first rather unsystematic; alongside Camus, Sartre, Malraux, Greene and Simone Weil, the expected chest-beaters of modern times, we find T. S. Eliot, as a representative of the philosophy of "Knowing the Worst", Yeats and Lawrence as the apostles of a "New Religion" drawn through the sieve of literature and, in unexpected combination as the prophets of a "New World", George Santayana and the Myth Critics, who, according to West, come "from a confident society" and find "meanings everywhere". But as one reads on through the volume, one realizes that it is a sensibility rather than a system that unites the subjects; considered for themselves, these are merely a group of largely unrelated writers, admittedly all given to a certain sombre earnestness, who have aroused West's interest, and in whose works he has found something that touches his personal anxieties as a sensitive twentieth-century man. It is this personal element, the strand of interest on the part of the writer, which cements the essays into a book. It emerges not merely in a recognizable style, but also in an idiosyncratic treatment in which always appears, without obtruding, that peculiar combination of passionate interest and amused common-sense, which is West's tone, a tone that for me echoes the author's native North Midlands as I heard it over the border from the Salopian marches in my youth.

There are times when, in summing up another writer, critics reflect a great deal of themselves, as Orwell did in the peroration of his great essay on Dickens, and some sentences at the end of the essay on Lawrence in this book tell us, I suspect, much about Paul West.

And that anxiety for man to face life,

> stemming perhaps from some streak in Lawrence of working-class doggedness, is what his writings express most of all. For he saw life, as he saw himself, in its paradoxical, processional roundness... From him we learn that passion and intellect must be generous with each other while fighting their common war against lack of awareness. For, in the end, the fiercest stupidity a man can commit is indifference, and that is what Lawrence is all about.

The desire to face life, to see it in all its roundness, to live without indifference, emerges abundantly from Mr. West's essays. If I write on them in this biographical tone, it is to set the point of view that shapes his final evaluation of all the writers he considers. The point of view is valid, for West is not professing to write as a neo-critical analyst, but as a moralist commentator, considering how the various authors he discusses have made terms with their recognition of what Camus called "the division between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints," and how the best of them transcended it to the ultimate benefit of their art: thus in the long run his criticism adds to the moral an æsthetic dimension. While West points to the limitations of Malraux's search for consolation through art, he never denies the use of art in this search to give meaning to one's life when no meaning is certain beyond it. Indeed, he grants that the very act of trying to describe the human predicament already mitigates its absurdity, since to trap even the meaningless in words is to humanize it.

In the end, in his final essay, "An Ist among the Isms", Paul West completes his book and gives it a kind of ultimate honesty by putting himself forward for examination. He emerges as one of the kin of Camus in his stress on "moderation", or perhaps, to give an English affinity which he himself justifies by constant reference, of the kin of Pater, properly understood. "If we respect man at all it is for his capacity to live in tension without disintegrating"; that is not far from the burning "with a hard, gem-like flame" which, for Pater, was "success in life". It is an attitude that is not merely hedonistic, that can have its moral dimensions "on the levels" — as West remarks — "of love, friendship, shared interests, principles stood by communally"; by dissolving the "foolish dichotomies" it can embrace action and its repercussions, which, as the Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* long ago insisted, the nature of our destinies on this earth will not allow us to avoid.

The Wine of Absurdity is fine eclectic criticism, but it is a great deal more, an examination of the very sources of metaphysical courage in our age, and a final statement of personal philosophy which impresses one by the simplicity with it is expressed by a man whose gifts tempt him elsewhere always to eloquence.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

THE LADY HERSELF

MARCUS VAN STEEN, *Pauline Johnson: Her Life and Work*. Musson. $6.00.

SWINBURNE, upon hearing of the death of Pauline Johnson, is said to have remarked: "We can never forget Pauline", a tribute sincerely expressed, no doubt, and one which he did not imagine could be voiced wryly sixty-odd years after by a later generation of readers, Canadians at that. No, evidently we cannot forget Pauline, as this book valiantly proves.

Nor, indeed, should we. But (said desperately), let us stop proclaiming, or at the least, strongly implying, that she was much more than a minor versifier whose fame actually does not depend upon her literary efforts at all, despite the kind pronouncements of critics ranging from Theodore Watts-Dunton, Swinburne's friend, to (more recently) George Davidson, the federal politician, and of course, Mr. Van Steen, the maker of this book.

Mr. Van Steen, indeed, realizes the extent of his problem in offering what the dust-jacket describes as "a fitting tribute to Canada's best-loved poetess" when he asks if we can separate the "vibrant personality of the Mohawk Princess" (the half-truth is thus continued) of the public platform from her material. And although the book proposes to set "the story aright", to give "an intimate portrait unclouded by Edwardian sentimentality", we are by no means convinced.

The selections of Miss Johnson's poetry and prose seem familiarly typical enough; the former is either mellifluously empty, if pleasant, or heavy and melodramatic — particularly when the themes are Indian:

What dream you in the night-time
When you whisper to the moon?
What say you in the morning?
What do you sing at noon?
When I hear your voice uplifting,
Like a breeze through branches sifting,
And your ripples softly drifting
To the August airs a-tune

Lend me your happy laughter
Ste Marie, as you leap;
Your peace that follows after
Where through the isles you creep.
Give to me your splendid dashing,
Give your sparkles and your splashing,
Your uphurling waves down crashing,
Then, your aftermath of sleep.

or

Up the long trail of fire he boasting goes,
Dancing a war dance to defy his foes.
His flesh so scorched, his muscles burn and shrink,
But still he dances to death's awful brink.

. . . . .

One savage yell
Then loyal to his race,
He bends to death — but NEVER to disgrace.

And the prose selections are as simple and innocuous as ever you would find in an elementary school reader, which, if memory serves, is where, once upon a time, some of them — or similar, were.

Most interesting to me, however, was Mr. Van Steen's forty-page biography of "our Pauline". Rather clumsy at times, it nevertheless holds the reader's attention — as so it should, considering the subject, who, if not a very good poetess, surely had a fascinating life. But here again the myth is perpetuated. Did Miss Johnson's mother really "read Keats and Byron rather than Mother Goose to her babies in their cradles"? Had Pauline herself "read every line Scott ever wrote, every line of Longfellow, much of Byron, Shakespeare and Emerson" by the time she was twelve? Perhaps that was part of her problem.

Mr. Van Steen promisingly begins his final section ("Her Lasting Memorial") by stating that it is now possible to assess Pauline Johnson solely as a writer. But then we are informed of the Institute of Iroquoian Studies, the commemorative postage stamp, "Chiefswood", and of the Johnsonian relics to be found in various museums across the country. Perhaps to remove any awareness from the reader's mind that he has been duped, there is introduced in the final lines the suggestion that certain lost documents might affect "the reputation of our dear and

gracious Pauline" — and then we realize that, after all, we are on the right track again — the lady herself.

NORMAN SHRIVE

TALES OF AN INDIAN PEOPLE

NORVAL MORRISEAU, *Legends of My People the Great Ojibway*, with illustrations. Ed. Selwyn Dewdney. Ryerson.

THIS VOLUME is a collection of legends written by a young Ojibwa artist. Morriseau has travelled widely in Northern Ontario and questioned many of the older people. He has included sufficient stories to present the traditional philosophical system of this hunting and collecting culture. Whereas a technological system was well adapted to provide an economy through the changing seasons and animal cycles of migration, the whole area of uncertainty was coped with if not controlled by a philosophy of gaining power from the supernatural. Some obtained power from their adolescent fast and dream — hence their guardian spirit. Others, less fortunate, sought the help of professional drummers, seers and conjurors. And these persons had achieved relatively permanent powers which were used to advise and prescribe for the unfortunate. The cost of enjoying the good life was to pay heed and deference to each benevolent spirit. To offend any of these was to call forth supernatural sanctions of illness and death. Many of the fears of man were expressed in the magical powers of the great cat, the red-bellied sturgeon, the Windigo cannibal spirit and the giant thunder birds.

Both the power inherent in the drummer or conjuror as well as that of the spirits themselves might also be used for evil purposes. Some men downed their rivals by means of these powers, the victim often suffering a paralysed face, crippling disease or death.

Morriseau has written almost at random of these stories he has heard. But taken together they give a reasonable picture of the non-material world of the Ojibwa people. These legends are, however, well known, having been published several times in the past. What gives point to the present work is the curiosity of its author. Having been raised a Catholic and apparently travelled a good deal on the margins of the industrial world, he is trying to understand what he has heard of the traditional world. The result is refreshing.

Instead of an antiquarian folklore, his stories show an adaptiveness to modern experience which make them original and valuable. Thus electricity could most convincingly be understood as the capture by engineers of the power of the thunder bird. The European folktale of the race between hare and tortoise is understood because the turtle could travel magically great distances between sentences. There is an interesting development of myth about the afterworld. First it was actually situated on earth near Fort Frances, Ontario. As the "whiteman" populated the region the afterworld was transported to some place in the sky. Here there appeared to be several strata, the topmost being peopled by spirits, the next one by "whitemen", and the lower ones reserved for Indian people. In another myth this hierarchy of social difference is rejected by man's return to earth after death in the form of reincarnation.

The Ojibwa trickster or culture hero has been all but passed over and this is unfortunate. There are many stories extant. They are earthy and full of bawdy humour, illustrating man's precarious position under a capricious natural world.

R. W. DUNNING

CANADIAN SCOT

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH, *The Scotch.* Macmillan. $3.95.

"I MEAN TO GIVE a true picture," says the Harvard economist John Galbraith, "of life in the Scotch-Canadian community [of Dunwich, Elgin County, Southern Ontario] in the early decades of the century. I am writing it largely to amuse myself and because it is a story I can tell from memory." And he adds that it is "an exercise in social anthropology principally for my own benefit." Mr. Galbraith whimsically anticipates the offense his narrative may cause old friends and neighbours who may feel that the native son "could have spared the reader some of the less agreeable scenery and ignored some of the less enchanting personalities." But the author reminds them that "As Oliver Cromwell instructed for himself, portraits are best done 'roughness, pimples, warts, and everything'."

Good-humored irony ripples across the pages of Mr. Galbraith's remembrance of things past. He recalls the report of the judge's wife, "a Frances Trollope of her time and place", who, having visited the Scottish settlements in 1837 reported how impressed she was by "Their clannish attachments and their thrifty, dirty habits — and also their pride and honesty." The native son dryly notes, "They had not changed appreciably by my time."

Aldous Huxley once wisely remarked that anthropology, like charity, should begin at home. In a chapter entitled "Of Love and Money," Mr. Galbraith subjects the rural community in which he grew up to bemused anthropological analysis. In commenting on the "uncompromising Calvinism" of his upbringing, he says:

> We were taught that sexual intercourse was, under all circumstnces, a sin. Marriage was not a mitigation so much as a kind of license for misbehavior and we were free from the countervailing influence of movies, television and John O'Hara. . . .

In fact, sex education among the Scotch according to Mr. Galbraith, "depended largely on experience, instruction by the learned of one's own age and informal deduction based on the behaviour of breeding stock." Here the reader may wonder if such a reprehensively casual system of sex "education" could in any sense be regarded as peculiarly Scottish.

Against a background of urbane generalization the author has engagingly high-lighted many of the "characters" of that sturdy Scotch community. Of these undoubtedly the most formidable for the young Galbraith was "Old Tommy", the tyrannical schoolmaster, "who carefully combed his sparse gray hair, which had something of the appearance of crab grass in a dry autumn, over his bald spot with an increasing absence of plausibility." In the dreaded schoolroom, the dozen or so pupils "quaked in fear but . . . struggled to learn."

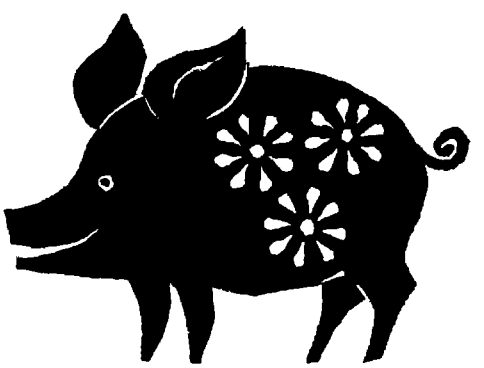
Many readers of *The Scotch* will be especially interested in the autobiographical details revealed by this Canadian

Scot Who Made Good in the States; who was to become an adviser to Adlai Stevenson and to John F. Kennedy. Mr. Galbraith tells us that his introduction to politics began when he was a boy in Dunwich:

> My father was a prodigious orator and from the age of six or eight, I began accompanying him to meetings. It was of some educational value, and I learned, among other things, the uses of humor. Once at an auction sale, my father mounted a large manure pile to speak to the assembled crowd. He apologized with ill-concealed sincerity for speaking from the Tory platform. The effect on the agrarian audience was electric.

The chapter on the Scotch as "God-fearing but Unfrightened" gives a clue to the author's thinking. With evident admiration for the self-reliance of the Scotch, he claims that they "did not ask God for anything they couldn't do for themselves and didn't expect to get done." He adds:

> Some will deplore such a secular community, will say that something of spiritual importance was missing. Perhaps. But this could be a parochial and inaccurate view. As matters are regarded in heaven, the proper vantage point, there must be some merit in people who look after themselves, do not request the impossible and keep to an absolute minimum the number of purely ritualistic and ceremonial petitions.



The Scotch is a thoroughly good-natured book, one which has a place beside *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* by that other humorous economist, Stephen Leacock. It's a book that merited, it must be said, much livelier illustrations than those it has been provided with.

J. A. MCDONALD

TASTE IN LITERATURE

REGINALD EYRE WATTERS and INGLIS FREEMAN BELL, *On Canadian Literature, 1806-1960*. University of Toronto. $7.50.

RAILWAY OR AIRLINE TIMETABLES and telephone directories can be read in several ways. At first glance these handbooks appear to offer only regimented trivia; closer acquaintance is needed to reveal them as storehouses of detailed and varied information about technological and social patterns. Bibliographies meet the same initial response from the public, even in our age of bibliographic cults. Professor Watters' *A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1950* was received with incredulity and sarcasm by certain superficial reviewers when it appeared in 1959, but it quickly became the basis for historical studies in English-Canadian letters. Clues to Canadian intellectual life can be found on every page. And now this supplement, *On Canadian Literature, 1806-1960*, compiled by Dr. Watters and Mr. Inglis Bell, Assistant Librarian at the University of British Columbia, provides clues to the development of English-Canadian taste in literature.

The sub-title, "A check list of articles,

books, and theses on English-Canadian Literature, its authors and language," should bore no one who likes a frank advertisement. All who deal with Canadian writing will need it on their desks; students will see it as a volume which takes some of the search out of research. Those who have used Lewis Leary's *Articles on American Literature, 1900-1950* will bless the compilers of this Canadian counterpart for providing an invaluable aid to study; there has always been more academic worth in intelligent finding than in laborious looking. Anyone who insists on hardship as good for the soul can go a step beyond this new bibliography and make his own vast compilation of book reviews, which Watters and Bell have understandably omitted. This kind of penance is not recommended. What has been accomplished by these pioneers is sufficiently valuable and impressive. They have included articles on culture and background, Canadian English, general literature, drama and theatre, fiction, poetry, literary criticism and history, regionalism, songs, folksongs, folklore, journalism, publishing, libraries and reading, censorship and copyright, all of these, together with works in books and periodicals on individual authors.

CARL F. KLINCK

INDIAN ART

BILL HOLM, *North West Coast Indian Art.* University of Washington Press. $7.50.

THIS IS A truly pioneering work, long awaited by those concerned with North West Coast art, and by other students of tribal culture and of art.

Hitherto, the subject of art style has been treated by using photographs merely as illustrations of the theme which being necessarily non-visual is necessarily non-precise. Holm has surmounted this difficulty by devising new units of design, line, form, space-filling and proportion which appear in North West Coast carvings, and producing a new form of analysis.

Selecting characteristic carvings and paintings of the North West Coast region (between Yakutat and Bella Coola), Mr. Holm chose 392 of the most representative pieces for intensive analysis. Using key sort cards marked for a number of technological and stylistic traits, he arrived at a summary of basic, essential characteristics of this Northern North West Coast art: dynamics of form line, space arrangement, symbolism and realistic representations, relations between carving and painting — these all make a significant study in style analysis.

Bill Holm, a Seattle art teacher, has a wide background in scholarly ethnography. In addition, he is a uniquely knowledgeable practitioner of the dances and other arts of several tribes. Not a false Indian nor a dabbling amateur, but a dancer and carver whose techniques have been schooled by the best teachers and critics extant in today's Indian villages, Mr. Holm has produced this unique and permanent major reference book for teachers, artists, and all students of tribal art.

AUDREY HAWTHORN

opinions and notes

CREATIVE WRITING: REALITY AND MYTH

IN "BASTARD BOHEMIA" (*Canadian Literature* 27) Robert Harlow suggests that creative writing programmes at universities should provide young writers with freedom from "the need to conform to specifications created by one managerial system or another." I think that Mr. Harlow intends this less as a claim than as a plea or hope that universities more fully recognize the need for such freedom. He's right, but I feel that in his eagerness to state a case for good conditions he does overlook the unfortunate fact that such conditions scarcely exist at all, either at the University of British Columbia or at universities elsewhere on this continent.

Writing talent is at least as elusive an item as is talent in music, sports or mathematics. Often enough it is easy to recognize yet impossible to explain why it occurs or just how in a given instance it can best evolve. Some of the greatest writers have done some of the damnedest things which only later turned out to have been perfectly consistent with the development of their abilities. This fact that writing talent often has maverick tendencies is sometimes used as a reason for excluding writing courses from universities. Why even pretend, the argument runs, to teach the unteachable. But such an argument could be applied all over the place. It never has been possible to teach someone to be talented but our universities have long since demonstrated that when talent occurs training is possible. And this goes for writing as fully as it goes for music, hockey or mathematics.

But at present in universities there are difficulties. Most accomplished writers would agree that the secret of their talent is an inner secret and that the intimations which lead to the forms the talent eventually takes are also from within. Part of the dragging pain and yet the intense pleasure of the writing life derives from the fact that it emerges from a do-it-yourself kit. At ages 18 to 22 the inner waters tend to rock on up to the writing surface with great force and turbulence but to swirl about in an almost formless form of sheer skill at pushing, pulling or slinging words about. Which means that the talent can be conspicuous — a word-slinger for sure — but the writing chameleon, today poems, tomorrow a play, next week, the novel. Yet when the sorting out finally does occur it usually turns out that the particular talent does have its particular corresponding form. Many gifted novelists are utter dubs at poetry, many gifted poets incapable of writing plays, and some of our finest critics have written novels their own mothers couldn't have finished. The man whose writing talent moves with equal ease in all the forms is as rare as Picasso. Hence the need for that "freedom from specification by one managerial system or another" that Mr. Harlow stresses. The true specifications are inside the kit. But by stressing the freedom he overlooks the network of distracting and conflicting specifications which both universities and creative writing departments impose that nag at the talented student from the day he sets

foot at almost any North American university.

During his first two years U.B.C., for instance, requires that the student take 10 courses in all, only one of which can be in creative writing. If he opts to plunge right in during the first year, he can take Creative Writing 201 in which the department specifies attempts at, "the familiar essay, column, character sketch, vignette, short short story and the dramatic skit." Or, if he holds back until second year, he can take Creative Writing 202 in which such presumably more advanced forms as the "autobiographical sketch, short story, short play forms (stage and radio) and lyrical and satiric verse" are specified. I'm doubly bothered. One part creative writing to nine parts other courses makes for a pretty weak drink. More, some high school students writing for interested teachers or for student publications have already tried their hand at more sophisticated writing levels than are specified for either of these courses. However unformed talent may be, it does have strong instincts for distinctive ways in which to wear itself and I doubt that a column, a vignette, a short short or a skit meet the need. Particularly because I feel that the need is otherwise than any of these forms could satisfy. However, that one-to-nine ratio is so unsatisfactory in itself that questions of what can happen in the one course are, as they say, academic. Strange that the word should have become synonymous with pointlessness.

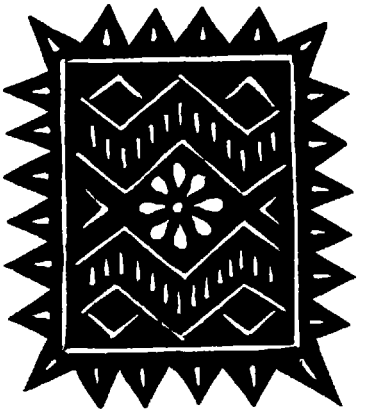
During third and fourth years the specifications seem to relax somewhat, though actually they only take different twists. During this period 10 courses are required but five of these can be in "creative writing and related disciplines." Five-to-ten is certainly a better ratio than one-to-nine. But notice, in the 1966-67 calendar there are only five creative writing courses listed for third and fourth years: (1) plays for radio, television and screen (2) stage plays (3) novella or novel (4) short story (5) poetry. And only three of these are offered in 1966-67. Given the initial distraction of five courses in other departments, the five listed seem to me to force an even more distracting scatter. I can't believe that the talented writer either wants to or can ride off in five different directions at the same time. Yet as of next February or March the letter home would have to read, Dear Mom, I'm busy writing a stage play, another short story, a term paper for my Shakespeare course (related discipline) some poems, and a term paper for my Philosophy course (other related discipline). Dear muse . . .

If such a scheme sums up into four years of considerably less than what Mr. Harlow touts as quasi-bohemian "freedom from specifications", it should be emphasized that Mr. Harlow is scarcely to blame for the arrangement. He isn't to blame because it was contrived circa 1957 by a creative writing committee of which I was, I regret to say, a non-dissenting member. Thinking back, it seems to me that we planned on a basis of ignorance, precedent and compromise. Creative writing is a study still so new in universities that teaching methods are at a relatively rudimentary stage. That's ignorance. Consult the calendars of other universities where the scope of offerings is comparable and you will discover that the form of the offerings is very similar. That's precedent. Sit in on a committee that wants very much to establish a creative writing programme yet realizes

a certain reluctance among other members of the academic community. Notice how soon the pattern of the offerings will begin to resemble the pattern of other offerings at the given university. That, worst effect of all, is compromise. All wrong, I now believe. Mr. Harlow would be well advised to turn arrangements contrived by the original committee to the wall and to strike out for a new beginning.

Sadder isn't necessarily wiser, but suggestions do seem in order. Mine all stem from a belief that talent is the clue and key; that it works by a paradoxically blind yet sure-handed osmosis as the inner waters of the writing life swirl or seep on up toward appropriate forms; that the field in which this groping and growth take place is that of the present-day writing idiom. Not that past usage isn't relevant, but it is relevant in terms of present uses. The best way to provide the beginning student who has a way with words the opportunity to begin to develop his talent is to show him all those ways with words that other writers in our time have made possible. And the best way to do this is to offer the first year student a reading and writing course that presents the best modern instances. These tend to sort out in the writing world as quickly (and slowly) as say impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, abstraction, assemblage, collage and pop in painting. In fiction, for instance, Ford Madox Ford's impressionism (his critics called it lying), Gertrude Stein's modifications of traditional grammar, James Joyce's fabulous word-play, William Faulkner's rhetorical accumulations, Franz Kafka's dream techniques, Dylan Thomas' and John Hawkes' surrealism, the jazz-inspired improvisational writing of Jack Kerouac and Robert Creeley, and William Burroughs' brain-wave fantasies are only some of the available uses to which talent can turn. Poetry and drama offer a similar bewilderment of riches as opportunity for the young person who happens to have a gift for the writing gab. So wide a range that students coming from even the best of our high schools can have only fleeting chances for close acquaintance. And so wide that I can scarcely imagine adequate acquisition of the possibilities in question short of a two-year course. The writing side of the coin would consist not of columns, autobiographical sketches, or short shorts but of some reasonable volume of words written in response to the reading — exercises, imitations, variations or extensions of some one, other or several of the possibilities, with the choice depending upon student inclination. This does specify an area of study and instruction, Modern Writing Idiom, but it does *not* specify what the student will write in response. Just that he write. Responsively.

From my view it would be difficult to overstress the need for such a course at the outset. That which emerges as unique when talent finally does arrive at its



appropriate form is beyond prior verification. But as an "X" factor, it cannot take root and achieve growth except in terms of available idiom. In some few instances a writer may pioneer new possibilities, but to do so he will have had to explore the known territory. Now, as always before, nothing will come of nothing. And even the newest new is rooted in that which is known. Which is why the student during his first two years should also receive instruction in two even more basic subjects, Linguistics for Writers and Language for Writers. Idiom, the way in which the thing is handled, traces to the magnificent thing itself, LANGUAGE. Nothing can happen in the *field* of idiom that is inconsistent with the *nature* of the given language. Ezra Pound said it, "there are laws," and the student needs to know.

Consider poetry. It is now some 400 years since the Elizabethans established syllabic patterning as the basis and norm for poetry writen in English. But in North America it is now some 50 years since Pound, T. S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams turned away from this emphasis upon the syllable to a more ranging emphasis upon stress, juncture, duration and what Charles Olson has named "composition by field." Evidence that this new emphasis is remaking the art of poetry in our time is close at hand. During the past five years Vancouver has been an active centre for young poets and some 10 of the 12 or so most talented do write in the newer mode, almost a clean sweep, a new idiom. Which means that the student who wants to write poetry needs to know what is implied and demanded by four degrees of stress, four degrees of juncture, the tone leading of vowels, composition by field, and a host of other practices which call for linguistic definition of what is happening in the poem. Ten years ago there would have been no one around to teach such a course because the split between poetry and linguistics was too wide. At present there are at least three younger men with M.A's from U.B.C. (Lionel Kearns, George Bowering and Frank Davey) and three other young men with B.A's from U.B.C. working on M.A's or Ph.D's from other universities (Fred Wah, David Dawson, Robert Hogg), all sufficiently versed in the poetry (which they write) and the linguistics (which they have studied) to teach such a course. Which would bear close analogy to the kind of music course in which the theory and terminology become valuable only when accompanied by practice. One of the truly encouraging signs on the creative writing scene in Canada comes from Simon Fraser University, where the English Department has recently hired Robin Blaser, a San Francisco poet deeply versed in the new practice, and Lionel Kearns, the young Vancouver poet and teacher whose chief academic interest has been linguistics. Interestingly the department chairman who hired them, Ron Baker, previously taught a linguistics course at the University of British Columbia which was taken by almost every young poet of note in this area. And despite the fact that it was an English course with only partial emphasis upon the linguistics of poetry, many of the poets consider it the most valuable part of their university training. This kind of course is so important, I feel, that there should be an introductory course for all writing students, and an advanced course

for those who incline toward poetry where both the theory and the practice are crucial.

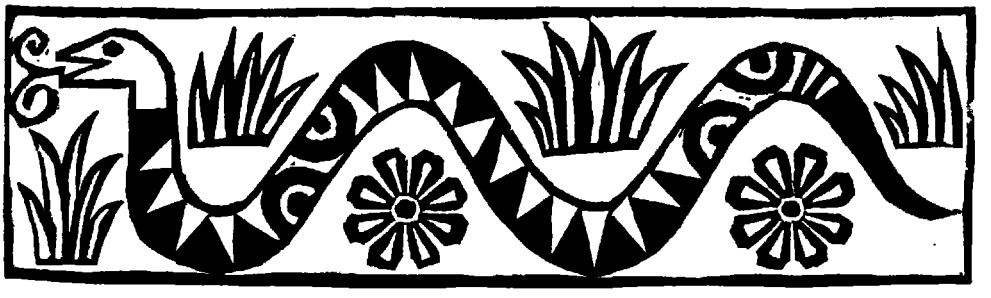
A similar rationale applies to the Language for Writers course. Mother tongue is like dear old mum, taken for granted, nothing quite so indiscernible as that which is most familiar. Although English is a qualitative language, which means that when we speak we tend to place more emphasis upon stress than upon duration ("To be, or not to be,/ That is the question"), many poets have emphasized duration ("The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea"). And two masters in our century, Pound and W. B. Yeats chanted their poems in an effort to renew durational values. Nonetheless, anyone raised in English is subjected to the stress emphasis day-in day-out at expense of a relatively starved ear for duration. This is one reason that a stress-writer like Shakespeare is easily accessible while a durational-writer like Edmund Spenser goes begging for readers despite magnificent beauties. And it is a reason why any talented young writer should be introduced to the possible liberation of a durational language—say French for Writers. What happens in both the speech and the literature would constitute valuable insight into what happens in English speech and writing. Such a course would be analogous to that kind of travel which broadens and intensifies awareness. One scarcely needs to point out all the instances in which such travel has been the making of artists. For the man who writes in English at least one such trip into a foreign language territory could be equally illuminating. While it is true that talent turns upon individual capacity for feeling, vision, response and thought, these can eventuate only in terms of the medium in which they are cast. When Henry James was criticized for cultivating his art at the expense of life, he replied, "more art." And was right. The life can only eventuate in the art. And writing is a language art.

Which carries to the student's writing during third and fourth years. I feel that the present arrangement which forces him to sample up to five different modes should give way to an arrangement in which he could concentrate on fiction, poetry and drama and yet, when so inclined, shift from one to another. Some students still casting about for forms appropriate to their talent might want to play the field. Others more definitely inclined might choose say fiction and stay with it until the inner voice demurred. Credit under such an arrangement could be determined by volume of work appraised in terms of the teacher's awareness of the student's writing tendencies. Some work fast and voluminously, others slowly, and it would be absurd to expect the same volume from fast and fancy as from slow and indwelling. Here, as elsewhere, the objective is an arrangement flexible enough to accommodate those inner impulses which derive from the peculiar nature of the student's abilities. Should some seemingly obsessive student choose to write fiction throughout third and fourth year it might just be because the form happened to coincide with his talent. Should another vacillate back and forth, this might be consistent with inner vacillations which can be so much a part of the process.

I would like to close out these suggestions by mentioning one other much-needed form of instruction for third and fourth year students, Literature for

Writers. English departments focus attention upon the background and interpretation of literary works. Because he is focused upon the art of writing, the creative writing student should have available, in each main form, genre courses that trace the twists and turns of the writing down through the centuries. These courses would complement the course in modern idiom mentioned earlier. It's amazing how often the man who is deeply dipped in the idiom of our time finds echoes in the past. But let me sum up what I have been suggesting. A "course" is a path after all, a channel or way. Talent is the true traveller, a way with words. As waystations for the progress of the talented, universities can provide training in the writing medium. Available idiom, all those present-day ways in which words are being used, can be taught and practiced. Those inner workings of the English language which make up the actuality of writing can be taught and practiced. A heightened awareness of English through contrast with another language can be acquired. And the story of each main writing form down through the years can also be acquired. Most important of all, the writing mode to which inclination prompts the student can be left open, left changeable, as is consistent with the chameleon nature of the writing life at ages 18 to 22. These suggestions argue for an earlier beginning of extensive study than is now possible and for more extensive offerings. The art of writing seems as important a pursuit as the art of music or architecture. Yet one need only consult the university calendar to notice the disparity. Which causes me to feel that Mr. Harlow has his work cut out for him.

WARREN TALLMAN



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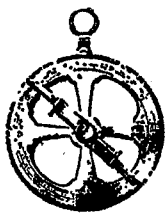

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