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Poems

BY DERK WYNAND, MICHAEL ONDAATJE, GEORGE WOODCOCK, CYRIL DABYDEEN

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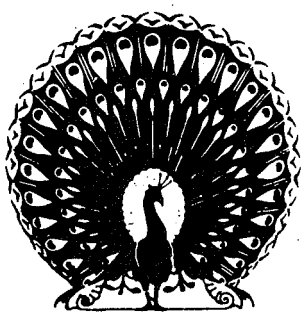
BY GERTRUD JARON LEWIS, MARSHALL BROOKS

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW



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editorial

THE ONCE AND FUTURE PAST

AT THE END OF HIS HISTORY of New Zealand, Keith Sinclair quotes from a 1925 *New Zealand Herald* comment on the election of Gordon Coates as Prime Minister, to the effect that "All is yet molten, mercurial. There are more departures to make than precedents to follow. To have a history may be an old land's glory and safeguard: to make history is a new land's perilous employment." It is an interesting phrase, full of calvinist optimism and coloured by a romantic sense of a national future and an imperial past. Fifty-three years later, the perils of the employment may be even clearer than they were in 1925: for Canada at least, whatever the case might be in New Zealand. Perhaps not so curiously, one of the perils seems to be the temptation to assume that the events of the nation's first century have established rigidly for all time the limits and structure of the nation's character. Growth and change are not, of course, intrinsically admirable; nor is structure intrinsically vicious. But the fear of change — and any demand for the rigid maintenance of order (whether the order is right or wrong, admirable or not) which is itself born of the fear of change — is as debilitating as unbridled license. The way things were may provide solace from the way things are, but seldom a solution. We ought not to relive the past in the present, but to reinterpret it. And knowing that the past exerts its fascinations, we have sometimes to remind ourselves sharply of our responsibility for the past that is yet to come.

Several books published recently in Canada coincidentally reveal varying attitudes to the past. They range from *The Shopping Guide of the West* (J. J. Douglas, $9.95), which reprints two of Woodward's mailorder catalogues, for 1912 and 1929, with an enthusiastic and entertaining introduction by Robert D. Watt, to Conrad Swan's *Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty* (University of Toronto Press, $29.95), a handsomely illustrated, solemn and scholarly guide to Canada's symbolic identifications of "authority and jurisdiction." In between are a variety

of histories, anthologies, memoirs, and perspectives which partake in differing degrees of scholarship and nostalgia. Some of these are local histories, like F. R. Berchem's *The Yonge Street Story 1793-1860* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $12.95) and the Urban Reader editors' pictorial volume *Vancouver's First Century: A City Album 1860-1960* (J. J. Douglas, $19.95). The titles themselves describe the different approaches. Berchem uses Yonge Street to tell a narrative; the Vancouver book relies for its effect on an engrossing accumulation of advertisements and photographs. The pace of the narrative varies — in large part with the cast of characters (Berczy, Mackenzie, Col. Moodie and others) — and so does the quality of the prints. But the contrast between the two tells of more than just the distinction between verbal and visual books. The accident of the year 1860 being the end of one book and the beginning of the other draws attention to the different kind of world that existed when Toronto and Vancouver grew from their separate wildernesses. Whereas the camera focussed on Vancouver from its earliest days, Berchem had to make use, rather unsuccessfully, of line drawings to give visual stimulus to his contemporary narrative. In yet another book, *The Drawings of James Cockburn* by Christina Cameron and Jean Trudel (Gage), we find Cockburn's arresting, though somewhat static, watercolour paintings reproduced, mostly in black and white, as "A Visit through Quebec's Past." Paradoxically, the camera can be taken now into the Ontario and Quebec countryside to photograph structures from the early days, whereas Vancouver's forest past has long since disappeared. Cockburn and Trudel's interest seems to be in revisiting and identifying particular scenes; Berchem's interest is less in structure than in people, whose actions and attitudes created the life of his street; and where Berchem strives for a sense of character in the past, the *Vancouver* editors, much more tangibly, simply *show* us people in their landscape.

Books like Allan Anderson's *Remembering the Farm* (Macmillan, $12.95) and Lawrence Klippenstein and Julius G. Toews' *Mennonite Memories* (Centennial, $15.00) combine elements of local and ethnic history in an endeavour to isolate both roots and attitudes of mind. The former is a tape-recorder-book, whose virtue lies in the way it catches Canadian voices; the latter, a compilation by several hands, is much more formally written and is more than anything else a testament of a persisting faith.

One can read roots and attitudes into both books. *Mennonite Memories* is inturned, its concern for privacy and propriety possibly the characteristic stance of the ethnic community it describes, and *Remembering the Farm* amply reveals "Rural Philosophy" and "Rural Anecdote." But such generalizations about either Mennonite or agricultural communities would be presumptuous, and both books as a result seem curiously artificial. The past they portray seems a contrived past, so that even the hardships they announce are made to appear like goals to which a contemporary age should strive.

Robert Watt, writing the introduction to the Woodward's catalogues, suggests that they will offer readers "a nostalgic trip down memory lane . . . [which] will be fun and hopefully . . . lead to some real understanding of the way we were." The important component there seems to me to be not "real understanding" but "fun." Enjoying memories is often bound up with embroidering memories; nostalgia allows us to alter the past and remember it selectively, which is a comforting process. But it is also perilous, for if we ever forget that selectivity does govern our memories, and accept our casual recollections, or advertiser's deliberate illusions, as whole truth, then we begin to rewrite history in unacceptable ways.

In *My Childhood and Yours* (Macmillan, $9.95), a series of engaging anecdotal "happy memories of growing up," Robert Thomas Allen provides narratives about childhood magic and childhood joy. But he also recognizes the degrees of illusion which he is both drawing upon and creating. His story of a boy who could pray better than play, but who was nonetheless elected captain of a hockey-team because he took the heat off the other boys in Sunday school is a case in point. The man writing about the boys knows why the boy is put in goal: because if he couldn't skate, there, at least, he could hang on to the goal post until the game was over.

> It wasn't the right ending for someone who had been a cowboy, a jungle explorer, a human fly, and The Greatest Champion of Everything the World Had Ever Seen, but somehow, without actually thinking about it, I knew that it was the most common ending, and that it happens far more often to most people than the things that happened to the heroes of my boyhood.

This comment provides the ending for the anecdote, but not for the book. The book ends by asserting the continuity of people's ability to live with a dream. If the dream dies, the society dies with it, which is why we should be so conscious of our sources and our ideals. To ignore the past is dangerous; to see the past as the only possibility is foolhardy; to accept either course alone is the greatest peril of a nation that thinks it is making history.

W.H.N.

RETURN JOURNEY

Derk Wynand

now the sun goes down in the west as it should
and the red turns to blue in the sky as it will

and the shoplights are dimmed and the shutters
are drawn as block after block the streetlights

come on and the women have kissed their weary
lovers good-bye and the drunks have been shut

up in their corners and the city workers begin
to water the hanging flower baskets as the blue

sky goes black and the black sky fills with the
obligatory stars to guide the women safely home

while the lovers lose themselves in ever deeper
sleep and the husbands begin to see things they

did not want to see for which reason they water
the hanging flower baskets in the light spilling

in from the distant streetlights past which their
wives are walking their dreams turning as dark as

wet brick or drawn blood from which they fail to
draw conclusions save that they should hurry on

past the drunken flower baskets and the obligatory
city workers and all the snoring shadows in corners

and it is midnight already when the women lie with
their dark husbands it is good to be lying in bed

HIS LEGEND A JUNGLE SLEEP

Michael Ondaatje and Henri Rousseau

Stephen Scobie

Having to put forward candidates for God
I nominate Henri Rousseau and Dr Bucke.

"The Vault"

THE CHOICE, FOR THIS EXALTED POSITION, of Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902), psychiatrist, intrepid wanderer in the Rocky Mountains, superintendent of the London insane asylum, author of *Cosmic Consciousness*, friend, pallbearer, and literary executor of Walt Whitman,[1] may come as something of a surprise to the reader of Michael Ondaatje's poetry, for he is not, with this exception, a prominent figure in it. On the other hand, there is nothing at all surprising about the choice of the Douanier, "gentil Rousseau," artiste-peintre, since Ondaatje's fascination with him is visible throughout his poetry.

The Dainty Monsters contains one complete poem, "Henri Rousseau and Friends," and Rousseau also turns up, appropriately enough, in the zoo poem "You Can Look But You Better Not Touch." In *Rat Jelly*, the poem already quoted, "The Vault," proceeds to a discussion of Rousseau's last great painting, *The Dream*, a postcard of which is also to be found on the poet's desk in "Burning Hills." Earlier in the book, Ondaatje uses as the text for a found poem the famous letter "To Monsieur le Maire," in which Rousseau, with his usual unsettling blend of naiveté and shrewdness, offers *The Sleeping Gypsy* for sale to the citizenry of Laval, the home-town which he shared with the author of *Ubu Roi*, Alfred Jarry.[2]

There is of course no mention (at least no direct mention: the presence may still be felt indirectly) of Henri Rousseau in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*: in 1881, the year of Billy's death, Rousseau was still an obscure employee of the Paris octroi, who had not yet painted a picture. Only his apocryphal incarnation (in the legend fostered by Guillaume Apollinaire) has visited Billy's part of the world, playing clarinet in Mexico for the army of the doomed Maximilian, whose ruined palace haunts the opening chapter of *Under the Volcano*.

Rousseau's entire life and work present a fascinating complex of paradoxes and contradictions. His genius was largely instinctive, yet he was a painstaking craftsman; unable to detect irony, he accepted praise and abuse alike as evidence of his own greatness; a committed admirer of the official, academic school of painting, he nevertheless exhibited with the most radical and anti-academic groups of painters, and may indeed have contributed to the naming of one of them: the Fauves. The kindliest and most humanitarian of men, he was twice imprisoned for larceny. Personal anecdotes delight in exposing his naiveté, yet in many ways he was very shrewd — shrewd enough, even, to play up to his own naive image. Dora Vallier comments:

> One day, in his lawyer's office, he made a telephone call. "Suddenly I heard him shouting," Maître Guilhermet tells us. "Surprised, I asked him why he was speaking so loudly, and he replied, 'The people I'm talking to are so far away.' " Rousseau was trying so hard to appear naive that he occasionally overacted the part. This was a form of self-defense, but the naiveté with which he approached the part made him seem much more naive than he really was — hence, the distorted image that those who knew him passed on to us. . . . On another occasion he was handed an invitation to a party being given by the President of the Republic [by friends as a joke]. When he came back, he told a long story: the guards had refused to admit him, he had insisted, and the President in person had come out and, patting him on the shoulder, said, "It's a pity, Rousseau, that you're in everyday clothes. You see, everybody is in evening dress. Come back some other time." But did he ever really go to the Elysée?
>
> (Vallier, pp. 82-83.)

The Mexican legend is another case in point. Apollinaire, and most of Rousseau's friends in the last years of his life, may have been all too ready to believe in it because it provided a suitably exotic source for Rousseau's exotic pictures. "When questioned about this period in his life," Apollinaire's version runs, "he seemed to remember only the fruits which he had seen there, which the soldiers were forbidden to eat. But his eyes had preserved other memories: tropical forests, monkeys, and strange flowers. . . . " Historically, it appears certain that Rousseau did not go to Mexico: at best, he may have had the opportunity to talk to survivors of the expedition. The forbidden fruits, and the "tropical forests, monkeys, and strange flowers" actually had humbler, more domestic sources: the Jardin des Plantes, and the international displays from the Paris World's Fair of 1889.

But to some extent, Rousseau had to invent a past for himself. "A curious phenomenon occurred," writes Dora Vallier: "his painting provided him with the raw materials for a past. Since he excelled in exotic landscapes, his obscure years of military service became a fabulous journey to Mexico." Rousseau was forty years old before he began to paint, but from that time on he devoted himself to his art, and to his conviction (naive? shrewd? laughable? correct?) of his own greatness, with an intensity which blotted out and transformed almost everything

about his early years. His art became his life, and in the Mexican legend his life learned, in a Wildean manner, to imitate his art. Asked once if it was not uncomfortable to have to sleep in his cramped and crowded studio, Rousseau replied: "You know, when I wake up I can smile at my canvases."

In his life as in his work, Henri Rousseau was one of the most bizarre, and ultimately mysterious, of all artists. This alone might well account for Ondaatje's interest, for Ondaatje's own work shows a lively interest in the bizarre. What, for example, could be more like an Ondaatje narrative — the shifting of tone between absurdity and profundity of, say, "Letters & Other Worlds" — than the many stories which surround the famous Rousseau Banquet held in Picasso's studio at the Bateau Lavoir?

The banquet was held in November 1908, in honour of Picasso's acquisition of a Rousseau portrait, sold to him for five francs by a dealer who said that he might be able to make use of the canvas. In fact, it remained to the end of his life one of the treasured paintings in Picasso's personal collection. The gathering of those who came to honour this most unsophisticated of painters reads like a roll-call of the Parisian avant-garde: Pablo Picasso and Fernande Olivier; Georges Braque; Guillaume Apollinaire and Marie Laurencin; Gertrude Stein, Leo Stein, and Alice B. Toklas; Max Jacob, André Salmon, Maurice Raynal, and Maurice de Vlaminck. Picasso ordered the food for the wrong day but still had fifty bottles of wine; Apollinaire caught up on his correspondence and improvised a poetic tribute to Rousseau; André Salmon and Maurice Cremnitz chewed soap and foamed at the mouth in an elaborate impersonation of delirium tremens for the bemused benefit of the Americans. Gertrude Stein, writing of course in the person of Alice B. Toklas, records that "Guillaume Apollinaire solemnly approached myself and my friend and asked us to sing some of the native songs of the red indians. We did not either of us feel up to that to the great regret of Guillaume and all the company."

Throughout all this, Rousseau was seated on a makeshift throne consisting of a chair placed on top of a packing crate, directly beneath a lamp which "with remarkable regularity," according to Raynal, "let fall drops of burning wax on his head." Fernande Olivier's account perhaps improves on the story, but in its bizarre simplicity and juxtapositions it certainly reflects the centre of the Rousseau legend:

> Rousseau was so happy that, throughout the evening, he received on his head drops of wax from a large lamp that hung above him, without finching. They ended by forming a small eminence on his head like a clown's hat which he kept right up to the moment when the lamp caught fire. He was made to believe that this was his final apotheosis. Afterwards he started to play a shirt piece on the violin which he had brought with him.

Gertrude Stein's version, however, shows that Rousseau was still assiduously propagating his own versions of legend: "Rousseau blissful and gentle played the violin and told us about the plays he had written and his memories of Mexico."

But it is not just this quality of the bizarre which accounts for Ondaatje's interest in Rousseau. They are in many ways very different artists — Ondaatje, obviously, works at a level of sophistication and self-consciousness entirely alien to Rousseau — but nevertheless there are areas of affinity between their works. I use the word "affinity" rather than "influence," because the latter would suggest too direct a causal relation. There are aspects of Rousseau's work towards which Ondaatje is drawn, but the poet does not treat them in the same way as the painter. This essay will explore two such areas of affinity: in each case, the use of Rousseau's paintings as an approach to Ondaatje's poems is not to be seen as limiting our understanding of the poems but as opening up possibilities, and showing how the self-conscious development of theme in Ondaatje inevitably raises questions which Rousseau's naiveté stops short of. It is, of course, the glory of Rousseau's work that he *does* stop short: it is the limitation of his imagination which produces those inimitable qualities which fascinate us still in the irreducible pictorial vision of the gentle toll-collector who never went to Mexico.

*

... a postcard of Rousseau's *The Dream.*

"Burning Hills"

The Dream is a large painting (80½ by 117½"), depicting one of Rousseau's characteristic jungle scenes: thick foliage with spiked leaves in intricate crisscross patterns, exotic pink and blue flowers, oranges. One painter is reported to have counted more than fifty shades of green in the painting. An orange-breasted bird sits on a branch; an elephant hides in the undergrowth; two playfully drawn lions stare around them in a rather baffled manner; a large black snake with a pink belly glides towards a charmer playing his pipe. And plumped down in the middle of this, dominating the left side of the composition, is a large red couch with a naked woman reclining on it, stretching out her hand towards the scene.

The couch had long been in Rousseau's studio — all his friends recognized it — but its presence in this painting proved a sore trouble to the literal minded. Rousseau courteously and patiently explained it to the art critic André Dupont:

> I am answering your kind letter immediately in order to explain to you the reason why the sofa in question is included. The woman sleeping on the sofa dreams that she is transported into the forest, hearing the music of the snake charmer's instrument. This explains why the sofa is in the picture.... I end this note by thanking you in advance for the article you will write about me. Please accept my best wishes, and a hearty and cordial handshake.

(To the poet André Salmon Rousseau gave a slightly different version: "The

sofa is there only because of its glowing, red colour.") Attached to the frame of the painting was the following poem:

Yadwigha dans un beau rêve
S'étant endormie doucement
Entendait les sons d'une musette
Dont jouait un charmeur bien pensant.
Pendant que la lune reflète
Sur les fleuves, les arbres verdoyants,
Les fauves serpents prêtent l'oreille
Aux air gais de l'instrument.

Yadwigha, peacefully asleep,
Enjoys a lovely dream:
She hears a kind snake charmer
Playing upon his reed,
On stream and foliage glisten
The silvery beams of the moon;
And savage serpents listen
To the gay, entrancing tune.

(Vallier's translation.)

Describing the painting in "The Vault," Ondaatje emphasizes the intimate connection between the dreaming lady and the landscape she has created for herself in her dream: she

has been animal and tree
her breast a suckled orange.
The fibres and fluids of their moral nature
have escaped within her frame.

The hand is outstretched
her fingers move out in
mutual transfusion to the place.

The identity between the dreamer and the dreamed is complete, a "mutual transfusion" has taken place. The red sofa belongs in the imaginary jungle; the enchanter's pipe plays in the small studio on the Rue Perrel.

This, then, is the first area of affinity between Rousseau and Ondaatje: the coexistence, amounting to interpenetration, of a domestic scene and a jungle. Ondaatje's poetry reaches towards the kind of balance found in the visual composition of *The Dream*, but for him it is more difficult to attain. Rousseau's jungle is more exotic than violent; but for Ondaatje, violence is the essence of the jungle, and time after time it breaks through his poems with disturbing effect.

Not that violence is entirely absent from Rousseau's paintings, though in *The Dream* it is held in check: Yadwigha's dream is not a nightmare but "un beau rève," and the charmer is "bien pensant." Similarly, with regard to *The Sleeping*

Gypsy, the letter to the Mayor of Laval insists that "A lion wanders by, detects her and doesn't devour her." Indeed, the absence of any footprints in the sand, in an otherwise meticulously realistic picture, has led some critics to suggest that *The Sleeping Gypsy* may also represent a dream. But in other Rousseau paintings, violence does erupt, as is shown by such titles as *The Jungle: Tiger Attacking a Buffalo, Tiger and Buffalo Fighting, Negro Attacked by a Jaguar, Horse Attacked by a Jaguar, Scouts Attacked by a Tiger, The Repast of the Lion* (a lion eating a jaguar), and the famous *Hungry Lion*, the painting which may have contributed to the naming of the Fauves, with its straight-faced commentary by Rousseau: "The hungry lion throws himself on the antelope and devours it; the panther waits anxiously for the moment when it too will have its share. Carnivorous birds have pecked out a piece of flesh from the back of the animal, which weeps. Sunset."

The extraordinary understatement of these final words (like the "effect of moonlight, very poetic" in the description of *The Sleeping Gypsy*) may be deliberately ironic, or simply naive, on Rousseau's part; Ondaatje's use of this kind of comment is more clearly ironic, as in "Application for a Driving License":

> Two birds loved
> in a flurry of red feathers
> like a burst cottonball,
> continuing while I drove over them.
>
> I am a good driver, nothing shocks me.

The irony, and absence of shock, are constants in Ondaatje's poetry, even if they do not always emerge quite as blatantly. Within the domestic scene, violence is always liable to erupt, and irony is frequently a way of dealing with the intensity of this perception.

The dog in "Biography" is "tacked to humility all day" by the children who are "unaware that she/ tore bulls apart, loosed/ heads of partridges,/ dreamt blood." But if the children see only Yadwigha asleep on the familiar red couch, the poet sees also the jungle, the dreams of blood.

Such dreams intrude all the time: a summer badminton net becomes tangled with dragons, and "My mother while caressing camels/ had her left breast bitten off." For Ondaatje, the problem is to achieve some sort of equilibrium, or "mutual transfusion." It will not do simply to repress such knowledge — "In spite of this I've no objections/ to camels" — although this is undeniably what the social structure will attempt — "a vulture calmly resting at a traffic light/ would undoubtedly be shot, very messily,/ by the first policeman who spotted him." Here again the ironic tone — the comic understatement of "I've no objections," the more chilling understatement of "very messily" — is reminiscent of the distancing Rousseau achieves by his naive description.

Ondaatje's responses to the irruption of the violent into the domestic are rarely phrased as direct statements: at their best, the statement is indirect, controlled by tone, by what is not said. Often this emerges not as "un beau rêve" but as various kinds of nightmare: the tight hysteria of "War Machine," the surreal but savage humour of "Rat Jelly" itself. Occasionally the terms are reversed: "After shooting Gregory," Billy finds his carefully controlled world of violence disrupted by the intrusion of a *domestic* element, the chicken, which pushes the scene to a height of surreal horror before Ondaatje, reasserting the poet's control of tone if not Billy's control of death, dissolves the scene in laughter.

Most of these illustrations, both in Rousseau and in Ondaatje, have centred on the role of animals. Ondaatje's fascination with animals is too well known to require much comment: what is remarkable is the way that they retain their integrity and absolute identity *as animals* at the same time as they provide an almost continuous commentary on what is done in human society. From the dog's dream in "Biography" through to the terrifyingly detailed observation of the porcupine quills in "Dashiell,"[3] the violence of the jungle is immanent in the most domestic of pets; the mad cracked eyes of Livingstone's mongrels are reflected in the one-eyed owls of Sallie Chisum's menagerie. Introducing his anthology of animal poems, *The Broken Ark*,[4] Ondaatje wrote that he was not interested in pretty pictures of animals as pets, but rather that he wanted the reader to "imagine yourself pregnant and being chased and pounded to death by snow-mobiles." Ondaatje's vision reaches to levels of harsh reality which the Douanier's gentle exoticism never accounted for.

But if the violence is harsh, vivid, and uncomfortably convincing, the domestic scene is no less real. Rousseau's sofa, whose "glowing, red colour" provides the necessary visual counterbalance to the fifty greens of the jungle, was also the most familiar and affectionately regarded of the objects of his daily life. In *The Dream* it provides a fully adequate, and even humorous, image of the domestic security in which Yadwigha's dream is based. In the same way, Ondaatje's poetry is full of images which establish the warmth, reality and humour of the domestic scene. One such image, that of the Chisum ranch, is, as I have pointed out elsewhere,[5] lovingly built up in direct contradiction to the acknowledged source material.

In *Rat Jelly*, the first section, "Families," is dominated by the evocation of that small circle — "wife kids dogs couple of friends" — which forms the necessary complement to the jungle of "Live Bait." It is often more difficult to present a convincing portrayal of happiness than of unhappiness; but Ondaatje is a master at this — as, indeed, is Rousseau. There is a skillful use of small details, observed with the most intimate affection, out of which the reader can reconstruct the fabric of a whole relationship:

> I am writing this with a pen my wife has used
> to write a letter to her first husband.

On it is the smell of her hair.
She must have placed it down between sentences
and thought, and driven her fingers round her skull
gathered the slightest smell of her head
and brought it back to the pen.

The centre of this section is the group of joke poems — "Notes for the Legend of Salad Woman," "Postcard from Piccadilly Street," "The Strange Case" — which are marvellous jokes but even better poems. Their humour is not there just for its own sake, but plays a functional role in establishing the tone and the credibility of the domestic image. If Rousseau smiled at his canvases, Ondaatje must surely smile at these poems.

The finest poems in this section, however, are those in which, as in *The Dream*, the red sofa is firmly set in the jungle. In "White Room," the image of the woman's body as "cool fruit" gives way to an image of her "stray bones" as "scattered fragments/ of a wrecked aircraft." Ondaatje's descent, "like helicopters onto the plain," may be taken as the arrival of rescue helicopters at a crash site; but it also carries uncomfortable evocations of the Vietnamese television war. The final line, "within the angles of the room," remains ambiguous: these angles may provide the security of a solid structure, but they are set harshly against the "collapse" of human "flesh."

In "Letters & Other Worlds," the domestic scene — again evoked by affectionate detail and the masterful narration of comic incident — becomes the scene for an intensely private struggle with an interior jungle. This is one of Ondaatje's absolutely finest poems: the control of tone, as the poem moves from comedy to deeply moving simplicity, is breathtaking. It is one of Ondaatje's fullest realizations of that "mutual transfusion" between the jungle and the sofa; but here, continuing the metaphor of blood, the transfusion is deadly: the "blood screaming in/ the empty reservoir of bones" so that "he died in minutes of a new equilibrium."

"Equilibrium" is here a key word. (One is reminded again of Robert Kroetsch's description of Canadians as "fascinated with problems of equilibrium."[6]) As I mentioned earlier, the jungle dream cannot be repressed: a balance must be sought, and maintained in the control of the poems' tone, whether it be ironic distance, surreal or affectionate humour, or the highly sophisticated manipulation of various tones in "Letters & Other Worlds." At any rate, equilibrium is the task of the artist. Rousseau, not Yadwigha, is the real dreamer; and it is Ondaatje's dream which must attempt to mediate between "Families" and "Live Bait."

*

Breavman loves the pictures of Henri Rousseau,
the way he stops time.

Leonard Cohen, *The Favourite Game*.[7]

Rousseau always had trouble with feet. One of the points of technique that the naive self-taught painter never mastered was the natural perspective by which feet appear to be placed squarely and firmly on the ground. Frequently, Rousseau avoids this problem by hiding the feet behind low vegetation; but when he cannot do this, the deficiency is obvious — as, most obviously, in his famous *Myself: Portrait-Landscape* (note, in passing, the similarity in title to Klein's great poem), in which he seems to be standing on tip-toe on the banks of the Seine, or else gently floating, like a ghost oblivious to land subsidence, a few inches off the ground. Although Rousseau was very concerned with the interaction between a figure and its setting, and was proud of having "invented" the genre of "Portrait-Landscape," in most of his portraits there is a curious dislocation between figure and ground. Rousseau's people all seem to float in space, cut off from its normal continuum. One consequence of this is that they are also dislocated in time.

Rousseau's technique is an extraordinary combination of primitive, child-like naivety in the modelling, and high polish and exactness in the finish. The effect is to give his own awkwardnesses in space and time a very precise, fixed quality. He was capable of painting swift impromptu sketches of a scene which in manner and execution would stand with the best of the Impressionists; yet these were always painstakingly transformed into the precisions of his own style, all the rough edges made hard, all the sweeps of colour clarified to exact forms. Curiously, the eye accustomed to Monet sees these sketches as far more "realistic," at least in their sense of perspective and illusion of depth, than the finished works. Compare, for example, the sketch and the final version of *Path in Parc Montsouris* (Vallier, plates 60, 61). This is what lies behind Rousseau's famous comment on the Cézanne exhibition of 1907: "You know, I could finish all these pictures."

A good example of this aspect of Rousseau is *The Football Players*. Four men with identical moustaches are playing football (rugger) in a neat little field framed by trees whose trunks seem to rest on the ground like stage-props rather than grow out of it. The men's positions are drawn as if they had been frozen in the middle of a rather jolly ballet; their feet, of course, have no solid connection with the ground on which they supposedly stand. One man is about to catch the ball, which hangs suspended in the air above him, surrounded by a haze in which the leaves of the background trees are less precisely drawn than anywhere else in the painting. Rather than watching the ball which he is trying to catch (and probably therefore won't!) this man — like all the four-square, straight-on faces in Rousseau's portraits — stares directly out at the viewer. The effect is, totally, one of suspension.* The players stand as awkwardly in the temporal continuum as they do in the spatial. The eyes staring straight at the viewer induce an intense awareness of the artificiality of the situation: they stare out of the canvas and out

* Shattuck writes: "The figures move ... in total stillness.... They appear to have no location, to float in air" (*The Banquet Years*, p. 95).

of time, out of the whole temporal-spatial situation of Henri Rousseau in 1908 into the timelessness of art.

This approach — through the naiveté of the technique, seeing the paintings' temporal dislocation as the result of their naive handling of space — is, I believe, the most profitable way of understanding that quality in Rousseau which Leonard Cohen eulogizes in the first section of Book II of the *The Favourite Game*. Cohen, however, approaches it entirely through subject-matter:

> Always is the word that must be used. The lion will always be sniffing the robes of the sleeping gypsy, there will be no attack, no guts on the sand: The total encounter is expressed. The moon, even though it is doomed to travel, will never go down on this scene. The abandoned lute does not cry for fingers. It is swollen with all the music it needs.
>
> (*The Favourite Game*, p. 58.)

This sounds very much like Keats addressing his Grecian Urn, and indeed, when the young Breavman is being lionized (excuse the pun) by literary Montreal Cohen comments that "Canadians are desperate for a Keats" (*The Favourite Game*, p. 101). One of Breavman's obsessions, throughout the book, is with the stopping of time — most notably in the midnight car-ride with Krantz — and this is associated with the vision he has in the brass foundry, of the "liquid metal" which was "the colour gold should be.... The arch of liquid came to represent an intensity he would never achieve" (*The Favourite Game*, pp. 104-6.)

This is an aspect of *The Favourite Game* which Michael Ondaatje does not deal with in his book on Leonard Cohen. He does comment, briefly, on Cohen's reference to the other Rousseau, Jean-Jacques,[8] but there is nothing at all about Henri. This is very curious, considering Ondaatje's interest in Rousseau, and considering that this whole theme of "the way he stops time" is as central to Ondaatje as it is to Cohen. In his poetry, Ondaatje does pick up the associated image of the arch of liquid metal:

> To learn to pour the exact arc
> of steel still soft and crazy
> before it hits the page.
>
> ("Taking")

The obsession with fixing moving things in time is most clearly announced in the opening of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*: under the empty frame of the "picture of Billy" is the quotation from L. A. Huffman describing the progress made in photographing moving objects: "I am able to take passing horses at a lively trot square across the line of fire — bits of snow in the air — spokes well defined — some blur on top of wheel but sharp in the main — men walking are no trick." This states, at the outset, one of the main themes of the book: *fixing* the

image of Billy, a character constantly in motion both literally (the finger exercises) and ontologically (as his image shifts between historical fact, legendary accretion, and the creations of Ondaatje's personal imagination). I have already discussed[9] the differences between Ondaatje's fixing of Billy in legend, and bp Nichol's evocation of Billy as rumour: here it should be noted that Ondaatje's Billy, while constantly in motion, can in fact be frozen, as in Huffman's photographs (or Rousseau's paintings), to a much greater extent than Nichol's can.

This concern is also present in the early poems of *The Dainty Monsters*, and interestingly, it is directly associated with Rousseau. In the zoo poem, "You Can Look But You Better Not Touch," Ondaatje comments:

> ROUSSEAU wisely eliminated
> leopards from his follies
> A mistake to imagine them static

The leopard is too much a creature of movement, Ondaatje says, to be frozen into the static image of Rousseau's paintings, and Rousseau was wise to recognize this. (In fact, Rousseau managed to incorporate lions, tigers, and jaguars, so there seems no reason why he couldn't have included leopards as well: but the interesting point is Ondaatje's insistence on the static nature of Rousseau's art.)

The motif is associated with all of Ondaatje's major themes. In "The Sows," the "immobile" animals "categorize the flux around them." In "The Time Around Scars," one of the results of the sudden eruption of violence into a domestic scene is to "freeze irrelevant emotions/ and divide us from our present friends." The task of the artist in "Four Eyes" is to "freeze this moment . . . and in immobilized time/ attempt to reconstruct." He can do this, in "The Respect of Landscape," only by "translating" himself and "taking the egoism" of birds, "becoming like them the centre."

In *Rat Jelly*, the idea is most thoroughly explored in " 'The gate in his head'," a poem written for Victor Coleman. The poem celebrates the beauty of things in motion: "not clarity but the sense of shift." A book left in a fishbowl opens "like some sea animal/ camouflaging itself," and the "clarity" of the typeface letters acquires a new beauty, "going slow blonde in the sun full water." Ondaatje sees his own mind as "pouring chaos . . . onto the page," in the same way as the liquid metal is poured. But these movements/ moments are also caught and fixed in time: the chaos is poured "in nets." Coleman provides the climactic image with "a blurred photograph of a gull . . . The stunning white bird/ an unclear stir." Again, this is a "Caught vision," and the same word is repeated in the final stanza:

> And that is all this writing should be then,
> The beautiful formed things caught at the wrong moment
> so they are shapeless, awkward
> moving to the clear.

This is, in another form, the "equilibrium" which I spoke of earlier. The balance to be struck here is between the essential beauty of movement, the "sense of shift," and the artist's "catching" of that movement. The resulting image is simultaneously a fixed moment abstracted from time, and a moment which implies and contains the continued "moving to the clear." It is a clear, unmoving image of a blurred movement towards clarity.

This kind of paradox is also implicit in Ondaatje's portrait of Wallace Stevens writing:

> his head making his hand
> move where he wanted
> and he saw his hand was saying
> the mind is never finished, no, never
>
> ("Dates")

Stevens creates a clarity, a fixed moment under his control, which immediately and uncontrollably generates a further movement towards a further clarity. Another poem says that Stevens "is thinking chaos is thinking fences" ("King Kong Meets Wallace Stevens"). The lack of punctuation equates the two activities, runs them together into one; it could also be read that what Stevens is thinking is that "chaos is thinking fences," and in a circle, fences are thinking chaos. The artist performs these impossibilities; under Stevens' hand, the page is "becoming thought where nothing had been," just as the spider-poet "thinks a path and travels / the emptiness that was there" (Spider Blues").

The effect is always to stop time: in "Taking," Ondaatje speaks of how he has "stroked the mood and tone / of hundred year dead men and women," and thus, for himself "removed them from historical traffic." It could be said of all Ondaatje's images, and also for the figures in Rousseau's paintings, that "Their idea of the immaculate moment is now."

There is a distinction to be made, however, here as always, between the poems and the poet. The poems may aspire towards the timelessness of the sleeping gypsy, the Grecian urn, or the blurred white bird; but the poet is still caught in flux and change, and so is the reader. Art may achieve moments of equilibrium, but these cannot be entered into by the artist or the spectator: the experience of them must pass. Ondaatje's description of *The Dream* suggests that this is anticipated even within the painting itself. The reason that Yadwigha "looks to her left" is that "that is the direction we leave in / when we fall from her room of flowers." (This is, incidentally, factually correct for the present hanging of the painting in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.) Time is stopped in the "room of flowers," but both artist and spectator must sooner or later "fall" out of it.

The perfect moments when the intensity of "the exact arc" is achieved may

go some way towards mediating between "Families" and "Live Bait," but they cannot go all the way. Rousseau died in despair when the petite bourgeoise Léonie refused to become Yadwigha for him, even when Robert Delaunay pleaded with her to visit the painter's deathbed. The artist does not escape from the destructive movement of time: indeed, he may feel called upon to immerse himself in it.

The Huffman quotation which sets out the image of caught movement in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* closes by insisting that "many of the best [were] exposed when my horse was in motion," in other words, when the artist himself partook of the nature of the subject. The relationship between Ondaatje and his persona in this book is a very complex one: although Ondaatje has to stand back at times in his familiar ironic pose, he cannot totally separate himself from the outlaw personality. Ondaatje as artist moves towards Billy as outlaw, and vice versa. It is Billy himself who stops time to replay the scene preceding his death which "I would have seen if I was on the roof looking," and who prolongs the moment of death itself with "the bullet itch frozen in my head." When the blank frame is finally filled, it is not with a photograph of Billy, but with one of Michael Ondaatje.

The image of the artist projected in many of the poems in the "White Dwarfs" section of *Rat Jelly* is a self-destructive one: the herons who find "ways of going/ physically mad" ("Heron Rex"), those who commit "Our suicide into nature" as insects eat the brain ("Near Elginburg"), the unwinding body from Vaughn-James' *The Projector* which "will be consumed before ever reaching the ground," Icarus "fished . . . from this Quebec river" ("Fabulous shadow"), and above all the "heroes" of "White Dwarfs" itself. "White Dwarfs" is a hymn to self-destruction, to those who are — returning for a moment to the terminology of Leonard Cohen — beautiful losers. The artists are "those who disappear," those who "die in the ether peripheries," the outcasts who "sail to that perfect edge/ where there is no social fuel." The artists can "understand their altitude" only by the "Release of sandbags" to take them higher from the ground. The artist moves into silence: the lonely "silence of the third cross," the silence of mules with their tongues cut out, the silence of the "perfect white between the words." Participating in the very movement which their art cancels, immersing themselves in the destructive element which their words have transcended, they become like stars gone nova, collapsing in on themselves, imploding into that silence which Eliot proclaimed words could reach into, "beyond speech."

Ondaatje understands this type of self-destructive artist, or beautiful loser (as is shown, in fact, by his interest in Cohen); but he is not himself one of them. Neither indeed was Rousseau, and though Ondaatje's main poem on a Rousseau painting ("The Vault") is included in the "White Dwarfs" section of *Rat Jelly*, his major poem about Rousseau's personality ("To Monsieur le Maire") is not.

Rousseau is live bait rather than white dwarf, at least in the pathetically vulnerable naiveté which the letter displays. But if we remember that Rousseau's naiveté may well have been fully as calculated as it was genuine, and if we note that the price that Rousseau asks for his painting in this "naive" letter is considerably higher than any he had up till that time been paid, the same letter may be seen as demonstrating an intelligence and ironic control of tone not too far removed from Ondaatje's. When Ondaatje uses the Rousseau text as a "found poem," it is hard to tell which of them has the last laugh.

There is a clear distinction, then, between the misery of Rousseau's last days, which he certainly did not seek to bring upon himself, and the obsessive self-destruction of his friend, sponsor, and fellow townsman of Laval, Alfred Jarry. Having created the monstrous role of Ubu in his work, Jarry came to adopt it in his life to such an extent that he broke down all barriers between the two. The result was what Roger Shattuck calls "Suicide by hallucination": Jarry died at the age of 34, becoming in the most literal sense one of those who "die in the ether peripheries." In *The Banquet Years* (the book which Ondaatje acknowledges as his source for Rousseau's letter), Shattuck writes:

> The willfulness with which [Jarry] kept himself saturated with ether was no longer a form of drinking or alcoholism; he was simply killing himself. . . . One of his last writings, a chapter called *"Descendit ad infernos"* intended for *La dragonne*, contains this visionary description of the hero's approaching death: "But soon he could drink no more, for there was no more darkness for him and, no doubt like Adam before the fall . . . he could see in the dark."
>
> (*The Banquet Years*, p. 221.)

These are of course the lines which Ondaatje uses, without identifying their source, as the epigraph to "Letters & Other Worlds"; the source adds yet another dimension to this rich and complex poem. Ondaatje's father, in the terrible isolation of the room where he "stayed . . . until he was drunk / and until he was sober," is also the artist immersed in self-destruction, yet "moving to the clear." His tragedy is the failure of equilibrium: he "balanced and fell," so that in death he is only human, "without metaphor." For him as for Jarry, the self-destruction of alcohol provided a new vision; but unlike Jarry, what he created — the "gentle letters . . . of the most complete empathy" — were expressions of love rather than of contempt. When Jarry died, he became completely Ubu; when Ondaatje's father died, he became completely himself.

"White Dwarfs," then, despite its climactic position in the book, does not seem to me to be Ondaatje's ultimate word on the nature of the artist. Rousseau and not Jarry must continue to serve as the paradigm: Rousseau who stops time, not Jarry who is destroyed by it. The maintaining of equilibrium is a matter of control, and Ondaatje is himself, always, a highly controlled artist. He is of course aware of the dangers of control, as "Spider Blues" shows — "Spiders like poets are

obsessed with power" — but this does not mean that he will endorse the surrender of control, the dissolution of personality, as completely as Cohen does in *Beautiful Losers*. The poet in "Burning Hills," who has the Rousseau postcard on his desk, and who prizes "one picture that fuses . . . 5 summers," is described in the final lines of the poem as writing "slowly and carefully / with great love and great coldness." It is precisely *that* equilibrium which Ondaatje at his best — as in "Letters & Other Worlds" — so triumphantly displays.

So perhaps a more profound statement is to be found not in the last poem of the "White Dwarfs" section but in the first: "We're at the Graveyard." It is a moment frozen in time, a moment of that small circle of friends — "Stuart Sally Kim and I" — preserved against the unfriendly world. Above their heads there are both mobility and immobility, together — "still stars . . . sliding stars" — which form "clear charts," a "geometry of moving." The stars provide an "intricate" form within which movement and clarity coexist; this form is paralleled "down here" by "friends / whose minds and bodies / shift like acrobats to each other." Only the presence of such friends can give expression to the clarities of the stars — "When we leave, they move / to an altitude of silence" — but the human limitations of these friends are clearly if unobtrusively indicated by the graveyard setting. At the same time, Sally is pregnant.

(If this poem is reminiscent of any Rousseau painting, it is *Un Soir de Carnaval*, with the lucid ordering of its night sky, the clown's / acrobat's costume, and the mysterious pale mask hung on the wall.)

The human function, which *is* here the artistic function, is as always to give form, to exercise control, to maintain equilibrium, to "shape / and lock the transient." The image used here is that of "bats / who organize the air / with thick blinks of travel" — like the spider poet who "thinks a path and travels / the emptiness that was there," like Wallace Stevens' page "becoming thought where nothing had been." In the closing lines, Ondaatje offers another such image, a shape to lock the transient. Insofar as it achieves this, it is certainly fashioned with "great coldness" and control on his part; but it is also, just as certainly, fashioned like his father's letters, "with great love":

> Sally is like grey snow in the grass.
> Sally of the beautiful bones
> pregnant below stars.

NOTES

[1] This information is derived from the article on Bucke by Robert W. Cumberland in *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ed. Charles G. D. Roberts and Arthur L. Tunnell, Toronto, 1934.

[2] The best short biography of Henri Rousseau is to be found in the book which Ondaatje acknowledges as his source: Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, first

published 1958, Vintage edition 1968. The most useful full length study is Dora Vallier, *Henri Rousseau* (Abrams, 1960.) Most of the biographical information in this essay is derived from these two sources.

[3] Michael Ondaatje, "Dashiell," *Canadian Forum* (March 1975), 26.

[4] Michael Ondaatje, ed., *The Broken Ark: a book of beasts*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1971.

[5] "Two Authors in Search of a Character: Michael Ondaatje, bp Nichol, and Billy the Kid," first published in *Canadian Literature* no. 54, and reprinted in George Woodcock's anthology *Poets and Critics* (Toronto: Oxford, 1974).

[6] Kroetsch makes this comment in Donald Cameron's *Conversations With Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Vol. I, p. 85.

[7] Leonard Cohen, *The Favourite Game* (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 1970), p. 58.

[8] Cohen, p. 33; Michael Ondaatje, *Leonard Cohen* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p. 34.

[9] See footnote 5, above.

BUCK LAKE STORE AUCTION

Michael Ondaatje

Scrub lawn.
A chained
dog tense and smelling.
The outhouse.
50 cents for a mattress. 50 cents
for doors that allowed privacy.
What else can you sell?
A rain
swollen copy of Jack London
a magazine drawing of a rabbit
bordered with finishing nails.
6 chickens, bird cage (empty),
sauerkraut cutting board

down to the rock
trees

not bothering to look
into the old woman's eyes
as we go in, get a number
have the power to bid
on everything that is exposed.
After an hour in this sun
I expected her to unscrew
her left arm off and donate it
to the auctioneer's excitement.

In certain rituals we desire
only what we cannot have.
While for her, Mrs Germain,
this is the needle's eye
where maniacs of heaven select.
Look, I wanted to say,
$10 for the dog
with faded denim eyes

COUNTRY NIGHT

Michael Ondaatje

The bathroom light burns over the mirror

In the blackness of the house
beds groan from the day's exhaustion
hold the tired shoulders bruised
and cut legs the unexpected
3 am erections. Someone's dream
involves a saw someone's
dream involves a woman.
We have all dreamed of finding the lost dog.

The last light on upstairs
throws a circular pattern
through the decorated iron vent
to become a living room's moon.

The sofa calls the dog, the cat
in perfect blackness walks over the stove.
In the room of permanent light
cockroaches march on enamel.
The spider with jewel coloured thighs the brown moth
with corporal stripes
ascend pipes
and look into mirrors.

All night the truth happens.

TWO SONNETS

George Woodcock

The biographical interest of these two sonnets may well be greater than the literary. They were the first poems I wrote in Canada, after returning in 1949 and going to live on the land in a remote corner of Vancouver Island where the vestiges of a frontier society still survived. Among the things that impressed me after so long in Britain (where deer live in parks and eagles in zoos) was the abundance of wild life, from cougars down to garter snakes, and I wrote my first poems there out of encounters with such creatures. When I had written them I was surprised at their archaic form and tone, and put them away in a folder from which I have taken them after more than a quarter of a century. Seeing them again, I recognize a pioneer phenomenon I have since noticed in many early Canadian and, for that matter, American poets; faced with a strange and physically compelling — perhaps hostile — world, one at first retreats into tried and familiar ways of expressing one's feelings towards what is both new and formidable. Like most writers confronted by old poems, I have tinkered slightly, tightening a line here and there, but the only major change I have made is to rewrite the weak closing line of "Eagle." "Eagle," incidentally, is the poem that most shows both where I came from and when I came. "East" then had for me the European connotation of Asia; now it would mean to me the Maritimes or perhaps Toronto. And 1949 was a time when the Asian East was especially "ominous," since that was the season when the two rival forces in China were locked in their final, fateful combat.

EAGLE

Down the cliff's edge, high on a leaning cedar
Whose branches hang in drooping deprecation,
Quietly resigned, as if mourning desolation
Left by the petulant saw and brutal tractor,
An eagle sits like the poet's conquistador,
Erect and peering through the lifting mist
Haughtily towards Japan and the ominous East.
This is a conqueror who seeks no glory, nor
The smoky golden loot of distant lands.
His eye slants over, not beyond the ocean,
Seeks the betraying ripple, form above sand,
Refracted through slack water, trembling fin.
Then on wide wings he falls, a shabby terror,
And ragged hunger breaks the sea, his mirror.

DEER

A dog barks in the distance. A moment later
Delicately through the sword fern steps the buck,
Polished prongs high, tense ears, his fear
Dwindling as he stops in the old cart track
To nibble the amethyst daisies between the ruts.
A dry crack in the wood: he pauses an instant,
Tapestry beast among the python roots
Of the giant fir-trees, tawny against the jet
Charred Christ-year stump. A dead branch falls
And he leaps away like a northern kangaroo,
Plunges in the glossy darkness of salal
As the bluejays scream in derision to see him go.
Lord, preserve him from the pitlamper's greed,
Avert the hunter's fury, the cougar's leap!

TO LIVE IN ABUNDANCE OF LIFE

Time in Canadian Literature

Ofelia Cohn-Sfetcu

THE TITLE AND SUBSTANCE OF THIS STUDY will come as a surprise to those who consider twentieth-century Canadian literature gloomy, pessimistic and obsessed with the problem of survival in a wild country, among wild animals and at the mercy of a wild climate. While it is undoubtedly true that contemporary Canadian prose and poetry are deeply concerned with man's unremitting struggle against an inclement environment, it is also accurate to say that what is ultimately administered to the reader is not a debilitating, self-defeating drug, but a strong mental tonic, able to produce a stimulating effect. Indeed, Canadian authors consider that the individual has to reach that state of acquiescence in which he is able to accept himself as a finite creature surrounded by an indifferent universe, yet capable of scoring victories and making contributions in spite of his frailty. What is running through their work is a clear intellectual tune affirming the dignity and significance of human existence, with the weight of novels and poems as its appropriate orchestration.

One notices in twentieth-century Canadian literature the presence of a fundamental premise to the discussion of the human condition: the idea that, time being an ineradicable factor in the universal totality, a temporal index must necessarily enter into the study of man. Moreover, that time is man's most characteristic mode of experience, for it applies equally to his external reality and to the world of his emotions and ideas for which no spatial order can be given.[1] One manifest feature of a concern with time is that it is a consequence of consciousness. In truth, from Grove to Purdy and Richler, from Avison to Aquin, Canadian authors have found themselves in a world they understand and control only partially, yet have attempted to order their consciousness of reality, to put themselves in harmony with the patterns they discern, and, thus, find foundations for the forms of behaviour one prizes in a full man and a fulfilled society.

What is characteristic of the best works produced in Canada during this century is a mature assessment of the human condition, equally opposed to facile optimism or facile despair. The pessimism pervading the intellectual climate of our age has

taken its toll on Canadian authors, yet they are not exhausted by the knowledge of man's impermanence. Though fully aware that man's life is not only insignificant within the overall pattern of existence, but also subject to crucial limitations, they do not conclude that human existence is a great mockery and life the ultimate four-letter word. On the contrary, with the human being moved from the privileged position of culminating point of Creation to that of integral part of an ecological system, Canadian authors try to contend with the awareness that man's reason for existence is not supplied by an external agency, but is consubstantial with the individual who thinks. It is, therefore, to man himself that the task to create living value is set, to find the inner reason to sustain himself in an existence which may otherwise be considered a purely biological accident.

But, where to look for the redeeming feature of the life of man? In man's uniqueness, comes the unequivocal answer: in man's possibility to engage mentally in a vertical temporal movement, rather than follow a merely horizontal sequence of moments. Indeed, the concept of time as formulated by science is only partly the time of the human being. There are categories of time which, though not meaningful in the framework of objective reality, are highly significant in experience. Memory, imagination, dynamic interpenetration and subjective metric are only a few of the concepts that find expression in the context of experience, not in that of the phenomenal world.

The direct result of this "new departure"[2] in the treatment of time is the creation of a philosophy of life primarily based on subjectivity, and, with this, the reader of Canadian literature is taken from the periphery of the human experience engrossed in local and transitory preoccupations to the centre of the experience itself, where the spatial order is no longer important. And it is precisely this distinct quality that catapults Canada into a literary order where people do not face Canadian problems solely, but men face the problems of man, and reach towards a universal spiritual reality accessible to all mankind.

The present study will focus attention on five authors: Grove, Purdy, Avison, Aquin and Richler. In selecting them, I have considered not only their status in Canadian literature, but also the diversity of the stances they adopt towards the unique issue of how to use time itself in the service of a meaningful human existence. In addition, an examination of their works gives the reader the opportunity to follow the progress of this approach to time, and of the spiritual movement accompanying it, from early in the twentieth century to the present.

GROVE'S WORLD is basically that of pioneers and immigrants: these two words conveying not only their primary sense, but also ecompassing all those whose most immediate enemy is space. It is precisely this particu-

lar spatial index attached to his heroes that explains the rather uncommon outlook on time which Grove holds. In an epoch predominantly convinced that the experiential properties of time are more important for human lives than scientific concepts, he constructs a theory of time which satisfies objective conditions, even if by so doing he partly discourages the practice of certain subjective qualities of time which are charged with great significance in human experience. Yet, while advocating rigorous synchronization with present time and objective reality, he is not rejecting temporal perspective, but expressing concern over the harmful effect which an imaginative approach to life may have under conditions of extreme environmental pressure. Pioneering and immigration are such extreme situations, and Grove's constant preoccupation with the importance of the present is obvious throughout his work. In *Over Prairie Trails*, however, his concern is articulated with particular poignancy, for, here, the challenge issued to man by both space and time is at its utmost, and the author's response is adjusted proportionally.

The framework of the book is deceptively simple — an almost bare stage and three performers in dramatic confrontation: Man, Space and Time. The man is alone and stands against space in its most brutal form: hostile nature — cross-country driving on unmarked rut trails over the prairie, through impenetrable marsh fog, impassable snow and blizzard. Time itself allows the driver only a few hours to wrest distance and join his family, for the journey has to take place between 4 o'clock in the afternoon and the fall of darkness. Each moment constituting the trip is therefore central and determinant, the whole development of the story being in effect a function of correct timing. "I looked at my watch," and "I looked at my watch again," are phrases which punctuate the narration, for Grove plays upon this theme abundantly and repeatedly.

Permanently affixed to the present, man is able to achieve perfect timing and control over his actions, to do the right thing at the right time, and thus transform each instant from a situation of being acted upon, into an opportunity to act. And it is precisely through well-timed action that the driver in *Over Prairie Trails* makes it possible for himself to reach his destination, rather than become lost in the marsh, or freeze to death in the blizzard. Conversely, when man abuses the objective time and thus loses his unique point of authentic and vital contact with reality, the very opposite can happen. Significantly enough, on the particular trip when the driver releases his attention from the things around him and indulges in day-dreaming, he almost loses his life.

This is not to say that Grove advocates the restriction of an adult's temporal perspective to one single element. On the contrary, numerous pages in the book are written precisely with a view to encouraging the expansion of man's imaginative grasp of objective reality. The way in which he endows with physiognomy the houses he sees by the road, or the attention with which he pauses over moments when the spirit of man transcends objectivity, and through a gigantic

leap experiences a reality beyond rational expression, testify to his interest in modes of perception which do not suffer from shallowness and unilaterality. Lifted on top of a drift which buried the trees around, the driver feels seized with a

> feeling of estrangement, as it were — as if I were not myself, but looking on from the outside at the adventure of somebody who yet was I — . . . a feeling of having been carried beyond my depth where I could not swim — . . . .

Such moments do exist and are immensely precious. However, Grove was too astute an observer of the human condition not to point out that the intense instant experienced on the top of the drift was flanked on both sides by moments of cruel factuality: one of urgent necessity to ascend, and one of equally imperative need to descend. A peak squeezed between two points of low altitude, a situation whose symbolic value is obvious. Private time cannot and should not be annihilated, for this would mean a contraction of human experience, but man must also stay keyed to objective reality. The "cheerless night" when he nearly lost his life taught Grove a painful lesson: if an accident happened to him on his way home, it was nobody's fault but his own, for he "should have watched the road more carefully instead of giving in to the trend of his thoughts."

If Grove's *Over Prairie Trails* urges the reader to stay keyed to the time of clocks and calendars, Aquin's *Prochain épisode* seems to exhort him to avoid living in the present to the point of totally ignoring the objective dimension of time. It is true that Aquin's heroes have always found it difficult to reconcile themselves to the reality around them, yet, the reason for the extreme point of view adopted in *Prochain épisode* springs not from a general dissatisfaction with the present, but from the nature of the particular situation described. Indeed, the narrator of *Prochain épisode* has been imprisoned and subsequently hospitalized for terrorist activity, and, at the moment delineated in the book, he is both deprived of his freedom and waiting for the date of his trial and sentence. Under the terrible stress of solitary confinement combined with prolonged suspense, the prisoner discovers his self disintegrating and considers committing suicide. Realizing, however, that lack of coincidence with the present would shield him from the lethal effects of detention, the prisoner decides to draw on his memories and write a story, thus interposing a subjective world between his psyche and his physical life in prison. Grove advocated synchronization with the present because the driver's success in his book was predicated on his ability to stay constantly in direct contact with the space around. Conversely, for the prisoner in Aquin's novel, it is imperative that he should separate himself from his immediate environment if he is to survive, and preserve his sanity till the day of his trial.

Through writing, however, Aquin's narrator-prisoner achieves much more than refuge from an unsatisfying present and release from nervous tension. Through

writing, the man deprived of an authentic future in the absence of a court sentence creates a future, and thus gives his mental life the quality of duration which otherwise it misses. The spy-story the prisoner writes is highly autobiographical, but what seems, at first sight, to be a collection of fractured past moments, is in fact a deliberately created system. The story does not revive a past dictated by a mere concatenation of precedence, but only the narrator's immediate past involved with K and the F.L.Q. The events recorded are distanced in space and time, yet they are united through the unique feeling aroused in the man who writes about them. He re-invents them continuously according to the well-determined intention to set himself in resonance with them, to re-establish with them a relation of mental continuity, and thus become again an integral part of the great flood of the revolution. Indeed, by attaining concordance with the past containing the objects of his love and commitment, the narrator attains concordance with their future as well, even if following the trial and sentencing he will, or will not, join K and the F.L.Q. physically. "En moi, déprimé explosif, toute une nation s'aplatit historiquement . . . " admits the prisoner in a supreme statement of identity, and it is precisely through this rhapsodic identification with his own people that he gives himself a future. And, since this particular group with whose future he wants to coincide is part of the universal totality of men, the prisoner is ultimately setting himself in resonance with the whole of mankind, and moves in rhythm with it in spite of the immobility imposed by detention. "Pour t'écrire, je m'adresse à tout le monde," the prisoner writes to his beloved K, at once woman and Quebec. "L'amour est le cycle de la parole," he continues, fully aware that by imposing upon disordered temporal elements a system deliberately constructed, he obliges them to constitute themselves into coherent duration, and ultimately produces a work of art.

Writing, therefore, is revealed not only as prophylaxis against a highly insufficient present time and phenomenal world, but also as the dimension within which man can express his creativity, and human intelligence can score a victory over the irregularities of natural time. Of course, what Aquin proposes is, in the final analysis, a mode of perception which favours temporal categories not meaningful in the framework of objective reality, but in the microcosm of the situation in *Prochain épisode*; this artificial arrangement of human experience through an almost total negation of present time is in order, for only the denial of intimacy with the prison world can save the inmate's mental balance till the day of his trial.

WHEN, HOWEVER, THE OBJECTS OF LITERARY ANALYSIS are not conditions of extreme environmental pressure, Canadian authors have different views to communicate. Avison and Purdy, a woman and a man, a believer

and a non-believer, do not advocate the cultivation of modes of perception favouring one of the dimensions of time to the detriment of the other; they attempt to achieve an ideal balance between the two, to let the subjective consistently enrich and transfigure the objective. And, significantly enough, for both poets, the literary notation of this newly emerging sense of human time is the tree. This can hardly be a coincidence. On the contrary, the presence of a common central symbol seems to indicate the existence of a unifying intellectual concept, in terms of which, the recognition of the uniqueness of man becomes the basis for the acquisition of a newness in spirit, capable of redressing each instant of temporal existence in stability and consistency. Filtered through an "optic heart" or a "hearing blood" each objective "now" is endowed with that particular quality which distinguishes living from merely existing, and gives life new dimensions.

Margaret Avison looks at the "orphan urban tree" squeezed "among the knees of clanking panoplied buildings," yet desperately forking skywards for air, realizes that the direction of the spiritual movement aiming at re-organizing human experience is "up" and transforms this realization into the theme which recurs transfigured throughout her work. Man, Avison claims, should no longer try to enjoy time horizontally, as a massive and continuous development of duration, but should become engaged in a constant attempt to emerge from the superficiality of mundane affairs, and fly into the world of vision. Disengaged from pure duration and oriented vertically, time becomes spatialized as an inner event, and, though man does not escape the frame of reference of objective time, he ransoms it within the span of a "now" which seems to last beyond its clock limits. Such intense moments are felt as a unique state of stretching and swelling with strangeness and, juxtaposed to each other, are able to reveal to man similitudes which in turn unveil essences. The grasp of the universal totality becoming possible, a twofold harmony is achieved: a reconciliation of opposite drives in human nature and a tuning in with the whole universe. The "poles and latitudes" of human spiritual geography witness a "curious encounter" and the poet who complained: "I find myself / but lose myself again," feels her mind join her body and is finally able to say: "I am." Concomitantly, the sense of division between the self and the rest of the world is annihilated and, comprehending the deep relatedness between inside cadences and outside occurrences, the individual melts in general communion with "the remotest fishrib / the hairiest thing" which "as one fragment / make towards" fullness.

Yet, not protracting into each other, vertical moments pattern life on an alternating rhythm of withdrawal and return. Successively, man feels he is given and relieved of everything, realizes the absurdity of his condition and sees the whole of existence deflated to a "luxuriant deep-breathed zero." At this point, however, Margaret Avison has a profound religious revelation and understands that love, with its power to overwhelm the moment, is the only conciliatory means of asso-

ciating temporal and spatial aspects of objective reality. Transfigured by love, the discontinuous becomes continuous, and the direction of time is no longer from past to future, but from isolated moments to authentic duration. It is important, of course, that Margaret Avison comes to this understanding through a religious experience. More important is that, having undergone it, she goes beyond it, and proposes a way of life whose terms are equally addressed to the believer and the non-believer. Indeed, the system once found, the task is with each individual to impose it and attain that synchronization which allows intense moments to remain autonomous, yet become part of a huge co-ordinate. The universe has to be re-invented, "the optic heart must venture" both "a jail-break" and "a re-creation," if man is to achieve plenitude of life. Hence, Avison's constant plea: "Come out. Crawl out" from a too serious immersion in the affairs of a present which has turned into a mere function of material productivity, feel "the power of the blue and gold breadth / of day," and realize that we, human beings, have moved "too far from ways of weightlessness." Above all, she invites her reader to share her hunger for the "real nourishment" of love, to sit and eat and feel alive.

Purdy, too, considers love as the only true solution to the human condition and he, too, tries to organize human experience meaningfully around this spiritual centre. He reaches this conclusion also by contemplating a tree, but his eyes rest not so much on its branches forking upwards, as on its roots plunging downwards. Indeed, he looks at the dwarf arctic trees of the Baffin Islands and, suddenly aware that their roots "touch permafrost / ice that remains ice for ever," that they "use death to remain alive," he, who previously thought life reduced to a "protein formula," is able to affirm "the dignity of any living thing," no matter how humble a form of life it represents. Like Avison, Al Purdy conceives human time not as a smooth, horizontal continuum flowing from the past into the future, but, symbolically, as a vertical axis representing the subjective dynamic relation between events which have happened, are happening and will happen. The existence of this axis explains the transcendental unifications of experience which make past and future appear intensely real and quivering with potency. And if his particular interest lies with the past spiritual roots of man, it is because he believes that at the level of roots the integration between the individual and the general is achieved, and death is conquered by life in vital and mental form. Therefore, he wants to descend to the level of mythical roots, equip himself with a new spirit, and emerge capable of transcending the limitations which the human condition imposes on him as an individual.

Indeed, Purdy does not conceive of his ancestors as part of a historical existence already accomplished and, hence, deprived of significance. On the contrary, he believes that ancestors long gone to earth come to life again through the present day people, that, like trees, they sprout through their descendants, not in flesh, but in spirit. The dead are not buried but "planted," and the people alive "stem" in

the graveyard, Purdy says in *In Search of Owen Roblin*, in an attempt to affirm that death is a contributor to life that has to spring from earth. He himself feels "all dead men / chanting hymns" tunnelling towards him underground and addressing themselves to his "hearing blood." To ease their way into his own being, to tap a spiritual heritage that will enable him to actually encounter the whole race of man, he goes to Roblin's Mill in search of Owen, the founder of the village. There, diving through time, going back "down the long stairway / we all came up when we were born," Purdy acquires a sense of human unity underlying individual multiplicity.

> Whatever is underneath a village
> and a one-time pioneer settlement goes deeper
> rooted inside the human character
> contemporary as well as ancient,

the poet says, discovering himself part of a universe to which no temporal order is given, and which opens to receive him as an integral part. With men having in common both an identity of person and of nature, humanity becomes a huge joint account, and Purdy, who felt his ancestors speaking in his blood, hears himself "already whispering in the minds of his descendants."

The sense of the continuity of human nature and of the likeness of the human plight makes possible a deeper sense of the brotherhood of man, and this, Purdy recognizes with Avison, gains man two things: a better understanding of his own psyche and the capacity to reach out to his fellows and participate emotionally in the world. "After being them I become myself again / rooted in Year One of all the directions I am travelling"; Purdy admits seeing equivalence in the gestures of his predecessors and feeling able to explore his own self "unafraid of darkness and failure." At the same time, freed from the prison of the self, the individual overcomes self-centredness and, with the soul rendered supple and flexible, merges in love with other beings and gives life the profundity which it otherwise lacks. "Love is an absolute as death is," Purdy unequivocally proclaims, at once locating and assessing the spark of life, and his idiot boy sings:

> Stay with me in the same world
> or I am lost and desolate
> . . . . . .
> that you are here at all
> delays my own death
> an instant longer.

This does not mean that the poet conditions man's capacity to extend love to others on having first communed with past generations. To find an opening in the past by using the subjective dimension of time is only one of the human privileges to which he calls attention. There are other ways of reaching the same

goal. Avison's way is one of them. What is highly significant, however, is the fact that both poets glorify moments of great and sudden experience, at once of self-recognition and self-comprehension, within the breadth of which both a self and a reality beyond the instantaneous is discovered. It is also extremely important that to the inadequacy of objective time, both poets oppose a kind of time which one may call "emotional," and which consists of setting up love as the unique point of perspective from which life should be considered. The point of perspective itself being outside time, never ceases to exist and to dictate individual moments to align not in their rigorous chronological succession, but in their relation to the pivot itself.

Of course, apart from love, there are many other subjective pivots around which human life can be organized. Metaphors, for instance, may function as rallying points in man's struggle against spiritual regimentation. To show the way in which such a pivot bears upon human life and gives it consistency and constancy while preserving the integrity of its individual moments, is the task that Mordecai Richler sets himself in *St. Urbain's Horseman.* In truth, Richler has timidly attempted to do the same thing in other novels; *St. Urbain's Horseman,* however, represents the achievement.

THE MAJOR PREMISE OF RICHLER'S NOVEL is that the concept of the self is inseparable from the concept of time, that both man's organic and his psychological development are predicated on time. The author's approach to his subject is also based on the observation that the time of human experience is different from the concept of time in nature; one major distinction being the fact that events of real importance for the psyche do not flow in a systematic chronological order, but enjoy an unequal distribution within a span of time objectively measured. However, what might be called the discontinuous in terms of clocks and calendars is the psychologically continuous, for apparently disparate events converge towards the unique point of momentary experience, and what happens to a man at one particular moment in his life is in resonance with what has already happened to him at other different times. This is why a memory which is not formed by habit but consists of significant events, as well as the fantasies and metaphors which constitute the structural landmarks of a person's imagination, provide outstandingly relevant psychological data. Referring to a pre-eminently value-charged aspect of experience, at times defying logical interpretation, they disclose a coherent structure of the self which cannot be recovered if only present experience is considered. Therefore, the author in quest of Jake Hersh's self is in quest at once of his memory and of his leading statement of identity: the metaphor of "the Horseman."

But how can this constant resonance between memory, imagination and momentary experience be conveyed? Richler's solution to the problem is simple but brilliant: he uses temporal cubism. The author places himself in one particular moment in the life of his protagonist, that of his trial, and, by means of his protagonist's recollections, allows the reader to view the central event from a large number of points of temporal perspective. Richler, however, is not imitating Proust. Jake's trial is not Marcel's biscuit and cup of tea; having triggered it does not disappear, and the book does not move backwards. On the contrary, the trial is the extensive present of the novel, and into this present the past is summoned to render it intelligible. In other words, what a cubist painter does with space, Mordecai Richler does with time. Indeed he spatializes the present by making it the point of confluence not of events governed by a uniform and consecutive order, but of incidents which exhibit dynamic association and interpenetration, precisely the qualities which are significant between time and the self. Accordingly, his hero is not a fixed structure, nor is he a passive recorder, but a constant interpreter, organizer and synthesizer. He is a distinct pattern of responses and associations called Jake Hersh, whose resistance to a meaningless existence and desperate attempt to establish consistency and significance in life is made explicit by the metaphor of "the Horseman."

In order to reveal the gradual construction of the metaphor, Richler relies heavily on temporal cubism, in terms of which echoes of past moments are discovered not in a process of merely re-living experience, but of self-identification in a present act. Three events seem to be particularly revealing in this respect, for they all contain both the given object — Joey, Jake's cousin — and a spiritual movement on Jake's part to adhere to it. The initial impression goes back to the year 1943, when, due to a number of circumstances, Jake singles out his cousin as exactly the opposite of what he considers hateful in the rest of the Hershes: success, adventure and action, as opposed to petty humbleness, clannish immobility and passive acceptance. Years later, Jake hears reports that his cousin fought in the Spanish war and, subsequently, in the battle for Jerusalem. At that moment, a profound relationship establishes itself between Joey as object and Jake's consciousness. The latter recognizes equivalence in the gestures of the former, and, through a mentally mimetic operation, creates "the Horseman," Joey's spiritualized equivalent. "The Horseman" is, indeed, everything that Jake would like himself to be: active, brave, of undisputable social and political integrity, and, of course, always on the back of a superb Pleven stallion, for, "when a Jew gets on a horse, he stops being a Jew."

The metaphor grasps Jake fully. Not only does it become his moral editor, but also, potentially, his supreme advisor and revelator. "Oh, Horseman, Horseman, where are you?" Jake, craving answers and certitudes, will often inquire. That eventually, in a gesture of characteristic inconsistency, Jake identifies the object

which originated the metaphor with the metaphor itself and transforms his cousin from Joey Hersh into "St. Urbain's Horseman," is less important for our argument. What is important is that the essence of the cinema-fantasies which, with the metaphor, play such an important role in Jake's life is also revealed by Richler through the use of his temporal cubism. Outstanding among these fantasies is the one in which Jake casts his own funeral. Here, Jake's painfully ambivalent attitude on social matters is made explicit by means of three complementary temporal angles, obviously supplementing another angle, far distanced in time, yet succintly advancing Richler's own indirect statement on the issue. Jake and his friend Harry are drinking. Jake hopefully suspects himself of social integrity, but Harry amicably reassures him: "Don't worry, you're rotten."

After the various dislocations of the time sequence throughout the novel, one observes the final actions of the story unrolling in their chronological order, yet, Richler's temporal cubism suggests that what one commonly calls the self can be experienced solely against the background of a biography defined not only as an objective structure of temporal movements, but also as a subjective associative network, a plurality of aspects whose significance consists in its totality. The possibility to experience time subjectively is the central gift of the human brain, and man's capacity to transcend the limitations imposed by his condition rests precisely on his biological uniqueness.

A great humanist of this century observed that "the richness of human life is that we have many lives; we live events that do not happen (and some that cannot) as vividly as those that do; and if thereby we die a thousand deaths, that is the price we pay for living a thousand lives."[3] Indeed, understanding that human time does not precede man, but is the manner in which he himself chooses to live, Grove and Purdy, Avison, Aquin and Richler, in their own ways urge their readers to stop indulging in thoughtless living and conformism which erases the difference between man and other species, and, through a spiritual and imaginative resurrection, achieve the essential step of disengaging themselves from the restrictive matrix of horizontal duration. The key part of man's equipment is no longer his technology, but the spirit in which he answers to the challenge of the sum total of nature, and man's main goal in life is no longer to wrest from space a habitable interior, but to give his existence an experiential depth denied to merely sensory perception. The individual, therefore, has the task to ride on the pulse of time and, by constant effort, re-organize its units and impose on them his personal volition. And, if in order to transcend objective reality, man has to question, to challenge and conceive of alternatives to the very life he is leading at that moment, he should have the courage and strength to embark upon this course. And, even though success is never completed and the struggle should be unremitting, the individual must strive to establish a really authentic contact with

existence and with time; one which would permit him to transcend his earthly life while still embracing it.

Able to do so, man becomes the creator of his own rhythms and durations, scores a victory in knowledge and will at the same time, and, as Toynbee phrased it, renders himself capable "to hear the accents of Jacob's voice, while feeling the hands of Esau."[4] A rich and significant existence is, therefore, the supreme affirmation of the human spirit, which in defiance of time and death, lives in abundance of life.

NOTES

[1] For a succinct but expert presentation of the reasons why time is considered the most directly and immediately given of the general human concepts, see Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature* (Berkeley, 1955), pp. 1-11.

[2] The phrase has been borrowed from Georges Poulet, *Le point de départ* (Paris, 1964), where the same new approach to time is noticed and studied in the works of a few French and American writers.

[3] Jacob Bronowski, "The Reach of Imagination" in *The Norton Reader* (New York, 1973), p. 74.

[4] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Norwich, 1972), p. 469.

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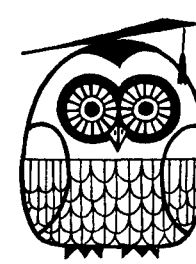

HISTORY IN *THE SECOND SCROLL*

Michael Greenstein

ONE METHOD OF UNRAVELLING *The Second Scroll* is to examine the beginning of "Gloss Aleph," Klein's "Autobiographical," for it contains some of the important themes developed throughout the book.

> Out of the ghetto street where a Jewboy
> Dreamed pavement into pleasant Bible-land,
> Out of the Yiddish slums where childhood met
> The friendly beard, the loutish Sabbath-goy,
> Or followed, proud, the Torah-escorting band,
> Out of the jargoning city I regret,
> Rise memories.

Like Milton in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*,[1] Klein suspends the subject of the first stanza by preceding it with the triple parallelism "Out of," a phrase with the three-fold connotations of space, time, or transformation. In the spatial interpretation the wandering "Jewboy" travels out of the ghetto to the external world, between oriental and occidental realms as he encompasses the twain; temporally, memories rise out of the poet's childhood as he recalls his nonage days in "Time's haze"; and the metamorphic interpretation includes the imaginative transformation of Bibleland out of pavement. Klein interweaves all three themes in the novel and although the temporal is the most important, it is useful to begin with an investigation of "Space's vapours."

Lacking the unities of time and place, *The Second Scroll* contains two symbols which, in addition to Canadian references scattered throughout the book, serve to unify the various settings. The first is the "ocean" separating the New World from the Old, a vastness which man must overcome. Melech, who "had completely weathered the ocean of the Talmud," writes of the Atlantic, "that futile bucket" unable to extinguish the fires of the holocaust, and concludes his letter with a description of the blue and white Israeli colours of the Mediterranean where the Navy of Redemption sails. If the Atlantic is powerless to douse the genocidal fires, it also cannot dissipate the odour of Casablanca's mellah: "Not all the breezes of the Atlantic, less than a mile away, have yet effected a purification."

"Leviticus" begins with the plane roaring over the Atlantic — the airplane

being Klein's second vehicle for combining distant locales. In addition to the Daedalus-Icarus associations, the flight is eschatological: "on the wings of eagles" the narrator is "borne" to his destination. "My very levitation seemed a miracle in harmony with the wonder of my time; through my mind there ran the High Holiday praise of God for that He did 'suspend worlds on without-what,' even as my plane was suspended, even over the abyss of recent history there had risen the new bright shining microcosm of Israel." "Levitation" picks up the title of the chapter, "Leviticus," while the miraculous flight is a "re-enactment" or rebirth with the obvious play on "borne." The chapter ends with another flight to Casablanca, and the fourth chapter, "Numbers," opens with reference to the Atlantic which acts symbolically as a mirror for the city.

The opening of the final chapter parallels "Leviticus": "Warmed by the sun beating through the porthole, my mind was dreamily in communion with the murmur of the motors humming through aluminum. They made me whatever music my mind willed, ululative, Messianic, annunciatory. It was as if I was part of an ascension, a going forward in which I was drawn on and on." This "ascension," like the earlier "levitation," is highly charged with meaning as are the leviathans of the Mediterranean covered by "white horses" which recall Melech's description of the sea with other leviathans. The old man from Safed makes the final connection between the Messianic airplane and its ability to diminish distances, to cross oceans almost instantly. When the narrator announces that with the airplane the transatlantic journey "is not so great a distance," the venerable sage begins his explication: "It is the Messiah's days because we see his signs and portents everywhere. Thus is it written that when the Messiah will come there will be the wonder of *kvitzath ha-derech*, the curtailment of the route. What does this mean? It means that a route which but yesterday was long and arduous suddenly becomes short and speedy. Is this not the experience of our time? Is it not the experience of the Yemenites who, located as if on another planet, as if in another century, are brought by planes to this our century and to this our planet, our country, our home, in the space of but eight hours?" The plane is for Klein what the train was to the nineteenth-century writer. How ironic for the old man, "bearded like antiquity . . . not of this world," to refer to "our century"; yet his remarks point to the importance of time in the overall historical context of *The Second Scroll.*

Klein incorporates two fundamental theories of history in the book — the cyclic, which he may have derived from Vico, and the progressively linear, inherited from the dialectics of Hegel and Marx on the one hand, and the Talmudic *pilpul* on the other. Whereas M. W. Steinberg stresses the religious themes in the novel and Miriam Waddington focusses on the literary, humanist, and secular points of view, I believe that an historical analysis may elucidate generic, linguistic, and religious difficulties in the book.[2]

ON THE LITERAL LEVEL the story covers events between 1917 and 1949, and it seems that Klein implies a cyclical view of history from the Russian pogroms to the establishment of the State of Israel at which time Melech is murdered during an Arabic "pogrom." With the help of Frye's demonic-apocalyptic polarity,[3] one may follow the plot conveniently and not altogether arbitrarily, for Klein alludes to the "apocalyptic dream of a renewed Zion" at the opening of "Exodus." From the outset Klein emphasizes the temporal, not only in the first phrase ("For many years") which introduces the theme of separation and reunion between brothers-in-law, but also in the apocalyptic reference to Eden which reminds the reader of the historical distance between first and second scrolls while simultaneously reviewing the narrative context of childhood. The apocalyptic continues at the Feast of Rejoicing in the Law with the father smiling until Uncle Melech's letter interrupts his mood with the news of the demonic pogrom in Ratno. The chapter ends with a further descent into the diabolic as the Nazis invade Poland; yet the demonic "cloud" over Europe changes to the apocalyptic dream of a renewed Zion at the beginning of "Exodus" as the narrator envisions the battle of Gog and Magog: "I saw through my mind's eye a great black aftermath cloud. . . . The cloud then began to scatter . . . until revealed there shone the glory of a burnished dome." "Leviticus" begins with an apocalyptic flight followed by the demonic descent into the mellah in "Numbers": "we slid into the mellah . . . descending into the . . . centuries." "Deuteronomy" remains predominantly in the upward direction from the opening flight to the transformed Sephardic elevator-boys ("whose houses but a year ago must needs be lower than the lowest Arab's") to the Safed scholar who expatiates on the Messianic resurrection.

But Klein's cyclic view of history goes beyond this vertical pattern of the rise and fall of life. In Miriam Waddington's words, "For Klein, as for Shelley, language itself is a vast cyclic poem."[4] Perhaps the most recurrent image in *The Second Scroll*, the "circle" or the cycle is used in the historical sense of the wheel come full circle or in a "mystical" geometry like Yeats's gyre.[5] In "A Psalm Touching Genealogy" which Steinberg quotes in his "Introduction," Klein sees himself as part of a whole historical circle complete with the risings and fallings of his forefathers:

> Corpuscular,
> They dwell in my veins, they eavesdrop at my ear,
> They circle, as with Torahs, round my skull,
> In exit and in entrance all day pull
> The latches of my heart, descend, and rise —

The same metaphors appear early in the novel: "A year of the reading of the Law

had been concluded, a year was beginning anew, the last verses of Deuteronomy joined the first of Genesis, the eternal circle continued. Circular, too, was the dance, a scriptural gaiety, with wine rejoicing the heart, and the Torah exalting it to heights that strong wine could not reach." The annual cycle and the circular scroll of the Pentateuch are followed by the Hassidic circle which, in its most extreme form, verges on the mystical. This joyous celebration contrasts with its tragic counterpart in Europe when the Nazis force the Jewish women to strip and circle the synagogue in vulgar imitation of the *hakofos* ritual. Melech uses the "corpuscular" image from Klein's "Psalm" to express the cyclical unity of the body of Jewry: "the numbered dead run through my veins their plasma, that I must live their unexpired six million circuits."

Klein's interpretation of Christianity is circular too, as seen in the dream of Melech as Pope, a transformation borrowed from Joyce's conversion of Bloom into Leopold the First: "he performed the annual cycle of religious rite. . . . the long round of his encyclicals." Melech confirms his faith in Judaism by including the thirteen credos of Maimonides at the end of his letter to Piersanti: "In a single circular sentence, without beginning or end, he described God coming to the rescue of His chosen." The mystical circle appears in the theorizing of the Zionist journalist beside the narrator on the flight to Israel: Jewry "lost itself in the contemplation of the One; with commentary hooped upon commentary it constricted Him until from Circle He diminished to Dot." Klein applies the mystical circle to the poets of the Israeli settlements: "In adamic intimacy the poets had returned to nature . . . the marabou, amorphous, mystical, circling ever in a round." In the novel's final scene the narrator, "As at the centre of a whirlwind," prays for his uncle and watches "the beacons announcing new moons, festivals, and set times"; though not as circular as the beginning and end of *Finnegans Wake*, these concluding words of "Deuteronomy" act as a *ricorso* for the return to "Genesis." And at the end of "Gloss Beth" the poet prays to God, "Circled and winged in vortex of my kin":

> Again renew them as they were of old,
> And for all time cancel that ashen orbit
> In which our days, and hopes, and kin, are rolled.

Thus, history, literature, and religion are part of a universal circle. Furthermore, the two-fold quest at the core of the novel is cyclical: nephew and uncle, seeker and sought are identical; language and poetry reside in a ubiquitous miracle, words made flesh. That the narrator and his avuncular double are the same may be evidenced when the nephew repeats, "I was like one that dreamed. I, surely had not been of the captivity; but when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, I was like one that dreamed," which is soon echoed in Melech's letter: "When the Lord turned again the captivity, I was like one that dreamed." The

distance between the two men diminishes until in Israel the narrator discovers that "A change in our relationship had ensued; it was he, I felt, who was now pursuing me." Similarly, in the cyclical quest for "the poetry of the recaptured time" the key image is the miracle.

Running counter to this cyclical view of history is the progressive philosophy, proceeding through dialectic. Malcolm Ross summarizes the stylistic tension in Klein's poetry: "Kein has come close to creating the archetypal Canadian pattern — a dense organic fusion of traditional idiom, ancient myth and cult, the contrapuntal dialectic of our French-English relationship, the sophisticated technical reach of man alive in this age and in whom all ages are alive."[6] The opening conflict between the lapsed uncle and the orthodox father commences the dialectical view. The father maintains primitive notions about the philosophy of Marxism; he displays his antipathy to the dialectical mode in the *reductio* "Hegelbaigal," and remains unimpressed by the Russian *pilpul* (a Talmudic equivalent of the dialectical method of argument). In direct opposition Melech, transformed into Comrade Krul, exploits his linguistic, polemical, and Talmudic talents in a dialectical essay: "it constituted a remarkable instance of what happens when the Talmudic discipline is applied either to a belletristic or revolutionary praxis . . . his argumentation was like nothing so much as like the subtilized airy transcendent *pilpul* of Talmud-commentary commentators." Indeed, the polemical content of *The Second Scroll* includes Melech's letter which occupies most of "Exodus," the narrator's political argument with Settano and Melech's religious disagreement with Monsignor Piersanti in "Leviticus," Melech's letter of protest against the treatment of Jews in Casablanca which appears dramatically in the Gloss to "Numbers," and the narrator's encounter in "Deuteronomy" with the Zionist journalist who expounds a theory of history. Thus, much of the book is taken up by letters, essays, and philosophic debates which account for the didacticism within the "novel."

No sooner does the nephew complete his uncle's essay in "Genesis" than he receives in the next chapter Melech's letter in which he notes "the abandonment of the Marxist jargon. Instead Uncle Melech had reverted to the epistolary style of his Talmudic days." This letter denounces "those two-faced masters of thesis and antithesis": "In the midst of our anguish we were regaled with a dialectic which proved that fascism was but a matter of taste." The long letter concludes with a dialectic game proceeding from Bible to Mishna to Talmudic commentary, but the rational, linear progression is undercut by the "revolving" circular "cumuli of Cabbala" with its *creatio ex nihilo* and swirling desert anticipating the imaginary "whirlwind" at Melech's death.

Klein collocates the narrator's argument with Settano and Melech's disagreement with Piersanti to show the kinship and unity between nephew and uncle. Although Klein treats his Satan with linguistic humour, the Italian begins his

attack in a manner which parodies Piersanti's proselytizing: "he had scoffed at me, styled me a typical emissary of the new religion, a sound, orthodox Coca-colian." In low imitation of the Sistine evaluation, the narrator retorts aesthetically: "I had spitefully accepted the compliment and — *pour l'épater* — had expatiated upon the beauty of the Coca-Cola bottle, curved and dusky like some Gauguin painting of a South Sea maiden, upon the purity of its contents, its ubiquity in space, its symbolic evocations — a little torchless Statue of Liberty." While Settano with his dialectical smile dogmatically asserts his materialist interpretation of history, the narrator presents himself as an example of spirituality and later imagines himself to be John the Baptist decapitated in the reflection of a window.

In comparison with his uncle's epistle to the Romans, the narrator inquires, "Whither, O Romans?"; in comparison with Settano's polylingual autodidacticism, Melech's letter is dominated by a polyphonous evocation of Aramaic; and in comparison with longitudinal-latitudinal directions during the conversation, Melech "was southing; other parts of his letter might be ambiguous, but that was orient clear." Stylistically there is little difference between the "homily" or "sermon" and the narrator's appraisal of it. The basic premise is the divinity of humanity in contrast to the Christian humanity of divinity; and the syllogisms lead to the conclusion that "Since man is created in the image of God, the killing of man is deicide." At the centre of the novel, Melech's critical interpretation of the Sistine Chapel is a rejection of Christian doctrine; Klein seems to be offering a defense of Jewish faith.

The description combines cyclical, labyrinthine, and dialectical modes. The passage begins and ends with the outer marble corridors; Melech circles the chapel gazing at the "whirlwind of forms" which are "circle-racked"; and in place of Michelangelo's "magic circles" he substitutes Maimonides's thirteen credos in a single circular sentence. Like Joyce's "Oxen of the Sun" episode, the letter imitates embryology: "the long umbilical cord of corridors behind me, pressed forward with infant eagerness to enter this new world." Like "Gloss Aleph," "Gloss Gimel" examines the theme of "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" as the marble corridors recall "childhood's ogred corridors" from the poem and the "ghostly gauntlet" echoes the journalist's phrasing of Jewish history — "a gauntlet to be run."

The ceiling is a heaven which "breaks even the necks of the proud" (a literal reference to the stiff-necked pride of the Jews). Melech's study of the ceiling juxtaposes Classical and Biblical allusion but, unlike Milton who blends these elements harmoniously, he has a different purpose in mind. The Classical list within the Christian setting includes the alexandrine floor, Euclidean geometry, the chapel's empyrean, januarial, Atlas-shouldered, lyre-chested, adonic figures, a pantheon of gods, damonandpythias. These Greek and Roman references deflate

the Christian content as Melech substitutes a secular aesthetic which somewhat reduces the religious subject. In addition to Classicism, Klein employs a linguistic dialectic of wit to undercut Christianity: adonic-adonaic, adamic-seraphic, damonandpythias-davidandjonathan, Michael Angelo-Archangel Michael. Klein's Classical allusions clash with the Christian; the marginal notes reveal a Hebraic-Hellenic dialectic in which the sons of Jerusalem are victorious. The method then shifts from pre-Christian history to Melech's personal history or the suffering of the Jews during World War II as his reinterpretation replaces the Christian interpretation of the Pentateuch. Seen in this light, *The Second Scroll* is an *apologia* which, in its support of the Old Testament, rejects the other Second Scroll, the New Testament.

THE NARRATOR REFLECTS THIS POLEMIC not only in his debate with Settano, but also in his understanding in Rome of "the miracle of the transformed stone." The final words from Melech's letter of affirmation ring in his ears as he realizes the historical truth: "The Arch of Titus, from being a taunt, then, had become an irony, an irony directed against itself; the candelabrum, set against the new light that had been kindled across the Great Sea, had turned into satire; the trumpets, symbolic now of jubilee, really taunted Titus!" Through the narrator's "appreciation" of the bas-relief and through Melech's analysis of the ceiling, Klein celebrates the victory of Israel over its foes.

"Gloss Dalid" also presents an *apologia* in dramatic form in a manner not unlike the most famous medieval defence of Judaism — Yehuda Ha-Levi's *Kazari*. The narrator refers to Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Levi, and Klein wrote the poem "Yehuda HaLevi, His Pilgrimage." Desmond Pacey suggests that *The Second Scroll* is the fulfillment of Klein's partial failure in this earlier poem, but the connection may be more substantial than Pacey's evaluative statement implies.[7] In *The Kazari* HaLevi depicts a mighty king searching for the true religion; representatives from Islam, Christianity, and Judaism try to persuade him of the truths of their respective religions, and in the end the Kazar is convinced of the merits of Judaism. In "Gloss Dalid" the Cadi replaces the Kazar as three judicial cases are brought before him; by the end of the play the Jew adapts the moral from each case to argue for freedom, understanding, and brotherhood. The Jew sees himself as the "plaintiff" while Hassan, Marouf, and Ibn Aziz are "but proxies." The parable of the lamp manufacturer and the light at the end of the play iterate the image which Klein uses in "Yehuda HaLevi":

> Did he not also in that wondrous script
> Of Al-Kazari chronicle that king,
> The heathen begging of the godly-lipped

Some wisdom for his pious hearkening, —
A candle for the dark, — a signet ring
To make the impress of the soul, — that prince
Who covenanted with the mightiest King,
Abjured false testaments and alcorans,
Accepting only Torah and its puissance.[8]

In another defence of Judaism the nameless journalist, like the nameless narrator, presents another view of Jewish history. His theory borrows the Hegelian "Judaic Idea" and the Essence-Existence terminology of Existentialism; in place of the Christian Incarnation he substitutes the miracle of "Discarnation." Like Joyce, Klein resorts to medical and physical metaphors to examine spiritual, historical, and metaphysical theories. In his analysis of the Sistine ceiling Melech discovers the key word for Michelangelo — The Flesh, and then proceeds to give his own version of the Discarnation from the concentration camps: "the flesh dwindled, the bones showed." Linguistically and ironically for this poet, the Word-made-Flesh is the "four-legged aleph." The Diaspora infection is reduced to the lowest common denominator as Klein "overdoes" the preparations for Israel: "Scarified ... against smallpox, punctured against typhus, pierced for tetanus, injected for typhoid, and needled with cholera.... they pointillated upon my arms their prescribed prophylactic prayers." Through Melech's veins run the plasma of six million souls, and he is "inoculated against the world" with the Star of David. The camp-manager at Bari "used the word *Monsignor* as if it were an injector." And when the narrator discovers the "miracle" in Israel, "It was as if I were spectator to the healing of torn flesh, or *heard* a broken bone come together, set, and grow again.

"Wonderful is the engrafting of skin, but more wonderful the million busy hushed cells, in secret planning, stitching, stretching, until — the wound is vanished, the blood courses normal, the cicatrice falls off." The individual Jew is part of a body politic that has survived the vicissitudes and cycles of history, unwilling to accept the Christian "Davidson."

The difference between Judaism and Christianity revolves around concepts of the Messiah, Incarnation, and the Word made Flesh; the difference between Islam and Judaism is the difference between magic and miracle. In "Leviticus" Klein defends Judaism against Christianity using the Italian Renaissance as an aesthetic and historical medium; in "Numbers" Klein reverts to Dante and the Middle Ages to support Judaism against Moslem persecution. Just as Melech discovers his own Jewish reality behind Michelangelo's art, so his nephew perceives the truth behind Casablanca's false front. Casablanca, "arrayed in all the colours of Islam, stands mirroring itself in the mirror of the Atlantic. As upon some Circean strand magical with voices." In contrast, Melech "naturalized the miracle" and "had become a kind of mirror, an *aspaklaria*, of the events of our

time." The mirror of art and the mirror of history reflect analogous events: Casablanca mirrors "false music" and "hollow art" while Israel reflects truth. The oxymorons depict the Arabian deceptions: "unlucky-lucky Negro," the "possible-marvellous," and "old-new affinities." History becomes regressive in the Dantesque descent into the labyrinthine mellah which reveals the reality beneath the appearance of beauty in the city. The Virgilian guide remarks that space deceives the stomach; the visitor from the West cannot believe it real. "Some magician out of the *Arabian Nights*, I thought, had cast upon me a spell and conjured up with sinister open-sesame this melodramatic illusion. Or perhaps it was a desert mirage that was playing tricks with my vision. Or I was dreaming." Like the "miracle of the transformed stone," the magic in "Numbers" is transformed into the miracle in "Deuteronomy."

Similar to the photograph of Melech Davidson, history is a double exposure with the present second scroll superimposed on the original past in a cycle of recurrence. Amalgamating cyclic and dialectic theories of history, Klein offers simultaneously an *apologia* and a linguistic *tour de force*. Followed by an ambassador on a transatlantic Jamesian quest, the wandering Jew passes through the labyrinths of the holocaust, the Sistine painting, and the mellah to emerge from space into time's eternal cycle.

This need for history to be complete — whether through the synthesis of a dialectic, the recurrence within a cycle, or the result of a transformation — parallels the necessity of completion in Klein's aesthetic theory: "such is the nature of art that though the artist entertain fixedly but one intention and one meaning, that creation once accomplished beneath his hand, now no longer merely his own attribute, but Inspiration's very substance and entity, proliferates with significances by him not conceived nor imagined." This poetry of process which hands over to the reader the powers of creation appears in the poetics of the underivative Tiberias poet: "a poem is not a destination, it is a point of departure. The destination is determined by the reader. The poet's function is but to point direction." Applied to Klein's style in *The Second Scroll*, this theory accounts for the synethesis of a multiplicity of literary traditions reflected in the individual words, the syntax, and the overall structure of the book. The epigraph from *Areopagitica* is thus more complex than Steinberg suggests: Milton, advocating free speech, criticizes the Talmudists who, ironically, use the license to "re-interpret" the Bible, to complete the original text just as Klein does in his own way molding a new scroll out of a variety of traditions. History repeats itself; art repeats and completes itself through the myths and archetypes of a collective unconscious.

NOTES

[1] Although Joyce's influence on Klein is far more important, one notes the Miltonic adjective-noun-adjective phrasing in "stony stare Semitic" and other Baroque convolutions.

[2] See M. W. Steinberg, "Introduction" to *The Second Scroll* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1961) and Miriam Waddington, *A. M. Klein* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970), pp. 92-108.

[3] In his "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 829, Frye calls *The Second Scroll* "one of the most passionate and intense of all Canadian novels."

[4] Waddington, p. 100.

[5] See T. A. Marshall, "Theorems Made Flesh: Klein's Poetic Universe," *Canadian Literature*, No. 25 (Summer 1965), 46-47; and for a larger, phenomenological consideration of the "circle" Georges Poulet, *La métamorphose du cercle* (Paris: Plon, 1961).

[6] Malcolm Ross, Review in *Canadian Forum* (January 1952), p. 234.

[7] Desmond Pacey, *Ten Canadian Poets* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1958), p. 286.

[8] *The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein*, comp. and introd. by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 245.

TAURUS

Cyril Dabydeen

The wild bull's
on his way. I do not
give myself too
easily.
The lasso-man
enters the scene
trying to grapple
with horns.

My father hammers
at the portals
of his mistress's
womb; the bull
bellows across
the fraudulent
road.

My mother spins her
machine like
a solitary queen.
I merely join
with the spinning.

PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS JOYCE SCHOLAR

An Approach to A. M. Klein

Lorraine Weir

"PERHAPS IT IS A NAIVE QUESTION," Klein wrote in 1946, "but who is our Edmund Wilson, who our T. S. Eliot?" (*CJC*, 1 March 1946)[1] He was responding to a questionnaire from Raymond Souster which asked, among other things, whether he was satisfied with the "standard of reviewing in Canada." Klein's exemplars are carefully chosen for, in one respect at least, his literary career after 1946 is analogous to those of Wilson and Eliot. At a time when, as Marshall McLuhan has written, Joyce was still regarded by many "not as an immediate and relevant source of artistic nutriment but as a monster exhibit to awe the dim of brain" (*Renascence*, IV: 1, 13), Klein ingested what he needed of Joyce's work for his own art and recycled his findings in three critical studies of *Ulysses*.

Like Eliot, Klein found nutriment in the Joycean and Symbolist variations upon the doctrine of the Logos as well as in Joyce's lifelong meditation upon the modality of the visible. Like Wilson, Klein was the first to publish a detailed analysis of a formidable Joyce text. Wilson's essay, "The Dream of H. C. Earwicker" (*New Republic*, 28 June and 12 July 1939), was the first effort by anyone outside the Joyce circle in Paris to elucidate the basic outline of plot and structure in *Finnegans Wake*; Klein's on "The Oxen of the Sun" (*Here and Now*, I: 3, 1949, 28-48) remains the only full textual analysis of that chapter of *Ulysses*. Both essays form part of the critical tradition with which any serious reader of Joyce's works inevitably contends. In the late forties when Klein began his work on *Ulysses*, only Hugh Kenner's early essays approached Joyce in a similarly analytical spirit, and textual criticism of Joyce's last work did not begin to appear until David Hayman published his "From *Finnegans Wake*: A Sentence in Progress" in 1958 (*PMLA*, LXXIII, 136-54). It is only in the last decade that Joyce studies have begun to catch up with Klein's scrupulous methodology.

More than any other chapter of *Ulysses*, the "Oxen of the Sun" provides an opportunity for the exercise upon difficult ground of the skill at disputation, at *pilpul*, which Klein had cultivated as lawyer and as editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Beginning his essay with the challenge he will take up, Klein quotes from the previously unpublished letter to Frank Budgen in which Joyce set out the basic structure of the chapter (now in Joyce's *Letters*, I: 138). Noting first that the existing commentaries (those of Stuart Gilbert, Harry Levin, and Budgen) are of little help in determining the detailed structure of the whole chapter, Klein proceeds to construct a *catalogue raisonné* of all the complexities which Joyce did not advertise to Budgen and Gilbert, and performed what can now be labelled the first Structuralist analysis of any Joyce text. Embryology manual in hand, Klein followed Joyce's instructions and ferreted out all the stages of human embryonic growth as they are encoded in the chapter. In the process, he discovered independently that the nine sections into which the chapter divides itself correspond to the nine preceding chapters of the book, and that the seventh section of the "Oxen of the Sun" itself consists of mirror images of the six stages which precede it. Finally, Klein demonstrated the correspondence between the nine sections of the chapter and the principal phases of Darwinian evolution — again, an independent discovery. The grand finale is an elaborate chart of the whole "labyrinth."

In all this there are some errors, several the result either of a faulty transcript of Joyce's letter (provided by Ellsworth Mason) or a misreading of it by Klein, and several the result of Klein's difficulties with recognition of the various authors Joyce parodies in the chapter (according to the scheme which Joyce gave to Stuart Gilbert). But Klein was certainly not unique in the latter difficulty and only now, as a result of a study published by J. S. Atherton in 1974, is it possible to account for a number of details which Joyce derived not from the originals but from Peacock's anthology of *English Prose: Mandeville to Ruskin*. As Atherton himself notes,[2] Klein's study was published long before most of the basic tools of contemporary Joyce scholarship (including Ellman's biography, Joyce's letters, and Phillip Herring's edition of *Joyce's 'Ulysses' Notesheets in the British Museum* — which would greatly have helped Klein) were available. Nevertheless, the essay remains the *locus classicus* for any student of the chapter as well as of Joyce's methodology in general.

And it is equally important for an understanding of Klein's own artistic evolution. For, as McLuhan's comment on the state of Joyce criticism at mid-century indicates, Klein's willingness to take Joyce and his work seriously, particularly in a section of *Ulysses* which has caused as much critical and popular consternation as *Finnegans Wake* itself, was at least unusual if not revolutionary. And it was precisely the revolutionary nature of the material itself, Joyce's first experiment in "Putting Allspace in a Notshall" (*FW* 455.29), which attracted Klein. "The

proper study of mankind is Man — not paysage," Klein wrote three years before he published this study (*CJC*, 22 February 1946); so in *Ulysses* Joyce uses every aspect of Dublin, June 16, 1904 in order to transcend it,[3] and in the "Oxen of the Sun" every phase of the English language from Anglo-Saxon to 1920's Irish and American slang in order to express not just the birth of Theodore Purefoy's latest child but also the birth of language itself. Charting Joyce's labyrinth, Klein not only demonstrated for subsequent readers the order inherent in the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter but also traced for himself the evolution of Joyce's aesthetic from the *Portrait* to *Finnegans Wake*.

The first published evidence of this study is a brief sketch entitled "Towards an Aesthetic," part of the "Marginalia" column of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* for June 11, 1948. Klein begins with the first chapter of Genesis, "the original blueprint," and proceeds to fuse Joyce with the Pentateuch as he was to do again in *The Second Scroll*:

> First described is the condition before Creation: Now the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
>
> Whence it is to be deduced that there are three requisites to an artifact: (a) form, (b) content, (c) light. By the last one must understand internal light — radiance; external light is already assumed in the concept of form.
>
> It was from his God, therefore, that the Angelic Doctor learned that *Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: integritas, consonantia, claritas.*

From this Thomist statement Stephen Dedalus constructs his aesthetic in the fifth chapter of the *Portrait*, amplifying it into what he had called the concept of "epiphany" in *Stephen Hero*. To perceive an object in its wholeness, harmony and radiance, to focus upon it until finally the object reveals itself to the "spiritual eye" of the perceiver, is to experience the moment of epiphany. From this proceeds Stephen's doctrine of art as stasis and the artist "like the God of creation" remaining "within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (*P* 219).

Looking ahead to the "Proteus" chapter of *Ulysses*, however, Klein preserves what Joyce was to retain for Stephen and to some extent for himself in the later works, and discards stasis immediately: "Art dynamic, not static; protean, not uniform; self-multiplying, not sterile." At the beginning of "Proteus," epiphany is transformed into: "Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot" (*U* 45). Klein writes: "The making of man in God's image: This is the poet's signature. In his creation, it is He who must be seen. The artist is a creator completely surrounded by mirrors." The artist's function, then, is to learn the divine mirror language so that he may render the world visible, and thus create it, for its inhabitants. Walking along Sandymount Strand, Stephen endeavours to read his world, first with eyes open

and then closed. Chased by the dog-God (whom Eliot borrows in "The Burial of the Dead"), Stephen attempts to write a poem but tosses away the scrap of paper in dejection. He must begin to learn "Divine grammar and syntax," as Klein labels the division of the waters in Genesis. And before there can be any possibility of Stephen's writing, he must acquire "The world's vocabulary which does not live unless it come alive, unless it reproduces itself, unless it connotes." Bloom is the agent of this transformation. In Circe, Stephen begs the apparition of his mother to "Tell me the word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men" (*U* 682). But there is no answer until Bloom and Stephen, gazing together into a mirror, see the face of Shakespeare, father and son at/oned, gazing back. The word and the world at last briefly united, the communion ceremony featuring "Epps's mass-product, the creature cocoa" (*U* 791) is celebrated in the "Ithaca" chapter.

LIKE JOYCE, KLEIN USUALLY PROVIDES CLUES where the source of an allusion is significant. In this case he adopts the mask of Leopold Bloom. Writing about a line from a poem by Rilke describing leaves falling, Klein comments "32 ft. per sec. per sec., not more, not less" (*U* 87). Immediately the whole motif of Bloom's pseudo-scientific speculations on gravity, parallax, and so on, is present. Before he encountered this philosophy of language in Joyce, Klein had likely been sensitized to it through his knowledge of Hassidic lore on the same theme. But Joyce was the focus, the hinge between aesthetic and technique. And once again Klein's criticism is the arena where he can be observed acquiring and moulding data for his own artistic use. "The Black Panther (A Study in Technique)" exemplifies this even in its title. Published a year after "The Oxen of the Sun," this essay has been absorbed since then into so many commentaries upon *Ulysses* that one comes upon the original almost with shock. In it Klein undertakes to prove that the "Telemachus" chapter is structurally an *Imitatio Dei* with Stephen as Christ, Mulligan as John the Baptist, and Haines as Satan. The mysterious black panther associated with Stephen is shown to be a symbol of Christ and the chapter a Black Mass parodied by Mulligan. Devoting the greater part of his study to a tabulation of correspondences between the parts of the Mass and sections of "Telemachus," Klein provides his readers with ample evidence of his own knowledge of Roman Catholic ritual and dogma. It is significant also that Klein's perspective on Joyce in both "The Oxen of the Sun" and "The Black Panther" is shaped by his knowledge of Catholic theology, or perhaps his knowledge of theology was initiated by Joyce. The relationship between Joyce and Catholicism is, at any rate, apparently a symbiotic one for Klein.[4]

As early as 1932 in an article entitled "If . . . ?" (*CJC*, 14 October 1932), Klein can be observed preparing himself for subsequent, more extensive use of Joyce. Perhaps attractive initially because of its Talmudic overtones, the catechetical technique which Joyce used in the "Ithaca" chapter of *Ulysses* was the first which Klein was to practice. A much more polished example of the same technique was to be found in the first instalment of the "Notebook of a Journey," and another in *The Second Scroll*. Using such headings as Reportorial, Rhetorical, Sentimental, Ironic, and so on down to "The plain unvarnished fact," Klein involves himself in a series of Joycean stylistic exercises in order to convey the excitement of his own departure for Israel. A sample will best convey the Joycean flavour:

> *Reportorial.* On the 31st day of July, 1949, at 7 p.m., subject prepared to board at La Guardia Airfield a TWA plane, destination, Lydda, Israel. He had with him not more than sixty-six pounds avoirdupois of baggage, a coat flung over his arm, and upon his person various documents of importance. . . .
>
> *Rhetorical.* Who can describe, what master of language can communicate the emotions which most thrill the heart of a Jew, scion of sixty generations of exiles, when at last, after two millenia of tribal banishment, he turns again his face in expectation of a return, albeit temporary, to the ancestral soil? . . .
>
> *Biblic.* And it came to pass that the word was spoken unto Abraham, saying, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, which is in Tur Malca, that is to say, Montreal.

In *The Second Scroll*, outgrowth of the "Notebook of a Journey," Klein fuses his borrowings from Joycean technique as well as aesthetic in one of the major turning-points in the quest and in the moment when the object is attained. Here again, as in "Towards an Aesthetic," he carefully labels his borrowing. The catechetical technique is used as the narrator and his guide are said to "slide" into the mellah in Casablanca "literally: for the narrow laneway which gaped through the gateway at the clean world was thick with offal . . . ; metaphorically: for in a moment we knew that the twentieth century . . . had forsaken us . . . " (*TSS* 62). The abrupt disjunction of worlds and the moment of awakening soon to follow echo the experience of Stephen Dedalus in the *Portrait*. Just before his last conversation with Cranly and his renunciation of religion and country, Stephen surveys from the Library steps the scene he will attempt to transform into art. But at this point he can transform in memory only Nashe's line, "Brightness falls from the air," as he catches a louse crawling over the nape of his neck (*P* 238). In the mellah, Klein's narrator encounters for the first time conditions akin to those which Stephen knows well. Looking at the garments of the people around him, he comments: "Brightness, however, fell only from rags; if a garment was whole, it was black, the sombre ghetto gaberdine" (*TSS* 62).

Like Stephen in *Ulysses*, Klein's narrator seeks a surrogate father, an Ahasuerus whom he will meet without knowing it, whose invisibility itself will shape the

quest and finally provoke its unwitting fulfillment. In the absence of a photograph of his uncle, he constructs his own and "as the years went by and I myself changed from year to year, the image of Uncle Melech that I illegally carried in my mind also suffered its transformations" (*TSS* 20). As Stephen does in "Proteus" and "Scylla and Charybdis," Klein's narrator constructs a mirror image of himself and pursues it in vain until, just before he enters the mellah, he is given a photograph of his Uncle. But Melech has just departed for Israel and the photograph is "a double, a multiple exposure" (*TSS* 61). Before Melech's nephew can get his uncle's image into focus, he must learn to see and understand the suffering of the mellah. Passing this test, he must lose himself again before he can achieve his goal. So when the narrator arrives at last in Israel, Bloom's fabled "Agendath Netaim," he gives up hope of finding Melech and devotes himself to the search for a "completely underivative poet" (*TSS* 82). Again like Stephen, he fancies that he will finally be liberated by the written word and its producers, the signatures of all things finally unravelling themselves before the intent perceiver. But Stephen must transcend the wordy introspection of "Proteus" until — having missed Bloom through his own verbosity in "Scylla and Charybdis" — he at last meets him in silence at the end of the "Circe" chapter. Approaching that meeting Stephen, drunk and confused, murmurs the words which encode the lesson of his day: "In the beginning was the word, in the end the world without end" (*U* 626).

Melech's nephew achieves the same epiphany at the end of his search for an "original" poet. In Tiberias he discovers a neo-Imagist versifier who combines the formulas of Ezra Pound with the composition of one-liners. But although this is clearly the last straw, the narrator has still not learned his lesson thoroughly:

> And then — it was after I had returned from Tiberias to Tel Aviv to attend a literary soirée — then the creative activity, archetypical, all-embracing, that hitherto I had sought in vain, at last manifested itself. Not at the soirée. In the streets, in the shops, everywhere about me. I had looked, but had not seen. It was all there all the time — the fashioning folk, anonymous and unobserved, creating word by word, phrase by phrase, the total work that when completed would stand as epic revealed! (*TSS* 84)

This, not Melech's death, is the centre of Klein's cyclic epic, the record of the birth in a new generation of the ability to transcend solipsism and recognize the world. In the "Oxen of the Sun" Stephen calls it the "postcreation" (*U* 511), the mystery of the Logos eternally recycled. Descending from high-flown speculation, Stephen summarizes the epiphany shared by Klein's narrator: "Dublin. I have much, much to learn" (*U* 183).

In their respective epics Melech and Bloom both function as Messianic figures, and Melech's nephew and Stephen both strive to achieve what Joyce labels "parallax" with these father figures. Just as Stephen encounters Bloom un-

wittingly in *Hamlet* and in theological obscurities, so Melech's nephew encounters his uncle first through his letters and the literary essay published during Melech's Comrade Krule phase. And just as the quest reverses itself and quester in pursuit of Ahasuerus discovers his goal all around him, so both *Ulysses* and *The Second Scroll* refer the reader in search of dénouement back to the web of language itself. In "Ithaca" and in "Penelope," Joyce provides alternate endings for 16 June 1904; in the five books of his second scroll and in the five glosses attending them, Klein does the same thing, providing endings derived from two different traditions — oral and print, Targum and Torah. Joyce borrows from the same system in *Finnegans Wake*.[5] In each of these works (as well as in *Ulysses* from the "Oxen of the Sun" on), the reader's addiction to character development and plot resolution is deliberately thwarted, and each attempts to engage us actively in a mime of its message as we go about the task of synthesizing. In terms of the Mass, this process is transubstantiation.

Near the end of "The Black Panther," Klein writes that "*Ulysses* was in a sense intended . . . as the body of Christ, rendered literature," and — borrowing from Eugene Jolas — he stresses the significance of Joyce's "jocoserious" fiftieth birthday gesture. Looking at his birthday cake, a replica of the first edition of *Ulysses*, Joyce intoned the words of the consecration of the bread in the Mass: "*Hoc est enim corpus meum.*" Book and cake are both Word made flesh; both must be ingested in literary communion; both manifest the Logos. Thinking of the same words of consecration as he looks at his "limp father of thousands" in the bath (*U* 107), Bloom attains the status of HCE, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, hero of *Finnegans Wake*, whose initials also encode this formula. And in the "Night Lessons" chapter of the *Wake*, as patient Dolph gives confused Kev a tour of the earth mother's genitalia, it becomes clear that the topography of Dublin is simply an extension of human physiology, the Word in the world once again. Thus all knowledge sacred and profane, all languages public and private, and all scraps of tribal lore from advertisements to popular songs must be recycled in this memory book of our culture. Parallel in many ways to the "Oxen of the Sun," the "Night Lessons" chapter extends itself in stylistic virtuosity into marginal glosses, footnotes and diagrams in order to reveal the mystery quite literally at the centre of the book. Here Klein found a model for the format and theme, though certainly not the style,[6] of Gloss Gimel.

It is not surprising, then, that Klein should have fused the logos with topography in his great poem, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." Just as the word in all senses is made flesh in the "Oxen of the Sun," so Klein's poet traverses the body of language (which is HCE interred in the landscape of the *Wake*) and discovers "the torso verb, the beautiful face of the noun,/ and all those shaped and warm auxiliaries!" (*CP* 332) Praising the world part by part, Klein's poet creates it just as Shem/Dolph creates the "geomater" for Shaun/Kev. And

finally the artist's "cruel-fiction" (*FW* 192.19) redounds upon both of them as the flesh which is word is consumed. Shem, the "first till last alshemist wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body, till by its corrosive sublimation one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history . . ." (*FW* 185.35). Imparting his own life to the world he creates, Shem is consumed by it as Klein's poet, "the nth Adam," maps "not the world's, but his own body's chart" and meets the fate of Icarus. But Icarus at least found death. Klein's poet, transfixed in a perpetual state of drowning, is bound to his redemptive mission. Like Shem "self exiled in upon his own ego" (*FW* 184.6), the poet has himself become one of the signatures of the world he sought to mirror and create.

But the poet is also a reflection of the worst aspects of that world, as Shem is. Remembering his youthful passion for language, he rehearses the roles of a culture which respected performance, and wakens to find his art outmoded, his youth vanished. Instead the conjurers, of the sort Melech's nephew met in Tiberias, have assumed control and set aside the bard's long memory, the epic unrolling around them. In the same way, although Shem is "hardset to mumorise more than a word a week" (*FW* 180.29), he is still the penman who sets down earthmother Anna Livia's letter, eventually the *Wake* itself. Accused of madness and mysticism, sexual perversion and egotism, Klein's poet and Shem triumph over "the ape mimesis" and rise out of "stark infelicity" to sing their song as best they can. And both Klein and Joyce sing ironic visions of how their works in turn will be received and not read.

Asked by Raymond Souster in 1946 whether he had been influenced by English or American writers, and which of the two was the "healthiest influence for Canadians," Klein replied:

> There are no influences characterized by place of origin which can be deemed either healthy or unhealthy. In the final analysis, a writer gets influenced by those things which do best harmonize with his own temperament. For Milton even Hebrew influence was healthy. (*CJC*, 22 February 1946)

And for Klein, even Joyce.

NOTES

[1] Abbreviations used: *CJC The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*; *CP The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein*, ed. Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974); *FW* James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (N.Y.: Viking, 1959); *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. I, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber, 1957); *P* James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man*, ed. Chester G. Anderson and Richard Ellman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968); *TSS* A. M. Klein, *The Second Scroll*, New Canadian Library edition (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969); *U* James Joyce *Ulysses* (London: The Bodley Head, 1960).

[2] J. S. Atherton, "The Oxen of the Sun," in *James Joyce's 'Ulysses' — Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 320.

[3] As Klein indicated: "Note how Joyce has made a secular pattern out of a single day, a spatial universe out of the environs of Dublin . . . " (*CJC*, 1 March 1946). In the same place, Klein called *Ulysses* "*the* masterpiece of our century" (Klein's italics).

[4] Klein's third critical study, "A Shout in the Street — An Analysis of the Second Chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*" (*New Directions*, 13 [1951], 327-45) should also be noted here. In it Klein attempts to demonstrate a number of correspondences between Vico's *New Science* and the "Nestor" chapter. While Joyce's use of Vico in *FW* is well known, similarly extensive usage in *U* is still to be demonstrated. So while Klein is meticulous as ever in this study, his case often seems over subtle. It remains to be seen why the "Nestor" chapter should have been the occasion for Vico to enter *U*, and whether his influence is equally apparent throughout the book. Attempts by other critics to demonstrate this have been sporadic and the hypothesis has yet to find general favour.

[5] On Joyce's knowledge of Targum and Torah, see my article "The Choreography of Gesture: Marcel Jousse and *Finnegans Wake*," *James Joyce Quarterly*, XIV (Spring 1977), 313-25. Targums were ritual oral responses in Aramaic to the set text of the Hebrew Torah. Klein's interest in oral culture of all kinds is demonstrated frequently throughout his works from his early recycling of Hassidic tales to his celebration of the Montreal *badchan* Shloime Schmulevitz (*CJC*, 15 May 1942, p. 4) and his article, "Riddle Me This Riddle" (*CJC*, 28 October 1932) on the evolution of the riddle. The parallel of the Irish with Jewry was also a favourite with Klein in other contexts. During a stopover at Shannon on his return from Israel, Klein wrote: "Irish very much like Jews. Some day someone should write a volume of parallels, not only the parallels of psychology, but also those of national struggle . . . " (*CJC*, 23 December 1949). In an article on Bialik, Klein noted that "between the Hebrew Renascence and the Celtic Revival there are many parallels . . . " (*CJC*, 10 July 1942).

[6] Readers dedicated to the traditional belief in Joyce's destructive influence upon Klein might consult Anthony Burgess, *Joysprick: An Introduction to the Language of James Joyce* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973) for a different approach to Joyce.

DAPHNE MARLATT'S POETRY

Robert Lecker

IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ Daphne Marlatt's poetry[1] without seeing the river. Behind each of the books she has published to date, there is a current which flows toward a heightened perception of an immanent world. The current joins each of her works, swelling into the torrent of impressions, sensations, and images which characterize *Steveston*. Linked to this inherent proclivity for movement is a need for poetic progress: each book can be seen as representing some form of search for an appropriate language of relation, for a form of discourse which will find a centre and render in clarity the instantaneous apprehension of things and thoughts caught in flux:

> shapes flutter
> glide into each other
> but the hand
> wanting to know
> picks a thing
> out from the center

Marlatt is involved in a quest for words which will give access to the truth of sight, reflecting not only the moment, but also the dynamic nature of experience and cognition. She arrives at a torrent, but not overnight. In fact, much of the power (and sometimes the weakness) of her earliest work lies in the tension between a tentative, frightened spontaneity, and an ambitious, robust control. So that in her first book, *Frames*, we find her hesitant about the plunge into this river of experience, content at first to watch this movement called Life from the sidelines, as if it were a show: "I'm / on the sidewalk viewing the procession."

Gradually, she compromises, slowly immersing herself in the flow, thereby allowing *Frames* to become more than simply a poeticized version of Andersen's "The Snow Queen." Marlatt reinterprets a number of the tale's motifs, and uses

these to define and call into question her own situation as a poet. The result is an allegorical prose-poem dealing with a search for a form of aesthetic freedom in the face of limitations imposed by style and personal experience. The first lines acquaint us with the themes of imprisonment, escape, and search, while the book at large elaborates upon these themes by examining them in the context of restrictive private and aesthetic frames.

The protagonists are Kay and Gerda, two next-door playmates living in attic rooms. Through the frames of windows decorated with boxes of roses they watch each other watch each other. Sometimes Gerda visits Kay, and listens to his grandmother's stories. Clearly, Kay and Gerda lead a life dominated by images of enclosure which limit and structure their experience of the world. Grandmother's stories constitute the most potent image of confinement, for her words belong to a paralyzed, strictly ordered past divorced from process and liberty: "She hypnotizes me with the past fulfilled, / always filled, as if that should be enough." Until Kay and Gerda and Marlatt herself are "lockt / in the grandmother's stopt voice," and left with no alternative but to survive through fleeing into a story of flow which endeavours to obliterate the incarcerating influence of dead words and frozen time:

> (at your grandmother's
> time is a glacier, bodies of ancestors keep turning up in
> the shadows of afternoon . . . But here, if anywhere, is
> a way out there

Marlatt has every right to join Kay and Gerda in flight, for their predicament, and the development of their story, serves as a metaphor for the problems of growth encountered by a poet struggling to break away from the frames imposed by established word patterns and the falsities implied by a worldview which categorizes experience, storytelling it in standardized form, as if the motion of living was always the same, always sane. Marlatt is not opposed to absolutes, but to the belief that absolutes can exist in isolation. Throughout her works, she insists that experience is a matter of relation. Hence stasis is validated by movement, stability assumes meaning in the midst of chaos, the individual realizes himself through others.

Frames represents Marlatt's initial attempt to formulate a poetry which would establish a correlation between perception and articulation. The task she immediately sets for herself is that of seeing herself seeing the world. She expresses a desire to unite the arts of seeing and telling in a bond so intimate that the eye will be interchangeable with the mouth: "as far as the eye can tell. . . . " Or, she sees herself as a digester of word-phrases-as-food, reorganizing, assimilating, and occasionally regurgitating the words, purging herself through the creation of new pictures which originate in the depths of her system:

thrown up
on each other in a
room word pictures be
come cru
/shall . . .

But she recognizes the difficulty of satisfying her own objectives, and in *Frames* we witness the struggle involved in achieving a balance between language and the reality it tries to describe. Because that balance never quite materializes here, language still manages to subdue the expression of reality, resulting in a strange mixture of fantasy, dream, and fact.

Significantly, both children are driven and controlled by the implications of language, and Kay is immediately presented as the victim of words which affect him in the same way as the fragments from the demon's distorted mirror do in the Andersen tale:

from this we know
two mirror chips divide
love
his vision of love
eyes
his heart

Kay suffers from the effects of a selective vision which ignores and destroys totality. Consequently, he cannot realize the complete poetic vision which, Marlatt implies, is composed of a blending of sight and emotion, heart and eye. The phrases which Grandmother casts upon Kay hypnotize him into believing that reality is the story itself, and so he is blinded to process and the world, stripped of his emotions, becoming a slave to the "Snow Queen" heroine whose tale has overcome him.

Marlatt sympathizes with Kay's plight, for it signifies many of the constrictions that she herself is trying to avoid. More important is the fact that she identifies with Gerda, whose activities assume the form of an aesthetic quest for experience inspired by a thirst for discovery. In the process of her quest for Kay, Gerda reads and interprets a phenomenological universe of signs which direct her towards the object of her search. Marlatt seems to admire Gerda's ability to leap into a flow of experience, and she emphasizes the power of the child's eyes, which are like nets capturing the multitude of images which constitute experience:

Can she see her seeing net

sight, light
start out of her eye!

There is an obvious envy of Gerda's camera-like eye, photographic in its ability to objectively capture the progression of moments constituting her search:

tells her tale
    caught
in camera obscura of her
history, an image
of the search

Clearly, one of the problems in *Frames* centres on Marlatt's dependence upon a character called Gerda: "Gerda, you'd better believe it! I'm clinging to you." Marlatt's reliance upon Gerda signifies a reluctance to assume her own voice, and a fear at the thought of challenging the river alone. At the same time, she wants desperately to discover the child's sense of wonder and immediacy, to move into Gerda's world of relentless and varied experience. So like a child she cries: "Let me come too!" And she does go, but their voyage ends in failure. Although Gerda manages to locate Kay, the poetic release ostensibly to be derived from the movement towards cognition never materializes. The story ends much as it began, with Kay and Gerda once again depicted as prisoners: "Back to back to the room. Where / windowboxes with roses border their image of the world." Any suggestion of the fairy tale is destroyed, and reality returns more heavily than ever, accompanied by a sense of defeat. On one level, the defeat is an aesthetic one, engendered by Marlatt's knowledge of the fact that she has relied upon the medium of Kay and Gerda to transmit her own experience of the world. Like them, she has tried to escape a frame imposed by words, but ultimately she admits the impotence of her own attempt. This aspect of the poetry is best revealed through an examination of the titles describing the seven sections into which *Frames* is divided. She is found, static, in (I) "white as of the white room," moving cautiously through (II) "shadows doors are" into colour and sunlight, where she experiments with poetry as painting in (III) "primarily colours," gradually employing (IV) "light affects," and realizing (V) "visual purple." In (VI) "eye lights," the eye is defined in a play upon the painter's word "highlight." But in the last section, "Out a rose window," Marlatt renunciates all claims to what she herself saw as progress, admitting that her art, which depended largely upon a voice at second remove, never managed to progress beyond a semi-real word encounter with experience. So the image of the window and "containment (not content —)" is reinstated as Marlatt confesses to a lingering predilection for rose-coloured vision.

The story of Kay and Gerda serves as more than a metaphor for an aesthetic impasse. It also describes the very real personal crisis of a woman who has recently abandoned a difficult relationship which threatened to enclose her. In this sense the children can be seen as representing two lovers who have parted. While Kay demonstrated the cruelty of a man whose heart has turned to stone, Gerda is the epitome of a woman enslaved to the memory of a man whose visage continues to haunt her. The distinct note of pain involved in the thought of a

snapshot-captured past is relieved only by the glimpses of freedom and weightlessness which are features of a developing individuality:

> But the whole weight of me shifted, changed value in fact. Without gravity I was absent too. Blown anywhere, clung to any personplace (for reprieval), had to begin to be a . . . will

It is this weight of the past which makes the act of seeing in the present so difficult to realize: "knotted in remembrance, not . . . / seeing." The poetry of *Frames* may have frustrated its creator in her search for words and a style which would accurately reflect the sensation of being a consciousness in the world. But this does not detract from the fact that even in her first volume, Marlatt provides the reader with an example of creative brilliance and stylistic innovation.

ONE YEAR LATER, IN 1969, SHE RETURNED to the public with *Leaf leaf/s*, determined to purify both language and image, and to resolve any discord between perception, voice, and experience. In her second book, Marlatt dispenses with any reliance upon fantasy or assumed voice, and somewhat resolves the conflict between stasis and fluidity by depicting consciousness as a series of instants comprising a flow, rather than as fragments and fluid which cannot mix. Here, Marlatt speaks in images as sharp and precise as photographs. Language no longer reflects upon experience, but *is* experience — the work is concise, immediate, distilled, demonstrating a variety of instantaneous responses to surrounding phenomena:

> that the
> summit of mountains
> should be
>
> hot at that much
> closer to
>
> ah clouds the
> sun

Each poem in the collection can be seen as an image which expresses an abrupt combination of the thing perceived and its effect upon the perceiver. These imagistic poems exist as entities, but they act as a leaf amongst leaves (leafs/s), or as part of a larger totality (tree of life?). The result is a set of perceptions which mirror a portion of Marlatt's awareness.

Leaf leaf/s appears almost as an exercise originating in reaction to *Frames*, and certainly, the reaction is complete. Whereas in *Frames* the syntax was often extended and complex, *Leaf leaf/s* presents a streamlined and extremely pure

arrangement of language. Frequently, words stand alone as poems within poems, or as precious moments related to the whole through imagistic suggestion. The poem bearing the significant title "Photograph" is a good example:

you sd a stalk I look
like a weed wind blows
thru

  singly
  smokes &
  fumes
green's
unripe a colour but
elemental, grass
easily hugs
ground, that's you

Although Marlatt's second book resolves many of the difficulties connected with *Frames*, the feeling remains that there is an overreaction here, that by immersing herself so completely in the experience of a phenomenological universe she ignores several of the questions of relation that remained unanswered in *Frames*. Marlatt is at her best when she qualifies an experience of the moment by relating it to time. A reading of *Rings* (1917) and *Steveston* demonstrates the intensity she can achieve by utilizing public and private history. Both of these later books are strengthened by their depiction of a poetic encounter with diverse forms of process and instantaneity. In comparison, *Leaf leaf/s* suffers, for it is solely concerned with a singular experience of the moment abstracted from duration. Nevertheless, its strong images form a powerful part of the foundation upon which Marlatt constructs the success of her later works.

Rings immediately recalls *Frames* through its introductory metaphors of enslavement, but here, the notion of restraint is highlighted by contrasting images of hope, release, and birth. In one respect, the birth of her child reintroduces the heroine to a whole range of apprehensions which had been stifled in the silence of a difficult marriage. The re-entry of perception is accompanied by a shift in language that becomes more dynamic as the newborn child grows. Although the problems of wedlock are never resolved, there is a progressive emphasis on movement and increased clarity of vision, suggesting the development of a healthy state of control derived from the mastery of language in terms of relation. Now, Marlatt manages to organize and coherently employ many of the qualities which she sees as essential to the poetic act: process intermingled with definition through stability, self-definition realized with regard to an environment of others, the development of a phenomenological approach to seeing matched by an identical approach to the mode of being.

The first words of *Rings* give voice to the heroine's conscious state: "Like a stone." The initial image of weight and stasis gives way to a blending that establishes a correlation between the woman's stifled condition and the suffocating effects of a silent landscape and a brooding husband: "... smothered by the snowy silence, yours. Me?" This pervasive silence is quickly offset by a "jingling of rings," the symbol of an imprisoning marriage. Finally, a myriad of sensory impressions combine, working together to define the consciousness of a woman pregnant not only with child, but with the tensions of a strained marriage. Characteristically, the fear of isolation-separation is linked to a problem of words:

> My nerve ends stretch, anticipating hidden dark. I read too much in your words, I read silences where there is nothing to say, to be said, to be read. Afraid of your fear of the sea that surrounds us, Cuts off roads ...

But this vision of being severed from the world ("disinherited from your claim to the earth") is relieved by the waves of sun breaking through the window, and the ensuing realization that sight has the ability to penetrate barriers and join every object in a multilevelled vision of movement and birth. As the sun "pierces glass (cold) irradiating skin, water, wood," every sense converges in the creation of a picture of hope, and the unborn child "kicks, suddenly unaccountable unseen."

Rings "ii" continues to describe the woman's immersion in a multisensory universe, but an interesting shift occurs, for the barriers between inner and outer begin to disintegrate, making it difficult to distinguish between the seer and what is seen. Marlatt's attempt to communicate the belief that we are what we see finds its best expression in this section:

> Back, back into the room we circle, It rings us. No, grows out of our heads like the fern in carboniferous light, smoke

The notion of perceptual and emotional intermingling develops in the woman's mind until every fact of experience, from the past into the present, intersects in the illustration of the functioning of a complex human state of mind. Marlatt's technical aims are also concerned with a blending, and so are governed by the belief in "image to outer" — the conviction that there is a never ending equivalence between landscapes of the world and mind.

Contained within the third section of *Rings* is the kernel of Marlatt's aesthetic. First, the familiar river image is evoked, signifying an ever-present state of flux and relativity, followed by a compact statement of the poet's concept of her art:

> Like a dream. There is no story only the telling with no end in view or, born headfirst, you start at the beginning & work backwards

The emphasis is upon discourse as a spontaneous act unhampered by structures of

plot or duration. Yet at the same time, creativity and movement are made possible only through a process of self-discovery which involves an investigation of causality. As the woman meditates upon the child floating within her, a parallel is established between birth and creativity. The poet survives in the stream of experience only by continually relocating the origins of flow:

> 'delivered'
> is a coming into THIS stream. You start at the beginning
> & it keeps on beginning

Although fragmented language and images continue to illustrate the presence of a multiphasic consciousness, the fourth section of *Rings* is primarily devoted to an examination of another relation: that between process, purgation, and birth. The metaphor is clear: creation can only be the product of a total release of consciousness. Spontaneity as a diarrhoea of words. The woman's desperate need for intestinal release is emphatically linked to the release provided by birth: "if only / it would all come out. But what if I had the baby in the toilet!" The greatest potential for poetry, however, exists in the actual movement involved in the process of birth, for only then is restraint destroyed to the extent that language cannot help but explode in expressing a tornado of sensation. No wonder the "birth" section of *Rings* is the most intense writing Marlatt has done yet. Absolute abandonment to flow.

The rush of language is succeeded by a placid language reflecting a calmer emotional state. Through the birth of her child, the woman herself is reborn into a world of innocence. In her desire to fulfil the infant's needs, the woman finds herself imagining (imaging) and finally becoming his conscious state:

> this newborn (reborn) sensing, child I am with him,
> with sight, all my senses clear, for the first time, since
> I can remember, childlike spinning, dizzy

The section continues to evaluate the surrounding phenomena in a language as simple as childhood:

> This world. Something precious,
> something out of the course of time marked off by clocks

Reassembling the infant's astonishment. But not for long:

> cars whirr by outside, gravel spews. (A certain motor.
> Gears down, stops. News from outside coming home

Her husband's re-entry is matched by a return to more complex language and thought. Yet in the last section of *Rings* there is a sense of lingering tranquility, not because the marriage is better, but because the new child will add softness to experience. The book ends in an unsteady voyage away from the past and beyond familiar borders, suggesting the possibility of a marital recreation:

> How do you feel about leaving? for good. That question. (If it is good. If we can make it so.)

The book's energy originates in the overall coherence that is established between a variety of conscious states, and in Marlatt's ability to realize a potent equation between sight, language, and thought.

RINGS ENDS ON A NOTE OF DEPARTURE, to be followed by a poetry of return and recognition. *Vancouver Poems* (1972) is a collection of highly polished sketches of city life, made vital by Marlatt's knowledge of Vancouver, and by the research she has done to enlarge upon that knowledge. A glimpse at the credits on the final page serves as proof of Marlatt's increasing concern with an "expanded vision" that sees the present with the aid of historical and sociological information. She is trying to discover an underlying myth which binds the poet into a ritualistic identification with the environment and its history. Consequently, we find poems inspired by the reading of such diverse sources as the *Vancouver Historical Journal*, *Art of the Kwakiutl Indians*, Weil-Brecht-Blitzstein, and *Vancouver from Milltown to Metropolis*. The ritual is discovered as life itself, and the poet incarnates the ritual by becoming the word/world mouth which feeds on vision, growing on the nourishment of phenomena:

> We live by (at the mouth of
> the world, & the ritual. Draws strength. Is not Secret
> a woman gives (in taking, Q'ominoqas) rich within the
> lockt-up street. Whose heart beats here, taking it
> all in . . .

In these poems, Marlatt repeats her habitual contention that the self can be understood only in relation to external phenomena, insisting that "matter inserts relation." Much of the book is devoted to the painstaking examination of the objects surrounding the poet. In fact, the success of Marlatt's effort is indicated by the difficulty which is inevitably encountered in any attempt to describe or classify the inexhaustible flood of images she incorporates. This phenomenological inundation forces the reader to see Vancouver as a tangible reality. It also provides a lesson in the way we can visually restructure (re/see) our own surroundings.

In many ways, *Vancouver Poems* serves as the testing ground for Marlatt's latest book. Every facet of her skill as a poet is demonstrated in *Steveston*. Here (as the epigraph from James Agee indicates), she continues her avowed intention of "seeking to perceive it as it stands," creating word pictures which capture a set of momentary apprehensions. At the same time, she manages to blend those incredibly tight images with a flowing style that speaks for a Heraclitean experi-

ence of flux, discovering the voice which allows her to unite the acts of seeing and telling.

It seems only natural that in this volume, her poems are bound with (and to) Robert Minden's photographs, for her poems, as we have seen, always seek the precision, objectivity, and instantaneous image implied by the photograph, and her books are progressively characterized by an application of photographic principles. In *Frames*, she expressed her recognition of the imagistic power of the photograph, but tended towards the more traditional association between poetry and painting, perhaps because the snapshot then represented a verisimilitude that spoke with frightening ease about reality. *Leaf leaf/s* represented an attempt to create a group of imagistic poems possessing a photographic appeal to exactitude. Then in *Rings* we witnessed Marlatt's endeavour to improve the coherence between several "exposures" of consciousness, and in *Vancouver Poems* she experimented with photographic impressions modulated by the introduction of personal recollection and historical data. *Steveston* is composed of a photographic poetry of immanence that improves upon the experiments of earlier works. But the book is much more than a refined expression of previous vision, for here, the maturation of Marlatt's voice is matched by a growth of self assurance that allows her to see herself in relation to a host of external questions. Throughout *Steveston*, Marlatt is continually examining the nature of her own poetic discourse, reminding herself of the need to remain attentive to the facts of physical reality:

> multiplicity simply there: the physical matter of
> the place (what matters) meaning, don't get theoretical now . . .

Steveston is the antithesis of that reluctant trickling which began in *Frames*. Now Marlatt has unquestionably connected the story with a torrent of visual experience. For her, the book represents a visual reinitiation into life, and its structure describes an expanding rush towards a heightened understanding. At first, Marlatt confronts Steveston in the role of detached alien, capable only of seeing the town in terms of its exterior characteristics, or in relation to the publicized facts of its history. She knows that Steveston is the headquarters of B.C. Packers, but only in the course of her visit to the town does she realize the extent to which the canning industry has relentlessly exploited its resources, both human and environmental. In her desire to know Steveston's present, Marlatt begins by imagining the past of a town stricken by fire in 1918:

> Imagine: a town
>
> Imagine a town running
> (smoothly?
> a town running before a fire . . .

Movement begins with this step into Steveston's past. As her perception becomes

more acute (and involved), she works her way through history into the present, arriving at a characteristic immediacy of sight. From an investigation of the general, she moves to a consideration of the particular, concerning herself first with industrial buildings and groups, and then with individuals, their jobs, their outlook, their home life:

> To live in a place. Immanent. In
> place. Yet to feel at sea. To come from elsewhere & then to
> discover/ love, has a house & name. Has land. Is landed . . .

As usual, Marlatt's perceptions transform her as she transforms through sight. In the end, the identification she realizes is so complete that she once again sees herself as performing the function of a mouth, giving voice to the sight of Steveston. Having assumed this primary role, she then associates directly with the mouth of the Fraser itself, indicating her willingness to explicate spontaneously and to become metaphorically the very symbol of Steveston's lifeblood. She is "at the mouth, where the river runs, in to the/ immanence of things."

This image of the poet-as-mouth-as-river is but another illustration of the repeated connection Marlatt makes between perception, digestion, and purgation. By allowing the phenomena which *are* Steveston to pass through her, Marlatt is able to "digest" the town, regurgitating it as a purged verbalvisual image. Similar images of purgation appeared in *Frames* and *Rings*.

The resulting pictures of Steveston may be pure, but they are not pretty. Dominated by a disinfected, punctuated industrial routine, a multitude of immigrant workers find themselves enslaved and exploited by a packing plant that "packs their lives, chopping off the hours." Indeed, these people face the same fate as the fish which roll smoothly towards a mechanical death on the non-stop conveyor belts of productivity: "the blade with teeth marked: / for marriage, for birth, for death." The mechanical precision associated with the factory also tyrannizes a community suffocated by an overdose of control: "& it all settles down into an order of orders . . . " Until consciousness itself becomes "silent, impassive," waiting in futility for an impossible release from an existence where "nothing moves," where even dream is shown to be an enslaved "pounding with the pound of machinery under mountains of empty packer/ pens."

The effects on an industry which thrives on the exploitation of human resources can be seen in an environment that is ravaged by pollution and destroyed through abuse. In this "decomposed ground chocked by refuse, profit, & the concrete of private property," the inhabitants of Steveston live "as if the earth were dead/ & we within it ash, eating ash, drinking the lead fire of our own consumption."

But it is the Fraser River itself, "swollen with its filth," "sewage," and "endless waste" that reflects in its stagnant waters the most exact image of a town gone

sour. Ironically, the inhabitants must depend for their living on the very river whose pollution and decay symbolizes a human degeneration flowing sluggishly to death. Their "lives / are inextricably tied with the tide that inundates their day," and so "there's a subhuman, sub/marine aura to things," with life seen as static, drowned. Every phenomenon in Steveston points to an overwhelming submergence and stasis exemplifying the predominance of impotence. This infertility is manifested in the undeniable absence of any form of material or human growth. There is only one growth:

> This corporate growth that monopolizes
> the sun. moon & tide, fish-run . . .

Like fish, again, these cannery workers are involved in a futile cyclicality which ends only in the grave. But Marlatt discovers an heroic element in the lives of these people who demonstrate a Sisyphean urge to survive:

> Somehow they survive, this people, these fish,
> survive the refuse bottom, filthy water, their chocked lives,
> in a singular dance of survival, each from each. . . .

Actually, *Steveston* can be seen as an historical, sociological, and geographical study of a region extending far beyond the bounds of Marlatt's consciousness. She moves outward, progressing beyond the Fraser to a vision of the sea. In order to facilitate this outflowing, she first seizes upon the minor phenomena which form the basis of larger vision, ultimately defining herself in the light of others. Because she takes the time to trade stories with an aging fisherman, he "connects" . . . "when the young woman from *out there* walks in." After speaking with a Japanese sailor who insists that she's a hippy, Marlatt sees herself anew:

> I'm clearly a woman on their float. Too weak to lift the pole,
> old enough to have tastes

From "out there," she comes to us, too, saying something radically different, allowing us to see ourselves anew. Definition, light (recognition) sight . . . Marlatt adds detail to detail (re)producing an onrush of purified visual discourse that balances the moment in flow. She remains with the river, writing poetry of immanence at its best.

NOTES

[1] Daphne Marlatt, *Frames* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968); *Leaf leaf/s* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1969); *Rings* (Vancouver: Georgia Straight Writing Supplement, Vancouver Series No. 3, 1971); *Vancouver Poems* (Toronto: Coach House, 1972); *Steveston* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1974).

LE PROFESSEUR ET LA LITTERATURE CANADIENNE-FRANCAISE

Anne Srabian de Fabry

LONGTEMPS L'ENSEIGNANT A ÉTÉ ABSENT de ce que nous appelons la scène littérataire canadienne-française, c'est-à-dire absent à la fois au niveau historique de la production littéraire et au plan fictif. Depuis quelque temps déjà, la situation s'est renversée. Le professeur et ex-professeur sont entrés dans la vie des lettres. Ils manifestent leur présence et leur existence par la publication d'ouvrages de valeur: en effet un nombre croissant d'autres contemporains tels André Berthiaume, Gérard Bessette, Jean-Ethier Blais, Marie-Claire Blais, Robert Elie, Anne Hébert (bientôt), François Hertel, Gabrielle Roy, Félix Armand Savard, Jean Simard, Yves Thériault, Paul Toupin, Gilles Vigneault et d'autres encore participent ou ont participé à la fonction enseignante. En outre, le pédagogue est apparu sur la scène comme entité romanesque, ce qui d'ailleurs ne devrait pas surprendre, puisque la gent enseignante et le milieu dans lequel celle-ci évolue sans doute ce que ces auteurs connaissent le mieux.

Il est à peine exagéré de parler d'envahissement de la scène littéraire par le professeur. Cependant, ce phénomène a été peu remarqué, surtout au niveau romanesque. Le pédagogue, il est vrai, joue souvent un rôle de deuxième ou de troisième plan, tels Melle Côté, Miss O'Rorke et Armand Dubreuil dans *La Petite Poule d'Eau* de Gabrielle Roy. Parfois le professeur n'apparaît même pas en scène, mais des tiers en parlent: les trois héros de *La Bagarre* de Gérard Bessette, par exemple, émettent des jugements à l'égard de leurs maîtres. En scène ou en coulisses le professeur est donc entré dans le roman. Sa présence n'est sans doute pas gratuite; elle a une signification qui mérite d'être dégagée d'autant plus qu'elle échappe à beaucoup de lecteurs.

Cette étude se propose donc de mettre en relief le professeur dans le roman canadien-français: son rôle, sa fonction, son image. A l'ère des anti-romans et des anti-héros nul n'est assez naïf pour s'attendre à trouver des professeurs séduisants et sympathiques, saints ou héroïques. Néanmoins vu l'étroite relation entre

le fictif et le réel dans le roman réaliste, on aimerait penser que les auteurs canadiens estiment leurs confrères, qu'ils jugent ceux-ci, en majorité, dignes de l'insigne tâche qui leur est confiée. Préparer et former les citoyens d'une nation est une responsabilité capitale; pour l'assumer le secteur enseignant a besoin d'hommes et de femmes d'élite. Or, pour aussi navrante que la constatation soit, les pédagogues jouissent, auprès de leurs confrères écrivains, d'une mauvaise réputation. Qu'ils le disent brutalement et sans équivoque possible, ou bien qu'ils le démontrent indirectement, la plupart des auteurs canadiens partagent l'opinion de Paul Toupin au sujet de ses professeurs et de l'éducation qu'il en reçut: "Je fus réfractaire au genre de discipline qu'on tenta de m'appliquer [. . .] Je réçus donc mes maîtres. Ils ne déçurent davantage. Je les avais crus parfaits et il ne l'étaient pas. Ils avaient même d'humaines imperfections [. . .] Ce qui me faisait crever d'ennui, c'était le programme. Je baillais à n'en plus finir" (*ACES*).[1] Le professeur et le programme d'études font donc l'objet de la satire des auteurs canadiens. On pourrait examiner la question sous les angles psychologique, biographique et historique. Nous nous bornerons ici à l'envisager dans une perspective thématique, soit à dénombrer les principaux chefs d'accusation émis par les auteurs canadiens-français contre les enseignants.

LE TROISIÈME ROMAN de G. Bessette, intitulé *Les Pédagogues*, est manifestement l'ouvrage le plus riche pour notre analyse. Tous les personnages importants sont des professeurs, et l'action entière pivote sur le sujet de la nomination des professeurs aux postes de l'Ecole de Pédagogie de Montréal. Cet ouvrage — qui n'est pas le meilleur de Bessette — a l'avantage d'être écrit sans la moindre ambiguïté. C'est une diatribe à l'encontre des "Pédagogues," c'est-à-dire pseudo-pédagogues, car, à l'exception d'Yves Lambert et de Sarto Pellerin qui sont tour à tour les porte-parole de l'auteur, la pédagogie est bien le dernier de leurs soucis. Certes Bessette vise tout d'abord les administrateurs de l'Ecole; il révèle les dessous de la cuisine académique; il montre les feintes et les comédies qui s'y jouent; il dénonce les injustices qui s'y pratiquent. Selon l'auteur les nominations aux postes et les avancements se font d'après trois critères principaux: l'assiduité aux offices religieux; la non-affiliation aux syndicats; les relations personnelles entretenues avec ceux qui sont influents. Comme on le voit les connaissances intellectuelles et la compétence pédagogique d'un postulant n'entrent pas en jeu. A vrai dire la valeur personnelle d'un candidat peut jouer en sa défaveur parce que certaines qualités sont souvent jugées dangereuses par les "bien-pensants." Ainsi, Stanislas Chavinski, qui est titulaire d'un diplôme de l'Université de Varsovie, d'une licence et d'un doctorat de la Sorbonne, serait suspect dans l'exercice de sa discipline — les mathématiques — s'il ne pratiquait pas publiquement la religion catholique.

Paul Marcotte qui parle un français pur est expulsé de l'Ecole Supérieure Sainte-Anasthasie et ne sera pas nommé à l'Ecole de Pédagogie où ses qualités l'appellent, car, affirme Pellerin: "Paul Marcotte n'est pas bien vu des autorités. Son Association des Instituteurs leur cause des embêtements. C'est un des seuls à refuser de plier l'échine" (*P*). Le poste de directeur du département de français reviendra donc à un homme qui parle un dialecte abominable, mais dont le frère entretient de bonnes relations avec le ministre de l'éducation: "Parlons-en du vieux Miron," fulmine Pellerin, "il sait à peine baragouiner le français Et l'on voudrait lui faire enseigner la composition, les explications de textes. . . . Tu l'as entendu parler toi Miron . . . c'est du sous-joual" (*P*). Et Alexandre Barré, "qui n'a pas la moindre notion de psychologie," sera nommé dans la section de psychologie parce qu'il joue au bridge avec les inspecteurs de la commission" (*P*).

Mais l'auteur des *Pédagogues* sait faire d'une pierre deux coups. Ses flèches satiriques n'atteignent pas seulement les administrateurs: d'ailleurs ceux-ci ne sont-ils pas eux-mêmes des professeurs ou anciens professeurs? Comme le titre du roman l'indique, les pédagogues — bons ou mauvais — sont responsables d'un état de fait que Bessette trouve déplorable: "Si ça s'est passé comme ça jusqu'ici, dit Sarto, c'est de notre faute" (*P*). Le problème que Bessette expose dans ce roman est situé dans la perspective de la politique intérieure de l'Ecole. Les scènes importantes ont lieu en Conseil d'Administration et le lecteur ne voit jamais les professeurs dans l'exercice de leur magistère. Mais si un roman suggère bien plus qu'il ne dit expressément, il est permis de penser que ceux qui font preuve d'indigence d'esprit en Conseil d'Administration ne sauraient acquérir miraculeusement du génie dans leur salle de classe. Ainsi Hubert Sigoin demeure "un crétin" et "un imbécile" en qualité d'individu et de professeur, de même que Sloper transporte partout avec lui sa lâcheté, sa sottise et son ignorance: "Un joli couard, ce Sloper, un mollusque illettré" (*P*).

L'ignorance de l'enseignant est un thème commun à tous les auteurs que nous retenus pour cette étude. Chez Bessette c'est même un *leitmotiv* qui se répète dans chacun de ses romans. Tantôt l'ignorance provient d'une scolarité réduite; dans *Le Libraire* par exemple il signale que l'ex-institutrice Rose Bouthiller avait "peut-être fini sa huitième année" (*L*). Tantôt elle est due à la paresse du professeur qui, une fois en place, ne se soucie guère de se perfectionner. Critiquant son collègue qui ne fréquente jamais la bibliothèque de l'Université le Pr. Weingerter s'exclame: "Gordon Blackwell (entre nous un ignorant de la pire espèce *nicht wahr* du plus scandaleux acabit) qu'on ne voyait jamais au grand jamais dans ces parages, c'était à se demander s'il savait lire, ce pitre, ce cabotin, ce professeur d'opéra comique" (*I*); "le dénommé Gordon Blackwell entre nous incompétence abyssale, ça dépasse l'entendement, entre nous je vous le dis à Vienne: unconcierge na! en toute amitié même pas un boueur" (*I*). Que Bessette raille le vieil érudit autrichien cela ne fait pas de doute; il n'en reste pas moins que

le Pr. Weingerter exprime une opinion fort répandue parmi les intellectuels européens, opinion que Bessette partage probablement puisqu'il ne cesse d'invectiver les enseignants. Dans *Les Pédagogues* par exemple il dénonce, sans le moindre humour cette fois-ci, la niaiserie d'instituteurs béotiens qui s'entichent des découvertes "psychologiques" d'Hubert Sigoin: "Des instituteurs plus ignares les uns que les autres ne jurant plus que par cette nouveauté à allure scientifique" (*P*). Si l'instruction est éternelle, comme le dit Sir Adam Beck, parce qu'elle se retransmet à l'infini, alors l'enseignement est une transmission de sottise. C'est cela sans doute qui explique le refus de Lebeuf, à la fin de *La Bagarre*, de s'engager dans le professorat: "Un travail d'un mois lui aurait suffi pour reprendre ce certificat. Ensuite, il serait licencié [. . .] mais à quoi bon? Il ne voulait pas enseigner dans les collèges du Québec" (*B*).

Dans l'enseignement plus que dans n'importe quelle autre profession l'enthousiasme est la clé de la réussite. Comment intéresser des étudiants, communiquer avec eux, si l'on n'est pas animé d'une flamme intérieure et de l'amour de sa discipline? Si l'on en croit les auteurs canadiens ils ont rarement rencontré le maître qui inspire. On a déjà cité Paul Toupin. Réjean Ducharme pour sa part fuyait l'école dans sa jeunesse. Marie-Claire Blais montre le double absentéisme: celui de l'institutrice que son métier ne passionne pas, celui de l'élève qui n'est pas passionné par son institutrice (cf. *Un saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*). Bessette a développé ce sujet dans *La Bagarre*. Les trois héros principaux de ce roman sont des étudiants de troisième cycle fort doués. Ils abandonneront tous trois leurs études et n'embrasseront pas la carrière de l'enseignement qui semble s'offrir à eux, car ils sont dégoûtés et déroutés par leurs maîtres. Weston ne pourra pas terminer sa thèse par la faute du professeur qui lui avait indiqué un sujet trop vaste. Avec une ironie facétieuse, Bessette montre comment les jeunes universitaires s'en laissent imposer par des professeurs incapables de diriger une thèse: "Le seul type intéressant à la faculté, d'après Weston, était le professeur d'histoire et de sociologie. Il était allé le voir, avait discuté avec lui. Le professeur avait suggéré 'les Canadiens français' comme sujet de thèse" (*B*). Sillery va "s'enfoncer rimbaldiquement dans les déserts d'Afrique." Quant à Lebeuf, nous l'avons déjà indiqué. Il ne veut ni enseigner, ni même obtenir son diplôme: les professeurs sont des "vieux bonzes" et les cours l'ennuient.

Des maîtres qui rebutent les élèves au lieu d'éveiller chez eux la curiosité intellectuelle, il y en a partout où il est question d'éducation et à tous les échelons de l'enseignement dans les romans canadiens. Jean Simard raconte facétieusement le fiasco pédagogique de Melle Boiteau, préceptrice auprès de Félix. Il feint d'attribuer cet échec à la "cancrerie" de Félix. Mais trois pages plus loin, Jean Simard nous informe que le dit "cancre" accomplit des prodiges: il apprend à lire en trois jours, et le reste à l'avenant. Au niveau primaire la Miss O'Rorke de G. Roy est une vieille fille inadaptée qui passe son temps à ce plaindre des enfants,

des francophones, des catholiques, de son installation à la Petite Poule d'Eau, et même du bêlements des moutons. Le résultat? "Tous les matins, c'étaient des protestations et des larmes. Les enfants [qui étaient si dociles avec Melle Côté] ne voulaient plus aller à l'école" (*PPE*). Au niveau secondaire le professeur de mathématiques de Gisèle Lafrenière est aussi "une fille grincheuse, esclave du manuel, laquelle ne lui donnait guère d'encouragement" (*B*). Arrivé au collège le Félix de Jean Simard se trouve en présence de "pédagogues" dont chacun a un défaut plus détestable que celui de l'autre. Comme les maîtres de Félix sont des ecclésiastiques, il se peut que la critique de J. Simard soit teintée d'anticléricalisme. Quoi qu'il en soit l'un est brutal, l'autre laid, un troisième exhale une mauvaise odeur, un quatrième postillonne, un cinquième bégaie: il y a ceux qui cumulent ces "qualités"; et tous sont fastidieux et endorment les étudiants. Selon J. Simard, pédagogie et personnalité sont indissociables: un professeur compétent perd le respect des ses élèves s'il est affligé d'imperfections par trop irritantes. La galerie pédagogique des auteurs comprend des types d'enseignants fort différents: mais aucun d'entre eux n'est exempt de vices et de travers. Bien que très écouté des ses jeunes élèves, l'instituteur Dubreuil de *La Petite Poule d'Eau* est très fantasque et trop irrégulier dans l'exercice de sa fonction. Nous reviendrons plus loin sur le cas de Melle Côté. Quant aux rares pédagogues dont les écrivains ne nous signalent pas les défauts, ils abandonnent cette profession, comme Gerard Goulu, le précepteur de Félix qui obtenait des résultats impressionnants avec son petit "cancre," mais qui a opté pour la comptabilité, ou bien comme le Dr. Chavinski qui, faute d'emploi dans l'enseignement, travaillera dans une compagnie d'assurances (cf. *P*).

Les critiques de Gabrielle Roy sont généralement plus nuancées ou plus voilées que celles de Bessette, de Toupin, et de Baillargeon. Trop discrète et trop généreuse pour incriminer ses propres maîtres, elle n'en fait jamais mention dans ses ouvrages autobiographiques. Mais certains silences ne sont-ils pas accusateurs? Le thème du professeur qui n'enseigne rien est sous-jacent à une grande partie de son oeuvre. Certes les enfants apprennent généralement à lire, à écrire et à compter; mais l'éducation ne consiste pas seulement en un enseignement primaire et mécaniste. G. Roy voudrait qu'on développe chez les jeunes une certaine indépendance intellectuelle, une certaine morale, une certaine sagesse. Or, si l'on en croit les détails exposés dans *Rue Deschambault* et dans *La Route d'Altamont*, Christine reçoit cette éducation non de ses maîtres mais dans la fréquentation de personnes âgées et de son entourage: son père, sa mère, sa tante, sa grand-mère et le voisin octogénaire, le bon M. Saint-Hilaire. Un vieux dicton anglais affirme que si l'on veut réussir dans la vie il faut consulter quelques vieillards: est-ce là le précepte que Christine, alias G. Roy, a suivi? Quoi qu'il en soit, expliquant pourquoi son héros Jean Lévesque a besoin de prendre des cours par correspondance, l'auteur de *Bonheur d'Occasion* lâche ce pavé dans la mare: "Son

instruction était insuffisante; il y suppléait. D'ailleurs qui donc a appris quoi que ce soit des professeurs?" (*BO*).

PARADOXALEMENT LE PROFESSEUR QUI N'ENSEIGNE RIEN n'est pas le pire des pédagogues. Celui qui enseigne si peu ou si mal qu'il borne l'horizon des enfants et leur inculque de fausses conceptions est bien plus néfaste. Ce type de professeur, Réjean Ducharme le qualifie de "rétrécisseur de têtes." Dans le domaine des sciences exactes, le rétrécissage de têtes n'a que des conséquences limitées; en revanche, il est très dangereux dans le domaine des sciences humaines, particulièrement en histoire. De toutes les matières l'histoire est la plus délicate à enseigner, parce que, estime G. Roy, le professeur, pour être objectif et honnête, devrait avoir connaissance de tous les faits qui sont relatifs à une donnée historique. Cela étant impossible, G. Roy préférait, lorsqu'elle était elle-même institutrice, négliger l'enseignement de l'histoire, et ce dans le seul souci de ne pas induire ses élèves en erreur: "J'ai commencé par la géographie. Il me semble que cela va tout seul la géographie, qu'il n'y a pas moyen de se tromper en enseignant cette matière si intéressante [. . .] Et puis ce n'est pas comme l'histoire. Dans la géographie on n'a pas à juger les peuples; il n'est pas question de guerres; on n'a pas à prendre parti" (*RD*). Combien de professeurs ont les scrupules de G. Roy? Bien peu si l'on encroit J. Simard qui prête à George Roundabout les sentiments suivants: "Rétrospectivement G. G. accuse ses pauvres maîtres ignorants de lui avoir enseigné l'Histoire à la loupe, par petits fragments myopes et disjoints" (*SN*). Pour G. Roy les professeurs d'histoire et les manuels d'histoire sont des instruments de propagande nationaliste, laquelle perpétue les haines entre les peuples. Au Canada c'est un problème d'autant plus grave que cette haine divise inutilement deux peuples d'une même nation. Le bon Alexandre Chenevert, qui rêve de paix et d'harmonie universelles, est lui-même — ô ironie — victime de préjugés absurdes, mais, comme G. Roy le souligne, ses préjugés lui ont été inculqués: "D'ailleurs l'Anglais pour Alexandre, c'était l'ennemi héréditaire, proposé par l'histoire, l'école, l'entourage," et, ajoute l'auteur avec autant d'humour que de psychologie, "celui dont il pourrait à peine se passer, tant, en les perdant, ses griefs manqueraient d'emploi" (*AC*).

Le meilleur pédagogue en matière d'histoire est de façon paradoxale le plus dangereux puisque, jouissant de la confiance de ses étudiants, il s'en fait écouter. Les jeunes sont crédules lorqu'ils aiment et respectent leur maîtres. G. Roy met en garde contre le tort qu'on professeur d'histoire trop sympathique pourrait causer: "Avec moi ils étaient dociles. Il y avait dans leurs yeux fixés sur les miens, une confiance parfaite. Je suppose qu'ils m'auraient crue si je leur avais dit la terre est peuplée d'ennemis, et qu'il faudrait haïr beaucoup de gens, des peuples" (*RD*).

Si l'on relit attentivement *La Petite Poule d'Eau* on s'aperçoit que Miss O'Rorke, qui ne parle pas un mot de français, n'est pas la seule à cultiver la division au Canada. L'excellente pédagogue, Melle Côté, n'enseigne pas l'anglais à ses élèves, ce qui est impardonnable au Manitoba. Son cours d'histoire glorifie les colons français et ignore totalement les Anglais. Elle lance les noms des pionniers français comme jadis les chefs militaires exaltaient leurs combattants avec des cris de guerre: Maisonneuve, Iberville, Champlain.... Et son lyrisme marque le coeur des enfants Tousignant et celui de Luzina comme les mythes chevaleresques imprimaient l'imagination de Don Quichotte: "Ravie, elle [Luzina] écoutait la belle, vieille, vieille histoire.... C'était beau plus beau encore que dans les livres à l'entendre raconter par la maîtresse avec tant de talent, cette jeunesse fervente qu'elle y mettait. Luzina avait envie de rire, de pleurer" (*PPE*). Ainsi en flattant le chauvinisme émotif des Tousignant, Melle Côté avait préparé, à son insu, tout ce qui se passerait le jour où quelqu'un leur révèlerait la deuxième partie de la même épopée: la déception immense des enfants Tousignant et la friction inévitable entre la prochaine institutrice anglaise et ses petits élèves. Elle avait ranimé et nourri une vieille querelle, bref elle avait jeté la pomme de discorde. Dans un passage qui mériterait d'être étudié et analysé dans toutes les classes d'histoire et dans toutes les écoles du Canada, G. Roy dénonce la propagande chauviniste qui entretient la vieille haine entre les communautés d'origine différente. Elle rapproche et juxtapose les méthodes d'enseignement de Miss O'Rorke et celles de Melle Côté moins pour les opposer, croyons-nous, que pour les comparer et montrer en quoi elles sont semblables. Le fanatisme de l'Anglaise n'a en effet rien à envier à celui de la Française: "Le coeur de Miss O'Rorke [...] battait d'une excessive loyauté envers l'Empire britannique et, particulièrement envers le Royaume Uni sauf l'Irlande catholique, où elle n'avait jamais mis les pieds. Animée d'une passion tout aussi déraisonnable, Melle Côté en avait fait rayonner la *folie* [c'est nous qui soulignons] autour d'elle, Melle Côté avait laissé derrière elle des noms de personnages aussi loin des Tousignant que la lune. Cavelier de la Salle, La Vérendrye, Radisson, Frontenac, le mauvais intendant Bigot; tous, même les méchants, avaient droit à un souvenir fidèle" (*PPE*). En outre G. Roy signale l'importance de l'instruction primaire, cette dernière expression devant être entendue dans toutes ses acceptions, car l'imprégnation première, surtout lorsqu'elle flatte les émotions, est indélébile: "Peut-être Melle Côté conservait-elle l'avantage d'être venue la premiere dans l'Ile" (*PPE*), ajoute l'auteur pour expliquer la réticence des enfants Tousignant devant certains faits historiques. En somme tout se passe comme si les avantages de Melle Côté — son antériorité, sa jeunesse, sa ferveur, ses pouvoirs séducteurs — ne servaient qu'à tromper les enfants, leur apprendre à croire lorsqu'il faudrait douter et à douter lorsqu'il faudrait se rendre à l'évidence. C'est le propre de ce l'on appelle communément: le lavage de cerveau.

Présenter aux étudiants des opinions toutes faites, des idées reçues, des "vérités" absolues et leur faire apprendre par coeur est précisément ce que Claude Jasmin reproche aux "maîtres à penser" qui enseignent tout sauf à penser: "Comment avait-elle pu échapper aux influences néfastes", s'étonne-t-il au sujet de Mariette, "d'une éducation accomplie par des professeurs, machines à mémoriser, à endoctriner comme tous ceux que j'avais connus moi-même" (*S*). Et Paul Toupin renchérit: "Mémoriser ce que des générations avaient mémorisé, marquer le pas, ne pas sortir des rangs, approuver, admirer, ne pas critiquer, le collège enseignait cela" (*ACELS*).

La "machine à mémoriser" dure ce que durent les machines: l'espace d'une quinzaine d'années, après quoi rien ne va plus. C'est du moins l'opinion d'André Berthiaume qui affirme par la voix de son protagoniste Jolivet: "Il faut que je te dise Sylvie, un professeur ça répète pendant quinze ans, après ça radote" (*F*). Cette formule de Berthiaume paraît si juste qu'elle mériterait de figurer dans un dictionnaire; elle résume le rôle du pédagogue à la fois comme espèce sociologique et comme espèce métaphysique. Même s'il exprime des réserves sur la "machine enseignante" Berthiaume a le mérite d'être l'un des rares écrivains canadiens à situer le professeur au niveau philosophique: l'homme qui répète le même cours pendant quinze ou vingt ans est comparable à Sisyphe. C'est parce qu'elle refuse — entre autres raisons — de rouler le même rocher que l'héroïne de *La Fugue* se suicide.

MOINS PHILOSIPHE QUE BERTHIAUNE, Jean Simard accuse le professeur qui n'évolue pas: "L'évolution n'attend pas les éclopés" écrit-il dans *Les Sentiers de la Nuit*. Le professeur de musicologie Auguste Labranche est un "éclopé" en ce sens qu'il est incapable d'évoluer au rythme de ses étudiants. Ceux-ci se passionnent pour Bartok et Webern tandis que le maître aux goûts sclérosés en est encore à Bach et à Mozart. Un mur invisible s'élève entre eux; toute communication est devenue impossible et les cours d'Auguste Labranche sont un supplice pour les étudiants autant que pour le maître.

Mais le cas où les étudiants dépassent le maître n'est-il pas assez exceptionnel? Il est regrettable qu'aucun des auteurs que nous ayons lus n'aient traité du problème opposé. N'importe quel professeur qui est intellectuellement curieux aime faire de la recherche et renouveler la matière et les perspectives de son enseignement. Il souffre s'il doit constamment s'abaisser au niveau du "répétiteur." Tels la Seine et le Pont Mirabeau les étudiants coulent et le professeur demeure souvent contre son gré, car celui-ci ne peut toujours choisir ses cours ni ses disciples. Tant qu'un professeur aura chaque année un groupe d'étudiant qui l'oblige à recommencer là-même où il avait commencé les années précédentes, sa tâche sera

sisyphienne. Et malheur à celui qui planerait dans des sphères trop élevées: il se retrouverait devant une salle vide comme Paul Valery au Collège de France ou comme Samuel Beckett à la Sorbonne.

La question d'âge est un autre élément "absurde" inhérent à la condition enseignante. Socrate disait qu'on ne devrait pas étudier la philosophie avant l'âge de cinquante ans; Malraux a écrit qu'il faut soixante ans pour former un homme. Si la sagesse, la connaissance et l'expérience sont nécessaires au bon pédagogue, il ne saurait en exister à moins de soixante ans. C'est l'idée qui se dégage de plusieurs ouvrages de G. Roy. Mais les personnes âgées n'ont plus la force physique, le dynamisme imdispensables à la profession. Tout au plus, un vieillard est-il capable de s'occuper d'un enfant à la fois, tel M. Saint-Hilaire transmettant un peu de ses lumières à la petite Christine. D'ailleurs seul un être aussi exceptionnel que Christine sent intuitivement le profit qu'elle peut tirer de la fréquentation des personnes âgées, car ces dernières ne jouissent pas de crédibilité auprès de la plupart des jeunes: les petits-enfants de M. Saint-Hilaire trouvent leur grand-père sénile et le dédaignent complètement. Toujours trop jeune ou trop vieux le pédagogue est ainsi placé devant l'alternative suivante: ou bien il consentira à répéter ses cours *ad nauseam* et ce faisant s'abrutira; ou bien il avancera sans attendre les novices ni les retardataires. Dans ce cas-ci on lui reprochera d'avoir perdu le contact avec ses étudiants.

Pierre Baillargeon a relevé l'incompatibilité des qualités qu'on attend généralement du professeur; cette inéquation entre "répétiteur" et penseur, ce divorce entre homme robot et homme de génie. Par la voix de son héros Claude Perrin, il brosse le portrait des "répétiteurs" typiques: "Je ne voyais pas bien ce que mes anciens maîtres auraient pu faire dans le monde. A quelques exceptions près ils étaient sots, laids, tristes. Sans doute étaient-ce là des titres à l'enseignement [....] On leur demandait de nous apprendre à lire, à écrire, à penser par nous-mêmes, toutes choses dont la plupart d'entre eux, faute de préparation, faute de loisirs, étaient incapables" (*MCP*, cité par Bessette, Geslin et Parent). Baillargeon admet bien quelques circonstances atténuantes (cf. "faute de préparation, faute de loisirs"). Néanmoins, que le professeur soit lui-même victime du système ou qu'il soit coupable de paresse cérébrale, les conséquences demeurent les mêmes pour l'étudiant et futur citoyen. Pour Claude Perrin — alias Baillargeon — de même que pour Lebeuf — alias Bessette — le professeur est un transmetteur d'erreur; sa bonne foi, ni aucune autre circonstance atténuante ne rachètent le mal qu'il fait: "A défaut de science, ils se fiaient à leur conscience. L'intention droite leur tenait lieu de jugement éclairé [....] Non seulement ils nous induisaient en erreur mais encore ils se trompaient eux-mêmes" (*LMCP*, cité par BGP).

Si la sottise et l'incapacité à penser sont des "titres à l'enseignement", il va de soi que l'intelligence et la faculté de penser constituent des obstacles sérieux au professorat: c'est du moins le raisonnement que fait Baillargeon qui poursuit

rigoureusement son idée: "Mais s'ils avaient pensé, ils n'auraient pas souffert d'en être empêchés par les élèves, et plutôt que de leur apprendre à lire, ils auraient fait des livres" (*LMCP*, cité par BGP). Les professeurs canadiens sauront gré aux Antonine Maillet et aux Gérard Bessette d'avoir en quelque sorte infirmé l'assertion de Pierre Baillargeon: ne relévent-ils pas l'honneur des pédagogues? Mais, en tout sincérité, ceux qui sont restés dans les rangs ne représentent-ils pas les quelques exceptions déjà concédées par l'auteur des *Médisances de Claude Perrin*? Quitter l'enseignement pour écrire des livres, c'est ce qu'ont fait en France les Simone de Beauvoir et les Régine Pernoud, les Achard et les Pagnol, les Butor, les Sartre et les Camus. Au Canada leur exemple a été suivi par Gabrielle Roy, Gilles Vigneault et d'autres sans doute.

La tragédie de l'enseignement n'est pas le fait du seul Québec, ni même du Canada; c'est une tragédie universelle. Mais cette constatation n'est guère réconfortante. Taine, Renan, Flaubert de concert avec d'autres grands penseurs croyaient que bien des maux sociaux — ceux qui sont évitables — résultaient de l'instruction erronée dispensée par des maîtres ignares. Saint-Exupéry déplorait le nombre de petits "Mozart assassinés." Comme leurs aînes d'outre Atlantique, les écrivains canadiens se lamentent en choeur sur le gâchis intellectuel qui se poursuit au pays, faute de révélateurs de génie, faute de bons pédagogues.

NOTES

[1] Oeuvres citées dans l'ordre des citations du texte: Paul Toupin, *Au Commencement était le souvenir* (abrégé: ACES), Montréal, Fides, 1973; Gérard Bessette, *Les Pédagogues* (P), Montréal, Le Cercle du livre de France, 1961; *Le Libraire* (L), Montréal, Le Cercle du livre de France Ltée, 1968; *L'incubation* (I), Montréal, Déom, 1965; *La Bagarre* (B), Montréal. Le Cercle du Livre de France Ltée, 1969; Jean Simard, *Félix* (F), Montréal, Editions Variétés, 1947; Gabrielle Roy, *La Petite Poule d'Eau* (PPE), Montréal, Beauchemin, 1960; *Bonheur d'Occasion* (BO), Flammarion, 1945; *Rue Deschambault* (RD), Montréal, Beauchemin, 1960; Jean Simard, *Les Sentiers de la nuit* (SN), Ottawa, Le Cercle du livre de France Ltée, 1959; Gabrielle Roy, *Alexandre Chenevert* (AC), Montréal, Beauchemin, 1954; Claude Jasmin, *Et puis tout est silence* (S), Montréal, Les Editions de l'Homme, 1965; André Berthiaume, *La Fugue* (F), Ottawa, Le Cercle du livre de France Ltée, 1966; Jean Simard, *Treize Récits*, "Un Professeur," Montréal, Collection de l'Arbre, Editions HMH, 1964; Pierre Baillargeon, *Les Médisances de Claude Perrin* (MCP), cité dans *Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne-Française* de Bessette, Geslin et Parent, Canada, Centre Educatif et Culturel, 1968.

QUEBEC ON THE EVE OF THE 15 NOVEMBER 1976 ELECTION

Max Dorsinville

In 1959, Maurice LeNoblet Duplessis died. The death of this politician who had dominated Quebec's political life for three decades signaled the end of an era. Duplessis was the sour incarnation of a long standing tradition, that of the alliance between the Church and the State which led him to brag that he had bishops eating out of his hand. Duplessis was a politician who clung to quasi-mystical beliefs in the virtues of the past while he conceded the present of industrialization and technology to the American trusts and corporations that owned the economy of his province. So that when Duplessis died in Quebec's northern wilderness, while visiting the installations of one of those combines whose rights for exploitation of iron ore were obtained for a pittance, his death was the ironical death of a king: [in the words of the late journalist André Laurendeau] a "negro king."

Knowing his record, intellectuals and artists of Quebec who had formulated their dissent throughout Duplessis' rule in the pages of *Le Devoir* and *Cité Libre* did not cry "Hail to the King" but they thought joyfully nonetheless that their fight against obscurantism had been rewarded. Now it was felt, Quebec would open its windows to the world.[1]

DURING THE SEVENTEEN YEARS that followed the end of the Duplessis era, it was a commonplace in the thinking in and about Quebec that the evolution of Quebec society was best characterized as a quest inspired by the need to open a society that had been traditionally closed and kept isolated. A nation which for better or for worse had been forced to live closed in, conditioned by conservative ideologies, had no alternative but that of destroying the frontiers which had been historically established for its protection and survival. The evolution of Quebec over the last seventeen years is thus characterized in a notion that is agreed upon by schools of thought as opposed as that of the Federalists (which believes in Quebec's future within Confederation) and the Independentists (which believes that Quebec's future is best understood within the framework of self-determination). It is precisely on the political dimension of this opening to the world that these two schools of thought disagree.

The problematical frame of this opening to the world is etched by an historical phenomenon during the last decade, in the context of the literature of that period. By means of a singular image in the poetry and fiction of the Sixties, the Quebec writer demonstrated a keen interest in if not a fascination for a diversified and complex cultural experience symbolized in the concept of Negritude. Negritude is an ideology, a literary movement, some would say a mythology that grew in the Thirties and Forties first in Europe and later in Africa and the West Indies: a concept argued by intellectuals of the Third World to assert their identity and, by extrapolation, the identity of their native culture. Negritude identified the forms, the characteristics of the cultural experience of black people subjected to colonialism in Africa, in the West Indies as well as in the Americas. It is with this search for identity, this quest for self-understanding by Third World intellectuals, that certain writers and intellectuals of Quebec associated their vision of a new Quebec. But before analyzing the terms of this new vision we have to consider the ideological conflict which gives it sustenance.

Duplessis' death was accompanied by a crisis within the intelligentsia in Quebec. The intellectual elite revolving around the review *Cité Libre* (1950-1965) had led a fight based on a liberal concept of the state and on humanism as an individual code of ethics. Claiming the right to personal fulfillment freed of conservative, religious and other dogmatic impositions, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Gérard Pelletier and other thinkers perceived the disappearance of the Duplessis era as the symbolic sign of the birth of a society which by discarding a state-of-siege mentality would henceforth relate to the mainstream of modernity:

> around 1960 it seemed that freedom was going to triumph in the end. From 1945 on, a series of events and movements had combined to relegate the traditional concepts of authority in Quebec to the scrap-heap; .... So much so that the generation entering its twenties in 1960 was the first in our history to receive fairly complete freedom as its lot. The dogmatism of Church and State, of tradition, of the nation had been defeated.[2]

But this elite, nourished by the ideas of the English liberal tradition, the thinking of the French Christian humanists and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, found itself overtaken by a series of events. On the outside, these events were the accession of former colonies in Africa and the West Indies to self-determination. On the inside, this elite was outflanked by upheavals in the political, labour, religious and educational fields. The past was opposed to the present, conservatism to radicalism, resignation to defiance, tradition to innovation. Two world outlooks, two conceptions of the new Québécois, were brought to light. So much so that Pierre Elliott Trudeau bemusedly notes that "In 1960, everything was becoming possible in Quebec, even revolution."[3]

The precepts of liberalism and of humanism advocated by the *Cité Libre* elite

gave rise to a new social conscience determined to effect a total overhaul of Quebec society. The generation following *Cité Libre,* organized around *Liberté* (1958-), *Parti Pris* (1963-1968), *Socialisme 64* (1964-1966) and a publishing house like Hexagone, left free to draw parallels and establish ideological links between the decolonization movement in Africa and in Asia and the "Quiet Revolution" that was occurring in Quebec. For the European liberal and humanist model, the intellectuals of *Parti Pris* substituted a Third World model inscribed in the perspective of colonialism, declaring the right of people to control their political destiny. The theorists of *Parti Pris*, far from perceiving Duplessis' rule as an aberation, or as the cause of Quebec's problems, characterized it as the reflection of an historical imbalance consequent to the 1760 Conquest. Accordingly, it was felt that a feeling of dispossession deeply embedded in consciences explained the century-long influence of the Church and the traditional reliance on one form of dogmatism or another in social and individual relations. Taking a long look at the history of Quebec since 1760, these theorists assigned to dispossession the significance of a dramtic shock which traditionally had never been confronted. The young intellectuals of *Pari Pris* committed themselves to the task of bringing about this resolution.

Basically, the ideological model provided by *Parti Pris* can be thus described. Like the former colonies of the Third World, Quebec had to liberate, repossess and recreate itself by means of political sovereignty. The equation was as follows. Like the Third World colonies, Quebec had been subjected to a foreign power. A local administration had been put in place, controlled by means of indirect rule by the foreign power. Any attempt at questioning the status quo was cancelled out from the beginning insofar as a conservative ideology obsessed with the past and a denial of the present dominated in all spheres of activity, and directly or indirectly sustained a colonial type of subjugation. Individual success was achieved by means of assimilation, acculturation to the dominant power group. On the one hand was a mass of people resigned and kept ignorant of the real causes of its sense of defeat; on the other, an elite that was convinced of the need to maintain the status quo as a guarantee of social mobility. Many other parallels were drawn with the aim of re-enforcing this new equation of Quebec sharing the Third World experience of colonialism, disenfranchisement and alienation. Not surprisingly, we find underlying the thinking of Paul Chamberland, Pierre Vallières, Pierre Maheu and others, some of the key ideas of the revolutionary Martiniquan Doctor Frantz Fanon. It is these same ideas, especially Fanon's theories on colonial violence, which in practice inspired the action of the first cells of the FLQ in the early Sixties. Read and analyzed further by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Gérard Pelletier and other intellectuals of both *Cité Libre* and *Parti Pris*, the work of Fanon and later that of Albert Memmi and Jacques Berque, Gramsci and Ernesto Guevara, were perceived as the cornerstone of a debate on the future form of Quebec society. Thus, it is with this crisis between two generations in the

intelligentsia in the background that we can approach the image centrally used in the literature of Quebec in the Sixties, the image of Negritude as co-opted by Quebec writers.

ADMITTEDLY, this identification with a Third World experience did not take place on the popular level; it was the concern of an educated middle-class. This movement in its extreme form was characterized by the violence or the rhetoric of violence of the FLQ members or sympathizers during the period 1963-1970. Inasmuch as this violence was not supported by the general population that the terrorists claimed to represent, their action was that of marginal elements in Quebec society. One could even add that insofar as identification with the Third World was essentially a theoretical problem debated by intellectuals in little magazines that reach a restricted readership, the Fanonian model is perhaps doubtful as an empirical base for the analysis of the cultural effervescence of Quebec during the decade of the Sixties. But on the literary level, in the mythical perspective of the imagination in Quebec, the image provided by the Quebec writer articulates at length a new vision of the Québécois.

The esthetic of the *Parti Pris* movement celebrated a native land; it called for an exploration, an inventory of landscape which had to be given proper expression. This esthetic established the particularities of a concept of art which rested on the power of the word, on the spoken effectiveness of language in its more vital concrete and direct form. It was a concept of art that aimed at describing in realistic fashion the Québécois' everyday life of alienation and general uneasiness. To be sure this vision produced an art that was violent in language, in imagery, since this art was coupled with a design that was vital and existential according to its practitioners. This design was that of a struggle for liberation. It was in this context that the mythology of Negritude and the image of the black man as the symbol of the Québécois were put to use: "I am the evil that you have created. I am what you have created Dorchester, Colburn, Durham. I am the heap of blackness in the gallows of America."[4] The influence of the poet, politician and playright from Martinique, Aimé Césaire, was dominant in this literature of "decolonization."

This perception of the black man did not differ from certain stereotyped images since it indicated what the onlooker aims at finding in what is looked at. To that extent, the perception revealed a psychological truth far more germane to the onlooker than to the one that was looked at. And perhaps that is what needs to be underlined: how the Québécois "engagé" writer painted a reverse image which he claimed as his own. This process of identification is fairly simple: the Québécois was perceived as alienated, uprooted, assimilated, oppressed, and divorced from himself; somebody who existed for others rather than for himself was therefore

associated with the image of the black, the stereotyped image of the alienated being. The writers expressing with the greatest anguish their sense of unease went to the extent of co-opting even the blackness of pigmentation to express their alienation, if not the precise historical experiences meted out to the black man: "When I'll go to New York it is to Harlem that I will head for and not because of exoticism. I am much too concerned with precise familial links. I know the feeling of night-sticks in Alabama. There are fraternities in sorrows that your civil rights cannot hide."[5] If the black man represented in his concrete physical self the embodiment of dispossession, the Quebec writer of the Sixties affirmed that the Québécois was a "white nigger" because he displayed all the psychological characteristics of Negritude.[6]

The metaphor of Negritude was omnipresent. In 1962, the novelist Jacques Godbout, fresh from a two-year stay in Ethiopia, used in his novel, *L'Aquarium*, a tropical colonial setting in the periphery of which a motley crew of expatriates survived. Clearly this novel was symbolic of Godbout's perception of Quebec as a hot-house environment for which fresh air was needed. Another writer, Réal Benoît, in a long short story entitled *Rhum Soda*, had used Haïti as a setting to evoke a sense of personal freedom sorely lacking in the Quebec experience. But it was particularly in the writings of Hubert Aquin (in his novels *Prochai Episode*, *Trou de Mémoire*), Paul Chamberland (in his poetry, *Terre Québec*, *L'Afficheur Hurle*), Jacques Renaud (in his novel *Le Cassé*), Jacques Brault, Gaston Miron, Gérald Godin and Michèle Lalonde, to name just the major writers of the Sixties, that we can see the diverse uses made of this new-found mythology. In her poem *Speak White*, published in 1968, Michèle Lalonde addressed herself in the following manner to this new preoccupation:

> Speak white/ Tell us again about freedom and democracy/ We know that liberty is a black word/ as misery is black/ as blood is muddied with the dust of Algiers or of Little Rock/ Speak white from Westminster to Washington, take turns/ Speak white as on Wall Street/ white as in Watts/ Be civilized/ and understand our conventional answer/ when you ask us politely/ how do you do/ and we mean to reply/ we're doing all right/ we're doing fine/ we/ are not alone/ We know that we are not alone.[7]

What we see in this passage is a summary of the equation drawn by most of the writers of the Sixties, an equation between what is said to have been the historical experience of the Québécois and that of other minority groups throughout the world, particularly the black experience.

In more general terms, this new mythology appeared in the following fashion. In one instance, it was the lyrical and aggresive call for revolution, for armed uprising. It was the picture of the revolutionary whose archetype was the Fanonian colonized who finds liberation by means of cathartic violence. In the words of Paul Chamberland: "The foundries are erupting in the veins of a people/ the

majestic soil grows and carves in its flesh/ the hammer and the/ sickle and the cannon powder/ its face expands in the primordial lights of bombs."[8] Elsewhere, it was the clinical description of a quotidian life style bared of any artifice, where an individual dispossessed of self — of identity, language, culture — sought a precise object to vent his rage against. That was the substance of Jacques Renaud's short novel *Le Cassé*. Further, it was a psychological climate where the Québécois was described as a member of the international fraternity of the "wretched of the earth." That was the design at work in Hubert Aquin's novel *Prochain Episode*.

BASICALLY THERE ARE TWO ASPECTS to the Negritude archetype. First, is the inventory of a sense of uneasiness and of pain, the quest through myriad events for the causes of a state of despair. Second, following the identification of unease and anguish, there was a desire to act upon and perhaps correct this state of despair. In Quebec literature of the Sixties, we find therefore by means of characterization, symbolism and themes, the commitment of the writer to a refusal of traditional acceptance and resignation; his commitment was to revolt and to the depiction of acts as augurs of the birth of a new revolutionary being. A novel that captured those two attitudes is Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table* (1965). In the poetry of Paul Chamberland, revolt was dramatized in a symbolism of blood and fire suggestive of a ritual of destruction accompanied by creation. In Chamberland as well as Miron, the theme was the cry of pain preceding the ultimate release of anger.

But around 1968 the movement of revolt and identification with the Third World had spent itself. The magazine *Parti Pris* folded. The principal theoreticians of the movement had other concerns. Chamberland left for Paris to pursue his studies. Upon his return, and with the collaboration of Pierre Maheu, he got involved in mysticism and in research on language and communication. Chamberland and the former revolutionaries found themselves in sympathy with the counterculture and other popular movements coming from the U.S. which were proclaiming by the end of the Sixties that social change could best be achieved by means of psychic change. Hubert Aquin, who in his first novel was already engaged in extending the boundaries of experimental fiction, went on to further mystify his readers with a display of arcane erudition and a probing of the mysteries of identity. The rhetoric of disguise, metamorphosis, bewildering temporal and spatial schemes, demonstrated Aquin's affiliation with the baroque tradition. Other writers cultivated an interest in the visual arts, in the cinema for instance. Or they simply stopped writing. By the Fall of 1970, as in a final resurgence of life, the FLQ was again in the news, but it was more or less of a death

throe: two years before, the visionaries and the celebrants of a revolutionary Quebec had revealed that they were tired or defeated.

Why? Perhaps, in one way, it was the revenge of history; a revenge not altogether different from the one that the *Parti Pris* generation had taken against their elders of *Cité Libre*. Towards the end of the Sixties a new generation had come to be no longer conditioned by the negative impositions which had been at the root of the revolt of *Parti Pris*. In an urban Quebec, where the birth rate had reached the degree zero, the traditional family no longer existed. The Church had lost its former power; the secondary and college school systems had been secularized; a breath of fresh air blowing all over Quebec since 1960 had brought in its wake the sequels of the decolonization movement in Africa. The process of self-determination in most of the former colonies had suffered from false starts or it had been aborted by fratricidal struggles and coups d'état. Also those newly-independent nations had discovered that they were still very much dependent on the resources of the former colonizing powers. But mainly, the rebellion against the established order in Quebec had found a substitute to Fanon in the youth movement, rock music and "flower power": a youth movement or counterculture which proclaimed the need for change by means of inner quest and experimentation with drugs. The stress was on personal vision as opposed to collective vision.

In Quebec, as well as in the United States, England and France, this new generation that appeared in the late Sixties replaced the hardline political models for social change with so-called alternative models (albeit provided by the culture of affluence and consumerism). Pop culture characterized the era. The new heroes were the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and other creatures of the media. The Third World model for revolt had been discarded and a revolt more germane to the North American experience was in place, the product of the contradictions of the consumer society. Violence or the rhetoric of violence was no longer fashionable, but "dropping out" of the system was. The talk was no longer about removal *of* the system but removal *from* the system. Hence a whole generation turned to utopias: it was back to nature, getting close to the earth, indulgence in Eastern philosophies, recourse to communal life style; in short, "getting high," "tripping." An anarchic wind blew over the European and American youth of that period and Quebec youth — the very same generation which presumably should have continued the fight begun by *Parti Pris* — participated in the process. There was a general lack of interest in Society. Instead of Fanon, the taste was for Jimi Hendrix; Janice Joplin was deemed more significant than Angela Davis. Quebec perhaps had finally made its entry into the modern world when the post-*Parti Pris* counterculturists, grouped around the avant-garde little magazine *Mainmise* (founded in 1970), identified Quebec's problems with the general malaise prevailing in most industrialized Western societies. The malaise was the same and the remedy provided in Quebec, as in the U.S. and elsewhere, was the recourse to

hallucinatory solutions. The sentiment of dispossession which for the *Parti Pris* generation had been a root motivation for the need for social change was now identified with an overwhelming sense of despair and cultural decadence prevalent throughout the Western world. The polarization came to be thus: on the one hand, the youth and avant-garde intellectuals of Quebec were claiming the counterculture and denouncing the Establishment; on the other, the Quebec Establishment rejoiced in finding itself sketched in a general frame alongside most Western Establishments: i.e. acquisitive, profit-oriented, committed to the benefits of technology. The era of the great clerics and of the rural notables in Quebec was gone. The new era of the Seventies was to be ruled by technocrats. This technocratic vision of Quebec society was provided by the Liberal party led by Premier Robert Bourassa, starting with his election to office in 1970 with the promise of 100,000 jobs within the first months of his term.

A "brains trust" along the Ford Company "whizzkids" pattern envisaged for Quebec an essentially American model for growth and affluence. An uncritical welcome was then extended to the multinationals and to theories of unlimited growth. If Jean Lesage led Quebec in 1960 on a "Quiet Revolution," in the direction of a goal which logically forced the *Parti Pris* intellectuals to call for an unconditional and unquiet revolution, Robert Bourassa lay claim in 1970 to the model of the affluent society as defined by J. K. Galbraith: a society based no longer on national values or on historical demands, but one that recognized only the imperatives of the mass world-wide market economy. Room was to be made for the multinationals and other international conglomerates. In the span of ten years, from 1960 to 1970, the evolution of Quebec had come full circle. Maurice Duplessis died in 1959 while visiting the installations of an American mining company in Northern Quebec; in 1970, Bourassa celebrated the opening of Quebec to the world by dining with David Rockefeller.

INDEED, QUEBEC WAS DISCOVERING ITS AMERICANNESS. The popular arts were replacing the cultural constructs and concepts of previous generations, whether of the *Cité Libre* of the *Parti Pris* stamp, who were found to be elitists and in any case "irrelevant." The post-*Parti Pris* creative writers sought to explore further the premises of art rooted in the spoken form of language, by making full use of the vernacular, particularly the street vernacular of the Montreal East end, "joual." The new populist art triumphed not in the traditional literary genres such as fiction and poetry but in the songs and the plays that were produced in the early 1970's. The premise of the need to describe the Québécois in as realistic a mode as possible led to the celebration (in the plays of Michel Tremblay for instance) of individuals from the working class. The

accent was on the environment, the language, the values, the outlook of urban street culture judged now to be symptomatic of the true Quebec reality beyond ideology and political aspiration. The native land was no longer claimed in the lyrical and transcendent fashion of the Sixties, but was presented, in drama and in the new film industry, in its quotidian form void of any theory. It was as if at the end of *Parti Pris* ideology was the discovery of an everyday life style which beyond language did not differentiate Quebec reality from the general North American reality. Which was precisely the theme of a well-known song of Robert Charlebois (who emerged as the epitome of the new "hip," urban, young Québécois image). The thinking of the Seventies reflected a consciousness of the decisive influence of the media on society. So that, in Quebec as elsewhere in North America and Europe, the perception involved the "generation gap", the rebellion against middle class ethics, the refusal of the culture of the academies, the desire for an alternative life style that no political doctrine could circumscribe; briefly, the ambivalence of a well-fed younger generation vis à vis the values of the affluent society. Unsurprisingly, the bible of American youth, Charles Reich's *The Greening of America,* was widely read in Quebec; something like "California Dreamin' " became the common dream of many an urban young Québécois.

From 1960 to 1970, a new middle class reigned in Quebec, the product of urbanization and technology. The values of this middle class became endemic: there was little inclination for traditional nationalist debates but there was a strong desire to correspond to the image of the middle class in all industrial societies. The taste was for prosperity, comfort, tourism, "the sweet life." At a time when the Québécois could afford to travel extensively; when Quebec industry, whether in the book trade, in cinema, or in hostelry, was expanding, necessitating wider, outside, markets; at a time when Quebec society was discovering a vocation for leadership of the francophone world; when Quebec had disenfranchised itself both of the state of seige of the Duplessis era and of a Third World-inspired ideology, the opening of Quebec to the world meant a new image of self, or the need for a new image of self. But which one? The image of the Québécois as a "white nigger" had lost its shock value.

Quebec literature of the Seventies indicated, if anything, the end of movements and ideologies. Writers were involved in projects where the imagination was deemed to be self-sufficient. Godbout's novel, *D'Amour, P.Q.* (1972), for example, was a reflection on the impact of the media on modern life; Aquin's *Neige Noire* (1974) was a mixture of media, time and space; Langevin's *L'Elan d'Amérique* (1972) dramatized the Americanness of the modern Quebec ethos; Carrier's *Il est par là la soleil* (1970), *Le 2000e étage* (1973) presented a mythology based on the Rabelaisian grotesque. Poets found themselves taking a back seat. Since 1968, in a state of uncertainty and ambiguity, a society which used to be closed found itself

now opened to all currents and to all winds. A society characterized by intense homogeneity had moved to pluralist openness informed by the spirit of individual pursuit of happiness of most consumer societies.

Ironically, Quebec and the Third World mirrored each other once more. The images reflected were those of a new middle class satisfied with itself and bent on maintaining newly-acquired privileges. The landscape was one of sharp contrasts. In Quebec the traditional elite was replaced by an elite which was indifferent to the national question. If that elite demonstrated a national preoccupation, it was to the extent that the national interest did not detract from the new economic order the elite benefited from. Therein lay the paradox of the Parti Québécois whose clientèle up to the November elections was essentially to be found within the ranks of this new urban elite. And there still lies the crucial question faced by the P.Q. now that it is in power: how to reconcile the benefits of affluence with political sovereignty? How to bring to fruition aspirations to self-determination without rocking the economic boat? But these are questions no one has answers for at the moment. To get back to the pre-November 1976 cultural climate and the vision of the new elite, we find the vocation of this new elite illustrated in various forms. It was the vision of the mayor of Montreal to inscribe his city in the lineage of the major urban centres of North America. It was the vision of Premier Robert Bourassa, continuing in the footsteps of Premier Duplessis, when he handed over large chunks of Quebec territory to I.T.T. Or it was Premier Bourassa hastening the coming of a "brave new world" when in disregard of ecology and the rights of the native populations he launched the billion-dollar hydroelectric James Bay project on Quebec's north shore. No doubt, the guiding principle was growth at all cost, at a time when limits were being placed on such a notion in the United States, where this concept had showed its worst excesses. It is ironic that at a time when American cultural influences were rampant in Quebec no one in government seemed to be paying much attention to the findings of a Barry Commoner or a Paul Erlich.

Social inequities meanwhile worsened. Citizens' groups made a dent in the municipal political structure of Montreal, but not to the extent of preventing the wastage that went into making Montreal the host for the 1976 Olympics. Agitation on the labour scene came to a head when labour leaders in 1972 threatened to bring down the state: they were consequently locked up. Junior colleges and universities jumped on the bandwagon of prolonged strikes. When the November 1976 elections took place, two large universities, one in Montreal and the other in Quebec city, were on strike. But all in all, the consensus was that these turmoils were at best mere reflections of the fact that Quebec had become an open society no different from American and other mass societies. Quebec was in the mainstream of a world order where technology and industrialization were allowed

to chart their own course, while, on the other hand, social needs were left attended by rhetorical agitation.

The Third World reflected a similar ambivalence. The state of things in general in Black Africa in the post-independence era was that of societies for which the need for a new order had been proclaimed, but which, shortly after independence had been achieved, repeated the mistakes, the errors and the built-in inequities bequeathed by the former colonizing nations. These nominally "independent" societies found themselves still subjected to the markets of Western nations, dependent on their technical assistance, accepting the principle of foreign investment as a *sine qua non* condition for progress. In brief, the acceptance of the maintenance of foreign social and cultural structures explained the existence of an elite whose values, outlook and interests were in most cases merely the mirror image of the former colonizer's. Frantz Fanon had, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (written in 1961), foreseen the ravages of neo-colonialism when political independence was not paralleled by a revamping of the economic structures of the former colonies:

> The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But the same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country ... Neither financiers nor industrial magnates are to be found within this national middle class. The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket.[9]

In the Third World, as in Quebec, the population was left waiting for promised rewards like the characters in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. The gap was wide and growing increasingly wider between the standard of living shared by a westernized elite and the traditional life style of the population. In the Third World, as in Quebec, one finds that the cornerstone of the social order was not so much national as a-national, and that "culture" simply meant the vagaries of everyday living subjected to the rise and fall of the Dow-Jones average.

Such was the general picture in Quebec on the eve of the 15th of November 1976 elections. A society had during the relatively short time span of two decades been tested by its ruling intellectual and cultural elite against three models. In the Fifties, the *Cité Libre* group called for a European liberal and humanist view of man whose primary concern was the preservation of individual rights. In the Sixties, the *Parti Pris* people looked to the Third World for inspiration and proposed an ideology for political liberation with the accent put on nationalism and

group consciousness. In the Seventies, the Quebec counterculture as well as the Establishment completed the journey where it had begun it, by effecting a rediscovery of America.

Hence the central question faced by Quebec on the eve of the 15th of November elections was precisely whether the future lay in the continued acceptance of and indulgence in the "brave new world" of consumerism or whether the quest for affluence was worth the price of relinquishing Quebec's indigenous historical and cultural character. Differently put, the challenge was whether consumerism could be compatible with nationalism. A positive answer to this last question had been badly thought out by Duplessis. Reformulated by the P.Q., the answer agreed upon by a plurality of the Quebec electorate suggested that Quebec might be in the unique position of integrating the apparently incompatible values of nationalism and consumerism in the making of a new society. And *that* has yet to be seen.

NOTES

[1] Max Dorsinville, *Caliban Without Prospero: Essay on Quebec and Black Literature* (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcépic, 1974), p. 27.

[2] Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), p. 206.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Paul Chamberland, *L'Afficheur Hurle* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1964), p. 18. My translation.

[6] See Pierre Vallières, *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal, Parti Pris, 1968).

[7] Michèle Lalonde, "Speak White," *Ellipse*, 3 (Spring 1970), p. 29, p. 31.

[8] Paul Chamberland, "Deuil 4 juin 1963" in *Terre Québec* (Montréal: Déom, 1964), p. 33.

[9] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), pp. 149-50.

LA POESIE QUEBECOISE

Edwin Hamblet

LA POÉSIE QUÉBÉCOISE SEMBLE AVOIR ATTEINT le rang de l'universalité tout en retrouvant sa particularité et en annonçant un nouveau classicisme par sa pureté et par son authenticité. Ayant passé par les différentes étapes de la passion, de la purification, de la mort, de la résurrection et de la regénération, cette poésie, résultat d'un long pèlerinage spirituel plein d'angoisse mais source de créativité artistique, a trouvé sa place légitime parmi les littératures nationales. Optimiste dans son état actuel, elle célèbre les souffrances et les joies de l'homme québécois tandis qu'il assume son destin et ose nommer sa patrie dans son passage des ténèbres d'un jansénisme morbide à la conquête de la vie et à la découverte de l'amour. C'est une poésie à la fois chrétienne ou séculaire selon l'optique du poète individuel qui annonce sa foi en l'homme libre et en la collectivité dont il fait partie. C'est aussi un chant liturgique qui proclame la rédemption de l'homme libéré d'une fatalité écrasante et de tout complexe d'infériorité qui accepte le risque de vivre et l'aventure que cela comporte.

Les caractéristiques "classiques" de la poésie contemporaine du Québec deviennent beaucoup plus frappantes quand on lit la description du drame antique dans les *Cahiers du Festival d'Avignon-Jean Vilar* (Numéro 10, mai 1973) : La messe primitive se jouait dans un théâtre. Il y avait Passion, Mort et Résurrection. Cette passion était un *Sparagmos* — un sacrifice par déchirement, par démembrement, suivi d'un repas collectif de chair crue, d'une communion sacrée. Par ce rituel, l'homme crée Dieu. Ce Dieu de la végétation, un dieu adolescent, meurt tous les ans, à chaque cérémonie, pour renaître — comme le grain, comme la nature tout entière. C'est le rituel même — ce rituel de la nouvelle naissance — qui le fait naître. La cérémonie imite donc le cycle de la nature dans son mouvement de montée — descente — montée avec un but magique: la fertilité, le regénération de la vie.

L'Eglise a conservé l'idée de sacrifice et de regénération dans la célébration de la messe, acte dramatique chargé de textes bibliques et poétiques. Le Christ s'offre à Dieu le Père, comme victime pour tous les hommes, par le ministère des prêtres. Ce sacrifice de pain et de vin de la Nouvelle Loi n'est pas sanglant mais continue

l'oeuvre de la Croix, symbole de la rédemption de l'homme et de son passage de la mort à la vie éternelle. Saint-Paul dans sa première épître aux Corinthiens (5:7-8, *La Bible de Jérusalem*) décrit aux premiers chrétiens la joie de la messe pascale, agape rappelant le repas collectif des peuples antiques: "Ne savez-vous qu'un peu de levain fait lever toute la pâte? Purifiez-vous du vieux levain pour être une pâte nouvelle, puisque vous êtes des azymes. Car notre pâque, le Christ, a été immolée. Célébrons donc la fête, non pas avec du vieux levain, ni un levain de malice et de perversité, mais avec des azymes de pureté et de vérité."

Dans le Québec séculaire et pluraliste d'aujourd'hui il a fallu l'odysée angoissée de plusieurs générations de poètes avant que l'acceptation de la vie avec ses douleurs et ses joies et la conception cyclique de l'existence, séculaire ou religieuse, prennent racine. Pendant près de deux cents ans l'homme québécois demeura essentiellement pessimiste de mentalité en refusant la participation active et plénière à la vie. La poésie reflèta ce pessimisme profond d'une religiosité janséniste qui déforma la bonne nouvelle du Christ en accentuant le péché et un défaitisme morbide. Plusieurs poètes furent victimes de ce milieu culturel qui rendit les hommes excessivement passifs et les fit mourir à petit feu. Frustrés dans leurs tentatives poétiques de s'évader de ce monde clos, beaucoup d'entre eux finir par devenir des aliénés d'intérieur.

Tel fut le cas d'Emile Nelligan (1879-1941), un des premiers grands poètes du Québec. Jeune adolescent impétueux, il ne put jamais sortir du cycle vicieux de ses souffrances et de sa passion et sombra dans la folie avant l'âge de vingt ans. Sa belle poésie tourmentée ressemble aux psaumes pénitentiaux chantés dans les offices catholiques de la Semaine sainte. Nelligan fut un "vaisseau d'or" dont les "mâts touchaient l'azur sur les mers inconnues." Mais le "soleil excessif" ne dura pas longtemps car la vie, cette vallée de larmes selon les Jansénistes, cet "Océan trompeur" selon le poète, causa son naufrage. Victime de "Dégoût, Haine et Névrose," Nelligan finit ses jours "aux profondeurs du Gouffre, immuable cercueil." Son coeur, "navire déserté," sombra dans "l'abîme du Rêve." Utilisant les couleurs de la liturgie dans ses vers pour exprimer les hauts et les bas de son voyage dans la vie, Nelligan ne put supprimer le noir de vendredi saint pour célébrer des Pâques dorées. Seul, triste et mélancolique, il ne put non plus faire face à la vie car "le monde est pour moi comme quelque linceul." Après avoir murmuré tout bas "des musiques aux Anges," le poète s'en alla "mourir dans son trou."[1]

Hector de Saint-Denys-Garneau prit courageusement la relève de Nelligan une génération plus tard. Garneau, catholique sincère, voulait à tout prix connaître la joie libératrice du christianisme en vainquant la dualité déformée entre la chair et l'esprit qui existait dans son milieu suffocant. Son pèlerinage poétique fut une tentative vaillante pour trouver une identité mais finit malheureusement par un échec. "Accompagnement," dernier poème de *Jeux et Regards dans l'Espace*, résuma cette incapacité de connaître le bonheur humain:

Je marche à côté d'une joie
D'une joie qui n'est pas à moi
D'une joie à moi que je ne puis pas prendre.[2]

Toutefois, les poètes québécois ont refusé de rester enlisés dans le marécage de souffrance et de dégradation où Nelligan et Garneau se trouvaient. L'obsession opprimante de la mort a cessé de les vaincre et de les maintenir dans un état perpétuel de masochisme. Alain Grandbois (1900-1975), maître des poètes contemporains, a carrément refusé la mort: "Ma mort je la repousse jusqu'à demain." Sa vision cosmique a été l'*aggiornamento* de la poésie québécoise car elle a aidé à chasser les ténèbres et les troubles de l'horizon. La mort a finalement trouvé sa place appropriée dans la vie parce qu'elle "n'est qu'une toute petite chose qui n'a aucune sorte d'importance." Grandbois affrontera la mort mais "demain seulement les mains pleines d'une extraordinaire douceur."[3]

Anne Hébert, cousine de Garneau, a pu se libérer, elle aussi, de la hantise de la mort en l'acceptant comme une partie intégrale de la vie mais non dominante. Elle a éprouvé le besoin de la confronter et son "Le Tombeau des rois" a été sa descente aux limbes dans un processus de purification nécessaire avant de remonter à la vie. "Livide et repue de songe horrible," le poète a "les membres dénoués" et les "morts hors de moi, assassinés." Ce n'est plus "l'abîme" de Nelligan car déjà dans sa descente Anne Hébert voit la brèche pas où la grâce va pénétrer: "Quel reflet d'aube s'égare ici"?[4]

L'emprise janséniste a été vaincue mais non sans souffrance et destruction. Roland Giguère a pu avec Hébert et Grandbois dépasser l'impasse de Nelligan et Garneau. Il s'agit pour Giguère d'un simple refus: "je détournai de moi les palmes noires que l'on m'offrait." Il opte pour les voies de la lumière: "je quittai pour toujours les routes jalonnées de feux morts." Tout de même Giguère trouve le besoin d'extirper ce mal hérité du passé. Une guérison, une purification s'impose:

Le temps est venu de passer par le feu
doubler la flamme à l'instant fatal
pour n'avoir des châteaux que l'essentiel

Giguère doit absolument rompre avec ce passé où tous étaient obsédés par la mort et rongés par un sentiment de culpabilité déplacé. C'est surtout un passé où l'amour et le pardon furent rejetés. Mais un sacrifice est nécessaire pour atteindre le nouvel état de pureté voulu: "il faut arriver à tout faire sauter à feu et à sang puis enjamber." Dans l'état antérieur "chaque nous nous arrachait un cri et nous grandissions dans l'agonie." La vie, "le paysage était à refaire." Tout repli, toute retraite est définitivement "coupé." "Dans la liberté des cris, un décret de bonheur" annonce la fin des ténèbres: "aujourd'hui la nuit est humiliée"; "tout est devant"; "je tourne le dos à l'ombre." Les chaînes de la prison de la fatalité accablante sont rompues. Cette fatalité désastreuse est le bourreau dont "la grande

main finit par pourrir"; c'est le geôlier "qui se meurt d'ennui devant la cendre des fontaines stériles." Le grand sacrifice, cet acte de purification, annonce la nouvelle vie: "Et les animaux de la peste renaîtront tous sous le signe du mouton blanc offert en holocauste." Le vieux monde périmé cède la place au nouveau, où selon Giguère l'homme libéré des monstruosités du passé est libre de construire une existence déjà rêvée. Le feu de l'Apocalypse purifie tout en réduisant à l'essentiel nécessaire pour un avenir meilleur.[5]

Le thème de rupture, de destruction et de purification se trouve aussi chez Paul-Marie Lapointe. Lui, refuse un monde clos pour vivre dans un univers pénétré d'espoir qui se dresse contre le mal. En contraste avec un Nelligan qui succomba prisonnier de son passé, Lapointe exprime la volonté de transformer le monde dans lequel il y a "tant de murs d'en arrière à démolir" et où "toutes les routes sont ouvertes" et "les troupeaux de buffles embauchés pour la conquête." Il parle des "cadavres purifiés par le feu et le fracassement des crânes dans le béton." Les couleurs de la liturgie (*vert*: espérance; *noir*: mort; *blanc*: vie; *rouge*: passion) s'affrontent dans cette lutte féroce de destruction et de libération. L'amour est l'élément catalyseur dans ce rite de passage au monde de demain: "l'horizon que je vois libéré par l'amour et pour l'amour."[6]

La poésie est un instrument de libération pour le poète québécois comme le signale Fernand Ouellette en parlant de sa naissance spirituelle. La rédemption entraîne forcément une lutte acharnée contre le dualisme et le manichéisme, héritages douteux de la culture occidentale. Ouellette décrit ce périple poétique au cours duquel il a réussi à dépasser cette phase préliminaire pour s'élever à une conscience de salut à la fois collective et individuelle. Lui, considère le poème dans sa nature même comme un acte de solidarité fraternelle car la parole est libératrice et franchit les murs du silence et de la solitude. La parole est aussi communication avec autrui. La marche vers un monde meilleur, vers le bonheur s'accomplit donc dans la collectivité: "Or la parole très neuve qui fut amère délie l'humain, vivifie le végétal." La lumière de la parole a toujours existé. C'est l'homme qui l'a refusée en l'avilissant. Dans *Le Soleil sous la mort* Ouellette chante la vie retrouvée à travers la parole: "Aujourd'hui nous sortons d'un bain de mémoire pour habiter blanc la matière végétale et vaste." Il salue avec joie l'éveil du peuple québécois qui découvre enfin, après un sommeil de deux cents ans, la chaleur du soleil, l'amour humain et divin. Il exhorte ses frères: "Debout! race de l'amour, la paix est vivante"! Ouellette devient le porte-parole de ces Québécois de l'âge atomique convertis du jansénisme au christianisme libérateur: "Le Christ en fusion s'adosse à l'amour . . . Tout lumière il abrase la mort." Le Christ retourne s'enraciner dans un Québec où il fut pendant longtemps mal compris et

"la paix ouvre ses paupières et longtemps fixe la mort."[7] Pour ce poète chrétien convaincu, la mort est vaincue et l'homme québécois, ainsi purifié et sauvé, peut prendre possession de son pays.

La majorité des poètes contemporains du Québec, croyants ou non-croyants, abordent dans leurs oeuvres ces thèmes de vie, de mort et de résurrection. Ils ont essayé de donner une nouvelle formule de vie et une identité à leur peuple. Ils ont préconisé non seulement une rupture avec le passé mais aussi une récupération des valeurs perdues pendant les années d'exil. Ainsi, la purification et la récupération représentent des étapes nécessaires dans le lent acheminement vers la société nouvelle. Jean-Guy Pilon recommande aux siens de "se rebâtir avec un visage neuf sur la cendre bientôt froide." La terre se libérera dès que l'homme québécois aura chassé "le visage de ses incertitudes." Pilon loue dans *Les Cloîtres de l'été*, ouvrage préfacé par René Char, ce "recommencement multiplié" où "il faut réapprendre les espoirs nécessaires" pour "la récouvrance d'une vie tant attendue."[8]

Le salut dans la poésie québécoise s'accomplit au niveau de l'individu et de la collectivité. Or salut individuel implique naissance et salut collectif, identité. Gatien Lapointe dans *Ode au Saint-Laurent* exprime intensément ce désir de connaissance de soi-même et de naissance:

> J'avance et j'interroge en pleine nuit
> Mon mal m'accorde une patrie
> J'ai vécu dans l'eau je nais sur la terre.

Lapointe est prêt à accepter les contradictions de son état d'homme québécois: "Je scelle la contradiction, ma langue est celle d'un homme qui naît"; "j'accepte la très brûlante contradiction." C'est là précisément où les poètes aliénés d'intérieur tels Nelligan et Garneau ont échoué. L'homme nouveau naît en même temps que la terre nouvelle et assume ses responsabilités en "informant l'avenir d'une caresse" et en "ouvrant à la chair un jour nouveau." Lapointe exhorte l'homme québécois à s'affirmer, à s'accepter et à construire en se dépassant et en se transformant. Le poète prend pied sur une terre qu'il aime: "L'Amérique est ma langue, ma patrie."[9]

La poésie québécoise a atteint le stade de la révolte et de la reconquête. Dans les rites de l'Antiquité classique et de la messe catholique le rachat s'accomplit par le sacrifice d'une victime. Pour Jacques Brault cette victime est son frère Gilles mort en guerre en Sicile. "Suite fraternelle" rend hommage à ce frère victime qui a racheté son peuple: si "ce pays n'a pas de nom," celui du frère est connu. C'est la fraternité même qui précède la naissance. Ainsi, la mort du frère aurait donné une identité au peuple du Québec "race de bûcherons et de crucifiés." En se révoltant contre le sort imposé aux Québécois, Brault dénonce leur apathie de "demi-révoltés confortables." "Ces croisés criards du Nord" seraient des colonisés de mentalité. Néanmoins, il ose affirmer l'éveil de cette collectivité: "Voici qu'un

peuple apprend à se mettre debout." Ce peuple est debout "face aux chacals de l'histoire, face aux pygmés de la peur." C'est un peuple qui a déjà subi sa passion, un peuple "aux genoux cagneux aux mains noueuses tant il a rampé dans la honte." Mais Brault observe toutefois qu'un peuple "ivre de vents et de femmes s'essaie à sa nouveauté."[10]

Yves Préfontaine, tout comme Brault, exige la destruction du mal en l'homme et une image nouvelle. Malgré les souffrances infligées au peuple, Préfontaine observe "le germe ici fragile qui persiste à croître contre l'hiver."[11] C'est le germe d'où jaillira la nouvelle vie, le printemps nouveau. C'est le retour de la chûte dont parle Paul Chamberland dans *Terre-Québec*:

> je fus descendu aux lieux de l'Innommé
> Un grand cheval d'ombre flambla l'instant de ma chûte Un million d'années-lumière et les arbres de la base au sommet s'éteignirent sur toute l'étendue de la montagne à la mer.[12]

Remontés de cette chûte, de cette descente, retournés de l'exil, guéris de l'aliénation, les poètes célèbrent la naissance du pays et l'éclosion à la vie.

Gaston Miron, doyen de l'*Hexagone*, chante "l'homme rapaillé," cet homme racheté et métamorphosé: "Je ne suis pas revenu pour revenir, je suis arrivé à ce qui commence." "L'homme de ce temps qui porte le visage de la flagellation" returne à la Terre de Québec. Rongé de la "morsure de naissance," du péché, il demande pardon à tous les hommes car le *nous* collectif était responsable de "l'humiliation de l'intelligence des pères" et de "l'avilissement de la lumière du verbe." Miron reconnaît la communion des saints, la fraternité de tous les hommes: "je vais rejoindre les brûlants compagnons dont la lutte partage et rompt le pain du sort commun." Tout en dénonçant l'apathie, la lâcheté, tout en refusant la mort, il reconnaît la nécessité de la souffrance, de la passion et de la purification afin de pouvoir accéder enfin à la vie de l'avenir. Dans "Octobre" Miron résume les aspirations et les promesses des poètes de la génération actuelle dans leur célébration de la vie:

> nous te ferons, Terre de Québec
> lit des résurrections
> et des mille fulgurances de nos métamorphoses
> de nos levains où lève le futur.[13]

C'est le mois d'octobre, c'est l'été indien précurseur du long hiver canadien; mais déjà l'humus contient le grain, symbole de la vie, de la fertilité et de la regénération du peuple francophone du Canada dans la magie poétique du printemps nouveau.

NOTES

[1] Émile Nelligan, *Poèsies complètes*, Luc Lacoursière, éd. (Montréal: Fides, 1952), pp. 44, 254.

[2] Hector de Saint-Denys-Garneau, *Oeuvres*, Jacques Brault et Benoît Lacroix, éd. (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1971), p. 34.

[3] Alain Grandbois, *Poèsies* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1963), pp. 125, 128.

[4] Anne Hébert, *Le Tombeau des Rois* (Québec: L'Institut Littéraire de Québec, 1953), p. 73.

[5] Roland Giguère, *L'Age de la Parole* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1965), pp. 11, 17, 24, 48, 90, 91, 95, 101, 111.

[6] Paul-Marie Lapointe, *Le Réel absolu* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1971), pp. 16, 117, 121.

[7] Fernand Ouellette, *Le Soleil sous la mort* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1965), pp. 16, 45, 64.

[8] Jean-Guy Pilon, *Les Cloîtres de l'été* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1965), pp. 19, 22, 24, 47.

[9] Gatien Lapointe, *Ode au Saint-Laurent* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1963), pp. 15, 16, 27, 43, 78, 90.

[10] Jacques Brault, *Mémoire* (Paris: Grasset, 1968), pp. 50, 53, 54, 56.

[11] Yves Préfontaine, *Pays sans parole* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, 1968), p. 70.

[12] Paul Chamberland, *Terre-Québec* (Montréal: Déom, 1964), p. 74.

[13] Gaston Miron, *L'Homme rapaillé* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1970), pp. 5, 72.

A TIME PAST

Cyril Dabydeen

A potted plant's conspiracy,
leaf-curled.

I bend down, rise up in duty
like a worshipper

in dwindling mist where plants
and humans

follow a breathing zest. Then
a sudden hiss —

a moment's careful withdrawal
in the almost disaster.

The snake lifts a venomous head.
Recoiling,

I imagine a dozen bend-downs, rise-ups
in a flash

before the pitchfork boys descend
like stalwart angels

in the kill. Snake-curled, potted head
chlorophyll and ichor —

our senses blessed.

review articles

TO IMPROVE WITHOUT PROGRESS

James Bacque

CHARLES TAYLOR, *Six Journeys: A Canadian Pattern.* Anansi, $7.95.

GEORGE GRANT GAVE us the theory in his *Technology and Empire*; now Charles Taylor gives us the lives of six people to whom it happened. He develops skillfully an important theme largely ignored by English Canadians, who seem destined, like the Greeks before Herodotus, to accomplish everything and remember nothing. The theme is, after Grant, that our own indigenous traditions and values exist, are worthwhile to others as well as to ourselves, are rooted in a past never marked by revolution, and will survive if honoured.

In the fly-leaf of Charles Taylor's personal copy of *Technology and Empire*, Taylor has written "all my six characters oppose . . . [Grant's] definition of liberalism." Grant's definition: liberalism is "a set of beliefs which proceed from the central assumption that man's essence is his freedom and therefore that what chiefly concerns men in this life is to shape the world as we want it." Those six characters experienced a difficulty peculiar to Canadians in their times, and continuing, if abated, even today. Taylor accepts Grant's view that "The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada." That's because of the belief in technological progress, which implies constant change, and also a certain philistinism, because the need to produce and cope with technological change preoccupies society through to basic education, making people indifferent to most art that is not, like television, film, photography and rock music, literally conveyed by the current of technological society. Thus all the Canadians in Taylor's book exemplify the disastrous results of opposing the majority of people who abide by and believe in that form of "progress through change."

"Since Canada became a nation in the Victorian era," Taylor says in the Introduction, "it is perhaps more than coincidental that [the] sort of energy and style" displayed by Bishop William White collecting Chinese artifacts and doing missionary work while gradually being converted to a love of Chinese art and philosophy, "has continued to prevail among the best of us." Taylor's biographical detail and anecdotes demonstrate this point throughout: James Houston, remote in his Arctic outpost like some frontier hero in a *Chums* annual, fights off Ottawa's distant imperialism, risking his job to bring a new livelihood, art, to his native (Innuit) friends; Herbert Norman writes poetry in Greek and Latin to the girl he loves, or, full of brandy, sings loudly down the streets of Cambridge; Emily Carr, Victorian eccentric in an old fishboat, putt-putts up a British Columbia fjord sketching totem poles; Colonel James "Buster" Brown,

dressed up in a dark business-suit, crosses the border into New England and spies out the land for the Canadian Army's planned invasion of the U.S.A. And finally, Scott Symons, the author's close friend, dines in Rideau Hall in 1962 with the Queen Mother: "After dinner, the Queen Mother asks him when his people came to Canada, and from where. 'Two centuries ago, Ma'am, from the Thirteen Colonies, as Loyalists to your Crown,' Symons replies. 'We are still loyal to your Crown, Ma'am. We are your Majesty's Royal Americans.' As he bows, his eyes fill with tears, and so do the Queen Mother's."

Like Grant, Taylor listens for lessons in the voices of the past. Before we obey the modern urge to get on with the business of the future, we have to pay attention to the qualities of Taylor's people. If we don't, we're doomed and not because Santayana was right about repeating a past one can't remember, but because in the knowledge of technology is a profound ignorance of people. Science (and technology) today is like a madman convinced that the best way to heat a house is to burn it (total-destruction bombs for war; poisonous products for peace). The problem with accepting the thesis as advanced by Taylor and his characters is that, like its antithesis, it goes too far. Standing against progress-through-homogenizing-technology equates to opposing the latest masters of that technology, the Americans. Norman killed himself because of the McCarthy witch-hunt; Buster Brown spent most of his life preparing for war against Canada's only enemy, the U.S.A.; Symons' Americanism remains Royal. But the U.S.A. didn't invent progress through technology, it was the eighteenth and nineteenth century British and French — our very own ancestors — who did that. Nor are Americans the sole sinners: the Germans and Japanese and Swedes are at least their equal. And most Canadians have long held that view of society. We often boast of our C.P.R. and that was a triumph of nineteeth century homogenizing technology.

"To flourish as Canadians," Taylor advises us, "we need to be more than contemporary Canadians, good technocrats and complacent taxpayers." Certainly none of his characters was that. Together, spirited visionaries in Taylor's admirable version, they make a book of the past, which if we read it right, will help us figure out how to improve without progress.

SHIKATA-NA-GAI AND OTHER OFFENCES

Silver Donald Cameron

BARRY BROADFOOT, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of the Japanese Canadians in World War II.* Doubleday, $12.50.

"SHIKATA-GA-NAI," said the old Japanese gentleman. *It can't be helped.*

"Shit on your *shikata-ga-nai,*" said the fourteen-year-old boy, who promptly got cuffed in the head.

The scene was Sandon, B.C., a deserted mining town stuffed into a crack in the Kootenay mountains, and serving in World War II as an enforced home for some of the 22,000 Japanese Canadians who had been expelled from the coast by

the War Measures Act. They were settled in ghost towns, or sent to labour on Alberta sugar-beet farms, road crews in the Interior, work camps north of Superior. Not one act of sabotage, espionage or terrorism was ever proven against them, and the majority were Canadian citizens, most of them born here. In the evacuation they lost everything — fishing boats, homes, berry farms, stores. Economically, many never recovered.

Shikata-ga-nai, they said, as they were herded into the staging area at Hastings Park, in east Vancouver. *Shikata-ga-nai*, as the trains sprayed them across the country. In 1957, when I was a school teacher in New Denver, B.C., the Japanese still made up a third of the town's population. *Shikata-ga-nai.*

"We were not cattle," said that self-described "tough little bird" from Sandon, talking to Barry Broadfoot thirty years later, "We were human beings, Canadians, and I still say shit on their *shikata-ga-nai.* All I was was a fourteen-year-old kid who didn't know what was happening to me, and I had enough sense to know that if this was *shikata-ga-nai*, then there was something wrong with all of us."

The strange feature of Broadfoot's book is its calm. For every tough little bird, twenty doves tell their mournful stories and almost visibly shrug their shoulders. *What can you do? Shikata-ga-nai. What's done is done. It wasn't all bad. Life went on. The camp was okay, in a way.*

Physically, the Japanese evacuees were evidently treated fairly well. Broadfoot records no beatings, no murders, no epidemics or malnutrition, though he does offer moving accounts of two lonely, desperate girls who committed suicide. Even in Canada, the Metis, the Beothuks and the Acadians can easily match the Japanese horror stories. Once away from the vicious racism of the West Coast, most of the Japanese Canadians found their fellow-citizens open, friendly and remarkably free of prejudice. Only the faceless bureaucrats of Ottawa remained intransigent and hostile.

The calmness of Broadfoot's book is a tribute to ordinary Canadians, both Japanese Canadians and others. Yet the evacuation was no less an outrage for all that, and at times the calmness seems more stated than felt. Beneath it lies a deep melancholy and a profound sense of betrayal which emerges only occasionally. In the detention camp at Tashme, near Hope, B.C., the children decided that they would begin their days in the makeshift, ill-equipped school by singing "O Canada."

"They were very bitter about it, really," remembers one of their teachers. "But they had been born in Canada and they knew nothing but Canada. They spoke English. They were Canadians and there they were, in a camp with guards.

"And so on that first day, when they stood and sang, there were tears running down many of their faces. Because Canada had failed them pretty badly."

Broadfoot's method has its failings. He records scores of interviews, and publishes short, pointed excerpts without identifying the speakers. But how do you evaluate what's said without knowing who said it? Sometimes it isn't even certain whether the speaker is Japanese or not. At other points, the anonymity is a thin veil indeed. I was able to identify Buck Suzuki, the late welfare director of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union — one of the few organizations, incidentally, which can be proud of its deportment towards the Japanese Canadians. But where the anonymity can be so easily pierced, why bother with it? Why not tell us that the speaker is Buck Suzuki?

The short excerpts also cause problems, striking the mind like a random patter of raindrops. By the time we have begun to

assess a speaker's outlook, perceptiveness or even his command of English, his moment has passed and we begin again with another voice from the void. The reader is not immersed and compelled to continue. He remains a passive observer. You don't have to swim in a shower of rain.

But these are small misgivings about what is fundamentally a fine, humane enterprise. And the issues of racism and panic, civil liberties and the tyranny of the majority, are no less pressing today than they were in 1942. For me, the saddest and most hopeful passage in this provocative, valuable book comes near the end, when one Japanese Canadian suggests that his people's experience gives them a special responsibility:

> We are the major group against whom the War Measures Act was invoked, and as a group that was clearly wronged under conditions of panic, we the Japanese have a special responsibility to remind people whenever that happens and it is directed against anybody else. I feel that . . . in 1970 every goddamned Japanese in the country should have been up in arms and on to Trudeau's back — and nobody did.
>
> I think this is the ultimate tragedy of the Japanese evacuation in 1942. It has made us so terrified of standing out, of running the risk of being incarcerated again. We've become bigots like everybody else.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Ann P. Messenger

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS, *The Execution.* Talonbooks.
MICHAEL COOK, *Tiln & Other Plays.* Talonbooks.
DAVID FENNARIO, *On the Job.* Talonbooks.
JOHN HERBERT, *Some Angry Summer Songs.* Talonbooks.
THEATRE PASSE MURAILLE, *I Love You, Baby Blue.* Press Porcépic, $4.95.
MICHEL TREMBLAY, *La Duchesse de Langeais & Other Plays.* Talonbooks.

PLAYS FOR THE LIVE theatre usually come in one of two sizes — long or short. The full-length play, running between two and three hours, is standard fare for an evening's entertainment, though occasionally a series of related short plays will fill the bill. Short plays, about an hour long, are in increasing demand: commercial downtown "lunch hour" theatres and university classroom or noonhour shows can rarely afford to run over sixty minutes. Both sizes present particular opportunities and traps, which Canadian dramatists are busy both seizing and falling into.

Michael Cook's short play, *Tiln*, in *Tiln and Other Plays*, is warmed-over *Endgame*. Beckett had time in his full-length play to build a world of symbol, a twisted interdependence between the two main characters, a terrifying sense of the void. Cook's attempt to pack the same ingredients into a small format leaves the symbols creaking and the interdependence sketchy, while the void is full of sea gulls and love. But in *Quiller* and *Teresa's Creed*, Cook is at his best; each play absorbs us in the speech, the life, the heartbeat of a single character. *Teresa's Creed* is literally kitchen sink drama, but at the same time it is an elegy for a way of life in the outports that is passing, an anxious anticipation of a new way of life to come, and a tribute to the strength of a woman caught between them. *Quiller* is even better, as a half-mad old man hops about his front porch in his long-johns, talking to God and shouting at his

neighbours, wrestling with the shadows and the realities that make up his life, and painfully, comically, working his way towards the ultimate wisdom.

Tremblay's five short plays use the opportunities of the genre in various ways. *Berthe, Johnny Mangano and His Astonishing Dogs*, and *Gloria Star* are all set in a sleazy nightclub, the Coconut Inn. The plays work well together, displaying the pathetic needs and dreams of the employees, from ticket-taker to star. The lengthy exposition in *Johnny Mangano* is awkward, but the threesome (suitably clean in language and heterosexual in relationships for performance on television) suggests much about sex and ego and power in the world of the theatre and the world of us all. Homosexual and profane, *La Duchesse de Langeais* has all the brilliance of the second act monologue in *Hosanna*. La Duchesse talks and drinks and talks some more, revealing the facts of her life as a queen and the talents — linguistic, theatrical, and sexual — that made her such a success. We see what she was and what she is, a man of sixty heartbroken over a faithless boy, wrecked but still strong. It is a first-rate dramatic portrait. *Surprise, Surprise* is equally successful and totally different. Tremblay has taken the form of classic farce, substituting for the slamming doors of hotel bedrooms the mix-ups in technical and human communication possible over the telephone, as Laurette and Jeannine try to arrange a surprise party for one Madeleine while another Madeleine (whom they dislike) is called by mistake. The telephone device would grow tedious in a full-length play but makes good fun in a short one. The narrow, sad lives of the Montreal women Tremblay knows so well are still poignant in the midst of the maddest hilarity.

John Herbert's plays are not in the same league at all. While much of the virtuosity of Tremblay's speech survives translation, Herbert's original English language is an insufficient vehicle for what he wants to say. *Some Angry Summer Songs* consists of three very thin slices of homosexual life (*Pearl Divers, Beer Room*, and *Close Friends*) and a dialogue between a critic and an actress (*The Dinosaurs*) about the deplorable state of the theatre in Canada. The language of all these plays alternates between the colloquial and profane on the one hand, and the stilted, pretentious, and pseudo-poetic on the other. Occasionally the mixture works for the actress, who can be expected to speak in a stagey manner. Most often, it doesn't. The four plays are undated, but cover a period of two decades, according to Peter Hay's introduction, and have been performed together. Despite his many services to Canadian drama, Herbert is not the *writer* the theatre needs, nor will this volume lead to his "discovery," despite Hay's hopes.

David Fennario is new to the job of playwrighting, but his full-length play, *On the Job*, is promising. Like David Storey in *The Contractor*, he puts the business of work on stage, with a group of men talking as they staple boxes and pack dresses and goof off in the shipping room of a dress factory. The reader would have been grateful for brief character descriptions, because the age and background (French or English) of each man are important and not always readily apparent from the text. (Everybody swears in both languages.) The time is Christmas Eve, and management is having an office party off stage while labour does a lot of surreptitious drinking and makes a pretense of working on stage. The men want their usual afternoon off but management has promised Eaton's a large order that day. Fennario builds his conflict well as the tough kids (English) from Point Saint Charles get drunker and more violent about the time off, while

management (also English, apparently) distributes Christmas bonuses and ill-will. Rene the foreman (French) is caught between the two. The pecking order is sharply presented, with Rene getting pecked most viciously from both sides. The play is never static; there is a splendid bacchanalian climax with dresses and fists flying. The conclusion is a disappointment, however: sliding into sentimentality, Fennario makes Rene choose the side of the underdogs and remain in the shipping room alone to face the music when the cops come. The supposedly tough kids, and even the supposedly wise old man, have been shooed away like so many chickens by the Heroic Foreman. But the speech is exactly right and the social and political implications fascinating, though Fennario could have done even more in this full-length work with the complexities arising from the French/English and management/labour structures. Yet, for a first play, it is remarkably good.

The Execution is Marie-Claire Blais's first play for the stage, though she has written radio plays besides her many novels. First performed in 1968 but not translated until 1976, *The Execution* gradually draws one into an improbable world populated by schoolboys who murder one of their fellows, the one whose name happens to be drawn from a hat. Guilt and innocence, evil and responsibility and manipulation and servitude and Nietzsche and Catholicism and a curiously adult, formal speech are all part of this brew, the mixture as before for readers of Blais's novels. The full length of the play gives her time to build that world so that the curtain line, "How many more victims will there be after you, Eric?", cannot be dismissed as mere rhetoric but produces a genuine chill.

This volume, and indeed all those published by Talonbooks, is handsome to look at but flawed by errors that a

sharper eye in the editorial department should have caught. Besides the usual typos, there are illiteracies such as "its" for "it's," and even the classic howler, "The dye is cast!" This should not be.

There is nothing classic about *I Love You, Baby Blue*, Theatre Passe Muraille's latest "docu-drama," but it may cause the reader to howl — from boredom. The subject is sex, in almost but not quite all of its manifestations on Yonge Street and in the bedrooms of Toronto. It is a long play, but is it a play? It claims to be a satire, but it sounds like a sermon, especially the final speech. The cover blurbs say it is "lighthearted" and "hilarious," but it has very few funny lines. It filled the theatre in Toronto until the Morality Squad closed it down, but its director, Paul Thompson, claims in the introduction that for much of the audience it was therapeutic. It is an extreme case of the difference between seeing a play on stage and reading it in the study: actual flesh has a stronger impact than printed stage directions. Clearly, *Baby Blue* has made theatre history, and one is glad to have the lavishly illustrated document in hand. But, like all "docu-drama" and perhaps like all "collective creations," it is essentially a document, shapeless and earnest and far too long.

STAYING TRUE

C. H. Gervais

DAVID NORMAN BRENNER, *Positions and Senses*. Alive Press, $1.00.
KEN STANGE, *Wolf Cycle*. Nebula Press, $1.00.
DAN DOUGHERTY, *The National Hen*. Pulp Press, $1.50.
KEN EISLER, *Inch Man*. Pulp Press, $1.50.
STEPHANIE J. NYNYCH, *By Death Never Leave Me*. Fiddlehead Poetry Books.
CHARLES NOBLE, J. O. THOMPSON and JON WHYTE, *Three*. Summerthought.

ELI MANDEL sets the shape of this review. His introduction to *Three*, a selection of Banff poets, defines the preoccupation of these writers as an exploration involving phenomenology, "a game of surfaces, with the poem as a framing device. . . ." In the broadest sense, he's pinning it down as the search of all poets. It's the success of other arts as well — photography as an example, moulding shapes, nuances into frames, meaningful borders, pictures. Something recognizable, familiar and "occasional."

Before I go further, the British poet Thom Gunn throws some light on this subject of framing in an introduction to *Ben Jonson* (Penguin). He declares "occasional" to be the fact of all poetry, not in the usual trivial or insincere sense, but as "the starting point . . . to which the poet must in some sense stay true." That effort is framing or boxing. Both Mandel and Gunn would argue that it's something far more complex and intangible than editorial technique. It's basic and instinctual . . . like the photographer who immediately crops off his picture before pushing the shutter release. Within that four-sided chamber is all he wants in the photograph. It's accomplished easily as breathing. For the poet it's similar. The danger in writing poetry, according to Gunn, is the ability of "staying true." In other words the framing device must crop not just simply what is representative, but the very essence of the subject probed.

On that basis I've approached these books for review.

Positions and Senses by David Norman

Brenner appears to have sprung into significance merely because of the author's background rather than ability. A review of his first book slugs him as a curious blend between a Rimbaud and Artaud . . . Ex-con, on day parole at the Clarke Institute . . . murderer of a man 13 years ago and today . . . writing poetry. One expects something revelatory and hard. Instead the verses are rudimentary, sentimental, over-stated, directionless, and the syntax is sloppy and confusing.

The poet here in every sense has violated the maxim of "staying true." He lacks technique. He doesn't frame off his picture. He argues that raw detail and the fact of living are enough for a poem. He's right; however the honesty and the glaring reality of prison existence falls short because "surfaces" of the poems are cluttered and disrupt a reader's focus.

Ken Stange's *Wolf Cycle* suffers from similar naiveté. Instead of allowing the inherent impact of his subject to develop, this writer attempts to direct it with the result of coming up with a highly simplistic view of survival which at first seems awfully elaborate. The book, described as a "mixed-genre . . . long poem in progress," employs generally a narrative style. I would agree that this is perhaps the best mode, but its effectiveness, as demonstrated by such writers as Purdy, Zieroth and Suknaski, is to let the tale unwind on its own. The result is to capture a sense of place and time, a peculiar language and way of approaching one's surroundings. *Wolf Cycle* has this potential, but Stange tends toward categorization and documentation. Mandel's idea of framing surfaces is constructive comment here, for this writer tends to want to take the poem further. He not only strives to provide a tale, but an explanation as well.

Stephanie J. Nynych's *By Death Never Leave Me* is by contrast an extremely elaborate work, both in language and style. A tapestry of images, long, rambling, ambitious lines and distinct visionary tone, places this book among the others as something unique.

But what of the tale here?

It's an elegy for John V. Nguyen and as such, the diction is suitable. However one learns very little of his character. In the first poem, "Quick Portrait of John," the poet, for example, introduces her character thus:

> he had youth in the core of his being
> tangled muscles, supple fibrous matter
> sheating long tubular bones.

That says very little when the rest of the poem (and book) continues in the same vein. One imagines a Charles Atlas or a Goliath, or in other words someone lacking authenticity. At the same time the poet isn't even invoking this character for strength or whatever; and Nguyen furthermore doesn't even qualify as an adequate persona. One suspects Nynych is attempting to portray someone who actually existed, but a blood and soul man is simply lacking here.

To say this is the problem of any elegy is escaping the matter, for it's not simply a situation of employing highly elaborate, textual and mythological imagery for an ordinary man — it's the choice of words which coerces the poem from its capability of "staying true." The suggestion of richness and turmoil in existence doesn't come through with the banal, tired and somewhat archaic diction used.

Thus, Nynych has given us only a glimpse (and an extremely inadequate one) of her figure, John V. Nguyen. Two other books from Pulp Press are equally obscure, but for different reasons. Here it is not an elaborateness in diction which gets in the way, but an eccentricity which prevents the works from reaching beyond the covers in which they are enclosed.

The National Hen by Dan Dougherty and *Inch Man* by Ken Eisler are written

strangely enough in the same vein. Dougherty's prologue inadvertently explains:

> I'll steal,from now, for you,
> A taste of untouched things,
> The unsubstantial substances
> Articulation brings.

The two writers lack the "instinctual" qualities spoken of earlier in the first part of this review. There's evidence of contrived, circumlocutive style and content. The objective to write of "unsubstantial substances" (or "untouched things") is far from being achieved when both books present obscure, insignificant trivial poetry.

Dougherty is perhaps more experimental by incorporating voice and dialogue, much like Gertrude Stein, but somehow that's a poor parallel. In any case the difference is significant enough to mention. It is not simply in intensity but in "tact" — Stein relied upon the positioning and timing of words, like a musician composer with notes. Dougherty on the other hand works by coincidence allowing words to collide.

Stein wrote in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*:

> I don't hear a language, I hear tones of voices and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences . . .

This quotation is definitely out of context, but it says something of style. Stein wrote *into* her work the tones of voice, and rhythms of her descriptions were created not by adjectives but by verbs. There is no question of "staying true." Form becomes subject and when Mandel speaks of framing surfaces he is speaking of form — the most apparent idiosyncrasy of writing. Staying true is a natural result. In *The National Hen* or *Inch Man* such a disparity exists between modes and subject matter, that the idea of staying true becomes virtually impossible.

Mandel's anthology of three western poets is probably the best of this selection for review, but many questions arise over the poems within because of his assertions in the brief introduction. For example, he borrows from W. H. New's *Articulating West*, claiming what his three writers articulate is "not an artistic language of . . . real landscape but the landscape that is language itself." He attempts to link Noble, Thompson and Whyte to both the contemporary tradition of experimentalists and to the older more formalized tradition. He terms their approach as "a controlled and measured formalism." The game of surfaces he speaks of, coupled with Gunn's philosophy of staying true, which I contend is one and the same thing, is a hefty statement to make. The choice of modes by the three is where theory breaks down. For example, Noble's persona "Arby," somewhat contrived, permeates the poem to the point that one suspects its intent. The work begins to echo back not with revelation hitting home but with banality. One is obviously coerced to feel resentment — that's part of Noble's objective — but the exploration into the nature of mankind or whatever becomes tiring.

The most ironic thing, too, is that most of the poems really don't require a persona, but can stand independently fashioned. The nagging presence of "Arby" (over and over again), however, pervades the entire selection. This is where Mandel's theory breaks down. Staying true becomes impossible with the obvious gap dividing Noble's message from the tale's structure.

Thompson, by contrast, has a much more vital control over his language. His success is with images through metaphor and simile which really drive home his stories. I say "stories" because Thompson is concerned with *telling* the reader something, not in the way of a lesson, but in basic narrative. His imagery is the struc-

tural element which really characterizes his work. As an example look at "Governor George Wallace Visits Strathcona County":

> Midwinter grins like a sharp dog
> as in the wind the bare trees fly —
> each branch a pinched dishonored flag —
> and smog confederates the sky

The approaches to writing, as outlined earlier, actually fit here, for Thompson delivers the poem to the reader in cold sensitivity, often reiterating the same images as in a refrain.

Whyte's work I find is difficult to follow with the rambling lines and twisted turns in theme and subject, coupled with mixed metaphors. The long narrative "Paley" is perhaps his best and does suggest as Mandel points out a comparison to Earle Birney's "David." The poem centres upon Raymond Edward Alan Christopher Paley who died April 7, 1933 at the age of 26 in an avalanche near Skoki in the Canadian Rockies. Much of the mood and grandeur of the mountains is caught by Whyte in the very beginning of the poem as he relates impending disaster and the feel of death by repetitive imagery with a slightly onomatopoetic tendency.

The enjambment of lines (as is characteristic generally in contemporary poetry) is in fact used effectively here for a change, but even noting these elements of Whyte's work, there are faults which need elaborating as well. Staying true requires a measure of formalism, no matter how experimental. With Whyte this can be applied most specifically with "Paley".

Although there is an obvious similarity to Birney, the style of the narrative more closely resembles the work of French poet Blaise Cendrars. The comparison with some of his longer works leads me to believe that Whyte might have drawn his influence there. Even if he did not, this style brings up a good point. The French poet trimmed his lines to the point there was very little run-on to the next. To effect this, it was necessary for Cendrars to tighten images.

Whyte fails to control his, by contrast. Instead of utilizing the best elements of imagery, he elaborates and repeats himself and therefore enjambment becomes inevitable.

Capturing disaster as a result loses its effectiveness. It's like taking a photograph of a man drowning 800 yards away with a normal lens on a camera instead of a telephoto which would bring the picture as close as a head-and-shoulder shot. In other words, Whyte crowds the narrative with a lot of detail which only distracts the reader. Even so, the poem is good and in some instances provides a much more interesting tale than those of Thompson's.

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books in review

CONVERSATIONAL CRAFTSMAN

ALDEN NOWLAN, *Smoked Glass.* Clarke Irwin, $7.95.

WRITING REVIEWS reminds me of the time I got dobbed in to be the judge at the Poochera sheep dog trials. It's easy they said, sinking beers in the shade of the lean-to, just watch the dog. If the dog gets the sheep through the course and into the pen you won't even notice the joker out in the paddock running things. A bit shaky as an analogy maybe, but it'll do. Think of the dog as the craft, the sheep as the language and the pen as the form of the poem. Where's the poet? He's the shepherd, standing still out in the middle of the paddock, whistling and moving his arms, doing his damndest not to get in the way.

And that's what Alden Nowlan does very well in *Smoked Glass.* He gets the job done. You could say he was a simple poet but that's nonsense. He gives the appearance of simplicity only because his craft is trained and functioning in a highly effective fashion. It's obvious he's absorbed a lot of technique from other poets — Pound, Williams, and so on, without the cultural bellyache that has given many other poets. But the dominant force is his own observation. Nowlan reports. He makes no great show of his poetic ability yet for the most part the sheep go in the pen, the poem is complete, the reader feels satisfied, as if some encounter with mindless experience has been set down this time. To my mind, *Smoked Glass* is no more remarkable as a book than the couple of others I've read, *Bread Wine and Salt,* and *The Mysterious Naked Man. Smoked Glass* probably contains a bit more social comment but there is a consistent quality to each of them, readable, unpretentious, conversational, as if the man has found his style and continues to use it in the best way he knows. Nowlan flirts with cliché yet gets away with it most of the time. The suggestion is in "A certain kind of holiday man," that with some exceptions, we all look at the world through smoked glass; a simple image suited to the material Nowlan deals with, the unfamiliar entering the ordinary, a sleeping bag inexplicably left on a back lawn, noises in a house, a car stuck in the snow, violence in suburbia, perhaps summed up in these lines,

> Until then it had been such an
> ordinary day
> poached eggs on toast, a morning
> newspaper
> that contained no surprises
> (and it's
> the unexpected that disturbs us
> most. . . .

This sense of everyday affairs being momentarily penetrated by the bizarre is reminiscent of the torturer's horse scratching its behind in Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts." Like the man going deaf in "Not fingers or wool" the world appears to be playing games with humanity, and the poem emerges as a reaction to that. The struggle is to get the perceptions straight, to put down as clearly as possibly what is happening. This Nowlan does very well. But the poems themselves move into dimensions larger than this, as in "Here lies," about Timothy Foley, "the only casualty of/the Battle of Schofield's Farm," where the callousness of the guide towards the absurdity of this unimportant battle and this ridiculous individual death is condemned in the last lines,

Damn the guide
for grinning when he
tells the tourists this

Finishing poems is another thing that Nowlan does well; a sign of a poet in charge of his material. The gate shuts with a firm snap on the sheep in the pen. Often Nowlan relies on the ending to keep the poem together; a dangerous business, but one in which he usually succeeds. The poem "The red wool shirt" ends with a cliché, "And that was that." You could argue that it could be left out of the poem, but it is just the right phrase for the placid acceptance of the death by drowning of the menfolk of the speaker. The woman reminisces about the event, remembers as well, convincing little details, like the old fashioned wooden clothespins she's using to hang out the washing, a button missing and the salmon flies on Charlie Sullivan's hat when he comes to tell her. The same poem also reveals aspects of Nowlan's sense of line. It is not an oratorical line, nor is it particularly dramatic. At times it's a bit dull, or a bit flat, as if the poet is muttering thoughts to himself. But when it's needed it's there.

Poor old Charlie

Its bad, Mary, he said.
I finished
hanging up the red wool
shirt

and then I said,
Charlie, its not
both of them, and he said,
Mary, I'm afraid it is.

And that was that.

There is a certain energy to other lines though it is not the general rule. In "Knowledge and Power" for example the movement and visual are incorporated in the rhythm created by the lines

They're cats, of course.
But I've got to stop it
— not the fight,
but the sound of it.
Got to.
I hiss
from my bedroom
window and they
scatter, one
through the tall grass, one
into the bushes

In "The apology," a similar effect is achieved,

Look!
I'll kneel
at your feet,
like so,
and beg.
But you must be quick.
You mustn't hesitate.
You must lift me up
now

But with a poem you feel there's got to be a bit of a struggle, a maverick ram, a bit of tension before its done. You need a break out from the mob of sheep, some difficulty or else you feel cheated, the mob boos, the sheep go straight, dull and quiet into the pen. It's fixed, they yell, the sheep have been on the course before, it's a cliché, give us our dough back.

With Nowlan this happens rarely, but poems like "Under Surveillance" or "Entertained by the chairman of the department," of "The rules of the game" show a weakening of that capacity for incisive comment which the rest of the book exhibits.

Asking for something else is like saying to Ben Jonson, listen Ben, you're as smart as that Jack Donne, why don't you write up a storm like he does. Nowlan reports what he observes going on in the world, what he sees, what people tell him. Yet this is not as limited as it might first appear. The poems are inventive in that they speculate upon what is happening behind the surface level. There are no explosive associations of one image with another, no hanging of one line against another in excited rhythm. The poems move in orderly fashion.

Perhaps the other important thing is that people other than academics or fellow poets can read, understand and enjoy *Smoked Glass*. What the geographers call "river capture" is happening to poetry. All the vital small streams are being grabbed by a huge meandering monster called academic poetry. Nowlan is a poet with the capacity to appeal to a much wider readership. The poet/academic is a two-headed monster who often writes out of the wrong head by mistake and reads with the wrong set of eyes with malice aforethought.

To write so that many people can understand, as Nowlan does, is not the academic sin we have been led to believe. Canadian poetry needs it.

KEVIN ROBERTS

THE OTHER GALT

H. B. TIMOTHY, *The Galts: A Canadian Odyssey John Galt 1779-1839*. McClelland & Stewart.

THERE HAS BEEN A great revival of interest in recent years in John Galt. There have been scholarly editions, a biography, critical articles in the learned and the literary journals. The pioneering studies of R. K. Gordon (Toronto, 1920) and of Jennie Aberdein (Oxford, 1936) have finally begun to pay off. The interest, however, has been confined to one side only of Galt: Galt the novelist, and the Scottish novelist at that — my own biography of 1972 was deliberately sub-titled "The Life of a Writer."

But there always have been two Galts, carefully kept apart by Galt himself. He even went to the extent of writing two separate autobiographies, the *Literary Life* (recounting his life as a writer) and the *Autobiography* (the record of his public achievements, notably his involvement with Canadian affairs). This "other Galt" has been played down by the literary critics. But, to the end of his life, Galt's "philanthropic dream" (which was also a dream of personal power) mattered more to him than his novels. The *Autobiography* is twice the length of the *Literary Life*.

It is good to see that this other Galt, first revealed by R. K. Gordon of the University of Toronto, has begun to attract the attention of other Canadian-based scholars. Galt's novel of 1831, *Bogle Corbet* (which the Scottish-based scholar is inclined to neglect because it is not *Annals of the Parish*) has recently been given a new look, in the New Canadian Library edition, by Professor Elizabeth Waterston of the University of Guelph: Bogle Corbet as "the first and still typical Canadian hero," the novel not a spin-off from the novel of rural Scotland but a new beginning, an early piece of Canadian writing. It is clearly time that Galt, not the Scottish novelist, but the Canadian founding father, Canada Company superintendent for two years in Upper Canada, should receive proper attention.

Professor Timothy's book, the first of a two-part study of the Galt family in Canada, does the job excellently. He has already put Galt enthusiasts in his debt with his 1969 annotated edition of the poems. In *The Galts* he has made excellent use not only of the *Autobiography* but also of the vast accumulation of documentation that lies widely dispersed in the Record Offices in London and Edinburgh, in the Canada Company papers, and in the Public Archives in Toronto and Ottawa. In spite of this massive underpinning of documents, Professor Timothy's narrative moves with economy and compression, resulting in a well-written book that gets all the essentials into 150 pages.

I have only one complaint. I wish Professor Timothy had given full references

to the documents held in Canada (as he has for those in the Public Record Office e.g.). It would have saved a lot of hunting on the part of post-graduates who may well be stimulated by his book into parallel or complementary researches. But this is a very minor grumble. Professor Timothy's researches reveal that Galt's *Autobiography* (which has sometimes been written off as the diary of a disappointed man) is essentially accurate. He was disappointed. His schemes for colonization outran the plans of the local oligarchy and the Canada Company (which wanted to keep at all times on side with "the Government") recalled him. Others were to reap where he had sowed. He was a founding father, even if it were to be *in absentia*. Professor Timothy tells the story with balance, and with a tact that Galt (alas!) lacked. His book is a notable addition to the growing body of work on this still underestimated writer.

IAN A. GORDON

CALCUTTA CHRONICLE

CLARK BLAISE and BHARATI MUKHERJEE, *Days and Nights in Calcutta*. Doubleday, $8.95.

IN ONE OF SATYAJIT RAY'S FILMS, called *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, a car load of men from Calcutta pursue their attraction for both tribal and elite Bengali women, in the forests far from the city. Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee have written a kind of travel memoir, in which they want to understand their attraction to Calcutta. Clark had visited the city briefly three years before; Bharati was born and lived there.

This is an ambitious and intimate book, chronicling a year these Montreal authors spent in Bombay and Calcutta in 1973-74. For a reader like me who has lived in Calcutta, Bombay and Montreal, it rings bells on many levels of memory and experience. It is ambitious because two writers of different styles and background try to capture the complexity of their involvement with disparate aspects of life in India. The larger contribution is from Clark but Bharati's is better written and better pruned, and to me, more interesting. It is an intimate book because these two writers are also married to each other, and each describes what the other is experiencing; there are spousely asides about the other's reactions, moods, preconceptions, or cultural background.

While in India, Bharati wrote her recent novel *Wife*, and Clark wrote articles including one on ice hockey. They gave lectures, and organized workshops for the United States Information Service. We learn a great deal about Bharati, who is from a prosperous East Bengali brahmin family turned wealthy by a pharmaceutical venture in Calcutta. Little is said about Clark's origins in North Dakota and Florida. They were married while attending the Iowa Writers Workshop, and went to live, perhaps temporarily, in Montreal.

The book is organized in two parts, and each writer has an epilogue. This duality offered opportunities for fine counterpoint writing, but the work is not disciplined in that manner. Occasionally an event like a wedding or film premiere is reported by both Clark and Bharati. We can thus anticipate the potential of the Rashomon-effect if it were employed consistently: it would confer on the text the fullest advantages of their two quite different perspectives and experience. Meanwhile they are also re-examining their own relationships; Bharati is able to see Clark in an environment unfamiliar to him but familiar to her, while Clark tries to separate his relationship to Bharati and to India (which would at least

amuse linguists, as Bharat is the Sanscrit name for much of what is now India).

There is much reflection on epistemological questions — on how one knows India, how one discovers the truth, and what stance should be taken as writer towards "facts" or "India," or towards one's audience. Clark's project is quite clear:

> What is the "real" Bombay, the real India, the real anything for a fiction writer?
>
> How is an outsider to understand? Literally? — certainly not.
>
> I wanted to *acquire* India to replace all that I had lost or outgrown. I even planned to set a novel there; I've never spent a year anyplace without writing about it.

In 1975, Clark later decided that his unintended accomplishment was that he "*would* see clearly for the first time... that whole bloated dropsical giant called the West, that I thought I knew profoundly." All this is embedded in a wealth of detail for which he has a keen eye and ear, though early on he grasps (but does not analyse) one of the funny and bitter truths about travelling and reportage: "One shouldn't ask the questions I ask; all the information I've elicited is vaguely useless." Surely his task as a writer is to make it vaguely useful, or wait until it becomes so?

Bharati's project is just as ambitious and complex, but more self-reflexive. She re-explores the networks of her family, and reflects on her childhood and schooling ("the geometry of one's birth") while meeting wealthy former classmates or film makers like Satyajit Ray. She is as much concerned with a stance to take as with modes of discovery. Confirming there is such a thing as the Hindu imagination, she sees it in "the inspired and crazy vision" of a sculptured frieze of a temple, marking "the enormity of detail. Nothing has been excluded." The message of this vision is "merge — there are no insides and outsides, no serpents, no gods." In contrast to "traditional" India, "where metaphor and reality continually change places," she says "we have confined ourselves to single obsessions." Faced with the stark contrasts of life in Calcutta she feels obliged to take a non-judgmental stance:

> Irony is the privilege of observers and of affluent societies. [In spite of] having set myself up as an interpreter of the slightest signs... it was not a time to judge.

Nevertheless there is judgment about literary cultures. Both authors are awed by the scope of the Bengali literary world — the sheer volume of production, the density of writers and poets on the ground, and the number of publications (there are about 130 million Bengalis in India and Bangladesh). Both are writers for whom the important audience lies, they say, in America. Bharati contrasts the Bengali and American situation with her feelings about Canada:

> While changing citizenship is easy, changing cultures is not.... In Canada I feel isolated, separate in the vastness of this underpopulated country.... I cannot make myself visible at all as a Canadian writer. The literary world in Canada is nascent, aggressively nationalistic, and self-engrossed.... I cannot yet write about Montreal. It does not engage my passions. It is caught up in passion all its own.

Clark is led to ask, in the face of the vitality of the Bengali literary scene, where his "own energy and commitment have gone?"

One of the abiding difficulties with this book is that nothing has been excluded. I feel it should have treated only their experiences in Calcutta, and emphasized those aspects of life to which they had privileged access: family life, servants, gossip, keys and security, and the wedding; or the literary, film and artistic community and its audiences; or the sophisticated ladies whom Bharati knew

or met and the men at their elbows at evening parties, the Number Ones in tea, their Clubs and the anatomy of their boredom. Doubtless the authors weighed all this and may have debated it in anticipation of reviewers' comments. But it would be a good book for anyone visiting India for the first time, and it is very good in its observations on family life, on elite society and on artistic and literary conditions. It is a book which travels well — I read it in the forests of British Columbia and the Mississippi delta. Even after reading all this about them, I would still like to meet the authors.

ROBERT S. ANDERSON

POET'S EFFORT

MICHAEL HARRIS, *Sparks*. New Delta, $2.00.
DAVID SOLWAY, *The Road to Arginos*. New Delta, $2.50.
RICHARD SOMMER, *Milarepa*. New Delta, $2.50.
RICHARD SOMMER, *Left Hand Mind*. New Delta, $2.50.

AS LONG AS CANADIAN LITERATURE is in competition with American Literature then it will necessarily follow the same form. Neither eager nationalism nor academic recognition can rush literature; neither can overconcern for native poets. Whatever they may do in later years, these three young writers here introduce nothing distinctive except effort.

Milarepa is a very odd book to come from an urban Wasp in Montreal. It contains nine long poems, each a series of shorter poems; but all are very much alike. Sommer has rambled over a whole area of Eastern philosophies, myths, and religions, so much as to make the readers feel they are reading not a poem but a book of worship. It is especially difficult to decide who the narrator is speaking to if not the reader, and just who this narrator is. I have the feeling that Sommer has not unravelled this either: "These are poems, but whose poems it is hard to say." Then the meditations can hardly be poems. They are meditative tracts which can only be valued from the authenticity of Sommer's source — not provided by this text.

Left Hand Mind is another odd book, where the verses are not in typeset but are a reproduction of Sommer's handwriting, using his left hand (presumably this being a special task if he is right handed). The poems are identified with successive dates, which is probably to show their connecting development. Instead, like *Milarepa*, each seems very much like the same poem. Again, as with *Milarepa*, the lines and stanzas appear to be measured arbitrarily. Still, this is not enough to break up a droning monologue of more Eastern-religious-philosophy meditations:

> out early morning for t'ai chi
> studio floor littered groggy bumblebees
> turn on heater start the form
>
> there is nowhere but here no elsewhere
> then where is here here here
> by the time you say that here is there

Other subjects in the book are just as esoteric. Whole tracts describe the raptures of sex, reflection, pedantry, and Sommer's "spasal" gazing. Oddly, Sommers admits his fuzzy intentions as, "release and a sudden access/ to what?/ the poems are my only reasons" given by his left hand "to remind you . . . of the rich clumsiness of our access . . . that's the poem i guess." I guess not; not with these verses.

Michael Harris's *Sparks* is a more earnest effort at lyrical poems largely concerned with love or occasional romantic interludes. And some short verses succeed. Yet Harris draws strongly on Imagism, while at the same time displaying the shortcomings of this genre. Such as his failure to follow a vital image, to

discover a larger significance and make a more convincing appeal to the reader. Images in a poem must inspire cognizant associations or else the poem becomes a flat description.

Solway has attempted something quite daring in *The Road to Arginos*: he has written in rhyme and metre — though rarely in traditional designs — to query the modern state, to try ornithology, and to tell of Trolls. Frequently, his verses refer to classical myths to show how they parallel his own dilemmas, and how the subjects might fare in a contemporary situation. Much of his poetry is clever and very carefully worked; Solway shows great verbal felicity and humour. Yet the poems seem curiously empty; somehow they take place nowhere, with no people; somehow they are just not a vital exercise. Also, Solway often overexpands an image or stretches an analogy too far. Most likely, Solway could write excellent comedy; much of his talent would work this way. Unlike Sommer, Solway is very clear on his task with poetry:

> I choose a Master's stern example.
> I confess to a prosodic itch
> but I contend that it is such
> as by a kind of mental torque,
> by love, austerity, or work,
> to turn the Eleatic key
> on your discontinuity .

He seems to be working in the right direction.

Unfortunately when Canada is encouraging an indigenous literature, weak American literary theories are followed. Imagism and its corollary Free Verse has been all but exhausted, so that Harris and Sommer would do well to attempt something new or an innovation of something old, which is what Solway has done. *The Road to Arginos* is a refreshing change from Vers Libre and the way poor poets have used it to hoax readers. Perhaps Harris could become the better poet insofar as he appears to inherit that special impressionable poetic mind. Nevertheless, he needs to work more carefully, which is why Solway succeeds, again, over his lofty erudition.

STUART NEWTON

ORCHESTRATED NEW BRUNSWICK

DAVID ADAMS RICHARDS, *Blood Ties*. Oberon, $11.95.

BLOOD TIES, David Adams Richards' second novel, is the one hundredth title to be issued by Oberon. In my judgment the novel is a classic, and Oberon is indeed fortunate to have been the publisher of such a fine book.

Superficially, *Blood Ties* is the account of a few days in the lives of the MacDurmot family of New Brunswick's "North Shore", concentrating upon the months of July 1967, February 1968, and October 1969. The point of view developed is internal and involves all the MacDurmots: Maufat and Irene; Irene's "wild" daughter, Leah, and her "no good" husband, Cecil; and the MacDurmot children born in wedlock, Cathy, the adolescent daughter, and her younger brother, the one-eyed, self-tortured Orville. All the other characters are seen through the eyes and the memories of the MacDurmots. Events are so selected, however, and memories so dovetailed, that behind the fragmented surface montage of individual viewpoints, the reader can gradually focus in growing depth as the novel proceeds on an unshaken — almost unshakeable — way of life that is rural New Brunswick.

Rural New Brunswick is a remarkable instance of a society that has substituted ritual behaviour for ideational intelligence in all avenues of life — religion,

sex, commerce, speech habits and speech rhythm, politics, work. All are subject to implicit tacit procedures that inevitably swallow up, absorb, or kill attempts at personal expression which may be at odds with ways of being that have evolved among hard-working people through generations of living with one another apart from the rest of the world on the edge of a frontier that seemed to demand standardization for survival. It does not matter what the characters in *Blood Ties* do as individuals: the Leahs in time become Irenes; the Orvilles and Cecils turn into Maufats as years of routine wear away the sharp edges of self-expression and blunt the "crazy" urge for impossible things. This one gradually realizes as one reads. Yet the ultimate effect of this realization is not depressing. The sure familiarity of conventional day-by-day intercourse as exemplified by Maufat and Irene and not the vagaries of passion à la Cathy-John are what produce the real "blood ties", the maturity of love that justifies a human family.

At the same time, however, that the New Brunswick way of life finds a kind of ultimate justification in *Blood Ties*, its development is, incidentally, very irritating to the reader. One keeps asking one's self, "Why does it have to be so narrow, so unfair?" Here are in fact two societies within the bosom of a community, within the bosom of a family. Men associate and work with men. Women associate and work with women. Apart from passion and procreation, a man and a woman do not meet as person to person, and when they do meet in any other than the most primal sense, they have so little in common that their meetings result in misunderstanding and hostility. This compartmentalization of sexes is the more compelling in *Blood Ties* in that David Adams Richards pre-

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sents it without comment simply as a thing which is so.

I realize that the foregoing treats with the novel more in terms of its social implications than its artistic merit. It would be an injustice to David Adams Richards to say that he wrote *Blood Ties* to exemplify ideas of rural New Brunswick which have been my personal interests for many years. Novels are primarily about people and what happens to them, and if the novelist does honestly get inside people, the kind of secondary ideas I have been writing about must of necessity follow. David Adams Richards is primarily interested in what it is like to be young and growing up in rural New Brunswick, and his young people — Cathy, Orville, Leah, Cecil — are rendered with a sensitivity and honesty that is completely convincing. Secondarily, David Adams Richards is interested in the technique of the novel, and in this work his orchestration of time, event, conversation, and memory is superbly conceived and almost as well executed in a prose that is often highly poetic. *Blood Ties* is a beautiful book and does, in Richards' way, for rural New Brunswick what Faulkner's novels in Faulkner's way, do for rural Mississippi. Where, however, can Richards go from here? More of the same would, I feel, be anticlimax.

FRED COGSWELL

STORY AND TELLER

MARGARET GIBSON GILBOORD, *The Butterfly Ward.* Oberon, $8.95, $3.95.
JACK HODGINS, *Spit Delaney's Island.* Macmillan, $9.95.
ALISTAIR MACLEOD, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood.* McClelland & Stewart, $8.95.

NEAR THE END of Jack Hodgins' story "Spit Delaney's Island," Delaney, after imagining a violently dramatic ending to his story ("Like a movie"), reminds himself of the banal actuality:

> It isn't true, though. That isn't the way it happened. Maybe a few years from now when I remember that day at the Wooden Nickel I won't be able to tell which was true and which I've made up. It won't even matter. I will probably remember the made-up one clearest, so that when I drive by the store in my camper I can think that at least I offered that fellow who runs it a bit of excitement, a story he can remember. And I will probably think that, for him and the others who work in there with him, I offered a bit of myself, I exposed something.

Besides reiterating the matter-of-fact ordinariness of his character, Hodgins achieves here a nice psychological accuracy: Delaney, in the very striving to be honest, realizes that even for him fiction is likely to supplant reality. The passage accelerates the realization that there is not nearly so much, either in Delaney's secret poetic personality or in the hitch-hiking poet Phemie Porter, as he invents. But this realization would still exist, its poignancy undiminished, with much less grinding of the literary gears. Hodgins himself seems to be thinking out loud at the end of the story, with the result that the literary question (what is the truth of fiction?) overwhelms the moral dilemma and the psychological insight, and tends to make the story its servant.

Hodgins' collection of ten stories takes Vancouver Island as its centre and the personalities of its apparently ordinary, usually rural, people as its interest. This focus doesn't make the book as explicity regional as might be expected, although there are carefully observed details ("a ditch clogged with dry podded broom and a wild tangle of honeysuckle and blackberry vines"), and "The Trench Dwellers" includes some amusing speculations on the Island identity. Hodgins shares Spit Delaney's taste for "a bit of excitement," and his stories often depend

on an incongruity slipping into the grotesque. In "Every Day of His Life" Mr. Swingler's courtship of Big Glad takes place on her roof while he paints mountain vistas and she drinks dandelion wine; in "Three Women of the Country" Mrs. Starbuck kills her calf with an axe and hides her son from the world in an attic. Such experiences are successfully dramatized externally, but lack an echo in the inner world of feeling. Often Hodgins seems simply to be reaching for the grand effect — the same feeling one has about the symbolism of the dividing line in the opening story, or the strained allegory of "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School." Indeed the more one thinks on Hodgins' stories the more apt Delaney's reflection on fiction becomes. It is not the elaborate, movie-like gesture that reveals, or "exposes" the characters, but precisely the simple, seemingly unremarkable, moments which Delaney wants to reject.

Alistair MacLeod, in seven stories collected under the title *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*, is more content with illuminating the commonplace. Each of the stories moves toward that moment of determining, or appreciating, otherness, of discovering that another's perception of exactly the same experience can be completely different, and yet just as valid. MacLeod builds to his quiet revelations mainly through the subtle power and pain of family ties, most established in the fishing and mining communities of Cape Breton. His emphasis on memory raises the same questions about fiction and remembering which so perplexed Spit Delaney. Several of MacLeod's stories are told in the historical present: "We are in the kitchen of our house and my mother is speaking as she energetically pokes at the wood and coal within her stove." But this formula, which should mark an intimate and confiding narrative, can feel, ironically, austere, as if the narrator were speaking into a tape recorder, setting his experiences down for history, as artifacts, rather than telling a story. The immediacy of "we are" is disrupted and diminished by the obvious retrospective, with the result that the narrative seems coy rather than revealing.

It is this danger, no doubt, which makes the historical present so rare among modern storytellers. MacLeod's repeated use of it indicates that he values its aura of the old-fashioned, its suggestion of stories being swapped around a hot stove. And even the stories which don't use the technique share a tone of thoughtful nostalgia. An incident in "The Boat," for example, demonstrates the contradictory responses evoked by the reconstructing memory. The narrator, who teaches in a midwestern university, recalls his Cape Breton boyhood, and particularly his father's harsh life and cruel death on the sea. One of the most vivid memories is of his father drunk, singing for hours through his repertoire of sea shanties, war songs, and Gaelic drinking songs for a group of tourists. As the narrator recalls his own response: "I was ashamed yet proud, young yet old and saved yet forever lost, and there was nothing I could do to control my legs which trembled nor my eyes which wept for what they could not tell." The narrator is delighted, yet hurt by his own insensitivity, to discover that his father is a frustrated artist, linked through song with generations of primitive suffering. On the other hand he is embarrassed at the prodigality of the emotions, and the fawning of the tourists. So it is, in a sense, with reading MacLeod: the stories, especially "The Return" and "The Road to Rankin's Point," are often emotionally subtle, but the self-conscious remembering can turn revelation into contrivance. The quoted passage, for example, quivers on the edge of excess, and drifts into increasingly vague sentiment. The self-assertive narrator, again reminiscent of Spit Delaney,

is always adjusting to try to put things straight: "I say this again as if it all happened at once and as if all of my sisters were of identical ages and like so many lemmings going into another sea and, again, it was of course not that way at all." But his hesitations and repetitions do more to deflect interest from the guts of a father/son relationship than to arouse concern for the narrator's struggle with his story.

By contrast the six stories in Margaret Gilboord's *The Butterfly Ward* startle with their continually deepening illumination of individual minds. Gilboord writes, in a prose that is tense and exact, of the agony and the lyrical clarity of people going mad. She knows the combination of discovery and mystery that can come with careful attention to her narrator. For instance, Jenny in "Ada": her sustained interest in others, and her restrained comments, just hint at the depth of her own feeling: "I can't remember how I reacted [to Leslie's eating her water glass], I think I just said oh Christ when the blood spurted onto my leg." The simple vocabulary and the minimal punctuation here suggest the urgency which the incident has in Jenny's own mind, and the straining she does to pretend such things are ordinary (or have they become so for her?). Similarly Kira, in the title story, concentrates on her ward-mate, Mrs. Watson, and on introducing her to the frightening neurological examination which she calls the butterfly treatment. Kira's reputation in the hospital as a stoic is at once confirmed and yet neatly denied by her own words, most tellingly in her obsession with the ironically beautiful butterfly which hovers behind almost everything she says: "One sees Dr. Carter only during the great pinning day or as he flies through the ward, white coat flapping. . . ."

Perhaps Gilboord's cool skill with such understated revelations is at its finest in "Considering Her Condition." The story is told from the point of view of Stephen Davis, as he perceives the pregnancy and eventual suicide of his wife. As a television writer and producer Stephen watches Clare — her confusions, her fear of pregnancy, her biting his hand — with camera-like detachment. But beyond our growing recognition that Stephen is smothering his wife's feelings and dismissing her intelligence, Gilboord is quietly working toward the moment when we realize that the story is as much a study of Stephen. We begin to consider his condition, too, first with anger, and then with something like pity: he is obsessed with his job, unable to feel any emotion, impotent, and finally, it seems, as insane as Clare ever was.

The Butterfly Ward, then, makes an answer to Spit Delaney. Here are stories that 'we can remember,' that 'expose something' of the person telling the story. But they are memorable precisely because they ignore the grandiose gestures of the movies. This, of course, is a point Jack Hodgins is making, but it never quite takes hold in his own stories. Alistair MacLeod's story-tellers, concerned less with 'excitement' and more with the fragile and essential relationships between people, occasionally go too far in offering 'a bit of themselves.' In *The Butterfly Ward* the distinctions between what is 'true' and what is 'made up' become essentially meaningless, as they will when story and teller become one.

LAURENCE RICOU

NORTHERN JOURNEY

CLAUDE LIMAN, *Landing*. Sesame Press, $3.00.

LANDING is the newest and perhaps the most interesting book yet published by Sesame Press — the young Windsor publishing house and labour of love run by

Gene McNamara, Peter Stevens, and Dorothy Farmiloe. The book is a kind of poetic *North American Education*: a loose sequence of poems dealing with the experience of immigration, the author's move from Colorado to north Ontario. Within these poems Liman investigates a number of attitudes, therein attempting to come to terms with the meaning of his move, trying to understand the elusive meanings of the harsh and unfamiliar environment of the Canadian Lakehead, and expressing his discomfort at being an American in Canada in the 1970's. In the first section of the book ("An American in Canada") the voice one hears is often ill at ease, occasionally querulous, sometimes defensive or hostile; in some of the poems of the first part, however, and in the concluding section ("Landed"), the reader begins to hear a different tone, as a new awareness and understanding of place begins to compensate him for his sense of displacement.

The journey into a new country described in the book is not only more than a physical one, it is also more than simply emotional; ultimately it is a poetic progress. The poems record a search for, and a struggle with, poetic voice. We see, initially, that some change has taken place when, in the second poem, the speaker wanders his darkened and still strange house and hears

> the whoosh of the vaporizer
> that in the old days might have lived
> in a poem all by itself.

Small poems of objectified experience having eluded him, the speaker finds himself seeking instead to define his relationship to the new world he discovers around him, but his first responses are somehow unsatisfactory: he is depressed and therefore in stasis, anxious and thus unable to feel at home. He moves into prose to describe going to a Finnish sauna; wanting to write a poem about Mount McKay, he finds himself encountering "an alien landscape that will not scan"; attempting to capture one moment of experience (in "The Elusive Dizziness Poem"), he finds instead that "My life, that old cave painting, / spreads on a surface thin as an eyelid." After reading an interview with a Canadian writer, he responds as to a new language:

> The print blurs, beds down in the page;
> lamplight softens in all four corners,
> drawing me off from this solid room
> where I've known who I am
> towards an invisible ell
> where a stranger keeps syntax.
>
> ("Late Night Research")

Meanwhile he exercises, frightened of mortality and trying to find his body's language as well as his mind's ("in last night's *TIME*, another poet dead / and this one not sweating yet"), attempts to keep "old rituals alive," and struggles against his sense of stalemate:

> and the snowsuit of my daughter
> binds — an omen of bunched fabric
> in the cogs of all journeys.
>
> My teeth grit like a clogged zipper,
> the curse caught between them
> like old food.
>
> ("The Bind")

In the book's conclusion, the poet begins to free himself at last from his binds, not so much by resolving his difficulties as by recognizing them, and in consequence seeing the meaning of the experiences that surround him, as of his wife practicing her "Morning Scales":

> But our hands are tense
> in those taut strings;
> our rigid posture won't relax
> until we have climbed
> into comfort again:
> slow, careful, articulate notes,
> scales to the familiar.

Significantly this relaxation, this rediscovery of familiar objects, results not

only in poems in which the poet moves at last from his past to his present, from America to Canada, but also poems which show him more open and outward — turning away from self-absorption and preoccupation to a new awareness of his family and of his interactions with others: a tenth anniversary is seen as fulfilling the promise of familiarity that has grown out of having once been a stranger to his wife; watching his son asleep or pushing his daughter in a backyard swing now becomes suitable material for poetry. The visit of an insurance salesman brings a new awareness of death, one that he now responds to not with poetry or with exercise, but with an intense awareness of the time that threatens the whole family and yet also draws them together. It is this new sense of time that he expresses in the book's final poem, one which concludes with his imagining himself become a part of the distant past for future generations to come:

> My broken watch and yesterday's paper
> are shards at this level of our cave.
> When the future chips back to us
> with its delicate tools, assemble these bones:
> buildings, textbooks, students, the swish of
> cars,
> pavements, concerns, a man in his high
> office,
> his files, his desk, his shelves,
> the wind on all buildings the corniced howl
> of earth's oldest time he's learning to tell.

Liman says that he first began to take himself seriously as a poet around the time that he came to Canada in 1973. Clearly the experience of a new environment provided him with an important topic for poetic investigation. *Landing*, the result of that, is an interesting record of a northern journey, one which seems also to have been a process of maturation.

RUSSELL M. BROWN

FATAL DISTRACTION

HUGH GARNER, *Death in Don Mills*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $8.95.

POIROT MAY BE DEAD, but McDumont lives. Inspector Walter McDumont, that is, principal agent of Hugh Garner's first murder mystery, *The Sin Sniper*, and now of its sequel, *Death in Don Mills* — a veritable Maigret, Holmes and Poirot all in one. McDumont, whose exciting adventures impel the reader through page after action-packed page of mystery and suspense.

There are in fact one or two interesting things about this novel, though probably none that its author intended. For example, the endless paragraphs of filler, though thoroughly counter-productive as fiction, hold a perverse fascination for the astute critic. It's a toss-up whether Garner's preferred cotton batting is the menu for lunch or the map of Toronto, but we may at least observe that when he resorts to the latter Garner writes not about Toronto *per se* but about the mere grid of its streets:

> "Where's Gamble Avenue, Inspector?"
> "I think your best bet, Clary, is to turn around in the Don Mills Centre and go south on Don Mills to O'Connor Drive, turn right on O'Connor to Donlands Avenue, and it's the third or fourth street down."
> "Okay, Inspector. I got it."

Garner's characters receive much the same treatment as his locations, and are invariably and repeatedly described in such a way as to establish their precise position on the social grid. All of this is simply in keeping with the austere Order Ethic which has permeated Garner's work since the first page of *Cabbagetown*.

The good guys in this novel, especially McDumont, behave in a peculiarly courtly fashion. Again and again McDumont curtsies and murmurs, "Good work, Bill"; "Good job, Tom" — thereby en-

suring the loyalty of his subordinates as he demonstrates that even the highest ranks of the hierarchy bow to the common cause. But woe betide anyone who profanes that sacred order. The wealthy lawyer who pulls rank to evade a drunk-driving charge, the social climber who breaks rank by concealing his working-class origins: these — plus homosexuals — are the villains for whom McDumont reserves the full strength of his acid sarcasm: "I'd throw up if I hear more fag love confessions."

Death in Don Mills could be called a working-class novel, since in virtually every respect it betrays a mind profoundly conditioned by the working-class myth. In the Garnerian beehive, everyone must produce: McDumont detests the unproductive rich, whose money is perforce "stolen or inherited." Everyone must keep the laws of the hive. And everyone, beneath the superficial differences of rank and function, must be alike: McDumont tolerates Jews and Blacks so long as they do a "good job."

The minimal entertainment value of such writing is hardly surprising, for if the art of the working class is kitschy or meretricious, that of the working-class myth is unspeakably minimalist. Banality, routine and repetition are its highest precepts. Together with the Aesthetic of Detail, that niggling camp-follower of fictional forensica, they combine here to produce a work that seems two-thirds composed of literary sawdust.

Traditionally, reviewers of mystery novels are expected to leave the disentanglement of the mystery to the private enjoyment of the reader. In the event that anyone could possibly be interested in reading this book, I take pleasure in refraining from discussing it any further.

ROD WILLMOT

CANADIAN FICTION MAGAZINE #28

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SOCIAL CHANGE

HUGH GARNER, *The Intruders*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $8.95.

ONE OF THE MOST difficult tasks for the "realistic" writer is confronted when he brings together characters of different social classes. He must transcend the limitations of his own social background and accurately depict not only characters whose feelings and experiences he can identify with, but those whose experiences are completely alien to his own. The ability to do just this is one of Hugh Garner's greatest talents and is evident on every page of his latest novel, *The Intruders*.

The setting of the novel is "Cabbagetown," Toronto, some forty years later than the neighbourhood described in his earlier classic. The area is much changed: physically, economically, and more importantly, socially. It is no longer exclusively the dwelling place of those who can't afford anything better; it is a mixture of young "arty types," upper middleclass professionals who have decided to move back into the city, working people who have lived in Cabbagetown all of their lives and see no reason to leave now that they can afford to do so, long-time residents thinking of selling their homes at today's high prices and escaping at last, young people striving for an honest working class living, teen-age punks hoping to steal their way through life, and drunks who gave up making choices years ago.

The novel's contrapuntal form with its narrative deftly shifting from scene to scene, character to character, is perfectly suited to its subject matter. No one or two characters are dominant; the book carefully examines the relation of each character to his environment. Garner's largely descriptive goal is a complex composite social view of the Cabbagetown neighbourhood of today. The area is seen as a mosaic of people with wide ranging differences in interests, view points, economic resources, and social backgrounds. Their tensions and points of agreement continually balance each other. The members of the Community Association exert efforts toward community programs and projects, but find little support either locally or from municipal government officials, and eventually they see the "Outsiders Club" becoming more popular than their group. But the most important aspect of Garner's description is the attitude of the characters toward their community, and the fact that most of the residents of the area have uneasy feelings about the potpourri the area has become. The Rawleys and the Harcourts, upper-middleclass families looking for involvement in a more urban life than they had known in the suburbs, find that they have irreconcilable differences with the working class people they find running the business and community associations. Elsie Dales, a working class widow and a long time resident, finds herself among "intruders" with whom she is uncomfortable, and finds her son involved with a stupid destructive teen-age gang. Without compromising himself, Syd Tedland, a member of the community association, local businessman, peacemaker, and sage, tries to accommodate the variety of people he now meets. And honest and hard-working, young Jim Travis attempts to find his way in a place that has grown extremely confusing. Throughout the novel characters attempt to overcome, either voluntarily or by the force of the situation thrust upon them, their class consciousness and the limitations of their own class stratified pasts. Some have more success than others, but none finds it easy.

A very peculiar aspect of the book (and something for which Garner should be given great credit) is its ability to hold the reader's interest with almost no action

and relatively little dramatic tension. Except for the antics and outbursts of the teen-age gang, most of the characters deal with the problematic relation of themselves to the neighbourhood in a quiet low-key fashion. Their alienation builds slowly, is caused by subtle things rather than dramatic incidents, and can be temporarily put aside, but never completely overcome.

This calm tone, especially when contrasted to the feelings of bounded energy just waiting to be released in *Cabbagetown*, is indicative of the important change (since the earlier book) in Garner's attitude toward the structures of organized society. In *Cabbagetown* he seems to view the existing social and economic structures of the 30's as unjust, arbitrary, and destructive, and implies that society must be changed very dramatically and very soon even though attempts to change it appear to be futile.

But in *The Intruders* rapid social change also has its difficulties, it is too fast and people can't change as quickly. The impetus for the liberal mixed neighbourhood of the 70's is intellectual and is exemplified by the Rawleys and the Harcourts. From the perspective of his suburban home and his downtown law office Len Rawley decides to move to Cabbagetown. He reasons that his political ambitions (to be a city Councilman representing the area) will be aided, and that more involvement with the city would produce a healthier life style. His wife and friends, the Harcourts, agree with the reasoning and join him. But the facts of existence in a mixed neighbourhood are quite a different thing. They discover barriers between themselves and the working class residents of the area. Perhaps the hope for change lies in younger people, like Jim Travis, who becomes a friend of Bonnie Rawley. Travis' thinking is not so rooted in older social orders and he finds less difficulty in relating to Bonnie and the other characters. It becomes increasingly clear that the most meaningful changes can occur only as people's attitudes change. Garner suggests that this is a slow evolutionary process.

GARY WERDEN

OUT OF PURDY-LAND

AL PURDY, ed., *Storm Warning 2*. McClelland & Stewart.

ON FIRST READING through this book I found editor Al Purdy everywhere. He must be flattered. For example:

> cold's getting in
> and this beer
> smells
> and besides
> my chest hurts
> nicotine
> and me listening to some crap artist
> pop poet on the radio
> sulking about losing his job
> and
> all of a sudden
> my desk becomes a bar
> and ...

and I'm thinking maybe Purdy's influence is too pervasive in this collection of not widely known Canadian poets, though I have to admit that this poem (by Rolf Harvey) is worth reading. But then the powerful vision of Peter Trower's distinctive alliterative poetry attracts me: vivid, intense portraits of a logger's world. And Laurence Hutchman is his own man in the fine "Perseus."

However, Tom Howe perhaps out-Purdys Purdy, avoiding superfluous language and producing metaphorical connections that are at once startling and beautiful:

> outside Williams Lake in a field
> beyond an Indian cemetery I am
> trying to name the colours
> but the grass refuses all categories

it is a tapestry woven by ethereal women
whose fingers are the roots of trees
they wear stars around their necks

"The grass refuses all categories." That's the kind of thing Purdy would say and surely the five words encompass a vast range of implication. At times I think the collection is a put-on: Purdy is publishing his latest poems under other people's names. Here is more of Howe's "Death In Autumn":

they are Chilcotin farmers
who fight with the north for nothing more
than modest money and that part of their
soul
travelling glances cannot reveal

The long elegiac enjambement, the "down-to-earth" stance ("modest money"), the neat way the syntax shifts the perspective from the farmers to the poet or, perhaps, the "traveller" in the last two lines — that's all very Purdy. And so is this evasion of glibness, as the poem continues in yet a couple more humble subordinate clauses (casual, loose, no overstatement):

which is something to consider
past glib assertions of man's struggle
against life while death awaits

Man's struggle for life is what one expects as a "glib assertion," but "against life" is a bit of a surprise. The poem demonstrates an impressive mastery of all Purdy's tricks, and it is, to me, a powerful poem.

And yet one wonders — how is it that so many people are sounding like Purdy and that so many poems, just like these, wrestle with an impressive landscape in a manner that reinforces what the critics tell us about "Canadian themes"? (see, for example, Peter Trower, Gordon Burles, Lorne Daniel, Anne Corkett, Erin Mouré). I guess it must be that many gifted writers really admire Purdy enough to be influenced by him and that Canadians really are wrestling with the impassivity of both the social and natural environments. Canadian poets seem surrounded by death.

Most people fight death through some kind of life-affirming relationship (dare one say love?), but Rosemary Aubert, recalling Sylvia Plath, pronounces the "nice nuclear family" dead, and does it in a pretty devastating way. Susan Hozy's "Bridal Veil" tries to do the same thing, but the perspective is not sufficiently angular to be arresting, if that makes sense. Then Darien Watson gives us death-in-life itself, with a crushingly intense vision of a foetus in a jar. It is quite an achievement to write an original poem on this overworked subject (Plath, Snodgrass, and who else?) but she has that eye for detail and that angularity of vision which compel complete attention, whether you wish it or not.

But it's still, surely, the mastery of another author's tone and technique that one appreciates:

Rare baby, Parian
porcelain and creamy rose, I
see jeweller's veins finer than
silk from caterpillars
tracked under your cobweb skin....

Still, mastery it is. Plath was seldom, if ever, more vivid than that.

Turn the page, though, and we're back with Al again:

I don't feel bad about wasting my time
eating blades of grass under a tree
or writing volumes of poetry
or not having the energy to sit in the sun
and get tanned
because no one really cares
if my father conquered Persia
or if ...

Believe it or not, this poem by Andrew Wreggitt turns out well, but it's still straight out of Purdy-land ("I am a sensitive man").

But the subject I was considering was how to fight death. Fraser Sutherland, in "Undergoing," faces physical pain with a

bluntness that makes one twitch. Erin Mouré has the victimized Riel undergoing a uniquely Canadian version of pastoral metamorphosis and, in "Trusting the Song," takes a trainride which ends in the scattering of man, machine, and history into Rocky Mountain oblivion. Mouré is an excellent poet. If some of the women attack marriage as death-in-life, Wayne Wright takes the same view of a middle-class Canadian girl in "For A Woman in Cam Che, Vietnam." A battle of the sexes, no less. He is a very good poet, too. So is Gordon Burles, who continues the struggle in "She Goes Away" (but "Old Xenophon Remembers" is even better; Burles is a powerful writer).

Anyway, after rejection by the land, by father, mother, history, husband, wife, where does one go? This sounds so much like a soap-opera. But anyone who has read *Survival* knows that one goes into whatever life one can find: plants, flies, worms, animal victims. Don Domanski does this superbly, making some very intelligent historical points. Here he describes flies (you have to be threatened by Uncle Sam before you really understand this):

> they are always pioneers
> Puritans escaping suppression
> having landed here
> not to compromise
> but to establish themselves
>
> I am a man staring out in wonder
> between trees
> I am their Indian

Maureen McCarthy merges with "the friendly earth" in her fine poem, "Plants." Peter Christensen embodies a lot of chaos and hate in his description of carpenter ants. Elizabeth Johnston completes her beautiful mythic "The Journey" like this:

> I saw a lizard crawl up upon a rock
> and scuttle in four-legged haste
> to disappear beneath a waterfall.

The animal as "other," as "Thou" if you like, and the fascination that accompanies such Roethkean perception — there's a lot of that in this collection. The clues these poets give about surviving boil down to this: see things as clearly and as fully as possible; find life in imaginative perception. If that sounds disconcertingly like a horoscope reading, I can assure you anyway that these poets communicate their perceptions with convincing detail and particularity. There are, in fact, so many good poems in the book that it would require much more space to do it full justice.

However, I'll close with some personal gripes. Why is there virtually nothing in closed forms? It really is a bit much when a poet as excellent as Richard Outram can't get published in his own country (see his *Turns*, Chatto and Windus), but maybe this anthology gives us the reason why. Outram's poems, after all, aren't "free." To make one other sour face, this time in another direction: it took more intelligence and commitment to achieve the level of artistry this book maintains than it does to write good journalism or good literary criticism. Sure, this may not be enduring stuff (emphasis on *may*), but any English prof who would not be proud to take credit for it wouldn't, to my mind, be worth his salt (e.g., I'd distrust his criticism of Milton). I say this in passing because the money which could put many of these gifted people on our literary map is now going to subsidize literary research done, by and large, for professional advancement.

So don't scoff, English prof! This book represents a commitment to excellence which is total, and goes without pay.

LLOYD ABBEY

A FLOODING PAST

PETER TROWER, *The Alders and Others.* Harbour Publishing.
JOY KOGAWA, *Jericho Road.* McClelland & Stewart, $4.95.
KEN CATHERS, *Images on Water.* Oolichan Books, $4.00.

THERE ARE SEVERAL GOOD and valid reasons why I should not review any book of Peter Trower's. Item — I just wrote an Introduction for a larger collection of his poems to be published by McClelland & Stewart. Item — I swiped a line from a poem of his recently, using it in one of my own without acknowledgement. Item — John Newlove and I read his poems for several years, selecting those that seemed the best for book publication. And therefore I'm not exactly unbiased about Trower.

However, not being an angel I plunge in, or rush in as the case may be.

My understanding is that this particular small book was published by the poet's friends, and that Trower was unaware of it until the book appeared. And poems selected by friends are liable to be slightly different from those you would choose yourself. This book is a mixture of logging poems (many of them having already appeared in *Between the Sky and the Splinters*), and other pieces arising from the lowdown shabby streets of Vancouver: poems written by a man looking up from the underside of life.

Of course a poem is a poem no matter what its subject matter; nevertheless Trower's metier is certainly the Vancouver pubs, B.C. logging camps, and includes a kind of poignance for what is unchangeable in these places and yet always changing. Most are set in the past, but a skilful use of verbs lends them some timelessness in the present. Counting the verbs in particular poems gives some insight — into "Outhouse," for instance. The poem arrives out of the past, and then stretches into the future when the builder is said to have been "planning a confident kingdom/ to last at least forever." Which makes me think that the quality of timelessness contained in poems is nevertheless always concerned with time, if that doesn't sound like a cliché.

This sense of nostalgia for the ongoing past is one of Trower's most attractive qualities. And since many of his better-known poems have been reprinted several times, Trower himself must be aware of this flooding pastness. In fact this book is just a small taste of the man's poems; knowing them so well, I think many were omitted that I would have included. But just to read a poem like "The Ravens" makes the whole book worthwhile:

> They circle strange in the curdled sky
> black messengers
> bearing indecipherable messages —
> oldtime loggers
> named them soulbearers —
> where you go when you die
> to wake feathered and swooping
> your fat brain reduced
> to a walnut of useful instinct —

Joy Kogawa published *A Choice of Dreams* in 1974. It consisted of poems about going back to Japan, and experiencing there some kind of culture-shock. In Canada she had felt she was not exactly Canadian; but in Japan she certainly was not Japanese any longer. I'm sure that, in some sense, she had been looking for a "spiritual home" on this trip, as well as some kind of inner and outer voice to say "you are you," and thus be reassured and inviolate inside herself. Of course no inner voice did speak: and I think Kogawa's own attitude toward the dichotomy of herself was amusement — detached amusement, at least partly amusement, or else she wouldn't have been able to write those poems.

Always there are questionings in ourselves: who we are, and what the purpose

of our residence on earth. "I am me" is seldom a satisfactory answer, and generally requires tougher self-questioning than we are prepared to attempt. (In fact, I think Kogawa knew all along that she was really a westerner in Japan, knew it without full self-admission underneath the obvious dichotomy of slight physical difference versus residence in Canada.) But the purpose of our residence on earth? That has nothing to do with nationality, only with our questing selves.

In *Jericho Road* Kogawa is still looking for herself, but this time in relation to a marriage that is gradually breaking up, and also day-to-day incidents whose significance is related to her own perceptions. She is an examiner of portents, omens, and her own entrails, is able to switch her literary and real identity — for the purposes of the poem? In other words, I think the poet's actual persona is rarely reliable and static as the poem makes it out to be; and yet, in this poem entitled "Fear," the fear is indubitably real, although not for very obvious reasons:

I fear you
as I fear the
flower in the flood
drowned in the
river of rain

as I fear the
water-skiing fly
leaping from
flower to flower

and the fish pursuing
and the man
with his fishing net

The poem is an exercise of ambiguities, in which everything is both itself and something else. In the previous book, Kogawa had concrete strangenesses to push against and make poems with: in *Jericho* she is pushing against different familiar objects and feelings, with different degrees of poems and human success.

With Kogawa, I have always an impression of this fluttering and questing mind. In a letter she said something to me that, if not typical, is at least characteristic — "well, the thing is that i believe in the miracle — the grace thing. you think that god's switchboard is jammed and i think it is too, but i think there's an underground at work, sending messages. i think that right now, if the message gets put into the right code, it'll get through and the code has to be free of the power fallout and that kind of pollution and i think i have to shut down the munitions factory somehow. at least it's worked before. though it could have been a ruse."

She writes letters like poems and vice-versa. Translators should read them.

There are poems to which one can't relate, and it's a question as to whether one should even attempt to review them. Ken Cathers' poems are like that for me. I might myself write poems on the subjects he chooses or which choose him, for I think they are valid subjects (in fact, what isn't a valid subject?), but I remain disinterested in these examples.

And now I suppose I have to give reasons for my disinterest. Because these are not bad or worthless poems. Perhaps, curiously, they seem things that I've read before, or are similar to other people's poems. Maybe even similar to some of my own. One verse even reinforces this impression:

changing into some-
one else, another shape
on the open field.

So maybe this is a poetry of echoes, of shape-changing without things being resolved — resolved in the sense that it can mean very much to me personally. Or have I changed into something else myself before Cathers can reach me? If so, there will be other readers.

AL PURDY

VAGABOND MASK

C. F. KLINCK, *Robert Service.* McGraw Hill Ryerson.

DURING WORLD WAR II, when Robert Service was in his seventies, he published two autobiographies, *Ploughman of the Moon: An Adventure into Memory* (1945) and *Harper of Heaven: A Record of Radiant Living* (1948). These are highly-coloured adventure stories, undoubtedly biographically true in their broad outlines, but heightened and fictionalized, I believe, in their many details. They constitute the self-devised romantic image of the man who achieved fame and a fortune out of Sam McGee, Dan McGrew, some twenty collections of verse and several novels. Service's style of versifying was outmoded by the twenties, but he still spoke of writing a poem every few days until he died at 84, in 1958. The old magic of his name continued to assure the publication of such collections as *Lyrics of a Lowbrow* (1951) and *Carols of an Old Codger* (1954), and on his eighty-fourth birthday he was suggesting to Dodd Mead that some "modest publicity" be given him. The determination still to be remembered commands sympathy, though it also breeds an embarrassed pity.

To make this biography, Carl Klinck has drawn from the autobiographies, Service's works, particularly his novels, and from personal interviews with his widow and daughter. The result is a kaleidoscopic picture of a long life, from Scotland as a young man to America, the Klondike, the South Seas, Russia, the battlefields of World War I and Hollywood in World War II (where, in *The Spoilers*, 1942, he played the part of Robert Service in a scene with Marlene Dietrich). After his marriage to a Frenchwoman in 1913, the home base for his travels was in France — in Paris, Monte Carlo and Brittany. The man at the centre of the picture remains a sentimental American stereotype of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a Mark Twain vernacular-speaking innocent abroad, a travelling cowboy encased in his own fantasy bubble of a world where a real man was a fighter with a heart of gold and morality was as simple a diagram of black and white as the Hollywood Westerns made it (the films of John Ford demonstrate the next historical development of that stereotype, particularly as it was played by Gary Cooper).

When the twenty-two-year-old Scottish bank clerk emigrated to America in 1896, he had already been versifying and dabbling in the theatre for several years. He brought with him his own ready-made picture of the vagabond hero, American style, derived from music-hall vaudeville and the works of Bret Harte. As Klinck remarks: "Glasgow, and not primarily the hobo camps of the American Pacific coast, made Service's voice and ear adaptable to the free turns of speech in which this boy from the land of Burns characterized and immortalized the common, unbookish language of the Yukon."

Carl Klinck was constrained in his portrayal of Service by the very existence and insistent detail of the two autobiographies, a hazard of which he was well aware: "the I and the me in his stories constituted a conventional literary device ... a means of providing a mask behind which he could preserve his privacy." Service was tenaciously devoted to his mask, however; he had worn it for so long successfully and then, in later years, defensively, that its lineaments and its morality seem indistinguishable from his own. Some years ago, in the museum at Whitehorse, I read a letter which said, in part: "We have a new teller in the bank. His name is Mr. Service. He is a

very quiet young man, but he reads poetry beautifully. Last night he read us some of the poems of Lord Tennyson." The quiet man undoubtedly lived somewhere behind the mask, but his capitulation to his own luck and legend was pretty complete — too complete to provide his biographer with the warmth and depth of personality he searched for.

CLARA THOMAS

FICTION STRONGER THAN FACT

FARLEY MOWAT, *The Snow Walker.* McClelland & Stewart. $8.95.

The Snow Walker is Farley Mowat's first work of fiction for adults, which makes it something of a milestone in a prolific writing career that has spanned nearly a quarter of a century. In common with the majority of his previous works, *The Snow Walker* provides Mowat with a convenient platform from which to expound his passionately held convictions about the North and its people, but it also proves, to this reviewer's satisfaction at any rate, that Farley Mowat can be counted among the top story-tellers writing in Canada today.

There are nine short stories in *The Snow Walkers,* each of which plays some variation on the general theme of character in conflict with environment, and two non-fictional pieces which are used to introduce and conclude them. The first of these, titled simply "Snow", is probably least successful of the lot. An ingenious collection of observations about the nature and effect of snow, its purpose is to compare modern man's view of snow as a nuisance with the Eskimo's welcome of it as an ally against the cold. This would have been all well and good if Mowat had not also seen fit to include a quasi-poetic series of answers to his own question, "How do *we* envisage snow? . . . It is the fragility of Christmas dreams sintering through azure darkness. . . . It is the invitation that glows ephemeral on a women's lashes on a winter night." . . . etc., etc. Surely it should be possible for a writer of Mowat's experience to describe snow without getting bogged down in heavy slush.

But the concluding piece in *The Snow Walker,* "Dark Odyssey of Soosie", is vintage Mowat indeed. In it he documents the true and tragic story of a group of Eskimo families whom the Canadian government and the Hudson's Bay Company shunted from one bleak and hopeless location to another over a period of 30 years, refusing to return them to their original home. Mowat's description of the Eskimos' ordeal, culminating in a murder trial; of the trial itself, and of its aftermath are as gripping as anything he has ever written.

Yet despite its power, "Dark Odyssey of Soosie" may seem out of place in a collection of short stories until we recollect that *The Snow Walker* is, after all, a book by Farley Mowat. Leaving well enough alone, or appreciating the Eskimo experience from a comfortable aesthetic distance, would be as foreign to Mowat's purpose as a baobab on Baffin Island. Though each of his fictional pieces is a self-contained story which can be enjoyed purely as a story, each is also in some measure a fierce and uncompromising sermon directed against white arrogance, ignorance and greed. Read as an epilogue, "Dark Odyssey of Soosie" goes a long way towards justifying Mowat's sermonizing. Truth, it demonstrates, is both stranger and more terrible than fiction.

All of which may seem to relegate the stories themselves to second place, which may well be precisely what their author had in mind. Yet looking back on the

book as a whole it is Mowat's fictional characters, especially his animal characters, which spring to mind.

The life of the Eskimo in Farley Mowat's Arctic is stripped to its elements: love, death, hunger, work and tradition, and gives rise not to despair, but to moral purification. The plot of each story is generally a straightforward explanation of a mystery or an anomaly. All of the stories, sooner or later, deal with some aspect of the theme of brotherhood or self-sacrifice. Narration is divided equally between Eskimo characters and Mowat himself.

But it is Mowat's prose style, even more than the sometimes spectacularly dramatic stories he has to tell, which makes *The Snow Walker* exceptional. His vocabulary is large and knowledgeable; he is rich in the wiles of the born and practised story-teller; his ability to select the best of all possible words at the ideal moment is first rate.

PAT BARCLAY

THE WAR OF 1812 AND MORE

JOHN RICHARDSON, *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War.* Introduction by Carl F. Klinck. University of Toronto Press. $18.50 cloth, $6.95 paper.

WHEN JOHN RICHARDSON (1796-1852) returned to Canada in 1838, he brought with him an almost completed manuscript of a sequel to his popular novel *Wacousta: Or, The Prophecy: A Tale Of The Canadas* (1832). In the spring of 1839, two selections from this sequel appeared in the *Literary Garland.* By the fall of 1839, Richardson, who was then living in Sandwich, had completed the manuscript and left for Montreal to arrange for its publication. *The Canadian Brothers; Or, The Prophecy Fulfilled. A Tale Of The Late American War,* by Major Richardson, Knight of the Military Order of Saint Ferdinand, published by A. H. Armour and H. Ramsay and printed by John Lovell of Montreal, appeared in a two-volume edition in 1840. It is this edition which has been used as the text for *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War.*

This second Canadian edition of *The Canadian Brothers* has been reproduced by a process of photo-offset printing. Thus, although it comes, curiously enough, without the title page of the 1840 edition, it comes with its tiny print, its printing errors, its dedication, its *errata,* and its preface, in which Richardson includes four letters relevant to *Wacousta* and *The Canadian Brothers* written in 1832 and 1833 by King William IV's secretary, a discussion of the novel's historical anachronisms, and an "apology for the imperfect Scotch" spoken by one character. Also, because this reprint is one of the *Literature of Canada* volumes, it comes with an "Introduction." In it Professor Klinck analyses the revised — "Americanized" — version of *The Canadian Brothers, Matilda Montgomerie: Or, The Prophecy Fulfilled. A Tale Of The Late American War. Being The Sequel To Wacousta,* first published in New York in 1851; the autobiographical aspects of *The Canadian Brothers*; the connections between it and *Wacousta*; Richardson's use of the " 'Beauchamp tragedy, which took place at or near Weiseger's Hotel, in Frankfort, Kentucky' " in 1825; and his disappointment about the poor sales of the novel in Canada, even though when it was first published, it received generally favourable reviews.

There are reasons why Canadians did not rush to buy *The Canadian Brothers* then and have only republished it now. Klinck mentions two — "Middle-

ton's puns" and Sambo's "odd speech" — in addition to Cranstoun's "imperfect Scotch." But there are other, more fundamental problems with the novel. Its setting, the War of 1812, frequently diverts Richardson from his fable with the result that the reader often loses sight of Gerald and Henry Grantham, the Canadian brothers, and the curse which they have inherited as great-grandsons of Colonel de Haldimar. Strands of the plot are introduced and dropped without being satisfactorily woven into the novel. Characters such as Sampson Gattrie are colourful, but play no integral role in the fable. Richardson often writes badly.

Still, *The Canadian Brothers* is fascinating. One reason is, despite the difficulties it creates for the fable, Richardson's handling of the War of 1812, especially as it was waged on the western Canadian frontier in 1812-1813. Richardson, of course, was born and grew up on this frontier. Moreover, serving with the Right Division of the Canadian Army, he fought at Detroit in 1812, was captured at Moraviantown in 1813, and was imprisoned for a year in 1813-1814 in Ohio and Kentucky. Thus, in *The Canadian Brothers* his descriptions of places, people, and events connected with this setting are not only historically accurate but based on personal experience. Furthermore, when he began his sequel to *Wacousta* shortly after its publication in 1832, Richardson had already learned much about turning this war into literature through his work on "A Canadian Campaign" (1826-1827) and *Tecumseh: Or, The Warrior Of The West* (1828). As a result, in *The Canadian Brothers* such characters as Brock and Tecumseh and such events as the capture of Fort Detroit and the disaster of Moraviantown are rendered with precision and complexity. In addition, Richardson presents this war as a challenge to Canadian loyalty and nationality.

But as well as allowing him to illuminate Canadian subjects, the War of 1812 also allows Richardson to throw light upon more psychological and moral concerns. It seems clear that in 1812-1814 he himself lived through moments of terror and violence that severely tested all his adolescent physical and emotional strength and that continued to haunt him and his works throughout his life. In *The Canadian Brothers* these traumas are most dramatically developed by Gothic motifs and by the continuation from *Wacousta* of the story of Ellen Halloway's curse. Richardson quotes from "Monk" Lewis at one point in the novel; at several he introduces motifs of betrayal, madness, mystery, revenge, and the supernatural. Some of these, including the sudden appearance of a horribly grinning face one night at an upstairs window, are repeated from *Wacousta*.

The most intriguing aspect of these characteristics of *The Canadian Brothers*, however, is the way in which they transform themselves so readily into archetypes. Gerald's being bitten by a snake on Hog Island on an Indian summer's day in October 1812, Matilda's sucking the poison from his arm, and her bathing it with a preparation of herbs she has boiled over a fire — events which end Volume One — introduce motifs of poison and potions and transform them into archetypal images of temptation, sin, evil, and death. Similarly, motifs of revenge, superhuman strength, and violence are transformed in the final scenes of the novel into an image of men falling into "the bottom of a chasm into which the sunbeam had never yet penetrated." Such symbolism as this finally controls *The Canadian Brothers* and makes it a compelling excursion both into the dark wildernesses of North America in 1812-1814 and into the shadowy wildernesses of us all.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

opinions and notes

VITZLIPUTZLI REVISITED

C. H. IBERSHOFF, in an early article on Vitzliputzli,[1] traces the origin of the name back to Mexican mythology as Brockhaus' *Konversations-Lexikon* lists it. He also finds in Heinsius' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1822) the German colloquial usage of Vitzliputzli as "ein Liebkosungswort kleiner Kinder" — which, incidentally, may still be encountered today. Having given these two rather opposed aspects of the name, Ibershoff then sets out to trace the literary occurrence of a Vitzliputzli-figure. He mentions Christian Weise's *Die drei ärgsten Erznarren* (1672) as the earliest work that contains the name in the bowdlerizing version of "Pizlipuzli." Friedrich Müller's *Faust* (1778) is next on his list where "one of the devils is called Vizlipuzli."[2] Vitzliputzli then appears in a poem each by Heine and Hebel and also in Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, as Ibershoff points out.

Without attempting a complete account, I would suggest that a couple of works be added here to Ibershoff's list. On the stage, Vitzlipuzli appears in Vienna in 1817: "*Der Vizlipuzli.* Eine romantisch-komische Volkssage mit Gesang in drei Aufzügen, nach einer Erzählung des Hrn. Baron de la Motte-Fouqué, bearbeitet von Ferdinand Rosenau, die Musik vom Hrn. Kapellmeister Müller." This romantic folk tale was first performed on February 14, 1817 in Vienna's "Theater in der Leopoldstadt."[3] The novella on which the play is based is very likely la Motte-Fouqué's *Das Galgenmännlein*,[4] the charming story of a bottle-imp which, however, makes no mention of the name Vitzliputzli at all. This musical play was followed two years later by what appears to be a parody called "*Der Pu(t)livizli oder Der Mann ohne Schatten*, komisches Zauberspiel in drei Akten nach de la Motte-Fouqué, von Ferdinand Rosenau." Its first-night performance took place at the "Theater in der Josefsstadt" in Vienna on February 1, 1819.[5] In prose, there is a reference to Heine's poem in Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1895) which brings out the grotesque and cruel aspect of Vitzliputzli as the Aztec god being pacified with the sacrifices of Spanish prisoners by his Mexican worshippers.[6]

All the literary references to Vitzliputzli mentioned so far appear in German works prior to the twentieth century. It would, therefore, be surprising to find Vitzliputzli make its way suddenly into the Canadian literary scene, were it not for the fact that it shows up in Davies' trilogy; for Davies' work makes use, in part, of a German (Swiss) cultural and geographical background. A brief attempt will be made now to point to some possible ways of looking at the Vitzliputzli-figure in Davies' novels.

Liselotte Vitzlipützli is the stage name of a character in *Fifth Business* who has been described to the reader as "a woman of captivating intellect and charm, cruelly imprisoned in a deformed body."[7] She is given this "absurd name," as the narrator puts it,[8] when she becomes the business partner of the magician Magnus Eisengrim, who is at that time performing in Guadalupe, Mexico. The reader is left with his own associations concerning the Vitzlipützli-name, until Davies has Liesl herself come forth with an explanation toward the end of the final volume in the trilogy, *World of Wonders*: "Dear, dear, how ignorant people are in this supposedly brilliant modern world," said Liesl. "You surely know *Faust*? Not Goethe's *Faust*, of course; every Teuton has that by heart — both parts of it —

but the old German play on which he based his poem. Look among the characters there, and you will find that the least of the demons attending on the great magician is Vitzlipützli. . . . "[9] Liesl's tone of snide condescension hits the "ignorant" reader as well as her partner in conversation. Her derivation of the Vitzliputzli surname takes us, then, into the "Teutonic," scholarly direction, thus indicating Liesl's own literary and German philological interests. Speaking of Vitzliputzli as a demon and a servant of a great master, Liesl points directly to aspects of her relationship with Eisengrim. The reader, however, need not stop there with his own interpretation. For even within the *Faust* context, the characteristics of Vitzliputzli are more numerous than what Liesl mentions. In Maler Müller's early *Fausts Leben* (the drama mentioned by Ibershoff), Vizlipuzli is, among other things, a sharp critic and satirist of the apparently brilliant characters surrounding him[10] — a trait that can easily be spotted in Liesl as well.

Only a full character analysis of Dr. Liselotte Naegeli, alias Liesl Vitzlipützli, can come to grips with the total complexity of her pseudonym. It must, therefore, suffice here only to point to some of the other allusions evoked by Davies' choice of the name.

The stage name is first mentioned in that part of the novel that takes place in Mexico. Thus, a connexion is established to Vitzliputzli's mythological origin Huitzilopochtli. This god — as, for instance, seen within the context of Fontane's novel — devours human beings. An allusion to this Aztec god cannot be ignored here, since the name occurs at about the time of the weird power struggle that inaugurates Liesl's lasting friendship with Dunstan Ramsay. During their fight, Dunstan refers to Liesl as "a Swiss gargoyle," thus evoking the image of a grotesque demon-like figure.[11] And later, when Padre Blazon asks Ramsay: "Have you met the Devil yet?", he replies affirmatively referring back to his victory over Liesl that night. "I met Him in Mexico City. He was disguised as a woman — an extremely ugly woman, but unquestionably a woman."[12] Partly Liesl may have acted as her master's servant in this close encounter with Ramsay, but partly she also reflected the ruthlessly demanding spirit of the mythological Vitzliputzli figure (whose name she brings up again during this scene[13]).

Finally, there remains the association this name evokes in colloquial usage, the one of a small, mischievous but endearing figure, as mentioned by Heinsius. Small she is not, this Swiss lady Liselotte Naegeli; on the contrary, she is huge in size. Clearly, we have here a glimpse of Davies' humour in giving a giant of an ugly woman the surname of Vitzliputzli which creates the image of a cute small creature in the reader's mind. Mischievous or malicious she may often be called, and rightly so. Endearing she is, or actually much more: Liesl is immensely lovable in her complex, ugly-looking, beautiful personality.

In summary we may say that, while several German works of literature have made use of the name Vitzliputzli one restricted way or another, it appears that Robertson Davies has used the name Vitzliputzli in a considerably more complex way. His allusions comprise the mythological, philological and colloquial aspects of Vitziliputzli and are united in one of his great character studies.

NOTES

[1] "Vitzliputzli," *Modern Language Notes*, 28 (1913), 211 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, 211.

[3] Kachler, "Kritik über die Erstaufführung des 'Vizlipuzli,'" *Bäuerles Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, No. 25, 27. February 1817, p. 100.

[4] (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1944).

[5] Information courtesy of Dr. Christine Gruber, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Theatersammlung.

[6] Fontane, *Romane, Erzählungen, Gedichte* (München: Carl Hanser, 1963), iv, 138.

[7] (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 246.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

[9] (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), p. 332.

[10] Deutsche Litteraturdenkmäler des 18. Jahrhunderts, vol. 37 (Heilbronn, 1881; Klaus reprint, 1968).

[11] *Fifth Business*, p. 262.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

GERTRUD JARON LEWIS

Malcolm's Katie THE INTERIOR VIEW

ON THE SUBJECT OF NATURE poetry, Margaret Atwood has written in *Survival* that such poetry usually involves more than just writing about Nature. "That is," she writes, "landscapes in poems are often interior landscapes; they are maps of a state of mind." In this way, it certainly can be said that Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie* is not just a poem about Love or Nature. More important, it tells us something about its creator — about her "state of mind."

Malcolm's Katie is, on the surface, a love story, but below that surface there is a great deal of violence and confusion, as well as beauty. In regard to Crawford herself, Northrop Frye has pointed out in *The Bush Garden* that her "framework," or surface, "is that of an intellectual songbird of the kind who filled so many anthologies in the last century." But it is also true to say that at certain times — perhaps when at the height of her poetic powers — Crawford is a soaring eagle or a villainous hawk, with a songbird clamped bloodily in her talons.

Crawford frequently depicts Nature as being in violent conflict with itself. The Moon of Falling Leaves in Part II of *Malcolm's Katie* is cast in the role of a succubus descending upon the dark wood.

> The keen, two-bladed Moon
> Of Falling Leaves roll'd up on crested mists
> And where the lush, rank boughs had foil'd the sun
> In his red prime, her pale, sharp fingers crept
> After the wind and felt about the moss,
> And seem'd to pluck from shrinking twig and stem
> The burning leaves — while groaned the shudd'ring wood.
>
> (Part II, stanza 4)

In the opening stanza of Part IV, the North Wind attacks the earth in the manner of an Indian brave.

> From his far wigwam sprang the strong North Wind
> And rush'd with war-cry down the steep ravines,
> And wrestl'd with the giants of the woods;
> And with his ice-club beat the swelling crests
> Of the deep watercourses into death
> . . . . . .
> And smote the tall reeds to the harden'd earth. . . .

Crawford even describes the fast-moving water as being in conflict with itself.

> In a green sheen, smooth as a naiad's locks,
> The water rolled between the shuddering jaws,
> Then on the river level roared and reeled
> In ivory-armed conflict with itself.
>
> (Part VI, stanza 2)

It appears that much of Crawford's interior must have been "deep and dusky" like her "pulseless forest."

Perhaps in trying to overcome, or "civilize," her own bizarre nature, Crawford sought refuge in the comforting symbol of the daffodil, as Max, the young lover, does near the end of Part II of the poem.

> And Max car'd little for the blotted sun,
> And nothing for the startl'd, outshone stars;
> For Love, once set within a lover's breast,
> Has its own Sun — its own peculiar sky,
> All one great daffodil — on which do lie
> The sun, the moon, the stars . . .

In order to affirm the existence of the daffodil, Max and the poet, both, must disregard reality to some degree. Prior to the above quoted passage, Max has just built a funeral pyre "strewn with the tangl'd dead" of the forest he is chopping down in order to marry Katie. The "resinous black smoke" from that fire is in utter conflict with the sunny daffodil in the next stanza.

We see this conflict again between the forest carnage and the daffodilian sentiments when Max points out where his and Katie's home shall stand.

> And heard so often, "there shall stand our home —
> On yonder slope, with vines about the door!"
> That the good wives were almost made to see
> The snowy walls, deep porches, and the gleam
> Of Katie's garments flitting through the rooms;
> And the black slope bristling with burn'd stumps
> Was known amongst them all as "Max's House."
>
> (Part II, second to last stanza)

Atwood's comment that "Canadian writers as a whole do not trust Nature, they are always suspecting some dirty trick" certainly applies to this ominous passage. How the conflict is to be resolved is unstated; in this way, the possible consequences seem all the more horrible and inevitable.

In view of all this, the last lines of *Malcolm's Katie* can be seen as heavily ironical. Katie says:

> I would not change these wild and rocking woods,
> Dotted by little homes of unbarked trees,
> Where dwell the fleers from the waves of want,
> For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers,
> Nor — Max for Adam, if I knew my mind!
>
> (Part VII, final stanza)

Try as she might to convince us otherwise, we cannot help but think Crawford's lines portend the flight of Max and Katie from their savagely-hewn Eden.

Frye has written this about the poem:

> In the long mythopoeic passage . . . beginning with "The South Wind laid his moccasins aside," we see how the poet is, first, taming the landscape imaginatively, as settlement tames it physically, by animating the lifeless scene with humanized figures, and, second, integrating the literary tradition of the country by deliberately re-establishing the broken cultural link with Indian civilization. . . .

It probably would have been more accurate to say that Crawford was trying to tame her interior landscape by way of writing about the external one surrounding her. Any "deliberate" linking of cultures was probably done just as much for psychological reasons as for purely literary or mythological ones. Crawford's interior landscape was one in which her imagination beat, throbbed, and pulsated uncontrollably — sometimes ambiguously — and, when she allowed as much on paper, the result was a unique, eerie kind of grandeur. *Malcolm's Katie* is indeed a "map of a state of mind": one in which the more treacherous routes seem much more appealing than the long and narrow scenic ones.

MARSHALL BROOKS

EXPENSIVE TOOL

A USEFUL new research tool which all but the prosperous will be wise to use in libraries is *English-Canadian Literature to 1900: A Guide to Information Sources*, compiled by R. G. Moyles and published by the Gale Research Company in Detroit as one volume in a cart-

before-the-horse-titled compilation called *The American Literature, English Literature, and World Literatures in English Information Guide Series.* A faintly distasteful odour of American literary imperialism hangs over the Gale series as a whole, but those whose concern is mainly with Canadian writers and writings should not be deterred, for *English-Canadian Literature to 1900* is capably done, divided between General Reference Guides, Literary Histories and Criticism, Anthologies, Major Authors, Minor Authors, and two inal and particularly useful sections entitled Literature of Exploration, Travel and Description and Selected Nineteenth-Century Journals. It is a good starting text for anyone beginning on the study of Canadian literature — and Canadian social attitudes as well — in the Victorian era. Yet it remains no more than a starting text; there is much that Moyles does not include.

G.W.

NEW IN PAPER

PAPERJACKS AND SEAL BOOKS between them have brought a small squad of paperbacks into print in the last few months. Surfacing among them are eight recent titles: Ian McLachlan's Hong Kong thriller *The Seventh Hexagram,* Bruce Powe's cautionary *Killing Ground,* Farley Mowat's *The Snow Walker,* and two searing comedies by Robert Kroetsch: *The Words of My Roaring* and (at last back in print!) *The Studhorse Man* (all at $1.95). Slightly more expensive are Martin Myers' bawdy satire *Frigate* and Brian Moore's banal romance *The Doctor's Wife* (at $2.25), and John Glassco's unnecessary story of a sadist, *Harriet Marwood, Governess* (at $2.95). Whether there is an intentional correlation between subject and price is not indicated.

Other recent paperbacks include two novels from Talonbooks: Jane Rule's *Desert of the Heart* and George Ryga's *Hungry Hills* ($2.95 each), and three works of non-fiction: J. Russell Harper's admirable *Painting in Canada: A History* (University of Toronto, $12.50), Carl Berger's instructive and illuminating exploration of Canadian historiography, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Oxford, $5.95), and J. G. MacGregor's evocative narrative memoir of pioneering in Northern Alberta, *North-West of Sixteen* (Prairie Books, $4.25).

W.H.N.

REFERENCES

TWO INVALUABLE RECENT REFERENCE works are J. L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens' revised *Canada since 1867* (Hakkert, $4.95) and Philip Stratford's second edition of his *Bibliography of Canadian Books in Translation* (French-English, English-French) (HRCC, $1.00). Stratford adds some 200 further titles to his work, and writes a provocative preface examining trends in translation and contemplating its future. Stevens and Granatstein bring together eight subject guides, by eight different writers, to aspects of Canadian history (national and regional policies, foreign and economic relations, social and intellectual history — the last of these assembled by Carl Berger). Stratford's method is enumerative; the historians provide a commentary and guide along with a selective history, which students of literature will find particularly valuable. M. H. Scargill's fascinating book *A Short History of Canadian English* (Sono Nis, $3.95) is an engaging and informative account of the words that Canadian experience has given to the language, thus providing a mini-social history in its own right. The *New Canadian Oxford Atlas* ($6.95), by contrast, does not sufficiently take into account the geographical implications of current social history. A generally adequate atlas, it provides too little detail on areas of increasing interest to Canada: in part because of recent patterns of immigration: The Caribbean, Hong Kong, India; in part because of economic, ecological, and political interests: Africa, South America, the Arctic, the Oceans. Finally, all users of Canadian books would do well to consult A. A. Keyes and C. Brunet's *Copyright in Canada: Proposals for a Revision of the Law* (Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs).

W.H.N.

ON THE VERGE

**** PAUL DUVAL. *The Art of Glen Loates.* Cerebrus and Prentice-Hall of Canada, $35.00. The work of this 32-year-old nature artist deserves to be much better known than it is. A meticulous craftsman, Loates is as skilled in portraying the ruffled fur of a woodchuck as in catching in paint the multiple textures of a Scotch thistle. Texture, indeed, is what Loates has learned best to render. Duval's handsomely produced volume traces Loates' development

from a precociously gifted schoolboy artist to a mature and visually eloquent observer of the natural world. The illustrations compel the attention; quietly occupying the background, Duval's text comments sensibly and sympathetically on the paintings, and complements them.

W.H.N.

**** DAVID R. WILLIAMS. *"The Man for a New Country": Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie.* Gray's Publishing Ltd., $15.95. It is astonishing that up to now no full biography of Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie, first Judge and later first Chief Justice of British Columbia, should have been written, for Begbie not only played an influential role in keeping British Columbia free from American intrusion and in shaping the colony, and later the province, in a political as well as a juridical direction, but he was also an exceptionally interesting personality in a time and place when colourful figures were not rare. In *"The Man for a New Country,"* David Williams has at last given us that biography. A lawyer practising in British Columbia, he has been able to deal with Begbie's career as a judge from the professional viewpoint, and he shows that, eccentrically though he may have sometimes expressed them, Begbie's judgments were usually correct and often wise. But Mr. Williams does not neglect the other man, something of an adventurer in the better sense, humane in terms of his time, devout but passionately interested in the natural world, and devoted to the land he travelled so extensively, so often, and in such hard and primitive ways. Some of the old Begbie legends are dispelled, but enough stand the test of research for Begbie to remain one of the most interesting people involved in giving Canada a far west.

L.T.C.

**** JOHN ENGLISH. *Borden, His Life and World.* McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $14.95. Robert Borden is not the kind of politician about whom one might expect a lively and interesting book to be written. He was not without abilities; after all, he resurrected the Conservative Party from the decay into which it fell on Macdonald's death, and he kept the Tories in power longer than any Conservative leader since his time. But his virtues were those of the organizer, and he lacked either the charismatic charm of Macdonald or Laurier or the fascinating secretiveness of Mackenzie King. But he lived in an interesting and eventful period — the turn of the century and the Great War — when Canada was changing into an urban and largely industrial country, and he played his own part in asserting the country's autonomy within the Empire. By an adept counterpointing of background and actor, John English has given us a readable, lavishly illustrated and highly interesting study of this worthy and ponderous man and his exciting times.

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** W. L. MORTON and L. F. HANNON. *This Land, These People: An Illustrated History of Canada.* Gage, $29.95. Two major beliefs — in multiculturalism and in the impact of the land upon Canadian life — lie behind this popular national history; but on the surface lies its open, almost belligerent enthusiasm for the nation itself and a romantic fascination with the past and the future. The diction and the story occasionally falter. It is surprising to read, for example, that "the forest-products industry rejoices in years of industrial peace" unless "in years of" means "in the years when there is any"; and it is equally arresting to read of "the charming, small-town lawyer, John A. Macdonald." But despite the occasionally odd judgments, the book succeeds in asking readers to consider the actual lives Canadian people have led, the values for which they have stood, and the opportunities which, by sharing the land, they have collectively created for each other.

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* *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker. The Tumultous Years 1962 to 1967.* Macmillan, $15.95. As a public speaker, John Diefenbaker has a great deal of power and wit, but in writing his manner — not to mention his rampant egotism — seems to defy all the ghost-writer's skills, so that he emerges out of these memoirs of his successive defeats by Lester Pearson and Robert Stanfield (or Dalton Camp?) as a prolix and bombastic man, resoundingly empty of wisdom. Perhaps this is because his intent in this third volume of *One Canada* is so narrowly self-justificatory. Memoirs by participants in historical events are valuable, but not if the process is a partisan refighting of old battles; reflectiveness, objectivity and an ironic view of oneself are the qualities that make a good political memoir, and John Diefenbaker in these pages shows evidence of none of them.

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