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A QUARTERLY OF
CRITICISM AND REVIEW

editorial

A NEW MAGAZINE always appears in a double guise. It is in one sense the arriving guest, anxious to exert whatever attractions it may possess on its potential host — the particular public to which it has chosen to appeal. But at the same time it sets out to become a host itself, offering its hospitality to writers and their ideas, and ready to welcome to the salon of its pages the most brilliant and the most erudite of guests.

During the past months we have spent much time and energy pressing the claims of *Canadian Literature* as a potential guest of the literary public of our country. We have pointed out that it will be the first review devoted only to the study of Canadian writers and writing. It will — we have added — throw a concentrated light on a field that has never been illuminated systematically by any previous periodical; and we have emphasized the kind of services it will provide for writers, scholars, librarians and — by no means least — the curious reader.

By the very fact of appearing, a magazine renders obsolete such prophecies and projections. It exists, and must become its own justification. But its very existence may have been rendered possible only by the faith of people and institutions who have been willing to become — in one way or another — its hosts. This is the case with *Canadian Literature*. We have been enabled to start publication partly by the support of the Koerner Foundation, which has provided a grant towards initial expenses, and partly by the confidence of the hundreds of individuals who have sent their subscriptions before our first issue even went to press.

Proust's Madame Verdurin thought that the ideal hospitality was that which restricted itself to the exclusiveness of the "little clan." *Canadian Literature* seeks to establish no clan, little or large. It will not adopt a narrowly academic approach, nor will it try to restrict its pages to any school of criticism or any class of writers. It is published by a university, but many of its present and future contributors live and work outside academic circles, and long may they continue to do so, for the independent men and women of letters are the solid core of any mature literature. Good writing, writing that says something fresh and valuable on literature in Canada is what we seek, no matter where it originates. It can be in English or in French, and it need not necessarily be by Canadians, since we intend to publish the views of writers from south of the border or east of the Atlantic, who can observe what is being produced here from an external and detached viewpoint.

As for the subject matter of *Canadian Literature,* the contents of the present number will at least suggest its scope. We welcome the reflections of writers on their own craft with as much interest as the analyses of the critics. Our field is that of Canadian writers and their work and setting, without further limitations, and anything that touches on this subject — the biographical as well as the purely critical essay, the discussion of general literary problems as well as that of individual authors — can expect our friendly consideration.

THE NEXT ISSUE of *Canadian Literature* will include: "Cat Among the Falcons," **Ethel Wilson's** reflections on the writer's craft; a discussion of the author's rôle in broadcast drama by **George Robertson**; an analysis of A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* by **M. W. Steinberg**; a study of Margaret Avison's poems by **Milton Wilson**, and the first of two essays by **Desmond Pacey** introducing new biographical material on the early Canadian novelist, Major John Richardson. It will also feature a discussion of the new legislation regarding obscenity in books.

THE WRITER IN ISOLATION

Roderick Haig-Brown

A SURPRISED EXPLORATION OF
A GIVEN SUBJECT

THERE CANNOT BE, for a writer or for any other man, complete isolation. He will not find it in a monastery, nor in a hermitage, nor even in the careful architecture of some retreat especially designed towards that state. Influences are everywhere and the very fact of withdrawal, if he attempted it, would be in itself a most powerful influence. A writer is, by definition almost, a man sensitive to influences; he may reject them or accept them, search for them or flee from them, but he cannot be neutral or unfeeling about all of them.

The isolation of my title, then, is something at once less and more than the impossibility of withdrawal. It has no special reference to the "social consciousness" that was considered essential by many writers and critics of the depression years, nor to the "engagement" of postwar writers, especially Europeans. It simply refers to the writer who, by accident or design, has placed himself and done his work largely beyond the reach of intellectual groups or associations. How does it work out? Is it good or bad, satisfying or disappointing, confining or broadening? If a deliberate choice does it serve a useful purpose? If accidental, does it lead to frustration and indifferent work?

Absolute isolation from outside intellectual and artistic influence should produce that rather vague being, the primitive. But true primitives are rare creatures in a time of universal literacy; a painter or a musician absolutely without academic training or sophisticated influence is a possibility; but a writer's basic skills are taught in school and no one with literary inclinations, even though they may be dormant, is likely to

evade all acquaintance with the writing of the ages. So a writer's isolation is likely to be qualified almost from the beginning. Someone will have tried to teach him to write more or less acceptably in his own language, and he will have experienced in some measure the power and effect of good writing. If he has any natural skill and ability, this may well be enough to start them working for him.

Most young writers feel strong doubts about the quality and potential of their skill, as well they may. After all, anyone can write. Why should one man's writing be of value, another's worthless? Where is there a test, whence can come the beginnings of self-confidence? Where can be found the assistance or instruction that will transmute ordinary writing into writer's writing?

The natural answer to these doubts, and the almost inevitable fate of the urban writer, is association with other writers, established or aspiring. Nearly all artists turn to such associations at some stage of their careers. Some treat them lightly and casually, some take them very seriously and use them extensively. Some men become lost within the groups so formed, contributing much within them and nothing at all outside them; still others find refuge from their own incompetence in talk of art rather than artistic production; others again contribute greatly and produce strongly; others may pass quietly, almost unnoticed, and go on to become important artists or great patrons or businessmen or ditch diggers.

There is nothing very strange about this. All professions and interests tend to associate among their own kind and all such associations contribute more or less to their participants. There have been some great and successful associations among artists—forced associations such as that of the Impressionists, purposeful associations such as the Group of Seven, deliberately chosen associations such as that of the Pre-Raphaelites, natural associations such as those of the eighteenth century coffee houses, casual associations such as those of Paris and Bloomsbury between the wars. Every capital and most large cities of the world breed them and have done so since the flowering of Athens. They are always of some importance to the individuals concerned and occasionally of importance to all civilisation.

It is these associations that the writer in isolation denies himself, either deliberately or through force of circumstances. Does he gain or lose? Obviously it is an individual matter and can only be discussed in terms

of individuals. And when I think it through, with a mind always faulty in recalling what little it has learned, I realise I do not know who were, or who were not, writers in isolation. Herman Melville, perhaps, and W. H. Hudson, Thomas Hardy, Kipling — but it won't really do; these men may have been independent of groups and group influence, but they were not out of touch with other writers of their times. Thoreau seems like a lonely man, but he was never far from his group. Old Izaak Walton, simple and contemplative though he was, regularly foregathered with such noble minds as Henry Wootton, John Donne, John Hales, Michael Drayton and Ben Jonson.

Among the artists I think of Winslow Homer and, paradoxically, the Group of Seven. Why these? Because they set out to see a new continent through new eyes, cutting themselves off as best they could from academic theory, and they succeeded. But surely there had first been training, associations, discussion and understanding of the older theories before a new theory could develop. They merely did what most artists of value do — they grew through associations and went out boldly into the isolation of maturity and production.

Consider, at the other end of the scale, those amateurs of painting and literature who are to be found in almost every Canadian settlement, however small. A few are primitives, unashamed as Adam and Eve before the serpent gave them an interest in life, and their work should be protected from the light of day, with flaming swords if necessary. Most are in touch with others like themselves; they may grow alone and produce alone, but they are not really in intellectual isolation.

When the topic of this essay was suggested to me, I readily assumed that I had some claim to be considered a writer in isolation. Now I am very doubtful about the claim. I was raised in a stoutly philistine atmosphere of athletics and field sports, but it was broken by a number of good school teachers and by a good post-school tutor; it was broken, too, by the memory of a father and a grandfather who had written.

By the time I was eighteen I had sold one or two short pieces of writing and was working in Pacific Coast logging camps. But I was not in isolation. For one thing, I read a good deal and not altogether badly; for another, my companions nearly always knew that I had ambitions as a writer and did not hesitate to advise and guide me. I recall dozens, if not hundreds, of bunkhouse discussions not a fraction less intense, if possibly

less recondite, than those of the most vigorous intellectual groups. My friends were realists to a man; they begged me to tell the truth, all the truth, not as poets and writers and film directors see it, but as they themselves saw it — the daily truth of hard work and danger, of great trees falling and great machines thundering, of molly hogans and buckle guys and long-splices. They made a profound impression.

In my early twenties I began to publish books and soon found myself on the fringes of intellectual groups — in London, Seattle, Vancouver. They were mixed groups generally, film and theatre people, a few writers, painters, musicians and those non-practicing amateurs of the arts who are often the strongest members of the groups. I contributed nothing that I can recall, invariably felt myself immature and insensitive, yet learned a good deal that removed me still further from the simplicity of isolation. Remembering my friends in the bunkhouses, I even became afraid of learning too much. I had a belief that if I could apply a straightforward mind to a wholly new country, then in some miraculous way the power of the pen would do the rest and produce literature. This was a conscious fear and a conscious belief and both, I think even now, made some slight measure of sense. I was never very happy with the theories of the groups and felt no urgent need of them. But I wonder if I did not withdraw mainly because of a sense of my own deficiencies. I lacked the intellectual background, the depth of reading and the measure of artistic understanding necessary to take full part in such groups. Rather than face the problems of learning in public, I turned towards an isolation where I supposed I could learn for myself.

I wonder sometimes whether I might have become a better writer if I had talked and listened more to theories about art and writing. But it is a profitless wondering. I am not a person who takes kindly to groups. I mistrust, for myself, most theories of writing that do not fit with my own instincts about it. I feel that showing unpublished work to other writers not directly connected with its publication is a form of indecent exposure. I am fearful of too much close analysis of style and purpose, because I feel it may destroy both. And I believe too much talk before audiences, however small and select, wastes a writer's substance. Occasionally it may sharpen something in advance of the actual writing, but too often it simply defers the hard test of writing — sometimes forever.

Even in retreat from the fringes of my uncertain groups I did not find,

nor really seek isolation. I married an intellectual, far better read and artistically far more sophisticated than myself. She has an untiring mind, which has grown steadily, and I have not been able to hide from it or run away. A hundred areas of thought and theory that might otherwise have remained closed have been opened to me; a dozen disciplines are there to test careless adventuring or shallow expression, a multitude of enthusiasms to stimulate and suggest. These are seldom spoken things or applied directly to the craft a writer must always ply alone; they are the simple outgrowth of living and companionship and by far the more powerful for that.

Few serious professionals, be they poets, novelists or essayists, can afford to live and write in isolation from the science of their times, and I am no exception. Biologists, educators, lawyers, sociologists, psychologists and a host of others expert in their various fields have directed me with influences as hard and unshakeable as those of my early bunkhouse mentors. It is true that they influence thoughts and conclusions rather than the techniques and emotions of writing, but this scarcely makes them less important or reduces their impact on the protective rim of isolation.

Lastly, there are the quiet and easy associations of maturity, the voices of those wise and experienced friends with whom one discusses many things for the sake of discussion, for the sake of broader understanding and deeper sympathies. These also are influences, fine shadings of influence that make larger differences than all the hot and anxious arguments of youth. Nothing, perhaps, is farther from isolation than these, no influence more subtly corrective.

It would be hard, I should think, for a writer of plays in English to live very far from London or New York. Producers, directors, actors, the very theatres themselves are all part of his life and his craft. Away from them, here on the shores of the Pacific Ocean for instance, theatre itself seems less important, a remote and artificial medium instead of the lively and powerful one it really is in its proper setting. Film, radio and television are less remote, but one still tends to approach them, if at all, as an outsider, a provincial. This, for the writer of books and verse and ordinary prose, is a beneficial isolation; he is largely spared the urgings and importunities and temptations of these other crafts.

But the writer of books and verse and ordinary prose is never in any degree cut off from the excitements and discoveries and stimulations of

his own craft. Books, reviews and criticism are his for the reading and no man has the advantage of him in this because reading at its best, like writing, is a solitary affair. A book read in New York or New Denver is the same book and carries the same values for the same reader. Books alone, without radio or television or films, without groups or discussions or any other intrusion of man, totally destroy intellectual isolation. And this is a type of destruction that few writers are likely to feel any inclination to resist. Jamie Anderson, the fur trader's son, rhyming his Cariboo ballads in Barkerville during the gold rush, might have been a better poet if he had never heard of Robert Burns. On the other hand, he might not have written at all.

I have written of isolation as though it were at once highly desirable and completely unattainable. Neither suggestion is altogether accurate. As Domdaniel told Monica: " . . creators must simply do what seems best to them. Some like solitude, some like a crowd." Some writers like to think slow thoughts and struggle with them alone; others like the brilliance and stimulation of constant intercourse with their peers. Neither is likely to produce poorer work for doing what he likes, or better work for doing what he hates.

I think I have been overly afraid of influence or possible interference with my natural inclinations and such natural ability as I have. I know now that neither of these things is easily shaken or distorted or perverted. Any writer who has the necessary minimum of integrity can readily afford to expose himself to influences of all kinds without fear of loss and with some real chance of gain. Yet talk is a danger to writers. More than that, talk is a positive, ugly menace. Talk is so much easier than writing, its satisfactions are so immediate, that some of the need to write is all too easily lost in it. It may be true that no man will talk himself out of being a writer if he has it in him to write, and no doubt some men have capacity for both. But I think the frustration of enforced silence is good for most of us. Young writers who meet in groups to discuss their own work would be better at home writing more and talking not at all; and old writers who yield to the incessant demands of service clubs and other organisations are bleeding energy they need for the vastly more important business of writing. Even service club members can read if they would; and if they want a writer's words, the printed page is where to find them.

I have said nothing of the intrusion of economics upon isolation. They

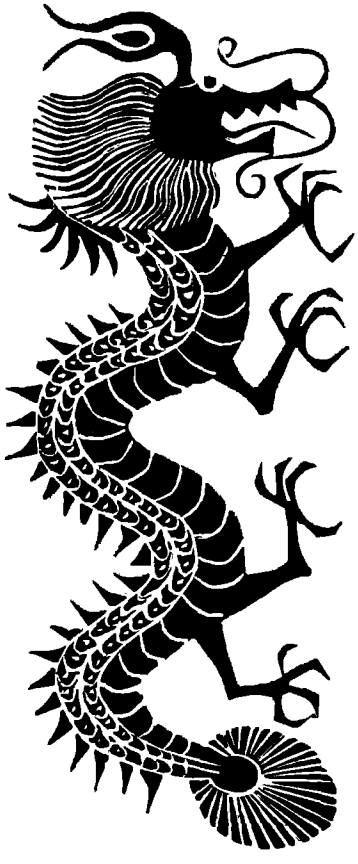
do intrude, as every professional knows. If communication is the purpose of writing, which I devoutly believe, the intrusion is not always vicious; it may even be a healthy discipline. Publishers, agents and editors understand communication; their guidance is usually important and often artistically valuable. They can easily interfere too much, but the wise ones do not and the wise writer always knows where to draw the line of his treasured isolation, as surely as he knows when he can yield to economics without harm to his faiths. I have known moments of panic and despair at the thought that London and New York were thousands of miles away, but one weathers these. The mail serves somehow, the needed advance arrives, the commission is negotiated, the editorial doubts are resolved. And in the long run remoteness still serves a useful purpose. One is protected from easy dependence and from small interferences that do not travel easily by mail. Associations with publishers, agents and editors are likely to be among the pleasantest and most satisfying a writer can have. But a measure of distance helps to preserve respect on both sides.

In the end, all writing is isolation. A man observes and absorbs readily enough among his friends. He may test ideas or sharpen argument or search for encouragement in talk. But he must mature his thought, develop and control his emotions, plan his work, alone. And he must write it alone.

Whatever measure of isolation I have known, I do not regret. Writing is the most natural of the arts because it stems directly from man's daily habit of using words to express his thoughts and emotions. Refinements of style and technique, sophistication of thought and approach, are desirable in their time and place. So also is freshness, sometimes even simplicity, of view and the impact of the uncluttered mind upon the ancient scene. Reconciling these two propositions is by no means the simplest of the large personal problems every writer must face. I believe some measure of isolation is helpful in this, but at the same time many outside influences must play their part. It would be as absurd for the novelist of 1960 to come to his craft in the same frame of reference as Richardson or Smollett or Fielding as for the automotive engineer to go to Leonardo for his ultimate refinements.

No man, not even the primitive, has ever written from a vacuum. There are always influences, sought or unsought, subtle or obvious, fundamental and superficial. A blade of grass or a city street, a fine mind or a

rough one, friends or enemies, love or hate, joy or fear, reasoned argument or unfettered emotion, any or all of these things and many besides have made their impact upon the mind that guides the pen. Isolation can never be more than a matter of degree. It would be grossest ingratitude for me to deny my influences by claiming to have written always in isolation.



DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT
A RECONSIDERATION

A. J. M. Smith

This essay is the substance of a lecture delivered by Dr. Smith in 1958 *at Carleton University under the auspices of the Institute of Canadian Studies. The complete paper is being published this year by the University of Toronto Press in* Our Living Tradition *(Second and Third Series). We are indebted to both institutions for their agreement to its publication in* Canadian Literature.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S first poems were published in 1893 in a volume entitled *The Magic House and Other Poems,* and they took their place at once in the main stream of what was clearly a great new movement in Canadian poetry. In that year appeared also Bliss Carman's first collection, *Low Tide on Grand Pré,* Archibald Lampman's second, *Lyrics of Earth,* Charles G. D. Roberts's third, *Songs of the Common Day,* and Wilfred Campbell's third, *The Dread Voyage and Other Poems.* At a first glance or after a casual reading all these books appear to have much in common. They all have a high literary polish; they all show the influence in varying degree of some of the English Romantic poets, of Tennyson, of Arnold or of the pre-Raphaelites; and all deal with nature, realistically, passionately, or mystically; but there the resemblance ends. Each of these poets, indeed, is remarkably individual, and even when, as all of them more or less consciously did, they submit to literary influences, they choose eclectically and respond to influences each in his own way. Duncan Campbell Scott is closer to his comrade and, in poetic matters, his encourager and inspirer, Lampman, than to any of the others, though, as we shall see, he has at times a passionate intensity and a troubled emotionalism that is matched only by Carman.

What strikes one immediately about *The Magic House* is the sureness

with which it takes its place in the tradition of English poetry and at the same time how responsive it is to all the new winds that were blowing in the nineties. Some of the poems, as E. K. Brown has noted, are definitely *fin de siècle*. The two sonnets "In the House of Dreams" cry out for illustration by Aubrey Beardsley and are filled with symbols that modern Jungian critics would recognize as Archetypal images and relate perhaps to those of Spenser or Coleridge. The title poem itself catches perfectly the languid note of William Morris and is filled with images and phrases that recall now the Blessed Damozel and now the Lady of Shalott or Mariana in the moated grange. The first two or three lyrics in the book suggest the early Tennyson of Airy Fairy Lillian, but there are other poems that have taken severer models — Matthew Arnold and Robert Bridges — and the result, in such poems as "Off Rivière du Loup" and "In the Country Churchyard," is much more permanently satisfying.

All this sounds a little discouraging, I fear. Yet the impression that the book lacks originality, that it shows promise only, or that it makes no positive contribution to Canadian poetry would be a hasty and superficial one. Let us begin to read it more closely. Can we discover from it the nature of the peculiar sensibility — and of the technical accomplishment that enables this sensibility to express and communicate itself; and then beyond that can we trace a line of development running through the whole body of Duncan Campbell Scott's work, and thus define and evaluate his contribution to our literature?

I have spoken of the dreamy lawn Tennysonianism of some of the less successful of the lyrics in *The Magic House*. In the first poem, for instance, where we find such puerilities as "rosy west," "dreamy lawn," and poppies that begin to yawn, we suddenly come upon an intense and accurate image: "A shore-lark fell like a stone." And on the second page in the midst of a flowery and insipid pastoral we are startled to find a hard, clear, sharply-etched picture that shows in its most concentrated form the union of intensity and clarity that distinguishes genuine poetry from pretty verses. It is only a moment, but it is a fine one — just the picture of "the little sharp-lipped pools, Shrunken with the summer sun," but not even Lampman has excelled that.

As we read further into the book, the vividness and intensity increase. The literary clichés drop away, and more and more poems appear that are almost completely satisfying or that at least can stand as homogeneous

and individual works. The nature, at least of their originality, can be discerned in their imagery, and this in turn is a reflection of the poet's individual sensibility. Let me illustrate by quoting some of these images, and before long you will begin to feel for yourselves the quality of the man and the nature of the poetry we are concerned with.

In a lyric called "The Voice and the Dusk" we have this:

> The king-bird rushes up and out,
> He screams and whirls and screams again . . .
>
> A thrush . . .
> . . . . throws his rapid flexile phrase,
> A flash of emeralds in the gloom.
>
> The rapture from the amber height
> Floats tremblingly along the plain . . .
>
> The swooning of the golden throat
> Drops in the mellow dusk and dies.

There is a mingling here of sounds and colours; the verbs are intensive and dynamic; the fusion of the senses takes place in a flash, and the resulting disturbance of equilibrium trembles and subsides slowly. The reaction is psychological, a fusion of sense impressions that stimulates an emotional response — here a rapture that slowly dies away. The whole poem is like the striking of a gong that glitters and fades slowly away.

This strangely beautiful poem is full of qualities we meet over and over again in Scott's poetry; its dynamism, the juxtaposition of light and shade, of colours and sounds, of sense impressions and emotional responses, all are characteristic of what is most original in Scott. His is the poetry of a musician and of a man enraptured and enthralled by the song and the sight of birds and by the flash of colours in nature. In another poem, "The Fifteenth of April", appropriately dedicated to A. L., we have an amazing (and accurate) richness of colour discerned in the commonest of places — the muddy soil itself:

> Pallid saffron glows the broken stubble,
> Brimmed with silver lie the ruts,
> Purple the ploughed hill . . .
>
> Down a path of rosy gold
> Floats the slender moon . . .

So far, colours; but soon we hear the bird-song, "the vesper sparrow", and

> Ringing from the rounded barrow
> Rolls the robin's tune.

and presently, "a hidden shore-lark Shakes his sparkling song"; and then the night deepens, the dewy sounds dwindle, and in the violet vault of the sky "twinkling tapers touched with steady gold" bring us back again to the "saffron" of the opening earthy lines.

Scott was fascinated by dusk, evening, and night. Of the forty-seven poems in *The Magic House,* sixteen, or more than a third, are nocturnes —evocations of the world after sunset. And nearly all of them illustrate the peculiar power of his sensibility. Darkness is filled with tension and suspense, and the poet chooses those scenes and situations that allow him to deal with nature dramatically and sensuously. In "A Night in June" there is a wonderful evocation of the coming of a nocturnal storm when the oppressive heat of summer seems about to break, and a sudden flash of lightning shows the hidden animal life that suffers also in the darkness.

> There is no stir of air at all,
> Only at times an inward breeze
> Turns back a pale leaf in the trees . . .
>
> A hawk lies panting on the grass,
> Or plunges upward through the air,
> The lightning shows him whirling there . . .

All is movement in the intense warm blackness, and all is hushed and breathless, so that the slightest sounds have an almost unnatural and shattering force: "The beetles *clattered* at the blind"; "The hawks fell *twanging* from the sky" — and when at last the rain comes, it is with a roar like fire, and after the lightning, thunder *rips* the shattered gloom.

In "Night and the Pines", which I think is the finest of all Scott's nocturnes, the darkness is intensified by the darkness of the pine woods. The poem is actually an ode, and it recalls Longfellow's fine "Hymn to the Night" with its magnificent opening chord, "I heard the trailing garments of the Night," but the décor is not classic and literary but unmistakably northern. Yet the feeling itself is classic, and after the half-heard thunder of a lonely fall and the eerie cry of the loon — "that cry of light despair, As if a demon laughed upon the air," the croak of a raven, and

the sound of a pine cone dropping in the dark, we come at the end to the invocation of a Sibyl and the reminder that we

> . . . cannot come within this grove
> But all the quiet dusk remembrance brings
> Of ancient sorrow and of hapless love,
> Fate, and the dream of power, and piercing things,
> Traces of mystery and might,
> The passion-sadness of the soul of night.

The association here of love with sorrow, night, dream, mystery, and power may lead us into a consideration of a group of poems even more remarkable than those that deal with the nocturnal aspects of nature—the divided and often ambiguous love poems that bulk large in the body of Scott's collected poetry.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S love poems are the product of the clash between a fervid and indeed passionate sensibility and a courtly, gentle, and rather nobly archaic — but very firmly held — conviction about the nature of love as a school of ideals. According to this conviction, love is an act of adoration and the Beloved is the object of a truly religious worship, of a service which paradoxically involves an act of desecration, both real and symbolic, as its central mystery and its culminating hope. As a result, many of the love poems express, or betray, an ambivalence that gives them a curious intensity and interest. It is hard to describe, but they seem to have a mercurial and doubtful sensitivity. They are tremulous and a little feverish. They hang in the balance, as it were, and we don't quite know which way they are going to fall. What contributes to this effect is the simultaneous presence of two opposing forces. T. S. Eliot has named them rightly in a famous passage describing the quality of sensibility in one of the lesser known Elizabethan dramatists as *fascination* and *repulsion.*

Let me, however, replace the Elizabethan example with a poem of Duncan Campbell Scott's, and then continue with Mr. Eliot's comment. I think you will find it applies perfectly. The poem is a small one, a little

serenade or night-piece from the poet's first volume; hardly more, it seems, than a goodnight kiss. It is called "At the Lattice".

Good-night, Marie, I kiss thine eyes,
A tender touch on either lid;
They cover, as a cloud, the skies
Where like a star your soul lies hid.

My love is like a fire that flows,
This touch will leave a tiny scar,
I'll claim you by it for my rose,
My rose, my own, where'er you are.

And when you bind your hair, and when
You lie within your silken nest,
This kiss will visit you again,
You will not rest, my love, you will not rest.

It *seems* hardly more than a good-night kiss, I said. But consider the nature of this kiss. Physically, it is gentle — only a tender touch; but the emotion that prompts it is "like a fire" and like fire it leaves a scar. The kiss is a magic one and its spell is powerful and dangerous. What are we to make of the tone of triumph in the exultant and somehow almost sinister last line, "You will not rest, my love, you will not rest"? Here indeed is love as an act of adoration paradoxically involving as its central sacrificial climax an act of desecration, and at the same time the emotional accompaniment that generates the poem, and is generated by it, is a fusion of tenderness and cruelty; or, as Mr. Eliot has described it, "there is a combination of positive and negative emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness which is contrasted with it and which destroys it." The intensity of the conflict, and therefore of the implied drama, is greater also when, as here, the "ugliness" is in the subconsciousness of the protagonist. To drag it forcibly out from there into the realm of consciousness is the real object of the poem, however deceptively it may pretend to be only a pretty compliment. It is an acknowledgment of what in a poem I shall come to later the poet calls "The little evil thoughts that trouble beauty".

The scar left by the kiss is invisible: what we have is not an image but a symbol. Much later, in *The Green Cloister* of 1936, the symbol appears again. It occurs in a dramatic poem called "By the Seashore" that might

have been written by Hardy or Lawrence. At dusk on the sands a man lights a fire of driftwood "as the tide and the sunlight are ebbing away." He is a lover, and he is burning old letters (he promised to burn them); the image of faith and a sacrificial ritual is clear, and again we have the touch of fire and the symbol of a scar — "The desire of the heart leaves sorrow that lives in a scar". The most powerful moment in this rather subdued and elegiac drama grows out of the restraint with which the poet pictures the ironic destruction by fire of the love-words of the letters:

> The flame flutters and vanishes.
> Here and there the word 'love' shines and expires in gold.
> The word 'forever' lives a moment in grey on the cinder,
> A shrinking of all the char in a brittle heap —
> It is done, nothing remains but the scar of a sorrow.

This, because of the restraint, the irony, and the controlled passion, is a much more mature and satisfying poem than the strange little serenade. It is a song of experience, not of innocence; and if it lacks the tremulous nervous excitement of the divided poems in which there is a clash between pleasure and pain, or between duty and desire, or between the dream and the reality, it has something better — a more universal humanity.

Yet it is the tremulous excitement that provides even some of the less successful of Scott's love poems with a glamour which, if a little fortuitous, is nevertheless significant, for it lights up an important aspect of the poet's metaphysic of love — his chivalric and courtly worship of maidenhood, at the worst destroyed and at the best transfigured by desire and passion. We can examine this theme in a curious and not very well known lyric, "The Water Lily".

"The Water Lily" is placed in Scott's *Selected Poems* next to the allegorical dream poems, "The Magic House" and "Avis", and it impresses itself on the mind as a symbolist poem akin to Mallarmé's evocation of the snowy swan or Yeats's of the rose upon the rood of time. There is an exotic, almost oriental luxury about the imagery and atmosphere of the poem that recalls Coleridge and again the early Tennyson. There is a strange and very powerful fusion of whiteness and coldness on the one hand with passionate, almost tropical, ardours and odours that serves to dramatise what I feel is the hidden theme of the poem — the presenta-

tion of an ambivalent attitude towards virginity. "In the granite-margined pool," the poem starts —

> Hot to its shallow depths,
> The water-lily sleeps
> And wakes in light . . .

All is rich and luxurious, and everything is tremulous, almost over-sensitive, soft, and responsive.

> Like moonstones frail, the waterdrops
> Invade her red-rimmed pads,
> Tremble mercurial there.

Each of the senses attends and pays court to "the starry-pointed wonder, Lolling so languidly by the lotus leaves."

But now there is a change. All the virginal and languid lily had been created for is about to happen:

> The intense heaven of her cold white
> Is troubled with colour;
> The shadow cast by light
> Of its own substance lies;
> The clear etherealities
> Are tremoured with fire;
> Conscious and still unconscious of the sun,
> The petals swoon amourously;
> The gold-tipped sceptres of desire
> Shine in the warm cradle cup
> Of the luxurious pure lily
> Trembling in ecstacy by the lotus leaves.

And then in the beautiful climactic final section we have the creative act itself, presented as a descent into the dark waters of generation:

> Maturity broods in water and air;
> The starry-pointed wonder
> From the root tangled lair
> Feels ripeness lure her under;
> She sinks reluctant from sunlight . . .
>
> Down the dark pool of silence;
> The world lost, —
> All lost but memory
> And the germ of beauty.

O banishment to cloistral water,
The pause in the limpid hush,
There to recreate . . .

The end of the poem is ecstatic joy, consummation, release, and rest. Nothing in D. H. Lawrence is deeper, more accurate, or more unmistakeable than this.

FROM THE BEGINNING, of course, there had been present in Duncan Campbell Scott's work another and very different strain from the tremulous and feverish one that pulses through the love poems. From love and from certain aspects of nature, particularly from those associated with night and storm and the hours and seasons of change, come the impulses that kindle. But there were also the impulses that restrain. These are derived from the poet's traditions — partly artistic and partly social and religious. An education in the classics, the enthusiastic reading of Wordsworth and Arnold as well as Keats and Tennyson and Rossetti, and the example perhaps of Archibald Lampman, equipped Scott for the writing of perfectly chiselled lyrics and descriptive pieces that for clarity of expression and delicate precision of observation are worthy of any of his masters. In the first book are "Off Rivière du Loup" with its fine opening lines:

O ship incoming from the sea
With all your cloudy tower of sail . . .

the haunting lyric, "Memory", the deeply-felt elegy written for his father, "In the Country Churchyard", and a number of calm and exact nature poems — the two sonnets called "First Snow", for instance, or the sonnet "September" which are very close to the spirit of Lampman.

Let us consider for a moment how Lampman and how Scott see nature. Lampman is an impressionist. Sensation rather than idea is what he derives from landscape. Details of shape and colour, seen in the light of a precise minute and valued for their own sake are what give a special significance to Lampman's portrayal of nature. I think this is true of Scott also; but while it serves to define almost the whole of Lampman's originality, it is only a part of Scott's. And in Scott, nature is usually less

exclusively presented as a picture: more often it is a picture *and* an idea.

In Lampman's famous poem "Heat", there is not a single concept until we come to the end of the poem: everything is perception, impression — sounds and sights, colours, shapes, tactile impressions and sensations of movement, and above all a pervasive feeling of heat. There are what might be called *conceits* in the poem, but they are *physical* conceits, not *metaphysical* ones. For example:

> Into the pale depth of noon
> A wandering thrush slides leisurely
> His thin revolving tune

or,

> The grasshoppers spin into my ear
> A small innumerable sound.

At the beginning of Scott's comparable poem, the double sonnet "First Snow", we have this:

> The field-pools gathered into frosty lace;
> An icy glitter lined the iron ruts . . .

And these lines are pure Lampman; but soon we come upon a touch that is rare indeed in Lampman but frequently met with in Scott — the metaphysical expression of a physical phenomenon:

> Between the dusky alders' woven ranks
> A stream *thought* yet about his summer banks,
> And made an autumn music in the place.

or,

> The shadow cast by light
> On its own substance . . .

This is a device that serves a twofold function. It intensifies the expression and gives it an intellectual as well as a sensational significance. Passages like these — and some quoted earlier in this essay — suggest that the characteristic virtue of Duncan Campbell Scott as an interpreter of nature and the real mark of his originality is the glowing fusion in his poetry of keenness of observation with clarity of thought so that the thing and the idea seem to be struck out together.

When we have the happy combination of this kind of sensibility with a classical precision and conciseness of style, we have work of a major excellence. This excellence can be illustrated in all of his books, and in the

latest more effectively than in the first. To cite one fine passage from *Green Cloister,* the collection of later poems published in 1936, here is the way the poet re-creates a moment of mist and silence in the heart of the mountains. In the intense stillness the attentive ear detects a sound so delicate that we can hardly say whether it speaks to the senses or directly to the heart and mind. It is from the beautiful third lyric in the series called "In the Rocky Mountains":

> For the mist had cloaked the range
> Hiding the vista and the flowing sky-line;
> Almost a silence there, but strange —
> Came a water-sound, a far off crying;
> All the ferns and firs
> Held the mist till they could bear no more,
> Then shed their store
> Of tears with sudden sighing . . .

It is the intimate interplay of light and shade and the delicate half-states of twilight and mist together with the magnification and slight distortions of sound that seem to appeal most intensely to Scott and set him apart from the other poets of his generation in Canada. He is as sensitive and intense as Carman, and far more accurate; as accurate as Lampman or Roberts, and more truly passionate than either. It is this love of the intermediate stage, the moment of change, when things and qualities are intermingled and partake of one another's characteristics that contributes much of the movement and drama to Scott's nature poetry. His most vivid and characteristic scenes are pictures of change, flow, and conflict. The times that fascinate him are times of change — sunset, dawn, or spring — and it is movement and change that make even his descriptive pieces dramatic; they are filled with images of storm, of melting, of thawing, of burgeoning or dying; colours are intermingled; sounds, sights and odours are fused with the emotional overtones that generate or accompany them. Sometimes a subtle perception of such a fusing is simply stated, its perceptiveness being its own sufficient recommendation, as in this almost casual sentence from "Compline":

> An odour arises from the earth
> From dead grass cooling in the dew,
> From the fragrance of pine needles
> That smoldered all day in the heat.

Or as in the description of what one sees from the window of a train stopping "for no apparent reason" by the edge of frozen lake in the wilderness:

> The sun is burning in the South; the season
> Is winter *trembling* at a touch of Spring.
> A little hill with birches and a ring
> Of cedars — all so still, so pure with snow —
> It seems a tiny landscape in the moon.
> Long wisps of shadow from the naked birches
> Lie on the white in lines of cobweb-grey;
> From the cedar roots the snow has shrunk away,
> *One almost hears it tinkle as it thaws.*

I do not want to give the impression that these descriptions, sensitive, accurate, and intense as they often are, are placed before us as being self-sufficient — though they might well have been, for they *are* valuable in themselves. But Duncan Campbell Scott is not an Imagist poet, and all his observations, impressions, and experiences are put to use. And I do not mean in an obvious or didactic way. The question arises: What use does the poet make of his perceptions and impressions? To answer it, let me continue the description of what the poet saw from the train window. He looks at the foreground now:

> Traces there are of wild things in the snow —
> Partridge at play, tracks of the foxes' paws
> That broke a path to sun them in the trees.
> They're going fast where all impressions go
> On a frail substance — images like these,
> Vagaries the unconscious mind receives
> From nowhere, and lets go to nothingness
> With the lost flush of last year's autumn leaves.

The theme of the poem, we see, is psychological — the way fleeting impressions fasten on the mind; and it is traditional as well—the great classical commonplace of the impermanence of all things. But the triumph of the poem depends not so much upon the subtlety and precision of the observation as upon the casualness and informality of the occasion. The homeliest and most ordinary experience can be made both unique and universally significant — when it happens to a true poet.

And when we read it and take it in we ourselves become true poets, and our eyes are opened to the possibilities of enrichment in the sensuous world of phenomena. That is why poems like this have a value—I needn't hesitate to call it a usefulness—that is incalculable. But quite apart from this, I would cite these lines as characteristic of a new clarity and simplicity that Scott attains to in the poetry of his last years. It is a poetry that one might well call modern, if it were not timeless. It owes nothing to Tennyson or Morris or Matthew Arnold, but it can take its place beside the best nature poetry ever written, beside that of Clare, or Edward Thomas, or Robert Frost — and that without being directly indebted to any of them. It is both traditional and original. This is high praise indeed, but not unjust praise.

WESTERN MYTH

THE WORLD OF RALPH CONNOR

F. W. Watt

"RALPH CONNOR" is a name which is virtually lost in the mists of time. Apart from librarians and specialists in Canadian literature, the few who remember it must do so with the nostalgic smile reserved for childhood things only valued because of their associations. I imagine few browsers in our libraries today let their eyes rest on the long shelf that contains his two dozen or more novels, and fewer still will have chanced upon *The Life of James Robertson, Missionary Superintendent in the Northwest Territories* (1908) and *Postscript to Adventure, The Autobiography of Ralph Connor* (1938) which carry his real name, the Rev. Charles W. Gordon. Half a century ago the situation was very different. For years the presses whirled frantically to keep up with the demand for *Black Rock* (1898), *The Sky Pilot* (1899), and *The Man from Glengarry* (1901), his first (and best) three novels. We are told that one publisher, George H. Doran, built his house on a foundation of Connor novels, and by 1937 when Connor died, his fame well on the decline, the total of copies sold was over five millions. Those books were read in Canada and abroad, by Scottish crofters and presidents of the United States, by businessmen, socialist thinkers, cabinet ministers, and ordinary people everywhere. When Connor travelled he was welcomed by high and low as a distinguished author. George Doran, in his lively autobiography, *Chronicles of Barabbas* (1935), records a typical incident: "The last time I saw him [Connor] was in London. I was to send

him a letter. 'Where shall I send it?' 'To Number 10 Downing Street. I am stopping with the Prime Minister,' was his quiet rejoinder."

How are we to account for Connor's extraordinary popularity, and his equally extraordinary fall from favour? By way of answer it is necessary to consider for a moment the literary and historical situation in which he appeared.

The history of the Canadian novel is a more dismal story than that of Canadian poetry, and where the nineteenth century novel is weakest — almost non-existent in fact — is in the mode which depicts contemporary reality. We can understand this best if we remember that the novel in the realistic tradition depends heavily on a social context, and Canadian life, even where it had risen beyond the struggle for physical survival, was a rapidly growing, changing, evolving flux for most of the nineteenth century. Naturally writers turned away from this confusing immediate scene to the more stable, clear-cut, traditional patterns of past communities for their matter, particularly to the colourful simplicities of early French-Canada. Moreover the prevailing conventions of piety, decorum, and gentility in fiction discouraged any robust approaches to the contemporary scene — Goldwin Smith's "Seven Lamps of Fiction" are a good summary of accepted critical criteria — and so the serious problematical approach was ruled out or made very difficult. Contemporary reality, then, entered if at all in its most trivial and innocuous forms.

In 1898 into the quiet sheepfold of genteel society novels and historical romances Ralph Connor burst with his portrait of the raw, turbulent, crude life of a Rocky mountain mining camp, *Black Rock, A Tale of the Selkirks*. Having in 1890 accepted a call to "the new Presbytery of Calgary, the largest presbytery in the world" (as Superintendent Robertson called it), Connor had seen that life at first hand, experienced its hardships and dangers, and had caught the fever of its excitements. Just as the physical horizons of Canada were suddenly pushed back to allow the flow of settlers and opportunists to pour into the plains and mountains of a new world, so the literary horizons were expanded by an outburst of what appeared at first glance to be a bold uncompromising realism, unafraid of hard truths, vulgarity, violence, sardonic humour, cruelty, immorality, and all the other things Canadian Victorianism preferred to turn its back upon.

Not everyone, of course, rejoiced in this pushing back of horizons at

the opening of "Canada's century." The crude, boisterous era of western expansion, which began abruptly in the 1890's and tapered off only after the disillusioning impact of the First World War and its domestic consequences, provoked the disgusted reaction of many intelligent Canadians. Understandably so, for few periods of Canadian history can have been less comfortable for the sensitive artist or the intellectual to live and work in. Unable or unwilling to share in the scramble for easy money which land speculation, mineral discoveries, industrial expansion and the swelling immigrant population promised, intellectuals fled to the artistic Bohemias of New York or Europe, men like Carman, Duncan, and Charles G. D. Roberts, the Father of Canadian poetry who chose to spend twenty-five years of his paternity abroad. Those who remained turned in revulsion from sordid materialism; "Beauty has taken refuge from our life, That grew too loud and wounding," opined the austere D. C. Scott. Or they sought out quiet corners of the land where nineteenth century peace and stability could be imagined still — Drummond's French-Canada, or the idyllic Prince Edward Island of Anne of Green Gables. A few bolder spirits were prepared to contend with the enemy. Stephen Leacock humorously drew attention to the plight of the "little man" drowning in a world of increasing "bigness"; shot his satiric darts at the folly of little towns that rushed eagerly to meet their fates as big cities; and laid the whip on the corrupt urban Arcadias of the new plutocracy. Peter McArthur returned to his paternal homestead to defend the dwindling agrarian paradise against the serpents of commercialism and urbanism with his eulogies of farming as a way of life and his war-cry, "Back to the Land."

These were the "inner-directed" men, aristocratic, austere, puritanical, cynically witty, romantic, incorrigibly nostalgic (or whatever form their independence took), but they were the minority. Far more numerous, setting the temper of the era, were the Services and the Steads, who did not flinch from coarseness, vulgarity and materialism. They might prefer the pen to the shovel or the placer pan, or to the glib tongue of the speculator, but they could find thereby their own way to share in the profits. These were primarily writers who welcomed and exploited the opening of the West. Ralph Connor took his stand, though as we shall see a rather different one, with them.

In Eastern Canada the boom era showed itself in rapid industrial de-

velopment, in the growth of urbanism, and, consequently, in that vast increase in social interdependency which brought an end to the nineteenth century era of economic individualism, in fact and in myth. A social revolution was carried out which was not immediately grasped. The units in economic relations were no longer individuals, the employer and his employee, but combinations — corporations, trusts, mergers, unions, associations. "Bigness" had inescapably arrived. How to conciliate the large, powerful forces contending within the body politic became the main problem of astute politicians like W. L. Mackenzie King, whose recognition of the corporate nature of social life constituted a major change in the philosophy of Liberalism. Late nineteenth century Canadian liberals, by clinging to simpler theories of individual liberty, had remained out of touch with the contemporary trend to collectivism. Ralph Connor was committed temperamentally and by religious faith to an individualistic view of human experience. He had first-hand knowledge of the social changes in progress, for he was for years in the thick of Winnipeg's labour unrest, and he acted as arbitrator (of the Mackenzie King school) in innumerable disputes. But the two later novels which deal with such subject-matter, *To Him that Hath* (1921) and *The Arm of Gold* (1932), treat social issues mainly in terms of personalities and individual sins and folly. It was only the West that provided him with matter his individualistic approach could handle to advantage. Western life was still too fluid in the early 1900's to crystallise into an urban civilisation of any complexity, and the ideal of individual initiative could with some justice hold sway.

THE WORLD OF Ralph Connor, in so far as it existed at all, lasted for only a short period. It was already passing as he wrote about it. And indeed, he was well aware of this, for he set himself in part the task of recording it before it was entirely lost. Why, it might be asked, did he choose for his subject what nineteenth century Canadian novelists preferred to ignore for that very reason, the changing immediate scene? The answer is, I believe, that he saw what other novelists failed to realise: that the present moment, with all its novelty and its

fluidity, is significant only in so far as it reveals an old, stable, enduring subject, man's essential nature and condition, and he felt the transient life of the West to be especially illuminating in this respect. Like James Joyce, Connor saw himself as writing a chapter in the moral history of his country, and the fact that his best novels can still catch at our attention despite their radical faults suggests to me that he sometimes came close to succeeding.

In the opening pages of that first novel *Black Rock,* the narrator Ralph Connor is led far away from the familiar East, from the "cosmopolitan and kindly city" of Toronto, into a primitive lumber camp six miles from the mining village of Black Rock in the heart of the Selkirks. Connor is a photographic observer, and we get details of the camp which make the then original setting vivid. The loggers are a tough, colourful, uncouth bunch — Connor nicely catches their mixture of dialects and accents — but they meet their match on Christmas Eve when the hero of the tale appears, the Presbyterian minister Mr. Craig, and proceeds to Christianize, willy-nilly, their rollicking pagan festival. The key-note of the book, and indeed of much of the later Connor, is struck when Craig, by telling the meaning of the Christmas story in the most informal of sermons, captures his reluctant audience, and especially the oldest, hardest, fiercest sinner of them all: "Old man Nelson held his eye steadily on the minister," Connor says. "Only once before had I seen that look on a human face. A young fellow had broken through the ice on the river at home, and as the black water was dragging his fingers one by one from the slippery edges, there came over his face that same look. I used to wake up for many a night after in a sweat of horror, seeing the white face with its parting lips and its piteous, dumb appeal, and the black water slowly sucking it down." Connor narrates as at first hand the long, violent, brutal and not entirely successful struggle of the powers for good, lined up with Craig, to save souls like Nelson's from their black waters of damnation, against the powers for evil, the bootlegger and gambler Slavin and his gang of rough-necks. The tale is full of action, from the vivid knock-down-drag-out fight between the Drys and the Wets, to the colourful race of four-horse combinations, in which the loggers' team edges out the citizens' and the miners' in a wild finish; but the theme of conversion and re-birth underlies it all.

The novels that followed in the next decade largely develop and vary

the *Black Rock* formula. It had proved a sudden and unexpected success. There were, aside from the large official issue, eleven pirated editions of that first book. The Rev. Charles W. Gordon had become the famous novelist Ralph Connor overnight, and he worked his vein thoroughly. Take a wild, barbaric setting away from the civilized gentility of the East; fill it with a crowd of virile, bold, lusty, profane, hard-fighting and hard-living men, often with pasts to live down, who are exploiting the unrestrained individuality of frontier life to the full; introduce morality and religion, usually in the form of a Presbyterian minister who fights bravely against great odds to save the souls of the indifferent and hostile sinners; add a touch of romance, a virtuous maiden, wife or mother to soften and uplift the harder hearts; mix up the moral and physical battles, letting the blood flow freely, and bring off victory for the forces of good; cap it with conversion and salvation for the evil as well. All this Connor did with considerable technical fluency, and a clever manipulation of tensions and contrasts and the simpler dramatic devices that appeal immediately to our feelings. The mild, gentle, boyish Sky Pilot, humble, aware of his own inadequacies as a man of God, shatters the cynical, callous indifference of the Albertan cowboys by his enthusiasm and his innocence. The Glengarry war-horse Macdonald, recently converted, endures the cruellest goadings of his enemies rather than forget the Lord's message, "Vengeance is *Mine.*"

Individual scenes of dramatic power and photographic vividness stand out in each novel, as for example the funeral procession in *The Man from Glengarry*: at night by the light of cedar bark torches the body of young Cameron is carried home to his waiting parents, and when the bearers arrive the father silences the mother's terrible scream of grief, recalling her to her duty — "Whisht, Janet, woman! . . . Your son is at the door." Every novel has its special locality to exploit (the Selkirks, the foothill country, the Ottawa river, the Crow's Nest Pass, and that boyhood home described so lovingly in *Glengarry Schooldays*); there are many special customs or colourful local activities to describe: maple-sugaring, a stump-pulling bee, a house-raising, a wake, a harvesting contest, and so on. The informative scope is panoramic (Connor's regions include almost the entire breadth of Canada), and sometimes we are shown striking scenes and experiences once common enough in this country but long since forgotten. *The Foreigner* (1909), for example, describes the

sordid shack-life of Russian immigrants in Winnipeg in the early 1900's; to find any other writer who dares deal with such material we have to turn to the sociologists, or rather to their only equivalent at that time, men like J. S. Woodsworth whose *My Neighbour* and other books angrily drew attention to the same situation. Throughout Connor's novels we get a sense of teeming vitality and an endless reservoir of varied experiences and exciting adventure. It is not surprising that the rough-riding Teddy Roosevelt and Ralph Connor were mutual admirers.

Through all the novels too runs a rich vein of humour. The vivid McGill-Toronto rugby match which is described at the beginning of *The Prospector* (1904) gains a dimension by the presence there of the pious little old Scots widow, Mrs. Macgregor, for whom the players' violence is nothing compared to the clan-wars she has known in the Old Country; who turns out to be an expert in the subtleties of the game; and who sends her giant of a son "Shock" into the scrimmage with the admonition, "Run away Hamish, and be careful of the laddies." The sentimentality of the Sky Pilot's funeral is cut astringently by the description of another funeral procession which ends in an unseemly race between the sleigh bearing the corpse and the two carrying the mourners and the pall-bearers respectively. Afterwards, the corpse-driver, having won the race to the burial-ground, "fairly distributed the blame," as Connor tells us: " 'For his part,' he said, 'he knew he hadn't ought to make no corp get any such move on, but he wasn't goin' to see that there corp take second place at his own funeral. Not if he could help it. And as for the others, he thought that the pall-bearers had a blanked sight more to do with the plantin' than them giddy mourners'."

But humour is after all not an added feature, an occasional ornament or the sugar-coating to Connor's writing; it is an aspect of his essential good-will, high-spirits, tolerance, or to choose the best word — charity. There is a love of action, of experience, and of people of all kinds and classes running through much that Connor has written that makes far better Canadian writers seem by comparison a little cold, narrow, priggish, snobbish, or dessicated in their orientation to their own lives and towards their fellows.

THE CHIEF REASON for the large sale of Connor's earlier books was no doubt their timeliness. By the late 1890's all eyes were on the West. The flood of immigrants from the East and from abroad so long expected was at last flowing strongly. What was the new land they were going to really like? Was it as thrilling as the reports claimed? Connor provided answers, and exciting ones at that. The country west of the Great Lakes was vast, infinitely rich in potential. If at times the latter part of *The Man from Glengarry* now reads to us like propaganda for the Canadian Pacific Railway, it is more likely that many of its first readers were deeply stirred by the vision of the "empire of the Canadian West" that it tries to project before our eyes. And it was the existence of real opportunities, not merely enthusiasm, that peopled Connor's novels with men on the make, young Scots from Glengarry or immigrant Slavs, rising in spectacular fashion from ignorance or poverty to power, importance and the life of wealth and refinement. The West, indeed, was a world on the make.

Naturally there was less time for some of the subtleties, even religious subtleties, of more settled communities, and human beings were likely to appear in their simplest, clearest outlines. The God of Connor's West is of an appropriate nature, generous minded, not too concerned with the letter (too little the theologian to satisfy Calvin, surely), sympathetic to the spirit in unlikely places, ready to have His work done by whoever will put a hand to it. Presbyterian ministers, saintly widows, Catholic priests, rough-mannered miners or lumbermen may equally enter into and even (at a pinch) conduct religious services. The people tend to be a little larger than life as the Easterner knows it. The men are tall, broad-shouldered, immensely strong, hardy, brave and tender-hearted. There are of course cads as well as Christian gentlemen (a distinction in nature, not social class), but the most vicious of villains are redeemable despite their terrible cruelty and wickedness; they repent movingly. The women are pure and modest and maidenly and beautiful. Nothing quite equals in the power for good "the sweet uplift of a good woman's face" (in those days no other uplift would have crossed a gentleman's mind). Their voices have such a sweet, thrilling tone that the savage breast is soothed with a single song; their eyes plumb the depths of a man's heart and see what really lies there, or glow luminously with a warmth of simple love,

or fill with tender tears, or disappear modestly from the too frank gaze of admirers. What mothers they make, and what wives! Timid and gentle, but brave as lions in the cause of virtue.

As the novels proceed we become aware that we are in the presence of a full-blown myth of the West, not merely a feeling of jingoistic patriotism or a sense of vast resources just being realized. When one of the characters in *The Foreigner* exclaims, "It is a wonderful country, Canada," she has something else in mind, for she says: "How wonderful the power of this country of yours *to transform men!*" In *The Prospector* (1904) Connor may be giving us an account of his own evolving experience when he describes the impact of the West on Shock, the book's hero:

> He was making the discovery that climate changes the complexion, not only of men, but of habits of thoughts and action. As Shock was finding his way to new adjustments and new standards he was incidentally finding his way into a new feeling of brotherhood as well. The lines of cleavage which had hitherto determined his interests and affinities were being obliterated. The fictitious and accidental were fading out under this new atmosphere, and the great lines of sheer humanity were coming to stand out with startling clearness. Up to this time creed and class had largely determined both his interest and his responsibility, but now, apart from class and creed, men became interesting, and for men he began to feel responsibility. He realized as never before that a man was the great asset of the universe — not his clothes, material, social or religious.

This is a somewhat startling position for a budding young Presbyterian minister to have reached (such is Shock) and for Connor it is an expression of a genuine break-through from the excessive refinement and gentility which swaddled many Victorian Canadians. The West had become a mythical land, a place where such revelations were forced upon one. Men went there to escape the old life and in search of a new life, and there the faith in conversion and re-birth took on a new meaning. It was a place where biblical parables easily merged with actuality. The Rev. Craig telling the story of the Prodigal Son's home-coming to his congregation of western fugitives and exiles (who listen like so many distraught Dean Moriaritys) concludes: "There you are, men, every man of you, somewhere *on the road.* Some of you are too lazy, and some of you haven't enough yet of the far country to come back . . . Men, you all want to go back home." This is a world seen through Christian eyes, where all

endeavour, temptation, success, failure and hope is translatable into terms of heroic Christian struggle.

No one would think of Connor's portrayal of the West as realistic any longer. Far from it. Too often he stepped from actuality into far-fetched success stories or melodramatic love fantasies. But many of his distortions are of another kind, the result of his endeavour to see religious meaning in the drama of western life. It is for this reason that Connor stands above his contemporary Canadian novelists, and because he dared to write about things that really mattered — the state of his characters' morals and of their souls, not merely the historical past or the surfaces of contemporary life. In this way he often escaped the incredible triviality of so many of the other western writers, Nellie McClung, Stringer and Stead for example, and there is often a touch of grandeur in what he was trying to do. Moreover it is not because Connor was a preacher first and an artist second that he failed. Distinctions of this sort are based on a modern notion with which many great writers would have little patience. In fact one could argue that Connor failed because he did not take his role of preacher earnestly and profoundly enough, but gave it up at times for a feeble and debased notion of "novelist". For not being a good or a passionate enough preacher we must blame him; for his conception of the novelist we must blame his readers, his critics, his society as well. They wanted and expected romantic nonsense, and too often he willingly provided it. It is interesting to notice in this respect that the later novels, in which Connor is very rarely the preacher, are his most unconvincing and trivial.

For the writer of realistic fiction the chief challenge is to project an image of life which is both consistent and deeply problematical. Connor came within a hairsbreadth of a solution in his conception of the West. Here was an arena where the ancient battle was actually being fought out daily (or so it seemed to him) between good and evil, Christian and Hopeful and Mr. Valiant-for-truth against the forces of Appolyon and the temptations of Vanity Fair. Connor only regretted that his palette did not contain sharp enough whites and blacks to show the intensity of that conflict, in which the costs at stake were (to him the only ones that

really mattered) the salvation or damnation of human souls. He tried to see life everywhere in the same thrilling terms. But, as I have said, Connor could never sustain a level of consistency for long. His realism had a disconcerting way of shifting abruptly into romantic fantasy and back again, like those incongruous mixtures of photography and cartooning perpetrated by Walt Disney. No doubt the life of the West failed Connor as much as Connor failed the West: it could scarcely avoid the descent to the ordinary and humdrum, losing its angels and its devils.

The Canadian novel since Connor has been tamed and trained. Flamboyance and grand (or grandiose) ambition has faded away. There is more artistic integrity, and the iron laws of probability are not so casually flouted. Though one cannot honestly lament the passing of Connor's world, there has truly been a loss of élan and an increased danger of that desert of exact likeness to ordinary reality in which Eliot feared realism would perish. However, the best recent writers have continued, mainly in the realistic tradition, to try to project deeply problematical patterns of experience, and with increasing success. F. P. Grove's flawed works are nearly redeemed by the greatness of his theme, the tragedy of the pioneer whose heroic conquest of nature brings to birth a new generation and a civilisation in which he finds himself superfluous. Hugh MacLennan's earlier secular gropings for significance in the issues of Canadian nationality (Connor would have appreciated that vision of Canada as the future arch of the civilised world!) have happily given way to artistic exploration of more fundamental moral and religious issues. Morley Callaghan's whole *oeuvre* now takes on its full force when seen as a developing dialectic in which all the contemporary appeals to man's faith — naturalistic atheism or agnosticism, Marxism, and traditional Catholicism — compete for the souls of his characters. And to come closer to home, that latest addition to the novels of the West, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, achieves what Connor might have valued most — a radically simplified but powerful image of human life freeing itself from the chains of its own sinfulness, a parable of re-birth. None of these earnest artists could ever share in the popularity and other rewards of this world that Connor enjoyed, though any one of them is a far more faithful servant of the Muses. But then art which is both fine and immediately or ever popular is too rare a thing for any writer to expect, least of all in Canada.

BILAN D'UNE LITTERATURE NAISSANTE

Gerard Tougas

POUR CELUI qui se sent attiré par les multiples problèmes de da critique littéraire, il n'est pas de phénomène plus curieux, plus riche en renseignements et qui en dernière analyse ne jette plus de lumière sur les grandes traditions littéraires elles-mêmes qu'une littérature naissante. Les questions de base que le critique ne cesse de se poser sur l'autonomie de l'œuvre d'art, sur le rôle des archétypes, sur la possibilité d'établir une hiérarchie des valeurs, sont réduites, dans une littérature qui n'est pas encore sophistiquée ou qui commence seulement de l'être, à leur plus simple expression. La fondation d'une revue comme la nôtre, consacrée exclusivement à la critique de la littérature canadienne et au recensement de la production courante pourrait donc ouvrir un champ d'observation fructueux aux esprits friands de spéculation sur la création littéraire et désireux de pénétrer dans la réalité de la littérature canadienne.

L'entreprise que représente la parution à intervalles réguliers de *Litterature Canadienne* présuppose un nombre relativement élevé d'écrivains et une tradition déjà suffisamment riche pour permettre les réinterprétations ou même les découvertes d'œuvres oubliées. La littérature canadienne, dans sa double expression anglaise et française, nous semble arrivée à un développement qui légitime la fondation d'une revue critique, destinée à éclairer sa marche, désormais assurée. Une telle conclusion eût

paru contestable il y a une vingtaine d'années, tout au moins en ce qui concerne la littérature canadienne-française. Aussi ne serait-il pas superflu de rappeler les grandes lignes de l'évolution de la littérature canadienne-française et de souligner le dynamisme des écrivains d'aujourd'hui.

Comme toutes les littératures issues de l'Europe, la littérature canadienne-française a dû passer par une période d'imitation. Ce qui doit surprendre n'est pas la lenteur avec laquelle les écrivains canadiens-français ont appris à s'affranchir d'influences littéraires françaises—d'aucuns n'y parviennent pas même de nos jours — mais bien qu'une littérature ait pu naître des débris d'un petit peuple conquis de soixante mille âmes. Après le traité de Paris (1763), près d'un siècle devra se passer avant que les balbutiements de poètes en herbe, d'historiens copistes et de dramaturges de province aient pris suffisamment de consistance pour permettre l'éclosion d'une modeste école nationale de littérature.

C'est aux environs de 1860, dans la vieille ville de Québec, que l'on peut situer le premier mouvement intellectuel digne de ce nom. Parmi les écrivains qui s'évertuèrent à jeter les bases d'une littérature nationale, nul ne saurait être comparé à l'historien François-Xavier Garneau. Son *Histoire du Canada* (1845-1848), l'un des rares classiques de la littérature canadienne-française, fournissait sous une forme noble les principaux thèmes dont allaient s'inspirer les poètes du siècle. A la même époque, le poète Octave Crémazie (1827-1879) at l'abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain (1831-1904) s'interrogeaient sur les virtualités d'une littérature canadienne et par là inauguraient la première critique suivie dans l'histoire de la littérature canadienne-française.

Si dès 1860 une matière canadienne, riche des mythes et des archétypes dont se nourrit toute création littéraire, rendait théoriquement possible une littérature nouvelle, celle-ci ne pouvait voir le jour aussi longtemps que l'écrivain canadien, par une timidité bien compréhensible, n'osait affirmer sa personnalité. Avec une touchante fidélité, poètes et romanciers iront chercher leurs procédés littéraires en France. Par malheur, ils imiteront les romantiques quand la France sera déjà réaliste et parnassienne, voire symboliste. Quand enfin vers la fin du dix-neuvième siècle le Canada français trouvera en Emile Nelligan son premier grand poète, ce dernier sera bien parnassien par la technique du vers et souvent symboliste par le vocabulaire, mais restera essentiellement romantique par l'inspiration.

Au DEBUT de ce siècle, c'est la critique universitaire canadienne qui, par son apparition, annonce indirectement qu'une tradition littéraire commence à se dessiner. Fidèle admirateur de Sainte-Beuve et de Brunetière, Camille Roy (1871-1943) chercha à canadianiser sa dette envers eux en adjoignant à la méthode biographique et à une conception assez simpliste des genres, les "lois" qui conviennent à une littérature naissante. Un autre clerc, Louis Dantin (1866-1945), moins rigoriste que Camille Roy, porta la critique canadienne-française à un niveau qu'elle n'a pas encore dépassé.

Depuis, la critique canadienne-française s'est sans doute diversifiée, mais elle n'a produit aucun véritable théoricien. De nos jours, Pierre de Grandpré et René Garneau, par leurs comptes rendus qui paraissent dans *Le Devoir* (Montréal) et *Le Mercure de France,* font preuve d'un élégant éclectisme sans réussir à se dégager de leurs maîtres français. A cet égard, les Canadiens-français doivent envier à leurs compatriotes de langue anglaise un Northrop Frye, dont la dernière œuvre, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), révèle un esprit d'une rare pénétration.

Plus heureux dans la poésie, les Canadiens qui avaient applaudi aux œuvres de Crémazie et de Fréchette (1839-1908) avant même celles de Nelligan, furent éblouis par les prestigiditations de Paul Morin, dans son *Paon d'émail* (1912). Il fallut attendre cependant l'arrivée de Saint-Denys Garneau (1912-1943) pour que la poésie canadienne atteigne et surpasse le sommet de Nelligan. Artiste inquiet jusqu'à la mort, Saint-Denys Garneau, bien qu'imparfait au point de vue de la technique, a su trouver quelques accents sublimes.

Alain Grandbois, par ses *Iles de la nuit* (1944) se place d'emblée au premier rang des poètes canadiens-français; les recueils qui ont suivi sont d'un maître poète. Anne Hébert, en pleine évolution, n'a d'égale que Risna Lasnier, pourtant si loin d'elle par la fermeté de cristal d'une poésie fort originale.

Or, ce palmarès, qui ferait honneur à de plus anciennes littératures que la nôtre, se complète par une remarquable pléiade de jeunes poètes. A leur tête se trouvent Jean-Guy Pilon, Fernand Ouellette, Réginald Boisvert, Claude Fournier, Roland Giguère, Gilles Hénault, Pierre Trottier. Joignant l'audace à une fertile imagination, ces irrévérencieux poètes (comme il se doit, la plupart d'entre eux conspuent la poésie tradition-

nelle pour se jeter à corps perdu dans le monde incréé de demain) sont à l'avant-garde des écrivains canadiens, pour le plus grand épanouissement de la personnalité canadienne-française.

Le roman canadien-français témoigne lui aussi de la vitalité de la jeune littérature canadienne-française. Il n'en a pas toujours été ainsi. Avec la critique, le roman a souffert de la situation si particulière qui est faite en Amérique au groupe francophone, perdu parmi près de deux cent millions d'Anglo-Saxons. Pendant tout le dix-neuvième siècle et jusqu'aux environs de la deuxième Guerre mondiale, les Canadiens-français, très conscients des valeurs spirituelles dont ils se trouvent les héritiers dans le nouveau monde, n'étaient pas psychologiquement préparés à accueillir le roman objectif, reflet de leur vie nationale. De même qu'en Union soviétique, les consignes officielles ont presque tué le roman tel que l'ont pratiqué Gogol, Tolstoï, Dostoïevsky et les autres grands artistes de l'âge d'or de la littérature russe, le roman canadien-français, qui depuis 1837 devait exalter les cœurs, démontrer la sainteté de la cause religieuse et nationale, ne produisit en fin de compte que quelques œuvres honorables comme les *Mémoires* (1866) de Philippe Aubert de Gaspé et *Angéline de Montbrun* (1881) de Laure Conan.

Puis vint Louis Hémon. Né dans une famille d'universitaires, formé, dans sa jeunesse, aux méthodes des écoles réaliste et naturaliste, Hémon, parce qu'il avait appris à consigner fidèlement dans son carnet le monde extérieur, devait opérer une petite révolution par son évocation du Canada Français. *Maria Chapdelaine,* une fois passé le petit scandale auquel donna lieu sa publication, exerça entre les deux guerres une influence salutaire sur les romanciers canadiens. Deux leçons, toutes deux fécondes, se dégageaient de cette œuvre qui résume encore aujourd'hui pour l'étranger la littérature canadienne-française.

Leçon d'abord d'honnêteté. Le roman canadien s'était fait depuis 1837 de pieuses recettes, aussi éloignées que possible de la réalité québecoise, parfois assez triste. Grâce à l'exemple de Hémon, le romancier canadien apprendra à se voir sans honte ni dilection et passera ainsi du tract politico-religieux à l'art. Leçon aussi de technique. Comme tous les jeunes peuples issus de la colonisation européenne, les Canadiens-français ont eu à résoudre le problème de la langue littéraire. Fallait-il dans le désir de créer une littérature canadienne faire fond sur les particularismes linguistiques des Canadiens-français ou au contraire devait-on s'en remettre

au bon usage courant en France? Incapables de s'entendre sur ce point, les écrivains canadiens avaient versé leur sac de canadianismes dans leurs œuvres ou s'étaient ingéniés à faire parler leurs personnages en salonnards. Après Hémon, les écrivains canadiens, la conscience apaisée, adopteront presque tous la seule formule raisonnable: écrire en français, langue universelle, sans avoir peur du canadianisme lorsque celui-ci fait image ou joue un rôle indispensable dans le dialogue.

C'est Ringuet, par ses *Trente arpents* (1938) qui ouvre brillamment la série des authentiques romanciers canadiens. La leçon réaliste de Hémon aura été si bien apprise qu'après *Trent arpents*, œuvre plus véridique à certains égards que *Maria Chapdelaine,* il n'y aura plus de surprises à attendre du roman du terroir.

Gabrielle Roy arrivait donc à point nommé en publiant *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945). Les trois romans qui ont suivi: *La petite poule d'eau, Alexandre Chenevert, caissier* et *Rue Deschambault* ont largement franchi les frontières du Canada et ont contribué, tant par leur description du monde ouvrier que par l'émouvante humanité de leurs plus brillants passages, à modifier l'image d'Epinal que l'étranger se fait trop souvent du Canada Français.

A ce même élargissement participent plusieurs romanciers dont le nombre va grandissant d'année en année. *Aaron* (1954), étude fouillée de l'âme juive et par extension du tempérament canadien-français, puisque c'est une même lutte qui se livre pour préserver les vertus ancestrales, avait confirmé le talent déjà si exceptionnel d'Yves Thériault. La parution en 1958 d'*Agaguk*, brillante analyse de l'aventure amoureuse d'un couple esquimau, constitue un événement littéraire. André Langevin, bouillonnant d'idées et d'énergie, n'a pas dit son dernier mot après *Le temps des hommes* (1956); Roger Lemelin, dont il est facile de médire, pourrait rejoindre ceux qui pendant son silence l'ont dépassé; Robert Elie, le plus lucidement introspectif des romanciers canadiens n'a sans doute pas encore atteint son étiage, si ouvrés que soient *La fin des songes* (1950) et *Il suffit d'un jour* (1957). L'on pourrait évoquer beaucoup d'autres noms. Mais puisque nous cherchons ici non à être complet mais à situer une littérature en pleine évolution, concluons: le roman, resté si longtemps exsangue et rachitique, attire à lui, avec la poésie, les meilleurs talents de la présente génération. Les romanciers canadiens-français, par la haute qualité de leurs écrits, impriment au mouvement littéraire cana-

dien une impulsion irrésistible. Quand, en une même année (1958) paraissent *Agaguk* et *Les chambres de bois* d'Anne Hébert, tous les doutes sont levés: au Canada Français se développe une dynamique tradition littéraire.

QUE DIRE du théâtre? Ce n'est pas le récent ouvrage de Jean Béraud, 350 *ans de théâtre au Canada Français* (1958) qui confère à la littérature canadienne des dramaturges ou des comiques. S'il est exact que les Canadiens-français ont toujours éprouvé un vif intérêt pour le théâtre, il est tout aussi vrai qu'un répertoire composé en partie de pièces de collège (le dix-neuvième siècle, qui compte *Le jeune Latour* (1842) de Gérin-Lajoie et *Véronica* de Fréchette n'a guère fourni autre chose) ne saurait constituer une véritable tradition. Il est fort possible qu'avec la récente création d'un théâtre national à Montréal, il soit permis à Toupin, à Langevin, à Dubé et à d'autres de doter la littérature canadienne-française de ses premières pièces de théâtre dignes d'être jouées devant les auditoires de l'avenir.

L'histoire, qui n'appartient à la littérature que lorsqu'elle est écrite par un François-Xavier Garneau, a toujours été assidûment servie par les Canadiens-français. L'école actuelle d'historiographie, telle que pratiquée par Guy Frégault, a renové les études du régime français en les doublant de considérations économiques et politiques sérieusement contrôlées et surtout en revalorisant les mythes que les historiens du passé, trop enclins à l'édification, ont inconsciemment répandus. Si méritoire que soit cet effort, il est à souhaiter que quelques-uns des nombreux historiens canadiens-français se tournent enfin vers les Etats-Unis. Vouloir retravailler la matière de l'époque de la colonisation française est une tentation compréhensible mais qui ne donne pas assez de prise aux incontestables talents des historiographes canadiens. Placés au centre même de l'univers américain dont l'énorme puissance de pénétration s'étend jusqu'aux pays les plus reculés, les Canadiens-français ne peuvent plus se désintéresser d'un pays qui a tant influé sur leur destin et à qui leur avenir est étroitement lié. Au dix-neuvième siècle, Edmond de Nevers, et de nos jours, Gustave Lanctot, ont accompli les premiers pas dans ce sens. Aux

autres maintenant de suivre, car c'est en s'appropriant l'histoire politique, culturelle et économique des Américains que les historiens canadiens-français se feront lire à l'étranger.

Quant à la philosophie, à proprement parler elle reste à être fondée. Rien de comparable au Canada Français à l'essor d'une philosophie américaine, qui est une philosophie de l'action s'appuyant sur les méthodes des sciences de la nature. A considérer cette question de plus près, il est fort douteux que le Canada Français arrive jamais à fonder une école philosophique qui le distingue des grands courants de la philosophie universelle. Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Josiah Royce, John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, dans leur anticartésianisme optimiste reflètent cette société dynamique et profondément originale que sont les Etats-Unis d'Amérique. La société canadienne-française a elle aussi son originalité, mais celle-ci, au lieu de s'opposer à l'Europe, y cherche sa stabilité dans le catholicisme. Il est naturellement possible, probable même qu'avec le temps le Canada Français produise des penseurs qui ne devront pas tout au thomisme. Dans la mesure où ils s'en écarteront ils deviendront moins représentatifs de la collectivitè canadienne-française.

Le thomisme est-il assez souple pour admettre les redéfinitions qui tiennent compte de l'évolution de l'humanité? A cette question le catholicisme répond par un oui des plus affirmatifs et la pensée spéculative moderne par un non catégorique. C'est dire que le thomisme canadien-français ne risque pas de déboucher sur l'extérieur et restera l'expression du particularisme philosophique des Canadiens-français.

Il faut reconnaître que les richesses du thomisme sont loin d'avoir été exploitées au Canada Français. La doctrine thomiste, "essentiellement progressive et assimilatrice" selon la formule de Jacques Maritain, n'a des chances de l'être que si les grands problèmes du monde moderne sont posés *d'abord* et que la philosophie thomiste vienne les informer subséquemment. Or, c'est la marche inverse qui est souvent suivie dans les universités canadiennes-françaises. La monde dans lequel nous vivons s'insère comme il peut dans la *philosophia perennis*. D'où l'air de byzantinisme qui s'attache aux études philosophiques au Canada Français.[1]

[1] Pour une interprétation plus favorable du thomisme canadien-français, consulter Edmond Gaudron, "French Canadian Philosophers," *The Culture of Contemporary Canada,* Edited by Julian Park, Cornell University Press, 1957. pp. 274-292.

L'érudition, elle, se porte mieux. Les deux tares qui ont marqué ses débuts, une information incomplète et la partialité, tendent à disparaître. Fort heureusement aussi, l'érudition s'étend aujourd-hui à d'autres domaines qu'à ceux de l'histoire et de la littérature nationales. La première contribution canadienne à la littérature française qui soit un enrichissement pour cette dernière est l'étude de Roméo Arbour, *Henri Bergson et les lettres françaises* (Paris, 1955). Qu'un prêtre canadien puisse aborder la littérature française en toute sérénité, en évitant d'adjoindre aux considérations esthétiques et à l'histoire des idées des déclarations doctrinales est la meilleure preuve que la société canadienne, sans rien renier de ses origines spirituelles, peut et doit participer aux batailles pacifiques de l'esprit moderne.

Encourageants aussi pour l'avenir de l'érudition canadienne-française sont les ouvrages de vulgarisation, telle l'*Introduction à l'histoire de l'Amérique latine* (Montréal, 1949), de Dostaler O'Leary. De temps à autre, des esprits curieux au Canada Français ont porté leurs regards sur le monde extérieur et en ont rapporté des témoignages de qualité. A la génération précédente, Jean Bruchési avait exploré les pays qui se trouvent aujourd'hui sous l'influence russe et avait écrit *Aux marches de l'Europe* (Montréal, 1932). Il faut espérer que se multiplient ces sondages des pays étrangers, puisqu'ils seront un signe de confiance en soi chez les érudits canadiens.

En conclusion l'on peut affirmer que la littérature canadienne-française tend à créer une tonalité qui lui soit propre dans la poésie, le roman et l'histoire. Le théâtre, la philosophie et l'érudition pourraient à l'avenir compléter la physionomie d'une littérature qui, dès lors, serait l'expression d'une culture originale.

Est-il possible de préjuger l'avenir de la littérature canadienne-française d'après sa lente mais progressive montée depuis plus d'un siècle?

Dans son ensemble, la littérature canadienne-française semble destinée à trouver son équilibre par un dosage inédit des esprits français et anglo-saxons. La France, par l'entremise de sa littérature, offrira aux futurs écrivains canadiens l'exemple toujours fécond de ce que peut la pensée lorsqu'elle s'allie aux prestiges de la forme et du bien dire; le monde anglo-saxon, par son génie politique et sa puissante organisation sociale, inclinera les esprits canadiens-français vers l'action extérieure, vers un sens de la solidarité humaine et peut-être aussi vers la sentimentalité. Ces

influences divergentes, la littérature canadienne-française de demain les conciliera par ce puissant sentiment religieux qui assure la survie, en Amérique, de la naissante culture canadienne-française. Portée à un niveau élevé, cette littérature serait susceptible un jour de s'ajouter glorieusement à celles qui s'élaborent aujourd'hui à travers le monde.

DRAWING BY LIONEL RAMPEN
FROM *The St. Lawrence*, BY WILLIAM TOYE

THE GARDEN AND THE CAGE

Hugo McPherson

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GABRIELLE ROY

IN THIS CENTURY, echoes of Alfred de Musset's despairing cry, *"Je suis venu trop tard dans un monde trop vieux,"* have begun to reverberate through the great new democracies of North America. The bright hymns of our patriots ("sweet land of liberty", "the true North, strong and free") have more and more been drowned in a dark chorus of disillusion. We have met Scott Fitzgerald's sad young heroes of the Jazz Age; Faulkner's sacrificial victim, the idiot Benjy, in *The Sound and the Fury;* Morley Callaghan's benighted journalist of *The Loved and the Lost,* searching vainly for a vanished church; and Jack Kerouac's frantic voyagers, crossing and re-crossing "the great American night." We have met few novelists, however, who have looked with visionary clarity at the plight of wholly ordinary people in our modern cities.

Gabrielle Roy is one of these writers, and Theodore Dreiser (though he must bow to Zola as an influence in her work) is her chief American predecessor. But where Dreiser's typical hero is Clyde Griffiths, the sad dreamer of *An American Tragedy,* Gabrielle Roy's central figure is the frail banker Alexandre Chenevert, an experienced teller of our nation's true accounts. And though, like Dreiser, Gabrielle Roy recognizes that truth-telling is unwelcome to customers who hope for a large credit balance, she looks beyond mathematical calculations in a way that Dreiser does not. In the midst of this commercial Canadian time and place she is able to make a quiet affirmation. Her statement is more important than we have recognized.

AT SIXTEEN Gabrielle Roy had her first troubled premonition of the isolation and pain that a serious story-teller (especially, perhaps, in a country as young as Canada) must encounter. In "The Voice of the Pools," one of the most moving chapters of *Street of Riches,* her fictional alter-ego Christine, *la Petite Misère,* tells her mother that she intends to be a writer. "Writing is hard," Maman replies. It is "like cutting yourself in two, as it were — one half trying to live, the other watching, weighing . . . I think other people never forgive it." Years later, remembering this critical moment in her development, Christine makes as poignant a statement of the artist's loneliness as we can find in fiction:

> I still hoped that I could have everything: both a warm and true life, like a shelter — at times, too, unbearable with harsh truth — and also time to capture its reverberations in the depths of the soul; time to walk, and time to halt that I might understand; time to withhold myself a little along the road, and then to catch up with the others, to rejoin them and to cry joyously, "Here I am, and here is what I've found for you along the way! . . . Have you waited for me? . . . Aren't you waiting for me? . . . Oh, do wait for me! . . ."

The artist's ineluctable choice lies between sharing fully the life of his fellows, and the lonely process of taking "time to halt" — time to understand and record what Henry James called "the look of things . . . the look that conveys their meaning." For Gabrielle Roy this choice was made before she could fully envisage its consequences. Writing was her vocation.

But if the mere fact of embracing a vocation and following it uncompromisingly is in some degree isolating, the nature of Gabrielle Roy's vision has further cut her off both from her fellow artists and from the popular audience. The typical heroes of Canadian fiction are intellectuals who search loquaciously for their own identity or Canada's, or "superior" observers who smile condescendingly at Canadian manners, or various sorts of crusaders, pioneers and rebels who face life boldly and bring it triumphantly to heel. Gabrielle Roy knows that such exceptional people do exist, but her whole concern is for the unnumbered thousands who "lead lives of quiet desperation" — the terrible meek. And she records their plight with a tolerance and compassion that rests not on patriotism, humanism or religiosity, but on a deep love of mankind. In the same way,

though she shares the existential concern for the individual of such French contemporaries as Sartre, Camus, Malraux and De Beauvoir, she does not wield the scapel of intellect with their clinical vigour. Gabrielle Roy *feels* rather than analyzes, and a sense of wonder and of mystery is always with her. She is a "witness" to the aches of her century and her culture rather than a reformer; and she believes that only *Love* can redeem the time.

Thus in her fiction Gabrielle Roy has held the mirror up to nature in the only way possible to her, but the image which she captures has been less and less a picture which Canadians understand or esteem. Her most popular book is *The Tin Flute* (*Bonheur d'occasion,* 1945), a story of Montreal slum dwellers. Its success, however, derives largely from its stunning documentary quality. Even in a decade enthralled by the *exposé* this book had a stinging authority. It arraigned the monster of big-city poverty with an accuracy that caught the last syllable of the market-vendor's cry and the tragic rhetoric of the Saint-Henri bum; and for English-speaking readers it revealed a backyard squalor which, though unpalatable at home, was vicariously exciting when spiced with *un zeste de Québec.* The works that followed, though welcomed by a few critics, lacked its topical appeal, and were proportionately less well received. *Where Nests the Water Hen* (*La Petite Poule d'Eau,* 1951) and *Street of Riches* (*Rue Deschambault,* 1957) were thought of as romantic retreats into a charmingly simple but irrecoverably *passé* frontier. And *The Cashier* (*Alexandre Chenevert,* 1955) — her most important work — was rejected as an altogether too painful case history.

Clearly Gabrielle Roy's development has not been directed by any desire for popular acclaim. It is time, therefore, that we attempted to look steadily at the vision of life which she has created — that we pause long enough to *see* what it is that she has found for us "along the way."

ALAN BROWN is the critic who has come closest to a broad definition of Gabrielle Roy's vision. Writing in *The Tamarack Review,*[1] he said:

[1] Issue I, Autumn, 1956, 61-70.

> The first and third novels of Gabrielle Roy [*The Tin Flute* and *The Cashier*] tell about the impact of poverty, war, and the twentieth century on a few unsuspecting inhabitants of Montreal. The second and fourth describe the relatively simple lives of country people and children in Manitoba. Taken together, they might be said to form a dialogue of experience and innocence . . . What seems to interest Gabrielle Roy is the interaction of the two conditions . . . Man expels himself from the Garden but can never quite forget the significance of the time he passed there. On the other hand, because of circumstances peculiar to life in large modern cities, it may be increasingly hard to recall that such a thing as a garden ever existed.

In Gabrielle Roy's imaginative landscape, that is, big-city living, with its soot and noise, its mechanical routine and impersonality, suggests simultaneously both the pains of adulthood and the dislocations of this unhappy century. By contrast, the warm and simple life of the frontier and the provincial town is becoming a thing of the past — as dear, and as irrevocably lost as childhood or innocence.

This perception of the controlling pattern in Gabrielle Roy's work is essential to an understanding of her statement. The values of the garden, childhood, innocence, and the past, array themselves against the forces of the city, adulthood, "experience," and the present. Mr. Brown's ceiling closes in, however, when he suggests that fulfilment is possible only in the green reaches of the frontier ("Whether it is rural Manitoba or the Garden of Eden would seem to be immaterial, so long as it is not a twentieth-century city"). It is true that, like Willa Cather, Gabrielle Roy endorses the values of the past and the frontier. The happiest character in all her fiction is the Capucin priest of the Little Water Hen country, Father Joseph Marie, a shepherd who never doubts that God's Providence is ultimately benign: "The world's pain remained inviolable for him, always inexplicable; but the same held true for joy and love." Unlike Cather, however, Gabrielle Roy is unflinchingly aware that there is no real escape from the present. *Here* and *now* is where Everyman lives; and his greatest gifts in a world where both faith and justice have perished are his ability to endure and to love. The critics who have regarded *Street of Riches* and *Where Nests the Water Hen* as day-dreaming retreats from the present, then, are mistaken; these works are rediscoveries, deceptively gentle and subjective, of the meaning of valour, pain, aspiration and love. They are, for Gabrielle Roy, exact equivalents of Alexandre Chenevert's trip to Lac Vert which I shall discuss below. The "dialogue"

of which Mr. Brown speaks is less a dialogue of innocence and experience than a debate between the steely voice of the urban present and the secret voice of the self which knows that values *do exist,* however cruelly the world appears to deny them.

But there is another feature of Gabrielle Roy's imaginative landscape which her critics have overlooked. If the garden and the past constantly draw her characters away from the cage — the grid-like pattern of the modern city — the prospect of the *future* constantly beckons to them and entices them. For the ingenuous Everyman, indeed, the future is a shining hope — a world of grandiose dream and fantasy in which suffering will magically end; and it is always just ahead. Thus one group of Miss Roy's characters look backward: Nick Sluzick, the irascible Ukrainian of the remote Water Hen country flies farther and farther North to escape civilization; the Russian trapper in *The Cashier* is equally a fugitive; and even Rose-Anna, the all-suffering mother of the Lacasse brood in *The Tin Flute* yearns (with a deadly awareness of the futility of her yearning) for a return to the sugar-maple farm of her girlhood. But a second group, the slaves of the future, are more imporant to Gabrielle Roy's vision. Florentine Lacasse, the dime-store waitress, never abandons her dream of comfort and wealth; her father, in the act of giving himself up to the machine of war, is sure that good fortune is just ahead; and her seducer, Jean Lévesque, believes that he can climb to happiness on the heights of Westmount. The hope of the future is a greater consolation to Everyman than the dream of the past, but Gabrielle Roy's narrative makes it clear that both past and future are insecure anchors. The present is inescapable; it is *now;* the past and the future are delusions.

In this vision, Alexandre Chenevert, the anonymous Cashier whose teller's cage becomes a symbol of our money-counting society, dreams of the unspoiled life of nature, and imagines vainly that he can repossess that simplicity by returning (in the future) to the uncomplicated life of the pioneer. His experiment, of course, is a failure. He is a city man, and he must find out how to live in the sooty slums and smog-filled canyons which are the setting of twentieth-century life. Gabrielle Roy sees with frightening clarity, that is, that the flux of life (which optimists call "progress") cannot be stopped or turned back. Youth goes forward blindly and joyfully into the travail of the future, never imagining that it will be, in Lampman's phrase, "the city of the dreadful night". Thus, in earlier

days when the banks of the Lachine canal were still sunny and green, Pitou, the droll little musician of *The Tin Flute,* ran desperately after his older playmates, calling in tragic innocence: "Wait for me. I'm coming too." But the playmates, intent on life's games, could not wait for their musician Pitou (or for *la Petite Misère,* their artist). The future beckons. It is Everyman's character to hope and aspire; it is his fate, apparently, to learn that his power to achieve is tragically short of his ability to dream.

This is Gabrielle Roy's vision of life. It is far more significant, I think, than the vision of many novels which are more self-consciously "Canadian", and far more pertinent than the statistical "firsts" which our press uses to shore up our wavering identity. The world may be mildly impressed to know that we have more nickel and better wheat than anyone else; that we have the Mounties, the Seaway, the C.P.R. and Social Credit. But these externals are no more than guideposts to the labyrinth that Gabrielle Roy has explored, for she has told us something about *ourselves* — about Man.

But a greater question remains. Is the urbanized life which we are so busy creating totally dismal — a dark valley between the sunny hilltops of past and future — or can the cage of adult and urban life be made bearable? To answer this we must look searchingly at Gabrielle Roy's two novels of city life.

Since *The Tin Flute* was Gabrielle Roy's first major statement, we shall turn to it first.[2] Its original title, *Bonheur d'occasion,* has no English equivalent. The blues singer might translate it freely as "Happiness is a some-time thing", for it implies "chance" happiness, "grab-bag" happiness and "bargain" happiness — a deceptive, fleeting joy. Its heroine is Florentine Lacasse, daughter of a poverty-stricken Montreal family who live precariously amid the factory whistles, railway crossings, slaughterhouse smells and soot of the St. Henri quartier. Appropriately, the name Lacasse suggests a "box" or "locker," for these people are thwarted — caged — born into a world of ugliness and want which they are powerless to escape. But all of them, in individual ways, dream of a happier world. Azarius, the father, childishly protects his *amour propre* by under-

[2] I am indebted to McClelland & Stewart Ltd. for permission to use some of the material from my "Introduction" to the New Canadian Library edition of *The Tin Flute.* Toronto: 1958, v-xi.

taking a succession of impractical ventures which he believes will make his fortune overnight; Florentine imagines extravagantly that she will marry a rich gallant; nine-year-old Yvonne asks no more than to become a nun; and little Daniel — dying of leukemia — finds his hospital ward the happiest place that he has known, and a tin flute which has been given him the most beautiful possession imaginable.

The central situation of the story records Florentine's seduction by a ruthless young orphan, Jean Lévesque (Mr. "Bishop"), her desperation when she learns that she is pregnant and unwanted, and her reluctant marriage to Lévesque's shy friend Emmanuel Létourneau ("a starling"). It is in this situation, and in the excruciating history of Florentine's parents, Rose-Anna and Azarius, that Gabrielle Roy's irony reaches its deepest level. Jean Lévesque is a calculating young opportunist; and Florentine is a yearning, empty-headed little fool. Yet they both, finally, strike us as disarmingly pathetic, for neither the opportunist nor his victim is really in control of his destiny, and neither realizes that wealth, if it is not somehow warmed by compassion and love, can be as hideous as poverty. The novel's central perception and its chief irony is its depiction of the nature of poverty, the scourge which blinds its victims to all motives but acquisition.

The story of Rose-Anna, Florentine's mother, is at once more painful and more reassuring. Rose-Anna has been able to forgive all of her husband's failures, but when he abandons his family in order to bequeath them the regular income of an Army Private's allowances (a "fortune" in St. Henri terms) she feels his action as a betrayal. In the last analysis, the love-pain nexus that binds people together is more important than the digits of a bank account. Rose-Anna, we feel, is an image of the universal *mater dolorosa,* the infinitely loving mother whose "poverty of spirit" will inherit the earth. Yet her secret is not a conscious formula; it is simply a question of unpremeditated giving. In existentialist terms she is totally *engagé* — committed to a way of life in which the moment is all-important, and in which fortitude, compassion and love are the essential values.

But if these are the only values that can triumph over the squalor of St. Henri, *The Tin Flute* does not affirm that the world will accept them easily as a remedy for mankind's suffering. Rose-Anna ends hers career in the same pose as her mother, a woman who has lived her life in the "garden" of a Quebec farmstead; each of them, with the stoicism of

resignation, rubs her fingers abstractedly against the seat of her hard wooden chair. Even Emmanuel Létourneau, whose vision is close to Rose-Anna's, finds no confident solution to the enigma of the human situation. His wife, Florentine, is incapable of understanding a love devoid of ulterior motives, and as he goes off to fight in a dubious war he sees from the train windows a desolate city: "Low on the horizon, a bank of heavy clouds foretold a storm." "Emmanuel" is prepared to give his life to save his fellows, but he cannot be certain that his sacrifice will redeem the time.

The statement of *The Tin Flute* is veiled; Gabrielle Roy allowed "the look of things" to convey its own meaning without authorial comment. In *Street of Riches* and *Where Nests the Water Hen* she adopts a highly personal, subjective manner. These are works of "spiritual autobiography", but their insights are not essentially different from the documentary histories of the Lacasse family and Alexandre Chenevert. Gabrielle Roy's experience has taught her that life offers an endless series of storms and mischances, whether they be blizzards in the remote Water Hen country, snowstorms that cut the arteries of Winnipeg's life, or cruel Arctic winds that sweep through the quartier of St. Henri. (The image of the storm, indeed, is a leading motif in these novels.) In country places, however, we see life in its simplest form — stripped of the complexities of the city.

But if country life is a spring of revelation, there is no stopping the cycle of history from frontier to provincial town to big city — or from canoe to Titanic to space-ship. Rightly or wrongly, wisely or stupidly, man aspires. And hence a final question arises. Is the idea of progress an illusion? Is there no possibility of turning the cage into a blessed garden? Gabrielle Roy answers this ultimate question by describing the ordeal of Alexandre Chenevert, the Cashier.

IT WOULD be difficult to imagine a less promising subject for fiction than the career of Alexandre Chenevert, for he is a man to whom virtually *nothing* happens — a nonentity who breaks down under the pressures of city life, escapes briefly to the "earthly paradise"

of Lac Vert, and returns home to die. Yet from the very first sentence he has an almost hypnotic fascination for us:

> It was still dark. The bed was warm, and the room quiet. Alexandre Chenevert had been awakened by what he thought was a noise, but was really a nagging recollection. One of his overcoat buttons was dangling loose by a single thread. And then too, it was spring. Spring reminded him of the income tax. "If I should forget to have that button sewn on . . ." he reflected, and then the notion occurred to him that perhaps there wouldn't be any war, simply because the weapons of today have such terrific killing power.

This little man, his mind awash in an endless tide of anxieties, is much more than a nameless Montreal clerk who suffers from insomnia and the aches of urban life; he is the neighbor across the street or the stranger who sits across from us in the cafeteria. Alexandre is *us* — Everyman. The doctor whom he consults when he can no longer disguise his illness recognizes with painful clarity that the little bank clerk's malady is a condition that medicine cannot cure:

> Of a sudden he realized how this man could so greatly plague him: it was because his name, indeed, was legion.
>
> Every morning at a set hour he walked down a thousand staircases at once, running from every corner of the city toward bulging streetcars. He crowded into them by the hundreds and thousands. From tram to tram, from street to street, you could see him standing in public conveyances, his hands slipped through leather straps, his arms stretched in a curious likeness to a prisoner at the whipping post.

Alexandre's malady is simply the human condition.

But Gabrielle Roy does not, as a number of her critics have argued, intend her story as a simple condemnation of urban living, for the cage of the bank (and the city) in which Alexandre passes his days is in its deepest sense the cage of adult life — of experience. Thus his trip to Lac Vert and the pristine beauty of nature is not a rejection of the abrasive facts of experience but an attempt to reassure himself that happiness and peace are genuine possibilities. "Are you thinking of settling down here for good?" asks the Lac Vert farmer:

> "No . . . that is . . . well, no."
>
> That was not the big point. What mattered was that Lac Vert should exist, and that Alexandre should have seen it with his own eyes. Later on it would always remain his property. To believe in an earthly Paradise — that was what he had so deeply needed.

Given this reassurance that man's highest dream is not vain, Alexandre is ready to go home. A New Jerusalem is possible. He leaves Lac Vert "two days before the end of his vacation."

And then, as his bus brings him tortuously back to the tangled city of men, he sees a terrifying image:

> A statue of Christ loomed up along the road. Electric wires linked it to a Hydro-Quebec pole. On its back you could glimpse a full-fledged installation: a network of twisted cables . . . and what was probably a fuse box. Alexandre wondered whether there was not likewise a meter, keeping track of the number of kilowatts the Christ might consume when it was illuminated at night; . . . Long after they had passed by, the electrified Christ continued to bother him.

This, perhaps, is the most ironic image in all of Gabrielle Roy's work. In modern life, even the figure of Christ — the symbol of brotherhood and *love* — has become a towering mechanical monster. In the cage of modern experience even Love has lost its way.

Yet this is not the end of Alexandre's ordeal. Soon after, he learns that Gandhi, the simplest and greatest man of the century, has been assassinated:

> Now you could expect every sort of excess and violence, Gandhi no longer being here to condemn them with one stern look! A tiny slip of a man, feeble, sickly, Alexandre reflected tenderly. Oh! it was not always the sturdy ones who brought the most to pass in the world — far from it!
>
> They had looked a bit alike; others had also noticed it; . . . It was certainly his own best self which today they had killed for him . . . but he would continue to suffer as a protest against violence, war, and murder. Why had he not earlier understood that his role in life, as Gandhi had pointed out for him, lay in meekness?

In these words we come once again to the very core of Gabrielle Roy's vision. There can be no return to the garden, but meekness and love can plant flowers in the cage and the wasteland. The poor in spirit — Mahatmas Gandhi, Alexandre Chenevert — have the secret. A final knowledge of Love's power comes to Alexandre as he lies in a hospital bed dying of cancer: the visits of his simple friends and clients reveal to him that his life has not been worthless or meaningless. In the face of his childlike helplessness, his friends abandon all past pettiness and rivalry: "Alexandre closed his eyelids. As Heaven, he could see nothing better than earth, now that men had become good neighbors."

> But did the priest really not believe that men would come to love one another? Couldn't one see signs of this happening? Might not Heaven, after all, little by little, come to be on earth?
>
> "No." The chaplain was categorical; . . . Men would never be ripe for heaven upon earth.

Perhaps Alexandre's dying vision was an hallucination. Gabrielle Roy does not intrude to debate the priest's official view. Nevertheless the spindly Alexandre Chenevert (Mr. Green Oak) stands as a compelling figure of Everyman, not unlike the tragic salesman Willy Loman, or the all-American failure Studs Lonigan, but rising above them in his final awareness. The money-counting world takes small notice of his passing, and yet this humble sufferer whose name suggests both a conqueror and a sturdy, growing tree, achieves a curious kind of immortality. For even now,

> elsewhere than in churches, it happens still today, after these several years, that name is uttered — and is it not a thing tender and mysterious that to this name there should attach a bond? . . . It happens that here or there in the city someone says:
>
> ". . . Alexandre Chenevert . . ."

It is impossible on this occasion to notice a number of features of Gabrielle Roy's art which must qualify and modify our estimate of her achievement, but my primary purpose has been to explore her "importance" as a voice speaking in this Canadian place and time. I have omitted mention, for example, of the wry and tender understatement of her humor; I have ignored her tendency towards episodic narrative, and the occasional awkwardness in chronology which breaks the unity of *Where Nests the Water Hen* and *Street of Riches*. I have also been unable to weigh the losses incurred in translation — losses which seriously reduce the impact of *The Tin Flute* (Harry Binsse's translations of the later books are inspired).

At the moment these matters bulk large, because we are always in some degree the slaves of literary fashion. Our final judgment, however, will rest firmly on two things: has Gabrielle Roy had something signifi-

cant to say? and has she said it well? She falls short, I think, of the panoramic sweep of our greatest novelists, and she lacks something of the intensity which enables a Katherine Mansfield to distill the meaning of a world in the microcosm of a moment. She has, however, given us a vision of ourselves which is immeasurably more powerful than "the vision" of windy Prime Ministers and journalistic patriots. She convinces us, indeed, that the truth which Canada has revealed to her is a timeless truth. And she persuades us to bear witness to its importance.

WOOD ENGRAVING BY ALISTAIR BELL

TOWARD A THEORY OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Criticism of Northrop Frye

E. W. Mandel

THE STRUCTURE of a critical theory may easily be obscured behind the mass of detail which it supports, and when the detail is as fascinating and spectacular as it is in Northrop Frye's criticism, it is not wholly surprising that even so imposing an intellectual framework as his cultural theory should be difficult to discern. His essays, pronouncements, credos, and epigrams have provoked a variety of reactions, but in almost every case the technical rather than the thematic question have been mumbled and worried by the reader. One exception which comes to mind is the review of *Fearful Symmetry* by H. M. McLuhan.[1] Professor McLuhan writes that the "awareness of the unity of mythopoeic activity in history and art" has given rise to "one of the principal intellectual developments of the past century", "the supplanting of linear perspective by a multi-locational mode of perception". And it is this "advance in the tools of intellectual analysis" which "has given modern man a sense once more of the simultaneity of all history seen at the psychological and intellectual level, as well as of the close bonds between all members of the human family past and present". This is the theme or informing principle of Professor Frye's criticism, the relationship of criticism to culture. Consequently, the boundaries of this discussion may be defined by the polarity of terms like "popular" and "provincial", "primitive" and "sophisticated", "prophetic" and "worldly" or, perhaps, "urbane". Obviously, one

[1] *Sewanee Review*, LV, 1947, 710-715.

of each of these pairs has some relevance to Canadian readers and Canadian subjects, but the context of our discussion is considerably larger than the history of Canadian critical theories. And in either a local or a more extended context, it is less of a paradox than it appears, at first, to say that Professor Frye's criticism can be understood as a defense of the popular and an attack on the provincial in both art and criticism, that is, as a theory of culture. Such polemical terms as "attack" and "defense", of course, are appropriate to his subject and go some way as well toward explaining the wit and irony of his style.

PROVINCIALISM clearly has something to do with boundaries, and it is revealing to notice what a difference can be suggested in the quality of a work simply by altering the borders within which it is placed. In discussing a criticism of the sort implied above, concerned with first principles, we are not merely subsidizing local talent, which would be one form of literary provincialism. We are concerned instead with the foundations and structure of one of the central humanistic disciplines, and it follows that we are not interested in personality or gossip, but in theory or idea. From this point of view we can define provincialism, as in effect Professor Frye defines it in the *Anatomy of Criticism,* as the failure to suspect the existence of a systematic criticism distinct from the history of taste. Provincialism here appears to be a derivative of a particular theory of criticism, the theory that criticism is parasitic rather than autonomous, and that therefore it can never deserve serious attention on its own merits. Thus the ancestral and persistent voices of taste murmuring that it is nasty, brutal, and parochial to talk about criticism, especially in a half-empty literary country. There is an attack on this position in the Polemical Introduction to the *Anatomy of Criticism*:

> A public that tries to do without criticism, and asserts that it knows what it wants or likes, brutalizes the arts and loses its cultural memory. Art for art's sake is a retreat from criticism which ends in an impoverishment of civilized life itself. The only way to forestall the work of criticism is through censorship, which has the same relation to criticism that lynching has to justice.

The parochial attitude, in fact, is that menacing or brute silence maintained in the face of the urgent need for criticism, and criticism itself is defined in the *Anatomy of Criticism* as "the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture, or the study of the humanities".

This begins to sound like Matthew Arnold. Indeed, Arnold's argument in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" might very well be the point of departure in this essay, for the reason that Professor Frye takes up Arnold's argument, with some ironic twists, in his own "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" which forms the substance of the Polemical Introduction to the *Anatomy of Criticism*. Both writers are concerned with establishing the autonomy of criticism and yet both are anxious that this shall not mean that criticism is isolated from the world of humane letters. In Arnold, the familiar terms which one encounters are "disinterestedness" and "culture". Criticism is a disinterested activity which yet will "make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself". In Frye, the terms are "autonomy" and "conceptual universe". Criticism is not a subdivision of literature.

> Criticism, rather, is to art what history is to action and philosophy to wisdom: a verbal imitation of a human productive power which in itself does not speak. And just as there is nothing which the philosopher cannot consider philosophically, and nothing which the historian cannot consider historically, so the critic should be able to construct and dwell in a conceptual universe of his own. This critical universe seems to be one of the things implied in Arnold's conception of culture. (*Anatomy of Criticism*).

A metaphor which we will meet again in Professor Frye's criticism lurks in this passage. It is of a subject visualized as a figure between two similar, but not identical, flanking figures (criticism between philosophy and history) which, in certain situations, are seen to be inside the central figure and, in others, outside of it. In a sense, the whole of Professor Frye's work can be explained as a search for and an account of this mysterious unity in multiplicity, and it is the possibility of such unity which informs his conception of criticism and art as central human activities, centres of culture and civilization. This fierce desire intensifies both content and style, making the one inclusive, the other radically metaphorical and paradoxical. It also accounts for the feeling one has that anything Professor Frye writes is related to everything else he has written. This is true

whether he is commenting on Canadian poetry chap books, defining an age of sensibility, accounting for the typology of *Paradise Regained,* analyzing colonial painting, reviewing film or ballet, or identifying myths in Toynbee, Spengler, or Shakespeare. And it is this quality of his work which M. H. Abrams seems to have in mind, in a review of the *Anatomy of Criticism,*[2] when he notices in Professor Frye's criticism "the regress to one hypothetical *Urmythos* behind the multitude of individual literary phenomena". "It's function," comments Professor Abrams, ". . . is metaphysical" and the certainty it yields "is not the certainty of empirical proof, it is the security of an ultimate abiding place for the monistic compulsion of the human spirit." Whatever else it may be, this notion of an autonomous conceptual universe of criticism is the centre of Professor Frye's theory, and any discussion of his theory is inevitably confronted with questions about the source and nature of such a conception and the relation of it to a theory of culture and popular art.

AT THIS POINT it becomes necessary to introduce what will surely sound like a resounding commonplace and to insist that, as Professor Frye himself demonstrated at some length in *Fearful Symmetry,* the source of his view that "criticism has an end in the structure of literature as a total form, as well as a beginning in the text studied" (*Anatomy of Criticism*) is Blake. But if this is a commonplace, it is both a needed and a valuable one. It is valuable, as we shall see, because it corrects the view that since archetypes are a late nineteenth-century discovery they never existed before that time and therefore anyone finding them in an earlier work of literature is "reading into" the work. It is evidence (the value of which is still an open question) that "The axioms and postulates of criticism . . . grow out of the art it deals with" and that there is a considerable difference between finding "a conceptual framework for criticism within literature" and attaching "criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks outside it" (*Anatomy of Criticism*). It is a needed commonplace because, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, readers of Frye continue to find his source everywhere

[2] *University of Toronto Quarterly,* XXVIII, 1959, 190-196.

but in Blake. Thus, one of the formidable Aristotelians from Chicago, R. S. Crane, in a discussion of modern critical theory (*The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry,* 1953) groups Frye with "the late Professor Coomaraswamy, Maud Bodkin, Kenneth Burke, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Richard Chase, Francis Fergusson", with, in other words, a group of critics "largely intent on interpreting poetry 'reductively,' in terms of something assumed to be far more primitive and basic in human experience". And Crane locates the sources of such criticism, not in literature, but in insights "of theorists and scholars in several other disciplines that have risen to prominence since the later years of the nineteenth century," in particular, "the cultural anthropology of Sir James Frazer, Jane Harrison, Emile Durkheim . . . and the psychoanalysis or analytical phychology of Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung". Crane mentions in addition "the efforts of philosophers of knowledge like A. N. Whitehead, Ernest Cassirer, Susanne Langer . . . to construct general theories of symbolism". To this imposing list of sources the literary historians William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks have nothing to add in their discussion of Professor Frye's criticism (*Literary Criticism: A Short History,* 1957), except that "critics, under the stimulus of such studies, write with the excitement of men who have suddenly envisaged a whole new hemisphere" and indeed that for Northrop Frye such studies point "to the possibility of turning literary criticism for the first time into a true science". M. H. Abrams, in the review of the *Anatomy of Criticism* already referred to, agrees that Frye's purpose is "to work in the implications for literary analysis" of "depth psychology" and "theories of ritual and myth in Frazer and other cultural anthropologists", and adds as well a third development, "the revival of serious interest in mediaeval symbology".

Where, then, is Blake? The answer, in this context at least, is the last chapter of *Fearful Symmetry* and a good part of the *Anatomy of Criticism.* Blake's philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and poetics, as expounded in *Fearful Symmetry,* echo, as indeed they are intended to, in the *Anatomy of Criticism.* No attempt is made to deny the resemblance between these and modern theories: Blake's Orc cycle is said to resemble theories of history as a sequence of cultural organisms; his Los is said to resemble modern metaphysical theories of time; his Four Zoas, psychological theories of contending forces within the soul; his Druidism, mod-

ern anthropological theories, and so on. But in no single one of these modern theories is there a unifying principle. Studies of dream and ritual, in fact, are dismissed as possible sources of a principle which would have both critical and cultural significance: "A comparative study of dreams and rituals can lead us only to a vague and intuitive sense of the unity of the human mind; a comparative study of works of art should demonstrate it beyond conjecture." Blake, we are told, "insists . . . urgently on this question of an imaginative iconography, and forces us to learn . . . much of its grammar in reading him." And, in a masterpiece of deadpan ambiguity: ". . . Blake's own art . . . is . . . a beginner's guide to the understanding of an archetypal vision of which it forms part."

Going outside *Fearful Symmetry,* we find Professor Frye ten years later doggedly insisting[3] that Blake teaches us the structural principles of fiction and poetry. His argument here is the same as that in the third essay, "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths", of the *Anatomy of Criticism.* The argument turns on a distinction between representative and creative art, the sort of distinction which occupies Reid MacCallum in the title essay of his *Imitation and Design.* The structural principles of literature, according to this argument, are more evident in non-representative than in imitative works, and it is to the "abstract and stylized" and "primitive" which we must go to learn such principles. Blake is obviously the poet we need. His "prophecies are so intensely mythical because his lyrics are so intensely metaphorical" and since "Metaphor is a formal principle of poetry, and myth of fiction" it follows that "just as Blake's lyrics are among the best possible introductions to poetic experience, so his prophecies are among the best possible introductions to the grammar and structure of literary mythology." And though this may not be clearly understood now, "opinion will have changed on this point long before the tercentenary rolls around."

The structural principles of literature and of criticism are located therefore inside literature rather than in depth psychology, cultural anthropology, or philosophical symbolism. We are presented now with the wondrous paradox that poetry like Blake's prophecies—obscure, esoteric, complex, erudite — is popular poetry. In this context "popular" does not mean "what the public wants", but instead refers to recurring elements

[3] "Blake After Two Centuries", *University of Toronto Quarterly,* XXVII, 1958, 10-21.

in great art, "even very complex and difficult art". It refers to "the art which affords a key to imaginative experience for the untrained".

We begin to see the outlines of a cultural theory in the form of archetypal or systematic criticism. Modern theories of criticism are not read back into Blake, but Blake is not an anachronism: "Blake suggests to the student of English literature that to recognize the existence of a total form of vision would not be a new discovery, but a return to essential critical principles that should never have been lost sight of." (*Fearful Symmetry*). In *Fearful Symmetry,* we are told that to understand Blake's thought historically we must keep in mind "an affinity between three Renaissance traditions, the imaginative approach to God through love and beauty in Italian Platonism, the doctrine of inner inspiration in the left-wing Protestants, and the theory of creative imagination in occultism". In "Blake After Two Centuries", we are told that popular art, in the sense described above, is "the art which is central to a specific cultural tradition". The English cultural tradition is then described as Protestant, radical, and Romantic. The comprehension of this tradition is said to constitute a cultural revolution, and it appears that the term is used in two main senses.

One is related to the paradoxical sense of the word "popular". The arts do not improve, but what does improve is "the comprehension of them, and the refining of society which results from it". A cultural revolution is created not by the production of art but by an intensified response to it, for "while the production of culture may be, like ritual, a half-involuntary imitation of organic rhythms or processes, the response to culture is, like myth, a revolutionary act of consciousness." Hence, the modern cultural revolution is not anthropological or psychological, but critical, since the key to an imaginative iconography is in art, not outside of it. In this sense, "The contemporary development of the technical ability to study the arts, represented by reproductions of painting, the recording of music, and modern libraries, forms part of a cultural revolution which makes the humanities quite as pregnant with new developments as the sciences." This is not what it first appears to be, a technological revolution, but a revolution in "spiritual productive power". (*Anatomy of Criticism*).

The second sense in which Professor Frye speaks of a cultural revolution is even wider and more visionary than the picture of a whole genera-

tion reading Blake's prophecies. As art is to criticism, criticism is to culture, and the structural principles of one provide a conceptual framework for the other. This is worked out both in terms of the relation of various types of criticism discussed in the *Anatomy of Criticism* to social reality, and in terms of a complex and elaborate analogy between mathematics and literature. What is sought for is a conception of criticism as at once disinterested and engaged with social reality: "though literature, like mathematics, is constantly useful — a word which means having a continuing relationship to the common field of experience — pure literature, like pure mathematics, contains its own meaning." Literature, then, is a "hypothetical" art, and it is the task of criticism to identify the hypotheses. This suggests that criticism can supply the conceptual framework for a theory of culture:

> . . . is literature like mathematics in being substantially useful, and not just incidentally so? That is, is it true that the verbal structures of psychology, anthropology, theology, history, law, and everything else built out of words have been informed or constructed by the same kind of myths and metaphors that we find, in their original hypothetical form, in literature? (*Anatomy of Criticism*).

The answer, of course, is yes. And it follows that criticism supplies the unifying principle in culture, "a language capable of expressing the unity of this higher intellectual universe". When that language is finally spoken well by criticism, the "social and practical result" will be that its words fuse together "the broken links between creation and knowledge, art and science, myth and concept".

WHETHER this argument for the integrity of criticism and its cultural significance is dismissed as dreary rhetoric, sonorous nonsense, or cloudy logic, its practical efficiency cannot be denied.[4] This brings us back to an earlier part of the argument, the opposition of provincial and popular in art and criticism. What would be the practical effect of applying these critical principles to a provincial art (that is, "dingy realism" or "nervous naturalism") and to a provincial criticism (that is, an unsystematic criticism)? One aspect of Northrup Frye's work

is the practical application of his criticism to Canadian literature. In articles like his major review of A. J. M. Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*[5] and his reviews of the year's work in poetry in the "Letters in Canada" series of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* he has rewritten the history of Canadian poetry, adjusting it to the focus of his mythopoeic lens. Thus, in "Letters in Canada: 1957", he notices "a tendency that I have seen growing since I began this survey eight years ago". In Jay MacPherson's *The Boatman,* in the second volumes of Douglas LePan, P. K. Page, and James Reaney, in the first volumes of Wilfred Watson and Anne Wilkinson, and in all the volumes of Irving Layton since *In the Midst of My Fever,* one can see a concern with "poetry as a craft with its own traditions and discipline". And "It is consistent with this that the more amateurish approach which tries to write up emotional experiences as they arise in life or memory has given way to an emphasis on the formal elements of poetry, on myth, metaphor, symbol, image, even metrics." Clearly, Professor Frye did not write the volumes he mentions, nor did he create this growing professionalism in Canadian literature, but clearly also he contributed to it, as one poet at least[6] is more than willing to admit.

So many more significant issues are raised in Professor Frye's criticism, that it may seem an abysmally provincial place to reach the end, in a discussion of practical, rather than theoretical, results. But at the end I shall not be misled by what Professor Frye calls the donkey's carrot of criticism, a demonstrable value-judgment. Whether his work proclaims a real apocalypse in art or criticism, I do not know, but that it is accompanied by all the sounds of that wonderful time, there can be no doubt at all. There

[4] Frye's theory that a conceptual framework for criticism may be derived from the formal principles of poetry has been criticized as wishful thinking and as mere metaphor: "We are stating, in short, not a relationship of effect to cause, but of like to like — that is, of analogy merely; our proposition is a kind of proportional metaphor" (R. S. CRANE, *The Languages of Criticism*): ". . . archetypal statements are empirically incorrigible . . . ." (M. H. ABRAMS, *University of Toronto Quarterly,* XXVIII, 1959); "Recurrence is one thing; organization is another. A pattern cannot organize" (G. WHALLEY, review of *Anatomy of Criticism,* TAMARACK REVIEW, 8, 1958). One can only observe that distrust of metaphor is a curious critical attitude.

[5] "Canada and Its Poetry", *Canadian Forum,* XXIII, 1943, 207-210.

[6] JAMES REANEY, "The Canadian Poet's Predicament", *University of Toronto Quarterly,* XXVI, 1957.

are trumpets, and, to adopt a fine phrase from the Blake book itself, if you listen closely you might be able to hear the squeaking axles of "Chariots of fire" lining up for the critical Armageddon.

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THREE CANADIAN POETS
A VIEW FROM ENGLAND

Roy Fuller

IRVING LAYTON. *A Red Carpet for the Sun.* McClelland & Stewart. Paper $1.95, Cloth $3.50.
JOHN GLASSCO. *The Deficit Made Flesh.* McClelland & Stewart. $3.50.
RONALD BATES. *The Wandering World.* Macmillan. $2.75.

TO DISCOVER at 47 a considerable poet of precisely one's own age, writing in the same language—this has been my surprising and pleasurable experience with *A Red Carpet for the Sun,* Mr. Irving Layton's collected poems of 1942 to 1958. I hope I am as curious as any poetry reader in England, but the hazards of Canadian and British literary exchanges have hitherto kept me ignorant of the extent of Mr. Layton's achievement.

This volume contains the poems of its period that the author wishes to preserve, and since there are over two hundred of them it is plain that entry into middle age — for many of his English contemporaries a time of poetic hesitancy—has been for him a fertile and stimulating experience. The general situation of *A Red Carpet* is the mature man whose settled place in society and conventional personal relationships make him acutely aware of his subversive thought and undiminished lusts.

> Golda, Fruma, Dinnie, Elinor,
> My saintly wantons, passionate nuns;
> O light-footed daughters, your unopened
> Brittle beauty troubles an aging man
> Who hobbles after you a little way
> Fierce and ridiculous.

Put in this concrete way, the strains of the poet's rebellious flesh are proper and moving mainsprings for poetry, but I found tedious Mr. Layton's Lawrentian praise of the body and celebration of his virility. 'Real pleasure and goodness Are in your rippling breasts,' he says in a poem addressed to Mrs. Arthur Miller, but we cannot help feeling that the sentiment is as tired as the adjective. Much of Mr. Layton's no doubt celebrated naughtiness arises from the same rather provincial notion of freedom.

> You went behind a bush to piss.
> Imagine Wordsworth telling this!
> About Lucy? And Robert Bridges
> About his dear lass?

Mr. Layton will convince no one but the callow adolescent that they *should* have told, and that anything very in-

teresting would have been gained thereby: though his poem is entitled 'Anti-Romantic,' the idea it embodies is really embarrassingly romantic.

So, too, there is something second-rate about the quality of Mr. Layton's intellectual protest, his indignation with society.

> The church is gone,
> The street is paved,
> The Home Bank thrives
> Where Jesus Saved.

Such criticism is too easy, too conventional; and in fact Mr. Layton rarely makes us feel that the quality of his living has forced upon him the dissidence to which he aspires.

However, all this is perhaps merely a somewhat unkind way of saying that we must not look to Mr. Layton for complexity of conclusion or for profundity of moral statement. These are almost all very short poems, and their surprises are in their assembly of images and penetration of observation. Mr. Layton is not, in fine, a didactic poet, though he sometimes tries to be one. In his best poems the content is modest, the language daring; the moment of experience fixed by wholly fresh comparisons. There are tropes in this book as remarkable as any I remember during many years of reviewing: the likening of a swimmer to 'a brown weed with marvellous bulbs', of tramcars to 'stained bacilli'; and the description of a frog as 'Chaplin-footed' and with 'sensitive pianist's hands'.

The ironically poignant feeling in this frog poem (which is echoed in a subsequent poem about a cat), articulated throughout its greater than normal length by an extraordinarily exact visual sense, seems to me to indicate a way for Mr. Layton's talent to make a still profounder effect on us (and he is one of the few poets of his age now writing whose development, in any non-pejorative sense, can be adumbrated). Some of the rhetoric in the earlier poems comes off with enormous success:

> Life is horrifying, said Cézanne,
> but this is not
> what he meant who picked flowers blooming
> in the slaughterhouse; he meant the slit throats,
> The bear traps smeared with blood, the iron goads,
> the frightened
> servant-girl's Caesarian,
> And this planet dancing about Apollo,
> the blood drying and shining in the sun,
> Turning to Titians, beauty, the Arts . . .

But the dangers and difficulties of this kind of poetry are obvious: it will constantly tend to the turgid, the empty, the sterilely general (though it must be added that in Mr. Layton's case his ear is so sure that his verse can proceed without the anti-speech rhythms that so often help to deaden rhetorical poetry). What in the end is reassuring about Mr. Layton is his power to set a precise scene, to make us feel through the exercise of all his senses the vast implications of the physical world — even the small world of domesticity and suburbia:

> On either side the even expensive
> Sod; the bungalow with the red border
> Of roses; the woman past her middle years
> In gabardine shorts, and her hard fists
> That held in place over her suntanned knee
> A book, half-shut, in spectacular covers.

I hope some English publisher will not too long delay introducing this excellent poet to a new public — a public which still remains to be convinced of the maturity and significance of Canadian literature.

MR. GLASSCO and Mr. Bates are also poets whose work was new to me. I gather from the blurb that though Mr. Glassco has been writing since the twenties, this is his first collection of poems. During the war he drove a country mail route, and there is nothing in his book quite so good as its opening poem, 'The Rural Mail', in which he arrives at a remarkably profound acceptance of the contradictions of man and nature:

> . . . here is man on man's estate of nature,
> Farmer on farm, the savage civilised
> Into the image of his God the weather . .

The poem goes on with some sharp and unpretentious observations ('The ring as the *Knowlton News goes in'*) and some colloquial speech ('Far as I'm concerned, the war can go on forever,' says the prospering poultry farmer), so that its conclusion, having been properly worked for, strikes home with fine effect:

> . . . the bull, the buzz-saw and the balky mare
> Are the chosen fingers of God for a farmer's sins,
> Like the axe for his woods, and his calves and chicks and children
> Destined for slaughter in the course of things.

Mr. Glassco does not seem ever again to have found materials so suitable for his talent, and many of his poems begin promisingly ('The Whole Hog', for instance) but stay cold and somewhat inhuman. He often piles up parentheses and subordinate clauses so that the texture of his verse is made needlessly difficult and opaque. He is most successful and attractive, I think, in the poems on literary and artistic themes, where the données give the poetry a sharpness and point which otherwise it is inclined to lack. A poem called 'The Cardinal's Dog' (of which I quote the first two verses) shows this civilised and accomplished style at its best:

> The unknown Master of Moulins
> Painted the Nativity: we see
> The stable, the stupid ox and Mary,
> Simpering Joseph on his knees
> And the Cardinal Rolin on his knees too,
> His red robe centred by a rat-faced dog.
>
> They all look at each other: Joseph at Mary,
> Mary (her face is blue) at the child,
> The Cardinal looks, if anywhere, at the ox;
> But the child looks at the little dog,
> And the dog at nothing, simply being well-behaved:
> He is the one who feels and knows . . .

MR. BATES I thought not so much an indifferent poet as perhaps not a poet at all — a writer working in the wrong medium.

> Nor would the sound of pebbles dropping down
> A disused well awaken echoes half
> So terrifyingly as the cold silence hung
> Like faint funereal wreaths about the square.

The well image is a not unfair example of the pointless comparison Mr. Bates too frequently evokes (and why, one asks, 'disused'?), and the movement of the verse can be seen to depend lamely on a counted blank verse line rather than the rhythms of speech or sense (compare my last quotation from Mr. Layton). And when speech *is* attempted it is sometimes feeble:

> True, I've made mistakes. I'll not deny
> I'm human. But to think I'd try
> A stunt like that. And with my own son, too! ('Dedalus'.)

The book is divided into sections ('Histories', 'Myths', and so on), and the most rewarding, I think, is the most modest—'Landscapes'. Here there is true

feeling for weather and the seasons which enables the poet to bring out some memorable phrases ('snow is real and grass Chimerical', for example), and a sense of real life which seems to me lacking from most of the other sections.

NEW BIOGRAPHY IN CANADA

George Woodcock

W. J. ECCLES. *Frontenac: the Courtier Governor.* McClelland & Stewart. $6.50.

MICHAEL BRECHER. *Nehru: A Political Biography.* Oxford. $8.95.

R. MAC GREGOR DAWSON. *William Lyon Mackenzie King,* Volume One. University of Toronto Press. $6.50.

BIOGRAPHY should be concerned with the history of a human personality, to which all other considerations — age and place and circle — are regarded as subordinate. In modern practice there is a tendency to diminish the stature of the man by increasing the scale of these elements in his background, and it is disturbing to me — as a biographer — that the three Lives by Canadian authors which I am now discussing should all be afflicted by the division of purpose that springs from trying to portray a man and his period with equal emphasis. One of the writers, Dr. Michael Brecher, is aware of the nature of the task he has attempted, for he remarks in his *Nehru: a Political Biography* that "the book is both a biographical history and a political biography." A *biographical history* seems, to me at least, a creature as unnatural as the griffin, since history (as Dr. Brecher clearly means us to understand it) is concerned with man in general, and biography with man as an individual. And yet it is the attempt to write biography that will read like history that characterises not only Dr. Brecher's *Nehru,* but also *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor* by W. J. Eccles and *William Lyon Mackenzie King,* the first volume of the massive biography of the Liberal leader which Dr. R. MacGregor Dawson left unfinished when he died in 1958.

Before discussing these books individually, it may be useful to speculate on why all their authors should adopt a hybrid form whose very division of purpose impedes their success. I suspect the reason is, primarily, one of profession. None of these writers belongs to the class of humanist men-of-letters who produced the best of the classic biographies. They all come to writing by way of other disciplines; Eccles is a historian, Brecher a political scientist, Dawson a political economist. And each is seeking to *annex* biography to his own domain rather than to become a biographer in the full sense;

each tries to use the art to present his own view of social man rather than to re-create an individual man. It is for this reason that none of them has produced one of those detailed portraits, well-fleshed with humanity, that please us when we read even such a relatively minor biographer in the classic manner as Hesketh Pearson.

All of them, in effect, limit biography by trying to incorporate alien elements, and we have to judge them in terms of comparative rather than total success. Which of them has produced the most effective portrait?

I THINK W. J. Eccles has done this in his *Frontenac*. It is a well-written book which only rarely stumbles into pedestrianism; it is also a provocative book which avoids being sensational. Professor Eccles takes the fatuous popular image of Frontenac — the stereotype saviour of New France — and examines it in the light of what one realises, with some astonishment, is the first rigorous research to have been done on this eminent Canadian hero. Those who have long suspected Parkman's view of Frontenac will be intrigued by the face that appears as Eccles wipes away the layers of legend and propaganda. In the end the real Frontenac is exposed — a seventeenth century nabob, whose military achievements lay largely in his own imagination, and whose contributions to the French empire in North America were the by-products of an unashamed desire to use his power as governor to line his pockets with beaver skins. Strangely enough, the cantankerous, arrogant, grasping, selfish man whom Eccles evokes is less exasperating than the idealised Frontenac of the past; he is at least probable and human. Professor Eccles does in fact succeed notably in one of the great biographical tasks — that of projecting the quality of an individual man; the principal defects of his book grow from the fact that he tries to combine his portrait of Frontenac with a history of New France from 1660 to 1700. This means that the unity of the biography is broken by detailed chapters on events in Canada during Frontenac's absence between 1682 and 1689, while the details of Frontenac's own life during this time and also before his first governorship are too skimpy for the biography to be even in tone or full enough in information. Nevertheless, it is a most readable book, and if Professor Eccles could forget—while acting as biographer — the wider demands of his historian's profession, he might become, as the publisher's blurb suggests, a Canadian equivalent of Lytton Strachey.

A DASH OF Stracheyian acid might have improved the books of Professors Brecher and Dawson, both of whom are too much in sympathy with their subjects to portray them with anything approaching the vividness of the Eccles Frontenac. Yet it is hard to be critical of Brecher on these grounds, since in presenting Nehru he is clearly concerned to emphasise those positive elements in the Indian leader's character that have been obscured by the petulance of politicians and journalists offended by Nehru's political neutralism. To document his study Brecher has carried out a massive task of investigation, and much of his knowledge of the political world which Nehru dominates was

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gained at first-hand from long periods of residence in India. What emerges is a curious tripartite work: a biography of Nehru, a history of the Congress movement, a study of the Indian republic since liberation. It might appropriately have been entitled *Nehru's India,* since it is even more the portrait of a country than the portrait of a man; the background grows progressively in size and vividness until Nehru himself is almost dwarfed by it. He is most clearly in focus in the first chapter — "Portrait of a Man" — in which Brecher introduces him by means of a *New Yorkerish* profile, and in the other early chapters which describe his youth. But as time and the book go on, it is the political aspect of Nehru's life that becomes dominant, and the sense of intimate contact on a human level fades long before the end. I found *Nehru* a most informative book, and I shall certainly keep it on my shelves for historical reference, but as a biography it never overleaps the divisions which its author's varying purposes create.

DR. DAWSON'S *William Lyon Mackenzie King* is more disappointing than one might have expected of a work so notably heralded. In part this may be due to the fact that it is an incomplete study, ending with its subject in mid-career. Even so, there is a lack of sharp outline in the emergent image of Mackenzie King which is due partly to a graceless style and partly to the lack of any very clear general form. It is true that these defects are easy to understand when one considers the kind of task that Dawson had to face. King was a human packrat on a Gargantuan scale, and the

selection of material from his files led the author and his research team through two million pages of miscellaneous documents. It was an achievement merely to reduce this vast paper midden to the dimensions of a readable book. But in the process Dawson seems to have been affected partly by the mechanical character of team research (always liable to stifle individual intuitions) and partly by the attitude of King's literary executors, who sought specifically a writer "in general sympathy with Mr. King" and then expressed the hope that "Mr. Mackenzie King might be allowed to tell his own story." We have in Dr. Dawson's book what the Literary Executors evidently wanted: an official biography which fails to bring into relief the characteristics that made King — beneath the familiar public exterior — a fascinating eccentric ridden by curious obsessions and torn by conflicts that projected themselves into his political career. Once again, the political career and its ramifications get constantly in the way of our picture of the real man, and although Dawson does at times indicate to us the elaborate self-deceptions which led King to see a divine purpose in social climbing, and also suggests the power of crude superstition in shaping his life, he rarely makes such points emphatically enough.

On the whole, indeed, Dr. Dawson seems so anxious to preserve the symbolic image of King as reformer of Liberalism and founding father of the Commonwealth of Nations that the real man constantly slips away from him, as the real King slipped away from many of those who knew him publicly. Yet we must be grateful to Dr. Dawson for what one might describe as a great biographical dig. He has done the excavation work which others will not care to repeat, and as a sourcebook his *William Lyon Mackenzie King* will be the acknowledged point of departure for other and more critical biographies.

A GENTLEWOMAN OF UPPER CANADA

Carl F. Klinck

SUSANNA MOODIE. *Life in the Clearings.* Edited and introduced by Robert L. McDougall. Macmillan. $5.00.

IN 1852, twenty years after her arrival in Upper Canada, Susanna Moodie published *Roughing It in the Bush,* making a book of "Canadian Sketches" which she had written for the Montreal *Literary Garland. Life in the Clearings* appeared a year later, in 1853, also in London, England. Most of the sketches it contained were composed a dozen years after those of the "bush" period. Professor Robert McDougall has now edited the first Canadian printing of the *Clear-*

ings, with his own critical foreword, Mrs. Moodie's preface, and also her Introduction to one of her novels, *Mark Hurdlestone.*

Librarians will shelve this new volume beside *Roughing It in the Bush*—in the "History" section—several stack-levels away from the natural habitat of searchers for Canadian literature. Here, of course, Mrs. Moodie will be in good company with displaced persons like Dr. "Tiger" Dunlop, Mrs. Anna Jameson and Major John Richardson. If it is now true, as the jacket of the new book declares, "that for general use as much has been preserved of this writer as is worth preserving," Mrs. Moodie will probably remain under "History", the bits and piece of her considerable production in poetry, fiction and essays being scattered elsewhere.

Life in the Clearings is described as a "companion-piece" to *Roughing It in the Bush* because it shows Mrs. Moodie's desire to add her record of the clearings, or growing towns and villages, to her earlier one about the bush, or backwoods. Is it, however, the same kind of book? Is *Roughing It in the Bush* a novel, and is *Life in the Clearings* something else?

THESE BOOKS owe their preservation to public interest in the social life of the pioneers, and Mrs. Moodie is established as typical of the gentlewoman of Upper Canada. Her historical worth has thus obscured her literary position, and her individuality has not been sufficiently recognized, although her curiosity, prejudices, circumstances, and especially her characterization of herself among her neighbours make her readily distinguishable even from her sister, Mrs. Traill. Her book, *Roughing It in the Bush,* has also been regarded as representative of colonial history rather than of colonial literature. Yet it is both unique and illustrative of the practices in writing which prevailed in the Canadas during the first half of the nineteenth century. Mrs. Moodie wrote within the current fashions, as she knew them in the colonies, and, in doing so, found her own way, shaping a form of fiction which incorporated and transcended the raw facts and ideas drawn from life around her.

Acquaintance with colonial writings makes one suspect that it was not illiteracy or even the distractions of menial work which kept the pioneers from memorable literary composition; many were overcome by the technical problems posed by facts, too many new facts about a new land, and by opinions—too many platitudes to be rooted in a new society, and too many assurances of good behaviour to be given to the people back home. Fiction, in the sense of something to be made by the author, suffered because so much fact was ready-made.

Not all writers succumbed. The early ones had come prepared in a way which promised success—in a steady concentration upon lively details of actions, minds and speech of individual men and women. Before Mrs. Moodie arrived, journalists in Halifax, Montreal and York were practising the still popular art of Addison and Steele's essays with the timely variations of *Blackwood's,* Washington Irving, and American humourists. The *Scribbler* and other Canadian literary journals of the 1820s and 1830s, "Tiger" Dunlop, John Galt, Joseph Howe, and Thomas Chandler Haliburton carried on this tradition. Characterization and anecdote provided reading matter more appetizing than that later put on genteel Vic-

torian tables; and the related "tale" in the form of the short story, beginning in annuals and gift-books for one's maiden aunts, was ready to serve any kind of taste. While letters, diaries, travelogues, and handbooks of advice for emigrants were often hopelessly bound to fact and opinion, uninhibited observers also made an approach to fiction through gossip, story-telling and self-dramatization.

Early Canadian romances, like Mrs. Hart's *St. Ursula's Convent* or Richardson's *Wacousta,* probably contributed little to colonial explorations in realism, but John Galt's *Lawrie Todd* (1830) and *Bogle Corbet* (1831) had underlined all the recurring compositional problems which Mrs. Moodie would face when she came in 1832, carrying a load of "do-good" papers ranging from the verses of *Enthusiasm* to moral tales like *Little Downy;* or, *The History of a Field-Mouse.*

The merging of these streams in a fictional form, which one may call a novel, could have been predicted. It did not come in the pages of the *Literary Garland,* in Mrs. Moodie's conventional novels, or in the separate "Canadian Sketches" which first appeared in the 1840s. But it did come when these were brought together in *Roughing It in the Bush,* a culmination of colonial fiction, the development of which is distinctive and traceable.

So one reaches *Life in the Clearings,* here considered as belonging to literary, rather than to social, history. The period is that of the 1850s. Although chronologically later in Mrs. Moodie's life, and in some ways more mature or "civilized," the *Clearings* looks like a trial effort, not like a sequel. It is made of similar stuff, including remainders from the earlier volume. But it is not self-contained; it proceeds without imaginative cohesion, the lack of which is felt in spite of a mechanical scheme of travel through towns from Belleville to Niagara and in spite of the predictable flow of Mrs. Moodie's admirable convictions. She has put on a one-man show of the various materials and tendencies out of which her masterpiece grew. But the prize exhibit hangs in another gallery.

The personal and sociological values of *Life in the Clearings* will not be reviewed here; they can be found on page after page of the text with genuinely entertaining illustrations drawn from experience and gossip. Professor McDougall's introductory essay is an excellent guide to this book and to Mrs. Moodie herself. He has brought us to the point, we think, where a study of this author's literary theory and practice, and a critical biography are not only possible, but are urgently required.

books in review

COYOTE AND STAG

SHEILA WATSON. *The Double Hook.* McClelland & Stewart. Paper $1.75. Cloth $3.95.

EDWARD MCCOURT. *Walk through the Valley.* McClelland & Stewart. $3.50.

THESE two novels have not only the same publisher, but also very similar settings; both are concerned with isolated groups of people in the foothills of Western Canada. Beyond this, however, they are about as different as two novels can be, different in conception, in execution, and in value. *The Double Hook* is unusual in conception, consistent and imaginative in execution, and compelling to read. *Walk through the Valley,* on the other hand, violates its conception by distorting both plot and characters in order to provide a "dramatic" conclusion, and although entertaining, does not have much impact, largely because its author shows himself unwilling to embrace his Muse. To drop the metaphor but follow up the point, I would say that two common ways for an author to engage his imagination are either to project himself into one of his characters or to immerse the whole situation in himself. The latter is what Faulkner did in *As I Lay Dying,* where ostensibly each few pages is given from the point of view of a new character but actually most of the characters speak Faulkner's strained and Romantic prose. Although Mrs. Watson does not label her chapters with character names, she uses the same technique as Faulkner, and her story is in many ways similar to his: in both a woman dies and is heard from after her death; in both a girl has become pregnant after aiding her own seduction; in both a character who has never exerted himself comes to grips with life; and both end on a note of mild affirmation. Although there are other parallels, I do not wish to imply that Mrs. Watson has simply transposed Faulkner into Canadian terms. For one thing her novel is not obviously Canadian in locale; for another her novel stands by itself — it is genuine.

Professor McCourt had presumably taken the other means of engaging his imagination. He uses his central character as the focus for his point of view (third person interspersed with second). His style is usually clear and straightforward. Since the protagonist is a fourteen-year-old boy, simplicity of language is appropriate and would be effective if maintained. Unfortunately it is not. I quote one of many violations. The boy Michael walks up to his teacher "working over a chart which was probably a time-table. Nine to nine-thirty, arithmetic; nine-thirty to ten, geography — that sort of thing. The pattern of servitude. Not that Michael minded studying such an awful lot, especially history and geography and literature and stuff like that." If authorial intrusion were more frequent (or controlling, as it is with Fielding), or if Professor McCourt were able to handle it well, it would not be a problem. As it is, we have to swallow stuff like this:

> Sin and high romance — were the two the same? Michael was troubled in spirit, for the instincts derived from a Calvinist heri-

> tage were at odds with an imagination fostered by a literature which, in a devious way, set the magic of illicit love far above the prosaic reality of conventional marriage.

In contrast, *The Double Hook* is rendered, as we say, and dramatic. Where Professor McCourt insults us and his Muse by telling all, Mrs. Watson mystifies and occasionally irritates us (in good Faulknerian style) by *not* telling us. She does not follow Faulkner into the realm of cloudy rhetoric, however. In fact, her language is in many respects simpler than Professor McCourt's. Here is her second paragraph: "James was at the top of the stairs. His hand half-raised. His voice in the rafters." This simplicity is obviously a conscious attainment, as are the complex structure and the rendered scenes. As a result the reader often has the feeling that the author's will has pinned her Muse to the floor — not a desirable victory. The impression I mean to convey by picking up this previously abandoned metaphor is that Mrs. Watson's desire to be a novelist would appear to be greater than the power of her imagination to sustain her aspirations.

But as one who approves of symbolism, I must applaud Mrs. Watson's effective use of it. The passage on page 55 from which her title is drawn contains images that involve seven of the characters intimately and that provide an emotional-philosophic basis for the plot. The reader feels more for these seven characters in a 115-page novella than he does for any of professor McCourt's stereotypes during 222 pages. Yet we do not finally feel quite enough for them. Distinct and original and driven though they are, the characters in *The Double*

THE CRUISING AUK

by GEORGE JOHNSTON

George Johnston's poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker, The Spectator, Atlantic Monthly, Tamarack Review* and many other magazines. Now presented for the first time in book form, it will be read with pleasure by all who agree that if philosophy is the best poetry humour is the best philosophy. *'The verse is pithy, immediate, sometimes wry, sometimes delightfully irreverent.'* The Ottawa Journal.

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Hook yet somehow fail to give themselves up to the reader. Since Mrs. Watson has taken a heavyweight's stance, I will again use Faulkner for comparison: for all his wild swinging and mannered style he manages to connect. Her mannerisms, on the other hand, do not undergo what Faulkner would call an apotheosis. Her habitual use of homey similes and details begins to bore instead of illuminating.

Both authors use animals as important symbols, Mrs. Watson a coyote which never appears, Professor McCourt a stag which does. Whereas the stag is tabbed from the first as an ideal, a sign of power and freedom, the coyote remains mysterious, at first taken as evil and a sign of death, later seen as symbolic of that darkness which must be faced in man's own mind. The reader will have to decide for himself whether he approves of the short bits of poetry Mrs. Watson occasionally includes in connection with the coyote. But I cannot help trying to influence his opinion of Professor McCourt's treatment of the stag. Towards the end the boy sees it "immense and lonely", looking "at him across the gulf of earth and time" and causing the boy's thoughts to be "annihilated by the surge of the strongest emotion he had ever felt" (anyone read "The Bear" recently?).

Although *The Double Hook* has what might be called a happier ending than *Walk through the Valley,* I do not feel that the result is forced or the purpose blurred. If anything, Mrs. Watson's aim is, as previously implied, too clear. Her novel is touted by the publishers as "sharply experimental"; yet ironically the section which is most successful is section Four, twenty pages of straight, almost conventional narrative which takes one of the central characters to town away from the others. Perhaps if Mrs. Watson could permit herself to be more natural, her imagination would come through more fully. In any case, just as one is depressed to learn that this is Professor McCourt's fifth novel, so one is hopeful discovering that *The Double Hook* is a first novel.

ELLIOTT GOSE

AN AFTER-GLANCE AT MACLENNAN

HUGH MACLENNAN. *The Watch that Ends the Night.* Macmillan. $3.95.

IN *The Watch that Ends the Night* Hugh MacLennan again demonstrates that his fictional house is divided against itself. On one level he has thoroughly mastered the art of representation, but on another he seems to have only an indifferent sense of where his strength as artist is centered. Much the finest writing in the novel is in the representation of Jerome Martell's childhood experiences culminating in the murder of his mother and in his escape from the murderer, flight to civilization and subsequent adoption by the Martells. This sequence belongs with the equally superb Nova Scotia brawls that figure in *Each Man's Son,* the conscription incidents in *Two Solitudes* and the brilliantly sustained explosion episode in *Barometer Rising.* All are characterized by a traumatic intensity of perception which lifts the representation up to a level with the very best that has been done in our time. MacLennan's capacity for representing persons mesmerized by the presence of long

repressed and then joltingly released fear and violence is really magnificent.

More, violence is at the heart of *The Watch that Ends the Night*. Martell has been subjected to the actuality during his mother's murder and George Stewart has been subjected throughout childhood to his father's evidently schizophrenic fantasies of destruction. And Martell's participation in the first war, his enlistment in the Spanish war and his subsequent imprisonment in Germany, Russia and China, make him a man who has experienced much of the violence that the modern world has had to offer. Yet crucial as the question of violence is in the novel it is strangely dissociated because Martell's experiences are so drastically subordinated to Stewart's narration. And Stewart's narration is badly marred by his mania for handing out crashing complacencies on almost every imaginable major consideration in life: marriage, religion, modern love, art, war, sex, neurosis, politics, philosophy, peace, the seasons. Although Stewart's garrulousness may be believable in a radio broadcaster who has fallen in love with the sound of his own voice it is in curious contrast to his other mania for emphasizing his many insufficiencies: as Catherine Carey's youthful sweetheart, as an intellectual, as a news commentator, as odd man out in a love triangle. The fact would seem to be that MacLennan's artistic powers assert themselves with exceptional effectiveness when he is representing persons driven to experiential extremes and falter markedly when he is representing his intrinsically less interesting but nonetheless central types of the ruminative mind.

It may be that his ruminative types stem from a stubborn determination on MacLennan's part to be not only an artist but also a spokesman for his time and place. Yet surely he must be aware that what the artist has to tell us is likely to be valuable by virtue of his capacity to represent experience rather than by virtue of any parallel capacity to comment upon it. When what he has to represent as artist clouds into what George Stewart has to say as commentator there is an uncomfortable feeling, for this reader at least, that someone has forgotten to turn off the radio. But when what George Stewart has to say fades out and Jerome Martell's childhood experiences move into presence under steady pressure of absolutely sure-handed representation, one realizes with something of a shock that this disastrously divided novel nonetheless contains some of the finest writing of our time.

WARREN TALLMAN

LOVE, FAITH AND TRUTH

MARY ELIZABETH BAYER. *Faces of Love*. Ryerson Press. $1.00.

DOUGLAS LOCHHEAD. *The Heart is Fire*. Ryerson Press. $1.00.

MICHAEL COLLIE. *Poems*. Ryerson Press. $1.00.

MARY ELIZABETH BAYER'S *Faces of Love* are cool, impersonal poems about love between people; the one unfortunate exception is patriotic. They never define the particular moment or the single event, and so appear like exercises or thematic inventions. Occasionally, however, she allows herself a certain emotional involvement, and the result (in "O Do Walk Softly" and "Ad Astra") is a breathless, tender quality of language. Her hand is always facile, and at times the sureness and grace of the language create a kind

*"Alive and wonderful . . ."**

George Woodcock's

INCAS and OTHER MEN

". . . After his distinguished book on Mexico—*To The City of the Dead*—Mr. Woodcock has moved down to Peru. He has the art of putting his travels before us, hour by hour."* V. S. PRITCHETT in the *Statesman and Nation.*

"The writer of the intimate travel book has assumed the role of the nineteenth-century explorer. Courage and intrepidity are today required to take the ordinary routes through a foreign country, to see no one in particular on behalf of no organization whatsoever . . .

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of cold passion. Here is an example from "Feast of Kings":

> So midnight maid I feast and feasting fast
> Reserve the right to die
> Once every time I love, each love a life
> I live in that last moment of my right
> reserve . . .

Douglas Lochhead's poetry in *The Heart is Fire* is uncommon and engaging. Although his themes are varied, he views them all with an open, unselfconsciously personal eye, and the book has an internal coherence and growth entirely lacking in Miss Bayer's *Faces of Love,* despite her vaguely chronological arrangement and her unity of theme.

The dedication (to his parents) sets the tone, which is earnestly traditional. He is one with his forebears and with the Atlantic Canadian landscape, wherein he finds a satisfying vision of completeness. The simplicity of his form and language is persuasive.

The note of faith is in all the poems. *The Heart is Fire* is in fact an affirmation. Through images of flame the poet defines the continuing spirit: the burning heart that will outlive "the claws and cage", the "white and hollow bone", and the dying hawk:

> Now in the golden glory of his armour
> the raging beak is voiceless, there,
> there in the ivory silence. Look,
> the feathers are aflame,
> death sings and claws lock tight
> as he fans the fatal fire.

Mr. Lochhead's book is engaging to the reader accustomed to poems of conventional chaos and fear. It presents a world of certainty, and such a world is rare.

Poems, by Michael Collie, provides the complete contrast. There is no traditional bond and there is no certainty here. Of the three books it is the most difficult and

the most rewarding. Here we find highly personal images—the owl, the falcon, the booming ice—recurring as if by an internal necessity, to articulate his search for meaning that "accords completely with the truth", a search which turns delicately between the inner imaginative world—which he seems to fear as painting false enamels on "reality", and the purely external world "where falcons draw", which seems at times to have its own meaning and at times to be devoid of meaning.

His search for objective truth is obsessive. It is described as evading him, obscured by his own lack of subtlety and again by an over-subtle reluctance to apprehend it, by the adherence of personal meanings and again by an alluring belief in a possibly non-existent external meaning. At the same time there is his constant struggle with language, his repeated admission that he cannot communicate pure experience by his "painful art", and a curious blindness to the creative (as opposed to recreative) or evocative qualities of language. He strives continually towards the boundaries of existence which he feels cannot be expressed by language —"What words can say I do not wish to hear"—yet he allows ("Notes for a Poem on Meaning") that his search has meaning in itself, that "words are toughened by uncertainty".

Mr. Collie's present concern is largely with natural objects like rocks and driftwood, and with natural sounds like the cry of the owl, and extends gradually to touch—with an even finer and more uncertain hand—his experience of other people. It is in this direction—although there is so much reticence, remorse and self-cancellation that he is seldom able to make a statement—that one senses his real concern is turning. His poem "Assertion", ecstatic though it is and couched in a dreamlike tower imagery, expresses an explicit hope that transcendent truth can be grasped through a human relationship.

HEATHER SPEARS GOLDENBERG

BITTERSWEET MASK

GEORGE JOHNSTON. *The Crusing Auk*. Oxford. $2.50.

IN A TIME when comic verse, like the newspaper "funnies", usually proves as comic as a clout in the kidney, it is pleasant to come upon a poet like George Johnston. Mr. Johnston's humour is, certainly, grained with melancholy, but the substance remains solid fun. It is not inlaid with the shards of fractured wit that often characterise Canadian light verse (and Mr. Johnston is a Canadian). Much of our humorous verse in fact reads as though written as an alternative to kicking the dog, drawing inspiration less from Calliope than from Dyspepsia, but Mr. Johnston amiably celebrates canine ritual in "Noctambule":

> Mr. Murple's got a dog that's long
> And underslung and sort of pointed wrong;
> When daylight fades and evening lights
> come out
> He takes him round the neighbour lawns
> about
> The which he does in drops and by degrees
> Leaving his hoarded fluid only where
> Three-legged ceremonious hairy care
> Has been before . . .

This sensitivity to the call of nature is not restricted, in Mr. Johnston's verse, to dogdom. It is human nature, in its setting of the city rather than the country, that he finds evocative. Rain pools in city

streets, cats, Mrs. McGonigle's boarders, even fish are citified, humanised:

> May he be a cannier chap
> Altered into me,
> Eye the squirming hook, and trap,
> Choose the squirming sea.

Mr. Johnston is well aware that he is jesting in the shadow of the nuclear come-uppance, but remains alert to the human comedy that continues to play itself out. That the sober note at times dominates the major of amusement attests to the profounder element in the poet's work. But he has the disposition to be objective about everything, including his own temptation into gravity.

The result is a kind of poetry that the traditional masks of comedy and tragedy no longer suit. A third mask, for the bitter-sweet, is required to represent coexistence of the smile on the lips and sadness in the eye. Despite the intimations of extinction, however, good temper is not grounded. The auk is cruising:

> The world is a boat and I'm in it
> Going like hell with the breeze . . .

It is to be hoped that Mr. Johnston will be encouraged, by the public response to this first book of his collected verse, to provide more, though he risk general popularity and a fate worse than Betjeman.

ERIC NICOL

A COUNTRY'S PAINTER

A. Y. JACKSON. *A Painter's Country*. Clarke, Irwin. $5.00.

AT THE AGE of 76, A. Y. Jackson, Canada's "best-known, best-loved and most-travelled painter", to use a frequently heard phrase, has written his informal and engaging autobiography under the title *A Painter's Country*. The book takes him from his early days as a child in Montreal, through the exciting 'twenties when he shared with the other members of the Group of Seven not only the revolutionary creative excitement, but also the public abuse thrown at their early exhibitions, right up to the present which acknowledges the Group's work as the only indigenous movement in the story of Canadian art, and himself as "a great Canadian painter, a great Canadian, and a legendary figure in the Canadian scene" (from the foreword by the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey). But most of all it is a record of his travels, which are always sketching trips, to the islands of Georgian Bay, to the remote villages of Quebec, to cattle country in B.C., to the open prairie country of Saskatchewan, to the Alberta Rockies, and on several occasions to the Arctic itself. And as the scene shifts continuously, so do the characters, dozens of whom, many of them well-known Canadian personalities, are introduced briefly and then seen no more (a fact which must at times make some readers outside the circle of Canadian art feel that they have stumbled into a conversation about persons known to all present but themselves).

A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1950

COMPILED BY R. E. WATTERS

This book attempts to provide as complete a record as possible of the separately published works that constitute the literature of English-speaking Canada. Each entry is coded to show the library or libraries in which the works can be found. Part I of the *Check List* records all known titles in poetry, fiction and drama that were produced by English-speaking Canadians up to 1950. Part II includes selected works of biography, literary criticism, scholarship, local history, etc. $15.00

Dickens on Education

BY JOHN MANNING

Among the multitude of books on Charles Dickens there are surprisingly few that have discussed his treatment of schools and education at any length. Professor Manning's account of Dickens' interest in education covers his life and times, and his fiction, speeches, articles and letters, as well as giving the background against which Dickens wrote, by reference to school inspectors' reports, private diaries, and biographical material. $5.50

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BY WILLIAM ROBBINS

Professor Robbins traces the development of Arnold's religious and philosophical thought, and shows how his mission of reconciliation between the forces of scientific investigation and those of ecclesiastical reaction met with hostility from both sides. Nonetheless he made an invaluable contribution to the debates of the sixties and seventies, and laid the foundations of a humanistic, ethical idealism which also has relevance to the difficulties of our own time. This study will be valued by the serious student of literature, philosophy, or religion, indeed, by all those interested in the interplay of ideas between science, religion, and humanism. $3.75

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Those who have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Jackson may have the illusion, as they read, of hearing his voice, for the book is written in precisely the easy, relaxed, uncomplicated narrative manner of his speech. There is too the same habit of hooking each episode of the story on some humorous or homely little incident, which "fixes" it—like a pastel drawing from smearing in the portfolio of memory. Thus it is entertaining to learn that Doctor F. Banting, with whom Jackson shared a number of sketching trips, liked to work incognito in old clothes, that Lawren Harris had a passion for Roman Meal, that A. H. Robinson was a brilliant mimic and so on. Stylistically these anecdotes have a way of sometimes obtruding from the texture of the writing, like fascinating warts on an otherwise smooth skin. But most of all in the book, it is interesting to hear at first hand of the wonderfully adventurous, youthful, spirited days when the Group of Seven, of which Jackson of course was one of the key figures, were building their revolution which was to have such an effect on the subsequent course of art in Canada.

The book has a curious external quality a little disappointing in an autobiography—as though it had been developed from a painter's log rather than a soul-searching diary. There is no evidence of a man's inner search for himself, or of an artist's struggle to find his creative self; and no intellectual discussion of art, his own or anyone else's. This too will be a limitation for some readers; however, Jackson is not and does certainly not pretend to be that kind of person, or painter, and naturally he does not write that kind of book. Given that, by natural talents and urges, he is to be a painter, he turns to landscape, as naturally and unquestioningly as a fish swims in water or a beaver chews on wood.

His painting philosophy, if one could call it that, rests on the assumption that nature, as seen in the Canadian landscape, is a manifestation of the highest grandeur, a source of good in itself, and that the painter's task is to interpret this good in his work. Hence subject matter is of prime importance; it is the spirit which *belongs to* the subject that is to be captured and presented. Hence too, the problem to a considerable extent for Mr. Jackson is one of having good material to interpret and this has involved him in a good deal of moving about. Not that he contends "that it is necessary or even advisable for the artist to cover the whole of a country looking for subject matter" but by disposition he enjoys "moving about and seeing strange places"—like a blind person physically exploring with his fingers every little bump and wrinkle in order to know fully the face of his friend.

"To make us appreciate the beauty of our own country"—the days when such a simple drive could animate a vital art are gone. "Is all this vast and lovely country to be turned over to the Kodachrome operators? Will there be no place in it for artists like Tom Thomson, Maurice Cullen, Emily Carr or David Milne with their intimate interpretation of the part of the country they lived in?" He cannot resist asking the wistful question but he knows the answer; the changes which have taken, and are taking place in the world of art are inevitable. But it is clear that at heart A.Y. Jackson will always remain A Country's Painter.

DORIS SHADBOLT

PORTRAIT OF AN ACTOR

LESLIE RUTH HOWARD. *A Quite Remarkable Father.* Longmans, Green. $4.75.

THIS IS a biography of Leslie Howard by his daughter, who is Canadian by marriage. As a portrait of one of the most impeccable actors of this century, it suffers from two defects (if you leave out the rather limp title, which makes a third).

Firstly, and naturally enough, the author stands far too close to her subject for a really impartial view. The general tone of the book is adulatory, although it tries hard not to be—yet this is not surprising, because Leslie Howard, in addition to his acting competence, seems to have been a devoted family man completely removed from the frenzied social and private world of the actor, often seriously unhappy away from his wife and children. Secondly, and more damaging, the arrangement of the book is almost entirely chronological, with neither selection nor emphasis. Minute details of home life, acting performances, and holidays are piled on one another; everybody Leslie Howard met is named and carefully identified. This treatment is flat and monotonous; most of the book reads like this passage: "The weekend was otherwise highly successful. Leslie went swimming and played tennis. Geoffrey Kerr and his new wife, June Walker, were staying with the Mannerses, and Leslie drove back to New York with them and was taken on to a party at Gloria Swanson's apartment where he saw a movie, *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter,* with Adolph Menjou and Florence Vidor. He thought it very good indeed."

The best chapters are those departing from chronology and attempting an assessment of Howard's character. He was an actor of perfect technique, whose personality reflected a very English reserve and modesty. He is well worth a book, and perhaps a better one than this.

MICHAEL R. BOOTH

FOR THE EYES OF CHILDREN

DONALDA DICKIE. *My First History of Canada.* J. M. Dent & Sons. $3.75.

RAGNHILDUR GUTTORMSSON. *Ian of Red River.* Ryerson Press. $3.25.

ROBERT D. FERGUSON. *Man from St. Malo.* Macmillan. $2.00.

MARGARET MASON SHAW. *Canadian Portraits. Geologists and Prospectors.* Clarke, Irwin. $2.50.

THESE four books are linked together by common themes and by like purposes: they all deal with the ingredients that go into the making of Canadian history and they all are designed to instruct and to entertain the young Canadian reader. How far they are successful in doing what their authors intended is hard for me to judge, for my childhood lies in the mist of the past, and my youthful reactions to books such as these have long since been changed — perhaps hardened or even warped—by the acquisition of age and some knowledge, if not of wisdom. Yet sympathy is still mine, and I shall try to judge these books as they should be judged—as works that should bring to the very young, the inexperienced reader a feeling of wonderment, of excitement, even of awe and mystery, but also as works that should be well written, and, in the realm of the factual, free from dis-

tortion, falsehoods, or unreasonable bias.

The reputation of Dr. Donalda Dickie as educator and as author of texts and books for children is, of course, well and soundly established. In *My First History of Canada* she attempts to do what is perhaps impossible to do well—to tell the story of Canada from the arrival of the Indians, who "came from Asia", down to the present day and to tell it for children not much beyond the level of grade two, or at most grades three or four. The language, the style, and the approach are all tuned to an elementary level of education, and the facts, which are numerous, are interlarded with anecdotal material designed to catch the attention of the very young. Many of the sections are interesting and told with considerable charm, but the brevity of the work (190 pages) forces the author into an over-simplification of history. Distortion is the inevitable result. For example:

> Wildhorse in the Kootenay was one of the wildest of the gold camps. There were shootings and murders every few days till, one morning, Judge O'Reilly rode in and called the miners together.
>
> "Boys," he said, "I am here to keep law and order. Those who don't want law and order can get out. For boys, if there is shooting in Kootenay, there will be hanging in Kootenay." After that, if anyone wanted to shoot anyone else they stepped over the boundary line into the United States.

Or, on the origins of the Second World War:

> Hitler was a strange little man who had been a sign painter. He dreamed of making Germany master of the world and wrote a book about it. The Germans read the book and crowded to hear and follow him. He gave the army all the latest weapons, big guns and planes. Instead of marching, his soldiers travelled in cars and motor cycles. They seized Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and Holland.

History is not quite as simple as these passages indicate, and I am not sure that even the very young should be given such diluted draughts to swallow. They might be better off to wait until they can drink a more powerful brew. Yet the book's virtues outweigh its faults, and youth may well look after itself. As an eight year oldster said to me, "The book is filled with facts which I can't remember, but it's certainly educational."

Man from St. Malo and *Ian of Red River* are both devoted to small but not unimportant slices of Canadian history. The first—one of Macmillan's fine historical series, *Great Stories of Canada*—is a biography of Jacques Cartier the sixteenth century explorer who opened up the vast St. Lawrence River for France. Mr. Ferguson readily acknowledges his debt to Biggar's edition of *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier,* and *A Collection of Documents relating to Jacques Cartier and Sieur de Roberval,* but he has also shown a great deal of ingenuity in adapting his material and in bringing a controlled amount of excitement and drama to his story. The account of the second voyage, including the tragic events of the first winter at Stadacona, composes the core of the book, and the young preadolescent reader is brought close to the mixed feelings of courage and despair shown by Cartier and his companions when the scourge of scurvy lashed them, bringing to cold graves a half of the courageous little band. Some portions of the work, especially those devoted to dialogue, are admittedly fictional, but the work is basically historical, and a well told tale it is.

The work of Mrs. Guttormsson is best described as an historical novel for the young. Its materials are drawn from the

records of the Selkirk Settlers, who came as colonists at the beginning of the nineteenth century to farm the prairie lands at the junction of the Red River and the Assiniboine in Manitoba. The characters who move vaguely in the background are historical; the central characters, the young boy Ian McLeod and his friend Don, who come with the early settlers are, as far as I know, purely fictional. It is a story of high adventure—of encounters with Indians and half-breeds, of buffalo hunts, of attacks and counter attacks—all reaching a peak in the Seven Oaks massacre when many of the settlers were slain by the Nor' Westers, and when Ian believes he has killed one of the attackers. At times the outlines of the story are blurred and at times the boys' dialogue is far from convincing, but generally the action moves rapidly and a feeling of tension, even of excitement, is conveyed to the reader. It is not a great book, but, through the imaginative treatment of the author, it breathes life into a brief moment in the history of Canada's West, and it deserves, I believe, to be called a good book. It is, by the way, Mrs. Guttormsson's first book; I hope she writes more.

Canadian Portraits, by Margaret Mason Shaw, belongs to a series being published under this general title by Clarke, Irwin. This volume is devoted to biographical sketches of two Canadian geologists—Joseph Burr Tyrrell and Charles Camsell — and two prospectors — Julian Gifford Cross and Gilbert Adelore LaBine. The portraits are designed to stir the imagination of the teen-age reader, to make him realize that Canada's greatness springs from the greatness of certain men who have, through their intelligence, their

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courage, and their faith in their country, contributed to the nation's development. The facts are given—each man is duly born, educated through perseverance and sacrifice, has youthful adventures, romantically meets and marries an understanding girl, slowly and courageously climbs the ladder of success, achieves honour and fame, and grows old gracefully. To be blunt, as biographies, or even as biographical sketches, I find them failures. The author scratches surfaces, but never uncovers the rich veins of ore that must lie beneath. Each man, in his own way, accomplished much and dared much. Tyrrell, in his geological surveys, travelled through vast areas never before seen by a white man; Camsell also ranged far to the north in his explorations, and was caught up in the fury of the rush for gold in the Yukon; Cross opened up the great deposits of iron ore under the waters of Steep Rock Lake; and LaBine—among many other discoveries—uncovered the great uranium deposits in the Great Bear Lake area. What were the inner motives that made these men? What were they—or are they—as men beneath their tough exteriors? Rarely does the author show the type of penetration that might have given the reader at least some partial answers. True, she weaves a fair strand of narrative, but her style is basically pedestrian, lacking vitality, and incisiveness. As factual statements of rich achievements these portraits may bring some form to adolescent dreams and hopes still formless. But when I think of what these portraits might have been I grieve at what is not now there.

Typographically the books by Dr. Dickie and Mr. Ferguson are of good quality, with some pleasant, even some excellent illustrations. Of the line drawings of the four men in *Canadian Portraits* I can say only this: unlike the subjects they are intended to portray, they are flat and undistinguished. Good camera portraits would have been infinitely better. But perhaps economy—or rather false economy—raised its little head and frightened the publishers. I wonder.

S. E. READ

AN OMISSION CORRECTED

R. E. WATTERS. *A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials,* 1628-1950. University of Toronto Press. $15.00.

PROFESSOR Desmond Pacey remarked in 1952 that "It is a grim commentary on our cultural apathy that there is as yet no satisfactory and comprehensive bibliography of Canadian Literature." Dr. R. E. Watters after some seven years of labour has now supplied us with such a bibliography. His *Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials* 1628-1950 is an attempt to provide as complete a list as possible of English-Canadian literary works.

It is probably not possible to reach agreement on what constitutes a "satisfactory" bibliography. Where could one find ten librarians, university teachers and students who would agree on method of organization? Dr. Watters has classified the first part of his bibliography under the headings Poetry, Poetry and Prose, Fiction, and Drama, and the second part under Bibliography, Biography, Education, Essays and Addresses, Local History and Description, Religion and Morality, Social History, Scholarship, Travel and

Description, and Miscellaneous. Most scholars and readers (to whose needs Dr. Watters gave preference over those of librarians and book collectors) will perhaps be content, although some will regret the lack of a classification under the heading "Humour" for the books of Leacock, Hiebert, Nicol and others. Some librarians, no doubt, would prefer that the organization were alphabetical under author with a subject index. Most people, however, will just be grateful that such a list has been compiled.

There is no disputing that Dr. Watters has provided a "comprehensive" bibliography of Canadian Literature. Even here, however, it is impossible to satisfy everyone. Many reviewers, armed with the critic's magnifying glass and ignoring the obvious impossibility of perfect completeness in a national literary bibliography will no doubt find many titles that have been overlooked. On the other hand, one reviewer tells us that he has already so succumbed to laughter because the list is not *selective* that his abdominal muscles ached for a week. Had he exercised his mind to the same extent as his muscles he would have realized that in the pioneer listing of a country's literature (especially by a single editor and a handful of assistants) selectivity is impossible, were it indeed desirable.

The purpose of the *Check List* is "to stimulate interest in our literary culture, to reveal individual figures and areas of investigation rich in published material, and to facilitate the finding of the books concerned." The embarrassingly slight list of books under "Scholarship" attests to the need of such a work as an indispensible tool for future research in Canada's literature. George Woodcock has pointed out that "The coming of American literature to independent maturity in fact coincides historically with the rise of American criticism, and the juxtaposition is not accidental." Perhaps now that we have a basis for research we can hope for a similar parallel development. One can be certain, in any event, that Dr. Watters' *Check List* will be referred to for many years more than any other single Canadian book.

INGLIS BELL

HUMANISM AT BAY?

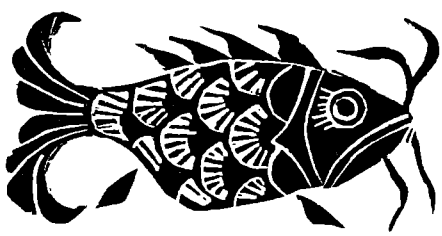
PAUL WEST. *The Fossils of Piety: Literary Humanism in Decline. Vanguard Press.* $2.75.

IN SPITE OF the extravagant promise of his subtitle, Paul West disclaims any intention of writing an exhaustive treatise. In view of the fact that the essay runs to little more than seventy pages, perhaps the disclaimer is not entirely necessary. The book is "an argument with instances", the author explains. "Its theme is the apparent inadequacy of attempts to write about man as sufficient to himself,

and the various evasions, pretenses and vacillations into which the humanist writer is compelled. Lacking an agreed world picture, such writers have tended to turn to the spurious neatness of systems, to the prison-growths of aestheticism, to attitudes that console by impoverishing their sense of life."

Clearly Mr. West does not lack confidence. He knows, by empathy, exactly what it feels like to be tortured by the "agonies" and "despairs" of humanism, and his manner is brisk and clinical when it comes to suggesting a remedy. The sick, sick humanist need only abandon his "evasions, pretenses and vacillations" and embrace revealed religion to be made whole again. And Mr. West very decently does not insist on any particular religion.

The essay is divided into four sections, the first of which deals with André Malraux and what Mr. West would call the "prison-growths of aestheticism". A comparison of Malraux's views on art with those of Walter Pater is concisely drawn, and then the support of Wyndham Lewis, of all people, is invoked, with disastrous effects on the structure of the argument. Anyone well acquainted with Lewis's writings will be surprised by Mr. West's summing-up: "Taste's partisan, he indulged his personal whims very little." The surprise becomes stupefaction when Mr. West asks: "Does he [Lewis] not belong with Malraux, Eliot and Aldous Huxley?"



T. S. Eliot is rebuked for removing himself "quite out of his own context of 'race, place and time' into the rose garden of the Church." Irving Babbitt is called up, only to be dismissed, and then it is Matthew Arnold's turn. "Arnold, on the other hand, perhaps because he was too uncertain or too courageous to abandon himself to retreat or the world to its gains, remains essentially without serenity, and, in some ways, the most appealing figure of the three."

The next section, entitled "The Pretense of Action", sandwiches three pages on Sartre between ten on Camus and six on Cesare Pavese, and provides little nourishment. Chapter three brackets Hemingway and Jünger under the heading "A Sensitive Default", and the final chapter reveals Santayana rather uncosily bedded beside Simone Weil, although so much space is given to Lionel Trilling that it almost becomes a ménage à trois.

If literary humanism can be identified as a movement, and is really in decline, then something more than this slight dissertation is necessary if the author is to be acquitted of charges of superficiality, and of putting shaky arguments into the mouths of others in order to demolish them.

There is no doubting Mr. West's sincerity. He apparently feels strongly the urge to save literary humanists from the all-consuming fires. I suggest he begin by refuting the arguments of Kathleen Nott, whose "The Emperor's Clothes" covers most of Mr. West's chosen ground a great deal more thoroughly than he has managed to do—in a book, a real book.

TONY EMERY

opinions and notes

LANDSCAPE THROUGH A PEEPHOLE

AN AMERICAN GLANCE AT SOME CANADIAN MAGAZINES

Dwight Macdonald

We sent a group of recent Canadian magazines to a well-known American journalist for review. His comments were embodied in the Letter we reproduce below.

I'VE READ the magazines you sent me, and I'll take your word for it they are representative.[1] I must take your word, because I am totally ignorant of Canadian art and letters. Peering through the tiny peep-hole these magazines afford me, I make out personages apparently familiar to Canadians but novel to me; Irving Layton, recently canonized by the *Times Literary Supplement* as the "father figure of modern Canadian poetry; the late Sidney Earle Smith, an academic figure who sounds impressive; a group of painters called The Seven who seem to have revolutionised Canadian art some time ago. It may be that my blankness is a reflection on myself, in which case there's no more to be said. But let us assume, so I may at least continue, that to some extent it isn't. In that case it must be (to some extent) a reflection on Canadian art and letters.

Several years ago I took a three-day automobile trip through Eastern Canada, my only visit to date. Except for Montreal, which was alive like a French provincial city, which indeed it is, the trip was dispiriting. It seemed like a mingy version of the United States, with all the vulgarity and monotony of twentieth century landscape (and townscape) and without the one attraction our own land-townscapes have—the visible effects, sometimes stimulating, sometimes wackily grand, sometimes even rather pleasant, of a great deal of money.

Reading your magazines gave me somewhat the same impression, of a starved, pinched version of our own culture. They weren't exactly bad, but they weren't exactly good either. There was a certain *flatness,* like old soda water, and there

[1] They are the current, as of last May, issues of *The Canadian Forum, The Tamarack Review, University of Toronto Quarterly, Queen's Quarterly* and *The Fiddlehead.*

was also a lack of that quality the existentialists call "authenticity". They were neither cosmopolitan nor were they indigenous. They were, in short, provincial—that is, dependent on the capital city (London or New York), and yet insistent on a local autonomy which there aren't the resources to sustain. Compared to similar American magazines, their contributors lacked strong, individual voices; compared to the London intellectual press, they were stylistically clumsy and culturally uneven; they had neither the intensity of the former nor the uniform high cultivation of the latter. Suppose that our own Northwest were to secede, culturally, from the union and set up its own special Northwestern division of arts and letters; the result would be not unlike the present situation in Canada.

Very well, but what about the magazines you sent me? Here are some reactions:

THE FIDDLEHEAD, Spring: A little "little magazine"—as against big "little magazines" like *Partisan Review*—which could just as well come from Frederick, Md., as from Fredericton, N.B., except that then it couldn't print ads like: "Congratulations to 'The Fiddlehead' for EXPANDING RECOGNITION, which illustrates the continuing spirit of the early scholars who have made New Brunswick Culture and Literary Art a Canadian Tradition, with compliments of GANONG BROS., LTD., Pioneers and leaders in the Fine Chocolate and Confectionery Industry since 1872". Mostly poetry, which, as in other magazines, seems livelier and better than the prose, but this perhaps because modern verse is not my pigeon. One short

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story—my pigeon—flatfooted realism with sentimental trimmings; cf. Frost's "Death of the Hired Man" if you want to see what can be made of the same theme.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY, April: Subtitle "A Canadian Journal of the Humanities". But why Canadian? Timeless, placeless, a not-bad academic anthology—interesting piece on *Samson Agonistes,* complicated one on Berkeley, pedantic one on Browning, sensible one on Hawthorne, sensible but superficial one on Orwell—but why Canadian?

QUEEN'S QUARTERLY, Spring: Subtitle "A Canadian Review", partly justified, but again why this provincial emphasis on "Canadian"? *Kenyon Review* doesn't call itself "An American Quarterly"; *The Spectator* isn't labelled "British-Made". Lots about Canada, some informative, thoughtful ("Stratford After Six Years", "The Social Sciences in Canada"), some meaningless to the non-Canadian layman (infighting about Champlain's veracity, a review-article on a biography of Mackenzie King that is mostly arcane discussion of fine points of Canadian political biography ending with an inside-the-inside *jeu d'esprit,* an algebraic equation expressing Mr. King's relationship to Canadian politics), and some specialised to the point of tedium ("Restriction of Output in Canada's Oil Industry" is merciless, beginning "Shut-in production is nothing new in the history of the Canadian oil industry", and ending "Sales in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area depend on United States import policy and the wellhead price acceptable to producers in the mid-continent fields"). The non-Canadian pieces vary from good ("Strangers in

the Tamarack Review

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Britain") to ghastly (a lengthy skit called "The Editor Regrets"). Again, an anthology rather than a magazine; great difference in tone and quality; editors must be porously open-minded.

THE TAMARACK REVIEW, Spring: A big "little magazine"—Contains the only distinguished piece in all these magazines, Warren Tallman's "Kerouac's Sound", done with great style and *brio,* though flawed by taking Kerouac too much at his own valuation: "When his fictions converge towards meanings something vital in him flinches back. His sound is primarily a life sound, sensitive to the indwelling qualities of things, the life they bear. To be Beat is to be wary of moving such a sound into the meaning clutter. It might become lost, the life. So Kerouac draws back. Which is his limitation. But also his strength." This seems to me misguided, absurd—if one sees meaning as anti-life, a mere clutter, one should perhaps be a jazz player but certainly not a writer—but Tallman has stated his thesis so well, with such insight, that one can at least disagree with it. But Kerouac is American—as, I've just learned from the Contributors' Notes, is Mr. Tallman—and so is Carson McCullers, the subject of the other critical article, which is by a Canadian and is as stiffjointed as Mr. Tallman's is supple, as provincial as Mr. Tallman's is sophisticated, from the subtitle ("Lonely Huntress") to the three-page summary of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter,* which might be journalistically valid if this novel were "news" but which is surely now supererogatory. Of the two stories, "Antigone" is stylish (all these classical Greeks in modern dress) but, to

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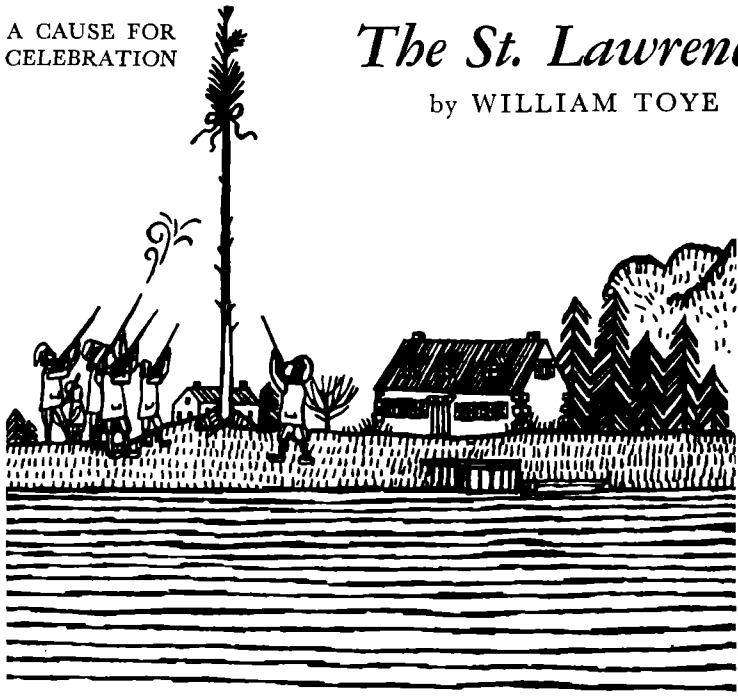
The St. Lawrence

by WILLIAM TOYE



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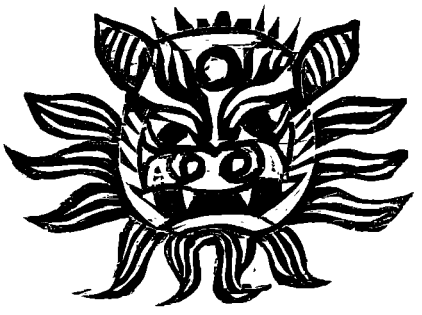
me, opaque, while "The Salesman", competently wrought though it is in the slice-of-life cum-wry-twist manner, is all too transparent. The poems, again, seemed good—perhaps, here, a real Canadian contribution.

THE CANADIAN FORUM, May: A liberal journal, stupefyingly dull except for the verse which (again!) is lively (I liked especially "Re Doctor Kirkonnel", "College Reunion" and "Where the Skeena River Margin"). No sense of editorial urgency, no passion or direction, another anthology. The non-Canadian material (Tibet, Rhodesia, U.S. Race Question, and especially an academic excursus on "The Age of the *Coup d'Etat*") is on a higher level than the Canadian articles, which read like lawyers' briefs. I suspect the editors will print almost anything about Canadian affairs because, after all, it *is* a Canadian magazine, but if local issues like "The Hours Controversy" and "The Newfoundland Labor Legislation" produce such dreary stuff, perhaps they should reconsider their editorial criteria—or dig up some competent commentators; I found *Time* more illuminating, for example, on the Newfoundland scandal than the *Forum*. The critical section was more readable, but still not very good. In short, I'd say that the *Forum* is about as far below the level of our own *Nation* and *New Republic* as they are below the level of the British *Spectator* and *New Statesman*.



This is what I see through the peephole of the magazines you sent me. It's a very limited point of view, just some recent issues of Canadian magazines. It may well be I underestimate what's going on there, to the north, and that if I had more knowledge, I'd be more impressed. Or, of course, not.

LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE IN CANADA

A NUMBER of linguists in Canada, as elsewhere, hope that developments in linguistic description in the last few decades will provide a firm foundation for stylistics, especially for the description of verse forms. The only significant work yet published in stylistics in Canada, however, is *Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais* by J. P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet (Paris, Didier, and Montréal, Beauchemin, 1958), and for the time being two other kinds of linguistic research are most likely to interest Canadian literary critics: lexicography and linguistic geography.

Lexicography is obviously useful to the historian of Canadian literature and to the foreign critic, who should not be expected to work entirely without native reference works. Linguistic geography should be useful to those concerned with

WOOD ENGRAVING BY JESSIE WEBB

regional differences in language and literature, both differences between one part of Canada and another, and differences between Canadian English and American English.

The great *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (the *OED*) is so taken for granted by most critics that they frequently fail to acknowledge what a basic critical tool it is. Unfortunately, few Canadian works are included in its sources, and it is little help to those concerned with language that is distinctively Canadian. The *Dictionary of American English* and the *Dictionary of Americanisms* are occasionally helpful, but they, too, used few Canadian sources and they do not distinguish between Canadian and American. *A Dictionary of Canadian English on Historical Principles* is at last under way. The Canadian Linguistic Association and the University of Alberta have cooperated to set up the Canadian Lexicographical Centre at Edmonton. Under the direction of Professor M. H. Scargill, the Centre hopes to produce a desk dictionary and a historical dictionary. Volunteer readers are urgently needed. Anyone who is willing to return from wanderings in the alien fields of anthropology, psycho-analysis, archetypal yearnings, etc., to the study of the language of literature will be welcomed by Professor Scargill.

Canadian French has long been the subject of more study than Canadian English. La Société du Parler Français au Canada, based at Laval University, is one of the oldest linguistic societies in North America. Instrumental in publishing such works as the *Glossaire du Parler français au Canada,* it serves in many ways

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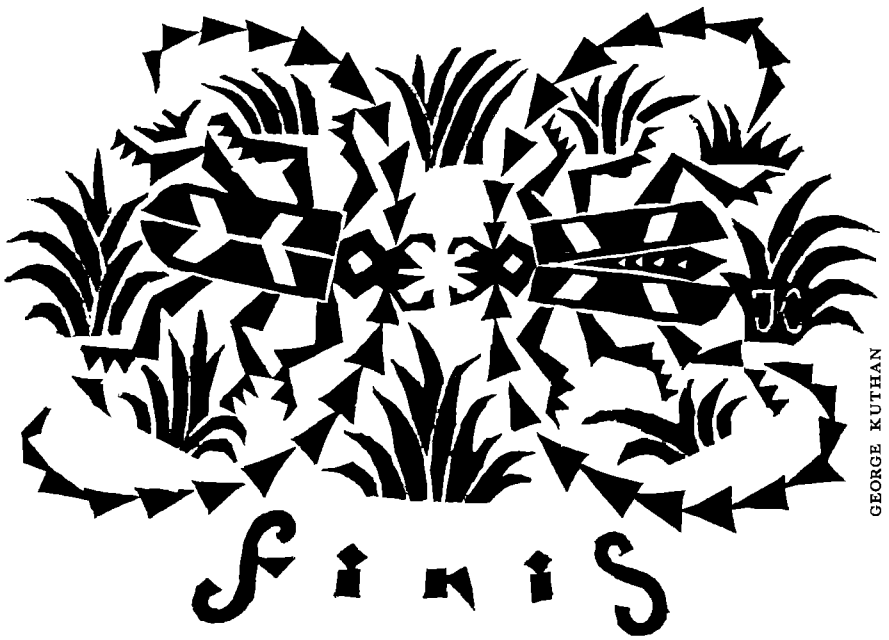
as a coordinator for studies of Canadian French. In Montréal, Le Centre de Recherches en Lexicologie de l'Université de Montréal has begun work, under the direction of Professor J. -P. Vinay, on a scholarly bilingual dictionary which will give Canadian French and English usages and words.

The linguistic geography of Canada is proceeding somewhat more rapidly now. It is hoped to coordinate work on Canadian English under Professor Rex Wilson, R.M.C., of Kingston, Ontario.

Full annual bibliographies of works on the languages of Canada appear in the *Journal of the Canadian Linguistic Association*, but those of interest to literary criticism will also be included in *Canadian Literature*.

R. J. BAKER



GEORGE KUTHAN