

LITERARY HISTORY OF CANADA VOLUME III

Canadian Literature in English

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LITERARY HISTORY
OF CANADA

Canadian Literature in English

Second Edition

VOLUME III

General Editor

CARL F. KLINCK

Editors

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ROY DANIELLS, NORTHROP FRYE,

DESMOND PACEY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

TORONTO AND BUFFALO

FIRST EDITION 1965
©UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS 1965
TORONTO AND BUFFALO

SECOND EDITION 1976
©UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS 1976
TORONTO AND BUFFALO

ISBN 0-8020-2214-6 (CLOTH)
ISBN 0-8020-6278-4 (PAPER)
LC 76-12353

This edition of the *Literary History of Canada* has been published with the assistance of a grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

To the memory of
Desmond Pacey,
scholar, teacher, friend,
this volume is dedicated
by the editors

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Desmond Pacey

1917–1975

William Cyril Desmond Pacey was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, on 1 May 1917. He died in Fredericton on 4 July 1975 at the age of fifty-eight.

Pacey received his early education at the Magnus Grammar School in Newark, Nottinghamshire (1928–31), and at the high school in Caledonia, Ontario (1931–4). After a distinguished career as an undergraduate at Victoria College, Toronto, he won a Massey Travelling Fellowship to study at Trinity College, Cambridge (1938–40), where he earned a PH.D.

Upon his return to Canada he lived, as George Woodcock fittingly said, ‘astonishingly parallel lives in the academic and the literary worlds.’ Desmond became Professor of English at Brandon College (1940–44), and in 1944 Professor and Head of English at the University of New Brunswick, where he remained, until his death, as professor, Dean of Graduate Studies (from 1960), and Vice-President (Academic) (from 1970). Among his achievements was the development of his department as one of the most prominent centres for the study of Canadian literature. Always ready to promote the cause of study and research throughout Canada, he was a favourite and powerful speaker at conferences and ‘learned’ societies, and he influenced the spread and quality of Canadian literature courses in schools and colleges. *Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938–1968* (1969) displays the variety of his published articles, his developing attitudes and opinions as a critic, his restless search for facts and values, and his identification of literary trends over three decades.

He broke new ground as early as 1945 when he undertook the difficult task of demonstrating the literary and social sophistication of the Canadian west’s least understood novelist, Frederick Philip Grove. To courage and imagination as a scholar, Pacey added tenacity. Over the next thirty years he investigated Grove’s career and published *Critical Views on Frederick Philip Grove* (1970) and *Tales From the Margin* (1971). He did not live to see in print his complete edition of *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*. He also wrote the first ‘full-dress’ critical study of Ethel Wilson.

The date of publication of the first Grove book (1945) places Desmond

DESMOND PACEY

Pacey among pioneer critics such as W.E. Collin, E.K. Brown, and Arthur Smith who 'discovered,' evaluated, and established for several generations the canon of the major Canadian poets and prose writers. Pacey's appreciative criticism was built upon 'a sketch map of the territory' (a coherent history of the literature around the principal authors, with, like Smith, concern about the nature of the literary background). His *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952) and his *Ten Canadian Poets* (1958) achieved great and merited authority among students and general readers as a pioneer guidebook for systematic study of Canadian literature. In 1955 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and in 1972 he received the Society's highest literary award, the Lorne Pierce medal.

The *Literary History* may be regarded as an extension of his survey. He lent his authority and gave his full co-operation to the preparation of the larger 'sketch map' and reference work which reached back to pre-Confederation times, revealed indigenous literary activity, and included scholarly historical, social, and scientific writings. He spiced our deliberations with candour and humour; his own chapters are perceptive and comprehensive. To all the editors he still seems indispensable. His prestige as a literary historian stands, as it should, very high, and his role as a happy warrior for recognition of Canadian culture will long be remembered with gratitude in the nation he served so well.

Contents

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-----|
| INTRODUCTION | | xi |
| 1 Politics and Literature in the 1960s | CLAUDE BISSELL | 3 |
| 2 The Course of Canadian Criticism | DESMOND PACEY | 16 |
| 3 Literary Criticism and Scholarship | LAURIAT LANE, JR | 32 |
| 4 Canadian History | MICHAEL S. CROSS | 63 |
| 5 Philosophical Literature | THOMAS A. GOUDGE | 84 |
| 6 Religious and Theological Writings | JOHN WEBSTER GRANT | 104 |
| 7 The Physical Sciences and Engineering | JOHN H. CHAPMAN | 111 |
| 8 The Biological Sciences | WILLIAM E. SWINTON | 122 |
| 9 Writing in the Social Sciences | HENRY B. MAYO | 136 |
| 10 Critical Theory: Some Trends | MALCOLM ROSS | 160 |
| 11 Essays and Biography | | |
| I Essays | BRANDON CONRON | 176 |
| II Biography | CLARA THOMAS | 180 |
| 12 Children's Literature | SHEILA A. EGOFF | 204 |
| 13 Drama and Theatre | JOHN RIPLEY | 212 |
| 14 Fiction | WILLIAM H. NEW | 233 |
| 15 Poetry | GEORGE WOODCOCK | 284 |
| CONCLUSION | NORTHROP FRYE | 318 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY AND NOTES | | 333 |
| CONTRIBUTORS | | 341 |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | | 344 |
| INDEX | | 345 |

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Introduction

THE *Literary History of Canada*, first published in 1965, is now issued in three volumes. During revision completed in 1975, the contents grew beyond a single set of covers. Parts I to III of the original book are now in Volume I; part IV is now in Volume II. The new chapters concerned with the years 1960 to 1973 are in this third volume.

The project for a *Literary History* was begun in 1957 and was brought to its first goal of publication by the editors and twenty-nine other contributors in 1965. They have been joined in recent years by twelve new contributors whose chapters appear in this third volume. Brief notes about them appear on pages 341–3.

The subtitle of the *Literary History* explains its scope as ‘Canadian ... in English.’ ‘Canadian’ has been broadly used for whatever is native, or has been naturalized, or has a distinct bearing upon the native – that is, on people, events, and writings which had their focus in our ‘environment,’ as Northrop Frye has put it, this ‘place where something has happened.’ That which is distinctively Canadian-French in language, thought, culture, and literary production has been left, in accord with their own wishes, to the French scholars of Québec. The time will come, one may hope, when it will be possible to have a French series of books paralleling our English ones – and translations in each of the languages – to facilitate a much-needed comparative study. The initiative has even now been taken by Professor Maurice Lebel, a distinguished scholar of Laval University, who made an impressive French translation of our 1965 *History*.

From its inception, the project for a *Literary History* has been devoted to two principal aims: to publish a comprehensive reference book on the (English) literary history of this country, and to encourage established and younger scholars to engage in a critical study of that history both before and after the appearance of the book (now books).

This program emphasizes research and basic fact-finding as prerequisites for good criticism, but the writers of chapters have also contributed to

criticism by exercising discrimination and taste cultivated in comprehensive acquaintance with literature and its traditions.

The climate for studies in Canadian literature has improved remarkably since 1957. Younger readers would find it difficult to imagine the initial difficulties facing the original contributors, for these scholars lacked most of the advantages, however limited, prevailing at that time in American literature or in general Canadian history. There was a very narrow base of authenticated and organized information.

The need for a *History* to deal with the literary products of the latest decade and a half is not felt in a limitation of materials, for publishers have recently turned out an immense amount, not only of new works and reprints, but also of critiques, interviews, casual advertisements, and even propaganda. The problems are still those of weighing, sorting out, selecting, discarding, and describing, and of passing over nothing of true significance. To these considerations the *Literary History* is still dedicated – and also to as much interpretation and objective criticism as the bulk and onrush of the material affords.

Critical writings of the 1960s and the early 1970s in Canada have shown several marked tendencies. Among the most controversial of these is a growing independence, an application of standards in some sense native, and a hesitation to acknowledge British or foreign influences. These are wholesome gropings toward real maturity, but they are often confused and confusing if they do not have a broad base of knowledge of Canadian experience, traditions, and the whole existing ‘environment.’ The writers for the *Literary History* hope to perform a service by contributing to orderly and wise judgments upon our literary works, as steps toward realization of their significance for us and for readers of English literature outside our country.

As a further contribution to the background of literary criticism in Canada, this volume treats not only works specifically classified as *belles lettres*, but also (chiefly in separate chapters, by specialists) other works generically and traditionally belonging to ‘Literature.’ A selection has thus been made of books significantly related to imaginative productions by other expressions of the thought and culture of this country. Canadian achievements in writings on history, philosophy, religion, the physical sciences, the biological sciences, and the social sciences have been outlined. The writers of these sections have appropriately shown how minds work in various important disciplines. Chapter 3 displays the strength and maturity of general literary scholarship in Canada.

It would be too much to claim that we have in our volumes the intellectual history of Canada, even with restriction to the humanities, but the *History* does deal with much that would have to be taken into account in such a desirable, integrated cultural study.

Publication of all kinds of books, articles, and journals shows few signs of

diminishing, and the 'Bibliographical Notes' which follow our text must be regarded as only what new research and criticism have now offered in anticipation of more to follow year after year. Not all of the contributors felt that such aids were necessary. The entire omission of notes for certain chapters means only that the writers have expected readers to acquire the habit of consulting the numerous bibliographies, and especially R.E. Watters's *A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1960* (Toronto 1959; revised 1972).

The editors wish to express their thanks for financial support for the second edition to the Canada Council and the Humanities and Social Science Research Councils; and for courtesy and the amenities of publication to the University of Toronto Press, especially to Miss Jean Jamieson (Editor, Humanities), to Miss Jean Wilson (who coped with the manuscript and saw three volumes through the press), and to Mrs Sally Wismer (who prepared the indices). We are also especially indebted to Mrs Pauline Campbell for secretarial assistance.

None of the editors or contributors received any payment for his or her labour in research and writing, or fees for manuscripts. To those who contributed so graciously and generously, the editors offer this most sincere expression of their gratitude.

For the Editors

CARL F. KLINCK

29 May 1975

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LITERARY HISTORY OF CANADA VOLUME III

Canadian Literature in English

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1 Politics and Literature in the 1960s

CLAUDE BISSELL

At the opening of the sixties, Canadians were aware that a new political age had begun, although its contours were still vague. The long years of Liberal rule, prolonged smoothly, with a sense of decorous inevitability under Louis St Laurent, had come to an end in the election of 10 June 1957, and had been firmly sealed in March 1958, when the Conservatives under John Diefenbaker had turned a precarious hold on office into a triumphant take over. An even more dramatic reversal took place later in the year in Quebec when the Liberals under Jean Lesage won the election and released the province from bondage to a narrow, introverted past. There was a feeling that the 'quiet revolution' in Quebec was likely to be accompanied by a more audible revolution on the federal front. Diefenbaker was not cast in a conventional Tory mould, and he was capable of sudden departures from normal policy and abrupt reversals of hallowed attitudes. His Minister for External Affairs, Howard Green, was a co-revolutionary, to some, a gentle sheep amid ravenging wolves, to others, a tough idealist amid soft-headed men of custom. His steady pursuit of peace, his horror of nuclear proliferation coincided with a widespread popular radicalism in the early sixties – a mood that was sensitively caught in David Lewis Stein's novel, *Scratch One Dreamer* (1967). But by 1962 the Diefenbaker glow had vanished, smothered in bitter internal squabbles and extinguished in the elections of 1962 and 1965. Although the country had spoken uncertainly, and had given Lester Pearson and the Liberal party a grudging victory, still there were high hopes that the new age might now begin. Pearson was the best-known Canadian of his time; in international councils he was the ideal Canadian – unvexed, informed, wise, constantly striving to grasp the big reconciling unity amid petty diversities. But during his five years of power he never succeeded in rallying the country as a whole, and, in the election of 1965, the electorate still refused him a reassuring majority. His government was plagued by a succession of minor scandals, more evidence of individual impropriety than of government corruption, but, taken as a whole, sufficient to undermine confidence and to

arouse suspicion. With the choice of Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1968 as Pearson's successor, and his overwhelming triumph a few months later at the polls, the country seemed finally, after two false beginnings, to have found an embodiment of its hopes and aspirations. Trudeau despised the old politics of promise and counter-promise; he placed reason above emotion, the practical solution above the theoretical absolute; but, with it all, he was direct and unpretentious, an urbane and witty man in a domain hitherto dominated by laboured platitudes and solemn rhetoric. But Trudeau, like his predecessors, Diefenbaker and Pearson, could not sustain the wave of initial support. He lost much of his left-wing sympathy by his swift, ruthless measures against the Quebec separatist movement, which, in the fall of 1970, was threatening to turn sporadic acts of violence into a revolution; and his cool, clinical approach to emotional national problems puzzled and distressed many of his public supporters. His government narrowly survived the election of 1972, but there was, in effect, a declaration of disenchantment with Pierre Trudeau.

Within 10 years Canada had repudiated its three national leaders – all men of unusual strength and, it would seem, of wide appeal, each considerably more attractive, certainly more engagingly complex than former leaders who had managed to enjoy long and unruffled reigns. The repudiation was not so much personal as an indication of the divisiveness within the country, of a feverish search, if not for a transcendent unity, at least for a peaceful diversity. Each of the three leaders had grappled with the problems, and had offered solutions that had received only partial assent.

Diefenbaker harked back to the days of high colonialism. Despite the quibbling doubts of many and the savage protests of the few, Canada, he declared, was one country, united under the monarchy, dedicated to equal rights for all. He was the first prime minister to emphasize the ethnic variety of Canada, and he backed up his rhetoric with action. Not until his administration was 'the first Treaty Indian appointed to the Senate, the first of Ukrainian origin to the cabinet, and the first of Italian origin as a parliamentary secretary' (John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic*, Toronto 1965, 71). He had, on occasion, a dogged sense of Canadian autonomy, and in the defence debates of 1963, on the question of manning the BOMARC missiles with nuclear warheads, he was determined to reach his own decision and not to be pushed into one by American pressure. Pearson, too, had a deep sense of Canadian unity, but he relied less than Diefenbaker did on external ties. When he replied on 25 July 1967 to Charles de Gaulle's famous 'vive le Québec libre' declaration, he spoke for all English Canadians and for many Québécois: 'Certain statements by the President tend to encourage the small minority of our population whose aim is to destroy Canada; and, as such, they are unacceptable to the Canadian people and its government.' Canadians did not need to be

liberated, he added, reminding the General that 'many thousands of Canadians gave their lives in two World Wars in the liberation of France and other European countries.' Pearson placed great store on national symbols; during his years in office no other issue consumed more time and devoured more pages of Hansard than the issue of the flag. His government gave unstinted support to the centennial celebrations, and in the Montreal Expo, brilliantly conceived and superbly carried through, the country seemed to find a pleasant respite before it resumed political warfare. In his interpretation of federalism, and, in particular, of Quebec's place in federation, he was flexible and accommodating, striving to maintain a balance between Quebec's nationalist aspirations and the primacy of the federal government. Co-operative federalism was for him both an ideal and a technique. One of his first acts was to establish a Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and, despite the criticism that the Commission was dividing the country, it laid the foundation for deeper understanding and for a liberal language policy.

Pearson drew back from the tough nationalism propounded by the left wing of his party and the NDP. He gave lukewarm support to his Minister of Finance, Walter Gordon, when Gordon presented his abortive nationalist budget in 1963, and under pressure from the United States his government conferred citizenship on the Canadian editions of *Time* and *Reader's Digest* so that advertisers looking to the Canadian market could still enjoy tax deductions for advertisements placed in these magazines. He managed to keep Canada free from direct involvement on the American side in the Vietnam war, and even incurred the primitive wrath of President Johnson by suggesting a pause in American bombing at an embarrassing time for American strategy. But to many critics of American policy in the National Democratic party, and in the universities, he was hesitant and pusillanimous in his approach to the Vietnam war.

In his concept of Canadian unity, Trudeau was unsympathetic to both the Diefenbaker and the Pearson points of view. He was a strict federalist, seeing Canada as a triumph of equipoise, a delicate tension. In a famous document published in *Cité Libre* in 1964, he and a number of his fellow French-Canadian intellectuals repudiated nationalism in all its forms: 'The most valid trends to-day are toward more enlightened humanism, toward various forms of political, social and economic universalism.' Even such an austere nationalist as Claude Ryan, editor of *Le Devoir*, was moved to refer to Trudeau's federalistic ideas as 'la froide logique de M. Trudeau.' Trudeau gladly accepted the concept of a multicultural mosaic; his insistence that the French language should have equality with English went along with the encouragement of ethnic variety. As a new and powerful recruit in the Liberal party with a special competence in constitutional problems, he was influential

in the decision of the federal government in 1966 to withdraw entirely from any direct concern with higher education, and to make the universities a purely provincial responsibility.

Although Trudeau disdained the rhetoric of nationalism, his natural scepticism and his instinctive opposition to the popular wisdom led him to support unorthodox approaches that were nationalistic in effect – the reduction in NATO forces, the early recognition of the Peoples' Republic of China, the assertion of Canadian suzerainty in the Arctic archipelago.

Although, on the surface, Canadian political life in the sixties was often a dismal charade of personalities or a succession of minor domestic squabbles, it was, nonetheless, doggedly concerned with the fundamentals of national life. This characteristic, blurred in the day-to-day world of politics, emerged clearly in the political literature of the time. Never had Canadian historians and political scientists looked more closely and analytically at the country, not as a remote object in time, but as an immediate, pressing reality. Even the journalists responded to the mood. Peter Newman, the most accomplished journalist of the decade, covered the Diefenbaker and Pearson years in two deservedly popular books, *Renegade in Power* (1963), and *The Distemper of Our Times* (1968). He gave to contemporary figures an elaborate and colourful treatment hitherto reserved for those who had long ceased to trouble our spirits.

The mood of formal political and historical comment, almost all of which came from the universities, was serious and troubled. Glen Frankfurter's *Baneful Dominion*, 1971, was a happy exception – a layman's informed and opinionated survey. If the sixties was the age of nationalism, in both English and French Canada, it was not a triumphant and glowing nationalism such as had coursed through the national veins in the post-confederation era, and less hectically, in the periods immediately following the two world wars. Birney's 'highschool land deadset in adolescence' had become 'a masochist perhaps, who thinks his sins require to be dismembered while alive.' Although there was a good deal of rhetoric, especially when the American obsession obtruded, analysis was bolstered by facts and generalizations emerged garlanded with statistics. Even the leaders of the radical nationalist wing of the National Democratic party, the Waffle movement (so-called, with typical Canadian irony, because they refused to 'waffle' on basic issues), relied more on careful analysis of the extent of American take over of specific industries than on emotional appeals to socialist ideology. The basic study of the period, John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic*, an analysis of class and economic power, was a great compendium of facts as well as a source of fresh insights into the rigid stratification of our society.

Much of the political writing came from scholars who were strongly committed to a point of view (in itself a new development in Canada where

scholarship in the social sciences, with some notable exceptions, like Harold Innis, had been grey and neutral). The sense of commitment was strong because thoughtful political writers believed that Canada was facing ultimate issues on which her continuing existence depended. The sharpest differences of opinion arose in the analysis of Canadian-American relationships. Frank Underhill, who had been the foremost socialist intellectual in the thirties and forties, had gradually moved towards a liberal stance; young radicals now thought of him as an apologist for Pearsonian liberalism, and, above all, as a continentalist. His collection of essays, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism*, which came out at the beginning of the decade, concluded with a strong exhortation to Canadians to stamp out their attitude of smug moral superiority towards the United States, and to remember the traditions of criticism, idealism, and dissent that had flourished far more intensively in the United States than in Canada. His later book, *The Image of Confederation* (1964), had a stronger nationalistic ring. In his concluding sentence he reminded us that 'a nation is a body of people who have done great things together in the past and who hope to do great things together in the future. 'But we can do those 'great things,' said Underhill, only in an American way, and when 'we have at least achieved a Canadian identity, it will be only when we are satisfied that we have arrived at a better American way of life than the Americans have.' The diametrically opposed point of view – life through eliminating American influences – became increasingly the dominating theme in the writing of Donald Creighton, as he moved from formal history to didactic essay. Creighton speaks from a conservative point of view – the desire to preserve a political structure that has been carefully reared in the past, but it is a kind of conservatism not blessed in the councils of official conservatism or in the board rooms of large corporations. For it is bitterly opposed to super-power imperialism, and, above all, to the religion that the ultimate good is the satisfaction of consumer lusts. Creighton's point of view coalesces with left-wing attitudes. As Abraham Rotstein, the leading theoretician of left-wing nationalism pointed out: 'There is an important sense in which nationalism is inherently a conservative force; that is, it attempts to conserve and protect existing social institutions from outside penetration, in the name of the autonomy and self-determination of that society.'

Right- and left-wing tendencies came together most powerfully in the work of George Grant, a philosopher with a persistent social conscience. He was also the writer most accessible to the literary world. Dennis Lee, the poet, refers to his collection of essays, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*, published in 1969, as 'the most profound book written in my country' ('Cadence, Country, Silence' in *Liberté* xiv 6 [1972], 75); and Margaret Atwood in *Survival* lists it as essential reading and draws upon its ideas.

Grant's influence springs, in part, from his topicality: 'no serious person is interested in history simply as antiquarianism but only as it illumines one's search for the good in the here and now' (*Technology and Empire*, 63). The 'here and now' rings even more clamorously through an earlier book, *Lament for a Nation* (1965), which interpreted the 1957 election as 'the Canadian people's last gasp of nationalism' (p 5) and Diefenbaker's defeat in 1963 as 'the end of Canada as a Sovereign state' (p 2). Diefenbaker emerges not as a heroic figure with a clear vision of his (and his country's) tragic fate, but as an eccentric individualist who had caught a partial vision of the good that might have been, who saw, in an obscure way, that Liberalism was the faith of the big corporations, whose ideal was one vast homogenized, technological society in North America.

With topicality went an intense moralism; Canadian writers, like Canadians in general, have had a great concern with the good and the bad, particularly if the two can be sharply distinguished. Grant is in a popular Canadian tradition, although he is much more subtle and incisive than others who have sounded the moral alarm. But he retains a suggestion of the national self-righteousness that Andrew Macphail referred to when he talked about his generation as being 'the Thank-Gods of America, rejoicing that "we are not like those republicans and sinners who live to the southward"' (quoted by Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* [1970], 155). The Canadian society, Grant argues, which is now about to be swept into the maelstrom of American imperialism, had, by reason of its loyalist and catholic roots, a sense of order, a natural preference for restraint, above all, an instinctive understanding of the danger of unfettered individual freedom.

What saved Grant from the great Canadian sin, moral arrogance, was his sense of tragic inevitability. North America, given its Calvinist roots and its founding expansionist philosophy – ('The view of everything but one's own ego – the new continent, native peoples, other nations, outer space, one's body – as a kind of raw material, here as pure value-free externality, to be manipulated and remade according to the hungers of one's nervous system and the logic of one's technology' [Lee, 'Cadence, Country, Silence,' 76]) was fated to be devoured by a remorseless imperialism (and Canada could preserve, only briefly, a tenuous independence). But inevitability was not necessarily good, and Grant insisted on the human dignity of lamenting what was passing away, and the intellectual courage of isolating, describing, and cursing the fatal disease.

Although Grant's ideas were often the common property of the day, he expressed them with deep emotion and in a homely oracular style that was always arresting, if, at times, craggy and opaque. He was, then, available to the writers, not simply through his ideas, but also through his style. The slow, meditative, insistent cadence of Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies* (1972) – the best public poem written in Canada – seems to be a lyric echo of Grant's prose.

Canadian social scientists were obsessed by 'the Canadian question' and did not address themselves to the wider issues that were exercising the New Left in the USA or that lay behind the popular apocalyptic romanticism of the day. The Canadian student movement of the sixties, not greatly concerned about national problems, found its ideas in foreign sources: the repressive nature of liberal tolerance in Herbert Marcuse; the concept of alienation in Marx; the distrust of bureaucracy and the redemptive power of community in Paul Goodman; the necessity of violence in a righteous cause in the writings of oppressed revolutionaries like Frantz Fanon; the distrust of reason in Norman O. Brown and Charles A. Reich. The Canadians who dealt most cogently with these wider problems were literary critics, Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan. To Frye the ideas of the new left were, at best, rickety half-way houses; his book, *The Modern Century* (1967), casually spears a succession of popular sages as it moves magisterially along (eg, 'Sympathy for the youth who sees no moral difference between delinquency and conformity still inspires such Utopian works as Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd*' [p 77]). McLuhan appeared to be closer to some aspects of the new wave. He attacked systems and institutions, because they were often embodiments of the linear and segmented and destroyed the wholeness of man; he criticized universities for their emphasis on specialized goals, when the times called for the assumption by the student of a flexible role; and he deplored the over-emphasis on the visual, an outcome of print culture, at the expense of the blending of all the senses. He hailed the electronic age, promising a world of simultaneity and oneness, that would, nevertheless, be made up of independent villages, no less global than the great concentrations of power. But his continuous emphasis on dialogue, on discovery through intellectual 'probes' was far removed from the soft romanticism of the age.

McLuhan's work was more accessible to the literary radicals, the post-modernists, like bp Nichols, Graeme Gibson, Bill Bissett, Matt Cohen, Dave Godfrey, and Robert Kroetsch, who emphasized discontinuity and a direct perceptual approach, and saw art as a process in which the reader worked with the writer in an uncertain and shifting world, rather than as a finished, ordered product that the reader understood and passively contemplated.

Insofar, however, as the Canadian student movement had any lasting effect, it derived its emphasis from one strand of Canadian nationalist thought – an insistence on the simple fact that personal loyalty to a country or institution is dependent on personal participation in the decisions that shape the country or the institution. Literature was more inclined to use the whole panoply of ideas, whether native or imported. Fiction was particularly receptive. The major novelist of the sixties, Margaret Laurence, although she went back again and again to her prairie roots, had no overt interest in national problems; her characters live in a world scorched by the flames of hell. Canadian poetry and criticism were more concerned with the particularities of

the Canadian situation; and, at their most characteristic, they expanded and refined many of the ideas that had their origins in politics and political comment.

If literature in the sixties responded to a basic political theme (what is the nature of the Canadian place and how does its definition relate to our well being?), specifically in such a work as MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx*, generally in the poetry of Atwood and Purdy, in the plays of Reaney and many others, literature achieved a new self-consciousness as a force within society, edging slowly upward in the list of national priorities, getting concerned response, not simply polite recognition, from the centres of economic power. Cultural nationalism could, to an extent, be divorced from economic nationalism, and in the branch-plant economy there might very well be native nests of singing birds. This was the opinion of the eminent Canadian expatriate, John Kenneth Galbraith, who, during the period, had seen his regional study of 'the Scotch' in south-western Ontario become a best-seller. But Canadian writers had to rely on an uncertain and harrassed publishing and distributing system within their own country; and, for the first time, the writers turned from complaint to action.

In the special issue of *Canadian Literature* devoted to publishing (number 57, summer 1973), George Woodcock pointed out in an introductory editorial that the scene had changed radically in the last five years. In 1967, the scene was the same as it had been for many years, 'a landscape of big commercial presses,' only a few of which made a serious effort to publish Canadian books. Since then, however, there had appeared a number of small presses, concerned exclusively with Canadian books, not content with striking a genteel blow for Canadian culture, but aspiring to reach a broad reading public. The emphasis was on the new and experimental in poetry and fiction; but there were books of a general nature, often, like *The New Romans* (1968), exploiting the wave of aggressive nationalism. The writers became activists, and several of the new houses – Anansi, Oberon, New Press, Press Porcépic, Coach House, Talonbooks – were started by writers. Dave Godfrey jauntily bestrides the new publishing world of the sixties, moving from Anansi (1967) to New Press (1969) to Press Porcépic (1971), and, like many of the young writers of this time, publishing his books through his own press. Most of the activists were young (below the fatal 30). They were the real youthful revolutionaries of the period, not their more highly publicized junior contemporaries in the universities, who went in more for pyrotechnics than action.

The major commercial presses continued to make modest contributions to the publication of Canadian books, with the traditional leader and innovator, McClelland and Stewart, dramatically rescued from financial ruin by the Ontario government, maintaining its dominance. McClelland and Stewart took the lead in the paperback reprint boom: its New Canadian Library,

begun in the late fifties, picked up enormous momentum in the sixties, and now numbers over one hundred volumes. This library goes a long way to solving the problems of basic texts for courses in Canadian literature. McClelland and Stewart also publishes the Carleton Library, an inspiration of the Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. This library performs the same service for the social sciences that the New Canadian Library does for literature. Macmillan and Clarke, Irwin have reprint series, made up largely of books they have already published in hardcover; and the University of Toronto Press, besides putting out the Canadian University Paperbooks series, reprints of its own significant books, chiefly in Canadian studies, has recently begun two reprint series, Literature of Canada: Poetry and Prose in Reprint and the Social History of Canada series, which provide basic texts and scholarly introductions. Hurtig Publishers in Edmonton has begun a bold adventure of reprinting early travel literature; and Coles has begun a similar venture, chiefly of pioneer literature.

The expansion in book publishing was accompanied by a similar, and, quantitatively, far greater, expansion in the publishing of literary magazines. Many of them were committed to a short life: they were often cheaply printed and distributed free, and became little networks for the exchange of ideas and impressions, or easily available outlets for new writers. (*Tish* in Vancouver was the best known of these.) Others sought a longer life and a more enduring format. A great number drew upon financial resources available in the universities during the sixties. *Exile*, published by Atkinson College at York University, was sternly devoted to the imaginative writer and excluded 'the scholarly praetorian guard,' whereas university-supported magazines like *The Journal of Canadian Studies* (Trent) and *Mosaic* (University of Manitoba) were scholarly reviews. *The Malahat Review* (founded at the University of Victoria to celebrate, both in content and format, Canada's centenary) publishes both imaginative writing and criticism. *Exile* and *The Malahat Review* made internationalism an editorial goal, and Canadian writers nestle side by side with writers from other countries.

In the area of major magazines with a national audience, the message of the sixties was, 'We have come through.' In many ways, the most important magazine of the period was *Canadian Literature*, published by the University of British Columbia and edited by George Woodcock. When it emerged just before the opening of the decade, there was widespread scepticism. It was thought to be but another example of how we give the tough and indestructible plant of criticism a favoured place in the little garden of Canadian creativity. There would be, it was contended, a decreasing amount of good material, and the magazine would dwindle away in tedious repetition and pompous inventions. But none of these things happened, and the magazine is as fresh and vital as it was at the beginning. In part, this is due to the firm, scholarly editing

of George Woodcock. But it is also a reflection on the vitality of the literature published in the sixties, and the increasing interplay between the creative and critical faculties. The other major literary magazines continue their traditional and influential ways: *Fiddlehead*, *Tamarack Review* (after a brief silence in the early seventies), the university quarterlies (with the *University of Toronto Quarterly* still resolutely devoting its summer issue to a review of everything of any note published in Canada during the previous year). The *Canadian Forum*, primarily a magazine of political and social comment, has always insisted on strong ties with the arts and literature. Its fiftieth anniversary volume (1972) could, with sober appropriateness, bear the subtitle, 'Canadian Life and Letters 1920-70.' On a more popular level, *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night*, the only Canadian magazines of a cerebral cast likely to be seen by the general Canadian reader, recovered from a series of mishaps, and by the last few years of the sixties had consolidated their positions. This was particularly true of *Maclean's* which, under the editorship of Peter Newman, moved into the black, combining serious political comment with popular fantasies about sex, hockey, and material success. *Saturday Night* had a lower and more distinguished profile, and a less certain economic base. Under Robert Fulford, who took over as editor from Arnold Edinborough in 1968, it followed a policy of publishing solid articles on politics, literature, and the arts, striving to expound the ideas that govern Canadian life. In its book review section, considerably enlarged, it gave priority to Canadian books, and its reviews were the best in Canada outside of the literary journals.

All of these expansive developments (with the exception of the rise of *Maclean's*) could not have taken place without government paternalism on a substantial scale. The chief agency was the Canada Council; its resources available for the arts and humanities and social sciences grew during the decade from approximately four million to approximately thirty-five million dollars. Its support of literature had been initially concentrated on grants to individual writers, supplemented by grants for public readings, and writers in residence at universities. During the decade the support of publications, both in literature and scholarship, grew significantly. These programs received some support from the various provincial bodies for the arts that were launched in the sixties. But the problem of maintaining the publishing industry was beyond the power of federal and provincial cultural bodies combined, and required direct government intervention. The appointment of the Royal Commission on Book Publishing by the Ontario government in December 1970, was, in effect, a national act, since almost all book publishing in English was concentrated in Ontario. The Commission was a response to the sale of Ryerson Press to American interests, and the Commission's first step was to recommend, in an interim report, measures to save McClelland and Stewart from a similar fate. These measures were promptly taken, as were measures

to implement further interim recommendations to prevent the distribution or wholesaling of periodical publications from becoming an American monopoly, and to enable publishers to secure loans from commercial lenders on a favourable basis. Subsequently the Ontario government made available the sum of \$500,000 to be distributed by the Ontario Council of the Arts in support of literary activity; the Council allotted a substantial portion of these grants directly to publishers of books and magazines, and reserved approximately \$100,000 for projects of a co-operative nature that might lead to more efficient methods of book distribution. In February 1972, the Secretary of State, Gérard Pelletier, announced a federal program to be implemented largely through the Canada Council, costing a total of \$1.7 million for 1972-3, and consisting of increased grants to publishers, increased grants for the translation of Canadian books, the purchase of books for free distribution in Canada and abroad, and a program of exporting Canadian books.

By the end of the sixties, the Canadian literary world had lost much of its defensive introversion. French and English literature still pursued their separate courses, but there were signs that each recognized a common ground. Ronald Sutherland's critical study, *Second Image* (1971), drew out analogies and parallels between the two literatures that were not laboured or forced, although his insistence that a consciousness of the double heritage constituted the 'mainstream' of Canadian literature was not a necessary derivative from his argument. English Canada had always known a number of French-Canadian writers in translation, and during the decade Anne Hébert, Marie-Claire Blais, and Roch Carrier became familiar figures across Canada. French Canada was not so receptive to English Canadians, but critics like McLuhan and Frye began to appear in the literary pages of *Le Devoir*. Within the English-Canadian literary world, some of the old rigidities disappeared. The tension between criticism and creativity decreased. Many writers moved back and forth between the two areas; in the various critical series that were launched in the sixties (McGraw-Hill Ryerson's *Critical Views on Canadian Writers*; Copp Clark's *Studies in Canadian Literature*; McClelland and Stewart's *Canadian Writers*; Forum House's *Canadian Writers and Their Works*) writers examined the work of their contemporaries (eg, Eli Mandel wrote about Irving Layton; Michael Ondaatje, about Leonard Cohen; George Bowering, about Al Purdy). The general effect was that of open dialogue and not of nervous self-protection.

The barriers between the social sciences and history on one side, and literature, on the other, were breaking down as the result of the realization of many writers that their fundamental strength depended on the winning of political battles against pressures from without and apathy from within. And within the universities, Canadian literature, as late as the early sixties a nervous and self-conscious visitor in the halls of academe, acquired status and

recognition. The outlines of a new scholarly approach to cultural history began to appear, especially in Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (1970) and in A.G. Bailey's *Culture and Nationality* (1972). Bailey's book, a collection of essays that span a scholarly career beginning in the late twenties, contains numerous insights that cross disciplinary boundaries with easy authority. Berger's concerns were also the concerns of literary scholars. The themes of the rural idyll and the deadening effect of scientific materialism, prominent in Berger's book, reappear in more elaborate guise, for instance, in D.G. Jones's study of our major literary traditions in *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature* (1970).

Within itself, the literary world acquired a new ease and even a consciousness of strength. Although the generations pressed hard on each other, and new ideas and fashions swept by in rapid succession, there was no bitter struggle between the old and the new. Some of the most vigorous and exploratory work came from writers who had established themselves in the forties and fifties: Ernest Buckler's novel of the sixties, *The Cruellest Month* (1963), was dismissed by senior academic critics, but was hailed by Dave Godfrey, who saw in Buckler an artist trying, like the young writers of the day, to show 'the glittering liquefaction' of things (*Tamarack Review*, summer 1965, 83); Robertson Davies moved easily and effectively from light to dark comedy; and Earle Birney, warmly receptive to youthful art, sought to relax the complex, subtle rhythms and the witty, concentrated language of his earlier prose; Mordecai Richler moved in *St Urbain's Horseman* (1971) from intense regional studies to the international novel, in which England and Canada cast satiric light on each other.

Literature, and its creators, became more visible. The insistence on a substantial Canadian content in television had something to do with this. But the popularity of the public reading – usually poetry, but often fiction – had a greater effect than Canadian television, which always drew back from any complete immersion in the arts. And the emergence of the little theatre in the large urban centres as a place primarily to put on Canadian plays helped to give the playwright – a Reaney, a Freeman, a French, or a Ryga – a substantial presence. By the beginning of the seventies, with successes at once popular and critical in poetry, fiction, and criticism, Margaret Atwood was the most visible figure and inspired profiles in newspapers and magazines. It would be possible to see some significance for the official state of literature in the giving of the Royal Bank award, the most ample available in Canada, to Morley Callaghan, in succession to a scientist, an engineer, and a cardinal.

Confidence at home was accompanied by some recognition abroad. Canada has excelled at keeping a low cultural profile, and her success has been greatest of all in literature. Earle Birney, after his one-man cultural sweeps of

the world, would point out that our embassies were never equipped with a cultural adviser, and looked upon poets as embarrassing intruders. That is now changing; the Canada Council has had a program for sending Canadian books abroad, and the recent project, Books Canada, an alliance between the federal government and 48 Canadian publishers, is designed to make Canadian books available on a wholesale and retail basis in the United Kingdom, the United States, and France. More important, the tone of comment on Canadian literature in the UK and USA is less crabbed and the content more informed. Some American magazines produced special Canadian issues (eg, *The Atlantic* [November 1964] and *Cultural Affairs* 6 [1969]); and the presence in Canada of a substantial number of anti-American Americans opened up a new view of the country (a good example is Edgar Friedenberg's review of the *Canadian Forum*'s fifty-year selections in the *New York Review of Books* xx 8 [17 May 1973]). The most substantial outside look at Canada was Edmund Wilson's *O Canada* (1964), generally condemned by Canadian critics for its perversely restricted view. But Wilson was the first major American writer to take an extended look at our literature; and the book ends with a ringing salute to the Canadian sense of individualism. The Canadian hero, he says, is the old *coureur de bois* plunging, not into a vast untracked forest, but into the healing depths of his own spirit. This, surely, is not ignorant condescension, but informed praise!

The mood of Canadian letters was reflected in the Canadian issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* (October 1973). The choice of writers was in itself significant – not, as in the past, an olympian observer in the United Kingdom, but a group of young Canadian writers and critics. The mood ranged from triumphant (Ronald Sutherland's 'Canada's Elizabethan Age'), through the cautiously optimistic (Margaret Atwood's 'a literary expansion of Malthusian proportions has taken place'), to Brian Stock's sombre social reflections ('culture was never related to social realities but rather to an abstract world derived from foreign literature'). Stock's comment posed a basic question: could the literature flourish on a cultural nationalism drawing its support exclusively from governments, while, at the same time, the country moved steadily towards economic integration with the United States? Whatever the answer, the writers went about their work with zest, conscious that the future might be gloomy, but delighted by the present plenitude.

2 The Course of Canadian Criticism

DESMOND PACEY

In 1889 the Toronto-based satirical magazine *Grip* published the following list of rules for aspiring Canadian critics:

1 If possible, get yourself born in England, Scotland, or somewhere outside of Canada, at any rate, and brought up abroad until your ideas and habits of thought are fully matured. This is not absolutely essential, but it is a very great advantage.

2 Be intensely, excruciatingly “loyal” and very patriotic. You will easily demonstrate your loyalty by writing a poem in honour of the Governor-General – any kind of a poem will do, so long as the sentiments are sufficiently enthusiastic. Denounce Yankees and all their institutions on every possible opportunity.

3 Write in a formal, stilted style, and carefully, as you value your reputation, avoid any phrase or expression which is racy of the soil, such as is used in every-day life. Of course Dickens, Scott and Victor Hugo drew copiously on the popular vocabulary, and their works teem with slang expressions, but for a Canadian writer it would never do to depict Canadians naturally. If you must use slang, let it be pure English slang.

4 Your principal theme will, of course, be Canadian Literature. You will write articles entitled, “Have We a Canadian Literature?” “Need of a Canadian Literature,” “Progress of Canadian Literature,” etc. As everybody knows, it was by writing *about* English literature, the necessity of having it, and the means of encouraging it, that it got a start.

5 Work the mutual admiration racket, by mentioning favourably all the other native Canadian writers – especially, of course, Professor Goldwin Smith and C.G.D. Roberts. They will naturally praise you in return. It is needless to say that criticisms and articles upon Canadian writers form the staple of “Canadian literature,” distinctively so called. N.B. – It is by no means necessary to have read the writings you praise.

Follow these directions implicitly, and you will very shortly be acknowledged by the fraternity as a native Canadian “Litterateur,” and some weeks you may be able to make as much as five dollars by your contributions to the press. (*Grip* 32 [6 April 1889] 213)

These rules imply some disconcerting home-truths, and as a native of New Zealand who is distrustful of American influences in Canada, whose style is

not noted for its colloquial ease, who has written a plethora of general articles on the past, present, and future of Canadian literature, and who is always duly respectful of his betters, I am perhaps tempting Fate by citing them. There has been a tendency for Canadian literary criticism to be strongly influenced by persons not of Canadian origin; there has been a continuing strain of nationalistic defensiveness in it; it has with a few notable exceptions such as Lorne Pierce and John Sutherland been academic in style, affiliation, and influence; and there has been an inclination to deal in large generalities rather than in detailed practical criticism.

The satirist, however, quite properly for his purposes, gives only one side of the picture, and the implications of his rules are far from being the whole truth. Even in the nineteenth century there were Canadians who cared strongly about our literature and wrote about it with at least a measure of objectivity: such men as J.G. Bourinot, J.C. Dent, E.H. Dewart, C.G.D. Roberts, and W.D. Lighthall. The present century, and especially the last fifty years, has seen the gradual but sure emergence of a literary criticism in this country which is based upon a shrewd understanding of Canada but not upon a romantic adulation of everything Canadian; which is expressed in a language recognizably indigenous in its allusions, vocabulary, and rhythms; and which has increasingly concerned itself with close analysis rather than with general exhortation.

The development of a large body of informed and responsible criticism has been most rapid in the last decade. When the six editors of the *Literary History of Canada* began our work in the late fifties, we hoped that its eventual publication would stimulate critical activity in this country, but none of us anticipated that the effects would be so immediate and multitudinous. By my count, and I am sure my list is not exhaustive, there have appeared in the last ten years no less than fifty-five anthologies, thirty-two of them in poetry alone, over sixty critical monographs, and eighteen collections of critical essays. Only in literary biography, where an exhaustive search turns up only seven titles, in literary history, where the monumental *Literary History* has so far only one new companion, Elizabeth Waterston's *Survey: A Short History* (1973), and in scholarly editions of texts and letters, has there been a dearth of activity.

In addition to all this critical activity in book form, of course, there has been a daunting mass of periodical articles, essays, and reviews, the bulk of them in the pages of *Canadian Literature*, founded by George Woodcock in 1959, and the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, founded by John Moss in 1972, but with many scattered articles in other periodicals published in centres from coast to coast, and some outside our borders. Some of these periodical articles have been of outstanding quality, and appear to have made a permanent impact upon our critical sensibilities. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I am

thinking of such articles as Warren Tallman's 'Wolf in the Snow,' Robert L. McDougall's 'Class in Canadian Literature,' Louis Dudek's 'Nationalism in Canadian Poetry,' Dorothy Livesay's 'Tennyson's Daughter or Wilderness Child: The Factual and Literary Background of Isabella Valancy Crawford,' Alfred G. Bailey's 'The Historical Setting of Sara Duncan's *Imperialist*,' and Sister Beverley Mitchell's 'Association and Allusions in *The Double Hook*.'

There have also been several series of reprints of Canadian literary and allied works, of which the best known is the New Canadian Library, published by McClelland and Stewart under the general editorship of Malcolm Ross. That series, however, has recently been joined by others emanating variously from Mel Hurtig in Edmonton, Coles Publishing Co. in Toronto, and the University of Toronto Press (*Literature of Canada: Poetry and Prose in Reprint*, edited by Douglas Lochhead). The items in these series sometimes contain critical introductions of considerable length and value, and collectively they have made a substantial contribution to a critical awareness of our emerging literary tradition.

I shall attempt later in this chapter to be more specific about the tendencies apparent in the relatively large mass of criticism which has appeared in the last decade, but in order to understand this recent work it is desirable first to set it in historical perspective.

There had been scattered forays into the field of Canadian literary criticism and scholarship prior to 1920. Almost exclusively, they had taken the form of introductions and notes to anthologies of Canadian poetry, such as those by Edward Hartley Dewart and William Douw Lighthall, or of chapters in books devoted to Canadian cultural development, such as John G. Bourinot's *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness* (1893) and John C. Dent's *The Last Forty Years* (1881), and of reviews and review articles in such periodicals as *The Week* and *The Canadian Magazine*. The first concerted efforts to establish Canadian literature as a suitable field for systematic and extensive exploration occurred in the nineteen-twenties. The developments of that decade have some almost uncanny similarities to those of the most recent decade: new magazines were founded, the Canadian Authors' Association was established (note that the last decade has witnessed the establishment of the League of Canadian Poets and of the Writers' Union), courses in Canadian literature were established in our universities, poets and novelists such as Carman and Grove made triumphant lecture tours from coast to coast, literary awards were founded and Canadian writers for the first time won prestigious international literary prizes (Martha Ostenso for *Wild Geese*, for example, in 1925, and Mazo de la Roche for *Jalna* in 1927).

Most relevant to our immediate purpose, there was a great expansion in Canadian publishing. The several series of monographs which have been

appearing in our decade had their analogues in the twenties in Lorne Pierce's *Makers of Canadian Literature*, and in the *Master Works of Canadian Authors*, a series launched by the Radisson Society in 1925. Both these series petered out before they had achieved their ambitious aims, but their very initiation expressed the new mood and purpose.

Again, a number of histories of Canadian literature were published in the twenties. *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924) by Archibald Mac-Mechan was a brief, judicious, and conservative appraisal of the principal works; *Highways of Canadian Literature*, however, published in the same year under the joint authorship of J.D. Logan and Donald French, was a much more bulky, less discriminating, and more flamboyant book, finding in our infant literature all sorts of schools and trends. Lorne Pierce's *Outline of Canadian Literature* (1927) was a more modest handbook, and dealt not only with Canadian literature in English but also with Canadian literature in French; for a decade or so it remained the standard reference book. Only two of the surveys published in the twenties, however, seem likely to retain permanent critical interest. Ray Palmer Baker's Harvard doctoral dissertation, published in 1920 as *A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation*, confines itself to the very early period, but is substantial in scholarship and penetrating in critical analysis. Lionel Stevenson's *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (1926), on the other hand, deals mainly with Canadian literature since the Confederation, and is now experiencing a revival because of its shrewd analysis of basic conditions which still concern Canadian critics.

Another way in which the twenties resembled the recent period was that it saw the reissuing of Canadian 'classics,' many of which had been out of print for some years – books such as Richardson's *Wacousta*, Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, and Kirby's *Golden Dog*. Furthermore, a start was made in the twenties on publishing critical monographs of Canadian authors. Although they were far less numerous than those appearing in the late nineteen-sixties and seventies, beginnings were made with James Cappon's studies of Carman and Roberts, V.L.O. Chittick's *Thomas Chandler Haliburton* (1924), Odell Shepard's *Bliss Carman* (1924), Carl Y. Connor's *Archibald Lampman* (1929), and the studies of Kirby and Pickthall by Lorne Pierce.

This first decade of systematic literary criticism in Canada was avowedly nationalistic in inspiration and intention. With some rare exceptions, the critical standards were low, and to read the encomia which were bestowed on mediocre works and authors is today somewhat embarrassing. The spirit of the decade is perhaps best encapsulated in the poster of the first Canadian Book Week, which read: '700 Canadian Authors in our Wonderful Canada. Have you read their books?' Sceptics such as Douglas Bush, A.J.M. Smith,

and F.R. Scott protested against this crass nationalism and 'boosterism,' but they could not dampen its fires: it took the great depression of the thirties to do that.

For all its excesses, however, the decade was a significant one: essential foundations were laid for the subsequent study of Canadian literary development. The individual most responsible for laying these foundations was Lorne Pierce (1890–1961), whom I should select as the representative critic of that period. The range of his activities, interests, and achievements is almost incredible. As editor of the Ryerson Press for almost forty years he encouraged, and often published, almost every Canadian writer of any significance. He launched the Makers of Canadian Literature series, which was planned to include forty volumes although only thirteen were actually published; the Canadian Men of Letters series, which included E.K. Brown's *On Canadian Poetry* (1943) and my *Frederick Philip Grove* (1945); the Ryerson Books of Prose and Verse (the chief significance of which was that they made selections of Canadian writing available in Canadian schools); the Canadian History Readers and the Canadian Art series. He also established the Ryerson Poetry Chapbooks, which eventually included no less than two hundred items. He himself edited an anthology, *Our Canadian Literature*, prepared the handbook entitled *An Outline of Canadian Literature*, wrote critical biographies of William Kirby and Marjorie Pickthall, edited the selected poems of Bliss Carman and Marjorie Pickthall, and wrote several impassioned books and pamphlets dedicated to the advancement of a national spirit and culture.

Pierce's nationalism had nothing crass about it: it was idealistic, almost apocalyptic, as in the passage from *A Canadian People* which caught the imagination of John Sutherland and led the latter to use the part italicized below as the motto for *Northern Review*:

The cosmopolite has no history because he has no strong, undivided ego, no well-defined home, no pure native language, no lofty sense of duty, or destiny. The voices of the world's great centres may be urbane, bland, sophisticated, but there is no high purpose in them, and no nation can survive without that. *No nation can achieve its true destiny that adopts without profound and courageous reasoning and selection the thought and styles of another.* ... (*loc. cit.*, p 24)

Lorne Pierce's influence extended over a period of forty years, but it was at its height in the twenties and thirties. While he was devoting himself to the development of a national sense of identity and to the maintenance of literary values which can best be summed up in the phrase 'romantic idealism,' a counter-tendency was making itself felt in the work of A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, and Dorothy Livesay. These persons, at any rate at this period, were practising poets rather than critics, but they made critical pronouncements which were influential and provocative. Although they were

nationalists too, in a sense, they took the view that true nationalism was better fostered by critical examination of weaknesses and deficiencies than by uncritical adulation; and although the romantic impulse was still strong in them, they at least wanted to modify romanticism by a strong infusion of irony or to discipline it by the application of such so-called 'classical' virtues as economy, wit, order, and control.

This counter-tendency to the romantic nationalism of Pierce and the twenties and early thirties became itself the dominant tendency of the forties and fifties. The new spirit of sophisticated scepticism had found early expression in the articles written by Bush, Smith, and Scott in the *Canadian Forum* in the late twenties, in the prefaces (both the one by Scott that was printed and the one by Smith that was rejected) to the anthology *New Provinces* (1936), and in the first and only book-length collection of Canadian critical essays published in the thirties, W.E. Collin's *The White Savannahs* (1936). Collin's book was as enthusiastic in its praise of Canadian poets as Pierce's work, but it found its standards in the modernist poetry of Eliot and the later Yeats and championed symbolic allusiveness and experimental verse techniques. The dominance of a new spirit, however, was most firmly asserted in 1943, when Smith published the first edition of his *Book of Canadian Poetry* and E.K. Brown his critical study *On Canadian Poetry*. Between them, Smith and Brown certainly controlled the critical atmosphere in the forties, Smith by the virtual monopoly and high prestige that his verse anthology enjoyed, and Brown because of the influence of his critical study and of his annual surveys of Canadian poetry in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

Smith, then, with E.K. Brown as his principal lieutenant, became the representative critic of the forties and fifties. Characteristically, Smith has been a far less prolific writer than Pierce – he is by nature and precept exigent – but the influence he has exercised has been out of all proportion to the volume of his publications. Fortunately his collected critical essays, *Towards a View of Canadian Letters*, were published by the University of British Columbia Press in 1973, and we can now see the main outlines of his critical creed set forth in a single volume. He has stood always for high standards, and has consistently opposed parochialism, vagueness, rhetoric, and sloppy technique. He has maintained that Canadian writing must be judged by world standards, must be conscious of its time as well as its place, and must be ready to subject itself to detailed critical scrutiny. It is in the close reading of specific poems and passages that Smith has most distinguished himself as a practical critic – see, for example, the fine essay on Duncan Campbell Scott which was originally delivered as a lecture in the Our Living Tradition series at Carleton University – but on occasion he has been as impassioned in generalization as Pierce. Witness this well-known passage addressed to young Canadian poets:

Set higher standards for yourself than the organized mediocrity of the authors' associations dares to impose. Be traditional, catholic, and alive. Study the great masters of clarity and intensity. ... Study the poets of today whose language is living and whose line is sure. ... Read the French and German poets whose sensibility is most intensely that of the modern world ...

Send your verse to the best English and American magazines. Until you are sure that your work is acceptable there, leave the Canadian magazines alone. (*Towards a View of Canadian Letters*, p 185)

Just as Lorne Pierce in the twenties and thirties inspired a whole group of other writers and critics, so did A.J.M. Smith in the forties and fifties. Northrop Frye has said in the preface to *The Bush Garden* that his own quickened interest in Canadian poetry resulted from his reading of Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry*, and indeed his review of that book in the *Canadian Forum* has become one of the classics of our criticism. It was in part the example of Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry* which led me to edit my *Book of Canadian Stories* in 1947, and his influence, together with the informed encouragement of Lorne Pierce, A.G. Bailey, and E.K. Brown, which prompted me immediately afterwards to prepare the first edition of *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952) and its more analytical successors, *Ten Canadian Poets* (1958) and *Essays in Canadian Criticism* (1969).

It is probable that Malcolm Ross, A.G. Bailey, Roy Daniells, Carl Klinck, Claude Bissell, Hugo McPherson, and Milton Wilson would make similar avowals. This group of critics, most of whom were eventually to be involved in the *Literary History of Canada*, were together to make a very significant contribution to the development of Canadian criticism. Most of them had come to know one another in the nineteen-thirties and forties, as students or lecturers at the University of Toronto. Although they all had a strong interest in Canadian writing, they were far from being merely parochial: most of them had studied also in Great Britain or the United States, and all of them were scholars knowledgeable about other literatures as well as that of their native or adopted country of Canada. Malcolm Ross's main contribution has been his judicious editing of the New Canadian Library series, but he also edited *Our Sense of Identity* (1954) and the anthology *Poets of the Confederation* (1960), and he has written some perceptive critical articles and introductions. A.G. Bailey and Claude Bissell have pioneered in the writing of Canadian intellectual history; of Carl F. Klinck we shall have more to say below; McPherson and Wilson have been amongst our most original and imaginative critics, McPherson especially of the novel and Wilson of poetry. Milton Wilson also edited two fine anthologies, *Poetry of Mid-Century* (1964) and *Poets between the Wars* (1967), and wrote a critical study of E.J. Pratt which is mentioned below. Roy Daniells' many essays and articles on Canadian literature and culture have yet to be collected in book form, but they reveal a

quick sensitivity to literary technique, and an ability to relate literature to the other arts, on the one hand, and to social and intellectual history on the other.

Since most of these men began their work in the nineteen-forties, it is hard to understand why George Woodcock maintains that the serious and sophisticated criticism of Canadian literature began in the nineteen-fifties, with the appearance of Northrop Frye's annual surveys of Canadian poetry in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* of that decade. Frye's surveys, excellent as they were, merely carried on a distinguished tradition which E.K. Brown had established. A more likely turning point would be Collin's *White Savannahs*; but the most likely – and indeed in my view the indubitable – turning point was the appearance of the Smith and Brown books in 1943. By that time, Brown and Smith were professors of English in distinguished American universities, and the fact that two eminent Canadian expatriates cared enough about the literature of their native country to write books about it did much to dissipate our lingering colonial inferiority complex.

To return to the historical process, we have seen that what we may for the sake of simplicity call the romantic idealism and nationalism of Lorne Pierce provoked a counter-tendency in the classical and metaphysical cosmopolitanism* of A.J.M. Smith, and that this counter-tendency eventually became the dominant one. A similar dialectical process occurred with respect to Smith, and began remarkably soon after his dominance was established. The counter-tendency manifested itself most clearly in John Sutherland's preface to his anthology *Other Canadians* (1947). (This preface, by the way, is probably most conveniently accessible in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* [1967], edited by Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, an indispensable book for anyone who wants to observe at close range the cut and thrust of critical controversy in Canada from 1910 to 1965.) In a fine polemic, Sutherland seized upon one of the weaknesses of Smith's criticism – his tendency to apply the terms classical and metaphysical too indiscriminately – and had some great fun with it, as in this passage:

The raging passion that we can detect in Mair's poetry was evidently under the control of a master spirit who combined the zeal of an arsonist with the efficiency of a fire-chief. Arsonist emotion and fire-chief intellect are asked to beget a child, which will combine the better qualities of both, and possess something entirely new. This "something else" is comprehended by the term "metaphysical," the use of which has always given Eliot and his followers special advantages over other critics. (*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, p 52)

As for Smith's cosmopolitanism, Sutherland saw it as merely a polite synonym for colonialism, and he argued for a poetry which would be North

*I am aware that this label is an inexact one. There are strong romantic and national strains in Smith – but the *emphasis* is indicated by the convenient label.

American rather than English in orientation and which would embody, as he saw the poetry of Dudek, Layton, and Souster already beginning to do, 'a more Canadian point of view, a greater interest in themes and problems of a Canadian kind, and a social realism which distinguishes it from the political make-believe of other poets.' (*ibid.*, p 60)

Smith's critical influence had begun to wane by the mid-fifties, and one might have expected the social-realist brand of nationalism preached by the early Sutherland and practised by such writers as Layton, Dudek, Souster, and Miriam Waddington (and later by Purdy, Nowlan, Newlove, and Acorn) to become the new direction. I would have welcomed such a development, for much as I respected Smith's standards my own sympathies were with the social realists. What happened, however, was something quite different. Instead of the Smith thesis of cosmopolitan classicism provoking the direct antithesis of national realism, what developed was a synthesis of Pierce's national myth-making and Smith's literary sophistication in the form of the now dominant Frye school of mythopoeic and thematic criticism.

Developed, that is, as far as *criticism* is concerned. We may observe in passing that criticism leads a life somewhat divorced from that of the creative literature of its time. Pierce, at a time when the trend in poetry was towards wit, scepticism, and social satire, and in fiction towards social realism of the Grove and Callaghan varieties, was still upholding the romantic nature poetry of Carman and Roberts and the historical romance of William Kirby; Smith stood for cosmopolitan and classical values at a time when the most creative literary practitioners were nationalistic and realistic in outlook. The influence of criticism upon creative writers is at best indirect, at worst quite irrelevant. It is upon the tastes of the reading public, and of their fellow-critics, that critics exercise their influence. Frye is a partial, but only partial, exception to this rule: his influence upon other critics has been more direct and effective than his influence upon poets and novelists.

We have now, in this survey, reached our own most recent past, and because we are so close to it it is difficult to see its dominant patterns so surely. There may, for example, be some who challenge the view that the dominant school of criticism in Canada in the past decade has been that of Northrop Frye. Who are the other possible candidates? George Woodcock is clearly one. As founder and editor of the magazine *Canadian Literature*, author of books on Richler and MacLennan and of a collection of his own incisive critical essays entitled *Odysseus Ever Returning* (1970), editor of two collections of essays from his own magazine – *A Choice of Critics* (1966) and *The Sixties* (1969) – and a collection of critical essays on Malcolm Lowry (*Malcolm Lowry: The Man and His Work*, 1971), Woodcock certainly has been a powerful and productive figure. He has been influential in directing a much larger share of critical attention to our prose fiction (in which A.J.M.

Smith apparently has had almost no interest), and in involving us in the discussion of moral, social, and political values and issues in our literature.

Influential as Woodcock has been, however, he has limitations that deny him the role of representative critic of our era. He is too eclectic in his critical approach to be truly distinctive; he is, or at least has so far been, insufficiently responsive to the peculiar value to us, as Canadians, of our earlier literature; and he is too ready to patronize us, as in references to 'the little zoo of Canadian letters' and 'the significant part which immigrants from Britain have assumed in the Canadian literary world.' Often his spiritual allegiance seems to lie with British writers of the thirties – an allegiance by no means unworthy, but not the ideal point of view from which to observe the development of Canadian writing. Although a Canadian by birth, Woodcock's long absence from Canada during the critical twenties, thirties, and forties cost him dearly in his attempt to understand the developing literary tradition of this country. Woodcock, in short, has been a tremendous influence for good, but he is not the Pierce or Smith of the present era.

Another possible candidate for the representative role would be Carl Klinck. As the moving spirit behind, and indeed the hard-pulling horse before, the *Literary History of Canada* (1965), as the author of books on Wilfred Campbell and E.J. Pratt, co-editor of the influential *Canadian Anthology* (1955), and author of a host of articles and reviews on our early writers of both prose and poetry, Klinck has certainly done much to uphold the standards and promote the interests of Canadian scholarship. If, as I hope, Canadian literary studies now move into a phase where scholarship rather than thematic criticism is the dominant concern, the development will owe very much indeed to Carl Klinck. He has been a pioneer in Canadian literary scholarship.

The fact is, however, that thematic and mythopoeic criticism, stemming from Frye's review of A.J.M. Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry*, his often scintillating conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada*, and the other essays and reviews recently gathered together in *The Bush Garden* (1971), is today, and has been for some eight years, the dominant school of Canadian criticism.

This is not the time or place, and I am certainly not the man, to attempt even a brief assessment of Frye's role as a critical theorist.* The fact that he has attained a world-wide reputation in this role has been of great indirect significance to Canadian writing, for it has given us all a sense of pride and self-confidence. My own concern here can only be to indicate, however inadequately, the part he has played in the criticism of Canadian literature.

Let me begin by noting that there are interesting similarities between Frye and Lorne Pierce: both were ordained as ministers of the United Church of

*See, however, Chapter 10 by Malcolm Ross.

Canada and thus have broad theological training and interests in addition to their literary interests; both tend to see literature as closely allied to religion and as having an apocalyptic dimension; both have a deep pride in Canada and an intense concern with its spiritual and cultural destiny. Obviously Frye is a much more rigorous thinker and more demanding critic than Pierce ever was, but the general direction of their thought is not dissimilar: both see literature as, quite literally, essential to the spiritual health of the individual and the nation.

As a practical critic of Canadian writing, particularly in his role as author of the annual surveys of Canadian poetry in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* in the nineteen-fifties, Frye was so stimulating that one cannot expunge a twinge of regret that he has not done more of it. He demonstrated in those annual reviews a finely epigrammatic and yet colloquial style, a gift of imagery worthy of a poet, as when he writes of Layton's *The Black Huntsmen* in 1951: 'The idea in Mr Layton's poetry is to use an intensely personal imagination as an edged tool against a world cemented by smugness, hacking and chopping with a sharp image here, an acid comment there, trying to find holes and weak spots where the free mind can enroot and sprout' (*The Bush Garden*, p 8), and a taste which is remarkably catholic (he can appreciate and discriminatingly praise such diverse poets as Charles Bruce, Alfred G. Bailey, Irving Layton, Thomas Saunders, George Johnston, and Jay Macpherson). His reviews are so full of wit that I am tempted to enliven this chapter by quoting from him at length – but I will content myself by reminding you of a few of his choicest witticisms:

One can get as tired of buttocks in Mr Layton as of buttercups in the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*. (*ibid.*, p 8)

[Birney's] account of a plane trip across Canada where, in spite of some excellent passages, some of the boredom of the trip seems to have leaked into the poem. (*ibid.*, p 16)

A glance at any American anthology reveals a series of poets who have progressed from gargle to Guggenheim in six easy volumes. (*ibid.*, p 23)

I find it hard to understand why one should look for sermons in stones when the inability to preach is so attractive a feature of stones. (*ibid.*, p 119)

This is like saying that because the quintuplets are Canadian, producing children in litters is a Canadian characteristic. (*ibid.*, p 131)

Frye is sometimes betrayed into too hasty generalization, as when he writes 'Nature is consistently sinister and menacing in Canadian poetry' (*ibid.*, p 142), and I frankly disagree with his theoretical views (which he does not in these reviews espouse in practice) that criticism is not and should not be concerned with evaluation, and that literature owes more to other works of

literature than to the writer's own life and times. But any such niggling objections fade into insignificance in the face of the magnificent insights of Frye's best passages, passages which will soon have launched a thousand theses and a score of books. For example:

The United States is a symmetrical country: it presents a straight Atlantic coastline, and its culture was, up to about 1900, a culture of the Atlantic seaboard, with a north-south frontier that moved westward until it reached the Pacific. Canada has almost no Atlantic seaboard, and a ship coming here from Europe moves, like a tiny Jonah entering an enormous whale, into the Gulf of St Lawrence, where it is surrounded by five Canadian provinces, all out of sight, and then drifts up a vast waterway that reaches back past Edmonton. There would be nothing distinctive in the Canadian culture at all if there were not some feeling for the immense searching distance, with the lines of communication extended to the absolute limit, which is a primary geographical fact about Canada and has no real counterpart elsewhere. (*ibid.*, p 10)

If we put together a few of these impressions, we may get some approach to characterizing the way in which the Canadian imagination has developed in its literature. Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological "frontier," separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting – such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. (*ibid.*, p 225)

This mood is closer to the haunting vision of a serenity that is both human and natural which we have been struggling to identify in the Canadian tradition. If we had to characterize a distinctive emphasis in that tradition, we might call it a quest for the peaceable kingdom. (*ibid.*, p 249)

Five of the books inspired at least in part by those memorable passages are D.G. Jones's *Butterfly on Rock* (1970), Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972), W.H. New's *Articulating West* (1972), Laurence Ricou's *Vertical Man/Horizontal World* (1973), and John Moss's *Patterns of Isolation* (1974). The distinction of Moss's book is that it is the first thorough-going attempt to apply Frye's concepts systematically to the corpus of Canadian prose fiction, and although it occasionally over-reaches itself and is somewhat turgid in style it contains some very acute perceptions. New seems to be a relatively recent recruit to the Frye battalion – his introduction, title, and subtitles are in the Frye tradition, but most of his book consists of straightforward evaluative and interpretative essays. Ricou announces a Frigian approach in his preface – 'Man on the prairie, as portrayed in Canadian fiction, is defined especially by two things: exposure, and an awareness of the surrounding emptiness' – but quite often he forgets the master, and becomes a more modest regionalist, in the rest of the book. Jones and Atwood, however, are Frigian to the bone, the former solemn, dignified, and hortatory, the latter trenchant, sometimes flippant, occasionally impassioned but always invigorating. *Butterfly on Rock* is probably the most thoughtful, consistent, and penetrating book of its kind in