

*T. A. Goudge*

## A CENTURY OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADA\*

A CENTURY AGO philosophers in English-speaking Canada all subscribed to the doctrines of Christianity. The majority, in fact, were clergymen or priests. Hence, they regarded philosophy as primarily a device for protecting Christian dogmas from hostile attack and for giving them, where possible, rational support. The great enemies were J. S. Mill's empiricism, Herbert Spencer's evolutionary naturalism, the positivism of Auguste Comte, and the scientific theories of Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall. Somewhat later, American pragmatism was regarded as a threat. In seeking to mount a defence for Christianity against these infidel doctrines, Canadian philosophers imported from across the Atlantic three different groups of ideas: the Scottish philosophy of common-sense as modified by Hamilton, neo-Hegelian idealism as formulated by Caird and Green, and, in Roman Catholic circles, the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. These ideas were expounded, always with an eye to their main purpose, by such influential teachers as James Beaven, George Paxton Young, James George, John Watson, James Clark Murray, Jacob Gould Schurman, and others. Their activities firmly established philosophy in the curricula of the young universities, and at the same time had a liberalizing effect on the interpretation of Christian dogmas.

Because of their approach to the subject, however, early Canadian philosophers failed to develop any new conceptions of their own. They were content to use ideas which came from Europe for the defence of the faith. Indeed, the integrity and autonomy of the whole philosophical enterprise was imperilled by making it subservient to the defence of religion. Instead of being dedicated to finding out the truth by following the argument in whatever direction it might lead, the early philosophers were committed in advance to their conclusions. Hence as H. L. Stewart used to say in another

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\* A shortened and slightly amended version of a Centennial Lecture at Dalhousie University, March 31, 1967.

connection, they would often pause in doing philosophy "to take theological bearings". Their approach also encouraged the old "battlefield" view of the subject, in which warring systems are supposed to struggle for supremacy with each other. Having chosen the "ism" that they deemed most favourable to Christianity, Canadian philosophers then proceeded to attack opposing "isms" in order to demolish them. Every philosopher, it was assumed, had to belong to a "school", and could be labelled as some sort of "ist". The most extreme version of this doctrine, which proved almost a *reductio ad absurdum* of it, was advocated later by R. C. Lodge, who contended that a philosopher *must* be a realist *or* an idealist *or* a pragmatist—there being no other possible pigeon-hole in which to hide. Finally, the attitude to philosophy taken by its nineteenth-century practitioners in this country, combined with the fact that most of them were clergymen, made it easy for them to adopt in their philosophizing what Ryle has called "the pulpit tone of voice". Rhetorical phrases, purple passages, and edifying "uplift" frequently took the place of rational analysis and argument. The effect was to illustrate the principle that a conflating of preaching with philosophy seldom produces great sermons or original ideas.

Among early Canadian philosophers the dominant figure was undoubtedly John Watson. On October 16, 1872, he gave his inaugural lecture at Queen's University, entitled "The Relation of Philosophy to Science". The opening sections of the lecture contain a polemical attack on Huxley, Spencer, and Mill, which is followed by a defence of the claims of religion, by appealing to the doctrines of Kant and of Absolute Idealism. The concluding section is worth hearing as an illustration of points that have been mentioned:

The three departments of Philosophy . . . Logic and Metaphysics and Ethics were incomplete if they did not, as their final result, lead us up to the Infinite and to God. Philosophy elevates itself above all mere opinions, above all untested assumptions, above all caprice and impulse—in short, above all that is peculiar to this or that individual—and lives and moves in the realm of necessary truth. It shews that man is able to free himself from all unwarranted beliefs and to unveil the secret of the universe, by discovering the essential rationality that, however it may be concealed from those who seek it, shines through all the outward manifestations of Nature and of Spirit.

It is safe to say the no Canadian philosopher now, at least in his professional work, would employ that style of writing, let alone make the sort of claims that Watson does. One can hardly imagine such a passage appearing

in the pages of *Dialogue*. It is not suggested that Watson was an inferior mind whose efforts are to be treated with pitying contempt. In his day he was a philosopher of considerable consequence. Moreover, the rather loose arguments that he uses would have been accepted without question by the majority of his fellow idealists. The fact that these arguments do not pass muster now, shows that standards of philosophizing in Canada (and elsewhere in the English-speaking world) are more exacting than they were a century ago. We are expected to be tighter in our thinking about problems than were the men of John Watson's time.

There is another way in which our thinking has altered since then. Very few, if any, philosophers in Canada nowadays would feel comfortable about claiming to know absolute truths about ultimate reality, exclusively on the basis of individual thought. It is hard to believe that anyone, just by sitting in his armchair or at his desk, and *thinking hard*, can "unveil the secret of the universe", and embody his results in a system. Such "one man shows", although they still occasionally appear, are hardly taken seriously. System-building has been replaced by the examination of specific problems, speculation by piecemeal analysis and description, high abstractness by particularity and concreteness of formulation. English-Canadian philosophy has thus grown more modest but at the same time more responsible in the claims it puts forward.

The causes of this change of approach are complex, and lie for the most part in developments which impinged on English-Canadian philosophy *ab extra*. They include such things as the steady progress and spectacular success of the sciences in understanding nature; the rise of modern logic; the anti-metaphysical arguments of logical empiricism; and the heightened awareness among philosophers of the way linguistic usages generate pseudo-problems. Apart from these factors, however, there was a native influence which worked, almost by inadvertence, against the system-building conception of philosophy. This influence came from the teaching and writing of G. S. Brett at the University of Toronto between 1908 and 1944.

Brett provides a salutary example of a philosopher on whom it is hard to pin a traditional label. It must have been frustrating for R. C. Lodge to find that his Toronto colleague simply would not fit into one of the three pigeonholes and be docketed as either an idealist *or* a realist *or* a pragmatist. There was surely a strong temptation (and according to rumour Lodge did not always resist it) to conclude that since he was neither an idealist nor a realist nor a pragmatist, Brett was "not really a philosopher, but only an his-

torian of philosophy"—a conclusion which illustrates Morris Cohen's aphorism that "every label is a libel". The fact is that Brett saw the philosopher's job as an investigation of particular problems in their historical contexts, rather than as the construction of an all-inclusive system. Instead of enlisting under one of the traditional "school-banners", and doing battle against opposing schools, he kept himself free to make use in his philosophizing of contributions from various quarters—from Aristotle, Leibniz, Lotze, James, Bosanquet, Bergson, and others. In this respect, Brett helped to move English-Canadian philosophy towards maturity.

But this was not the only respect in which he did so. From the start of his career, Brett espoused the classical view that philosophy should aim at scope and comprehensiveness in its investigations. The point is clearly stated in the Preface of his first book, *The Philosophy of Gassendi*:

This comprehensiveness makes for greatness; through it a man may be the spectator of all times and places. But he must not hope to gain this comprehensive outlook by occupying one solitary peak: he must not flatter himself that there is an essence of all essences, that he can condense all life and thought into one magic formula. On the contrary, he must keep the original wealth of material undiminished, if he would have a world in which "life's garden blows". If he abstracts and simplifies, the product is an "essence", a drop of scent in place of the living flower.

Many Canadian philosophers at present, particularly those influenced by existentialism, will share the sentiment expressed in that passage. For they, too, reject abstract essences and accept undiminished "the original wealth of material" in the world. Brett, however, was not disposed to sympathize with activist or irrationalist tendencies in philosophy. Like the idealists, he sought intellectual comprehensiveness. But he sought it not in an all-embracing system. He turned rather to the history of philosophy and science.

A number of strands of this history are traced by Brett in his *magnum opus*, the three-volume *History of Psychology* (1912-1921). The title of the work has always seemed to me to be misleading, for what is treated is really the history of philosophical psychology, i.e., the history of the concepts, assumptions, and explanation-schemes devised by Western man in the attempt to understand himself and his behaviour. Underlying the work is a theoretical orientation which Brett states in the preface to Vol. II:

A history of science is a unique species of history. For the content of the science

the student may go to the latest textbook where he may learn the established truths without any reference to their genesis or to the men who established them. For those who require no more, a history is superfluous: it can add nothing to that knowledge. . . . But there is another and a different object for which it has a specific function. If the student is not to be left with the idea that knowledge is a fixed quantity of indisputable facts, if on the contrary he is to acquire a real understanding of the process by which knowledge is continually made and remade, he must learn to look at the movement of ideas, without prejudice, as a separate fact with its own significance and its own meaning for humanity. To despise forgotten theories because they no longer hold good, and refuse on that account to look backward, is in the end to forget that man's highest ambition is to make progress possible, to make the truth of today into the error of yesterday—in short, to make history (II, 6-7).

The theoretical orientation exemplified here is quite different from that found among the idealists. Where they envisaged philosophy as separate from and superior to the sciences, Brett refused to make any such distinction. Where they regarded philosophy as providing knowledge about an ultimate reality inaccessible to the sciences, Brett considered scientific and philosophical knowledge to be interacting parts of a single enterprise—man's progressive exploration of his world and of himself. Where the idealists purported to find one, unchanging set of categories, Brett recognized alternative and historically changing sets appropriate to various disciplines. Indeed, "metaphysics" was for him not classical ontology, but "the science of categories" which lie at the roots of all first-order inquiries, and which are reformed in "the process by which knowledge is continually made and re-made".

This standpoint is expressed very characteristically in a section of his *History* entitled "Psychology without Metaphysics?":

History has failed to produce a psychologist who was not a philosopher of some kind; and it is notorious that a rejection of metaphysics is the most metaphysical of all positions. . . . The term "metaphysics" merely denotes ontology; it implies, therefore, ontologism, or the manipulation of data under the category of substance. Confining our attention to psychology, this means the explanation of psychic phenomena by assuming an underlying substance or "soul". This was the essence of that rational psychology which Kant criticized. . . . The central problem is that of method. Is psychology a branch of physiology or a department of metaphysics? . . . Is metaphysics necessarily the antithesis of science? The answer depends on the most fundamental of all sciences—the science of categories.

A new point of view, as opposed to a discovery of detail, is essentially a reform of the categories.

When it is said that this passage expresses Brett's position "very characteristically", it is implied that it does not make his views wholly clear. One cannot be *absolutely* sure, for instance, whether he thought that Kant's criticism of rational psychology had permanently demolished that subject, and along with it classical ontology; or whether he *really* wished to identify metaphysics with "the science of categories"; or whether he considered that there was no necessary antithesis between metaphysics and the sciences. Brett had a subtle mind. But its subtlety sometimes acted like the protective colouration of certain animals, and blended his own views so completely with the environment that their details remain in doubt.

Yet on two basic points there is no doubt where he stood. The first is that philosophy cannot be solidly based if, like Narcissus, it contemplates only its own image. It must reflect widely and deeply on knowledge which comes from outside itself, especially from the sciences. It must also take seriously the insights presented by literature—poetry, drama, and fiction. Here Brett and H. L. Stewart shared common ground. Stewart's course, which he gave at Dalhousie University for many years on "Philosophical Ideas in Literature", and which brilliantly analyzed the writings of Hardy, Meredith, Carlyle, Mrs. Humphry Ward, H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and others, was an educational experience that had few equals in the country. Brett never did anything so effective. But he believed that literature and philosophy, particularly in the Greco-Roman period, could be treated as a single, comprehensive whole, and his lectures made frequent and illuminative use of literary examples.

The other point where his stand was clear had to do with his conviction that a philosopher was uneducated and incompetent unless he had an exact knowledge of the history of his subject. This knowledge was not to be obtained from the "potted learning" found in histories of philosophy. It could be obtained only from close study of texts, viewed in their historical setting. Moreover, Brett believed that such study could provide valuable training, for if students tried to "think the thoughts of great minds after them", some particles of greatness might "rub off" in the process. By both example and precept he inculcated the practice of going straight to primary sources when one wanted to learn what a philosopher had thought or said.

Although in one sense this emphasis on the study of texts had a maturing

influence on English-Canadian philosophy, in another sense it was inhibiting. For it was all too easy to make the study of texts a substitute for thinking independently. Brett was not sufficiently alert to this danger. Hence he often limited himself, and permitted his students to limit themselves, to mere *explication des textes*. Whether what a philosopher said was true or false, whether his arguments were valid or invalid, whether his conceptual framework was consistent or inconsistent, were questions insufficiently discussed. But it is precisely by coping with such questions that students develop their own philosophical skills and make the study of dead thinkers a living intellectual enterprise. Thus the evolution of English-Canadian philosophy, while it owed a very great deal to Brett, had to go beyond him in important respects.

The thesis that there has been an evolution of English-Canadian philosophy will certainly be questioned, if not categorically rejected, by one group of philosophers, those who consider themselves to be the exponents of *philosophia perennis*. This group became prominent in the late 1920s, when the powerful figure of Etienne Gilson arrived from France to serve as Director of Studies at the newly-formed Institute—later the Pontifical Institute—of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto. He gave a great impetus in Canada to the study of scholastic thought. He also tirelessly advocated the view that the first principles of all philosophy were formulated by Thomas Aquinas. The task of genuine philosophers, Gilson held, is to learn those principles, and to teach, interpret, and apply them in relation to the contemporary world. Moreover, the proper understanding of Thomistic philosophy requires that it be kept closely tied to Thomistic theology. As Gilson put it in a recent book, *The Spirit of Thomism* (1964):

True enough, Thomas introduced a clear-cut distinction between reason and faith, philosophy and theology. But far from inferring from this distinction that they should be kept apart, Thomas always thought that the best thing for them to do was to live in a sort of symbiosis in which each profited from its association with the other. I know that many philosophers refuse to have anything to do with religion . . . but I also know that from the point of view of Thomism they are certainly wrong.

The last sentence illustrates Gilson's tendency to take "the short way" with opponents. He is reported to have said on one occasion that since philosophy must begin with "an intuition of being", any thinker who denied that he had such an intuition was simply not a philosopher—a saying that seems a little hard on Hume, Kant, Bergson, Russell, and others!



Gilson's voluminous writings do not form part of Canadian Philosophy in the strict sense, but they have profoundly influenced students and colleagues at the Pontifical Institute. Thus, Fr. Joseph Owen's *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* owes much to Gilson's Gifford Lectures, in which the attempt is made to establish the existence of a Christian philosophy. The central point that Gilson makes is that revelation provides the Christian philosopher with "a principle of discernment and selection which allows him to restore rational truth to itself by purging away the errors that encumber it". Once these errors are removed, of course, reason can deal with philosophical questions quite independently of faith, and can even produce different answers to a particular question. For Thomism is not a "system" of thought such as the Speculative Idealists sought to construct. "Philosophy", Gilson declares, "simply is not the kind of conceptual poetry they call a philosophical 'system'. Philosophy is wisdom, and wisdom is not poetry". It was Thomas who discerned and formulated the eternal first principles of wisdom, and thereby brought philosophy and Christian faith into harmony.

This position still has many advocates in Canada. But it no longer commands the assent of *all* Roman-Catholic philosophers. A number of younger scholars within that tradition have turned away from Thomism, and are tackling philosophical questions not in the light of eternal first principles, but with the devices of modern logic and of conceptual and linguistic analysis. It does not follow, of course, that they are reaching results incompatible with Thomism. What does follow, however, is that their arguments tend to be more tightly and effectively formulated, their use of words more self-consciously controlled, and their conception of philosophy closer to the twentieth-century secular view of it as a reflective enterprise which does not have to be based on a set of first principles. Moreover, these scholars are disinclined to accept the idea that philosophy should live in a symbiotic relation with theology, recognizing no doubt that one form of symbiosis is parasitism. The free exercise of the philosophic spirit for them, as for secular thinkers, is incompatible with any sort of propagandizing or *parti pris*. Hence even in quarters where one might not expect development to occur, it is going on apace.

There is one respect, indeed, in which Gilson himself has helped to implement this development. In the final chapter of *The Spirit of Thomism*, he urges Thomists to pay more attention to what the sciences are discovering about nature:



For although in itself nature has probably changed but little since the thirteenth century, our knowledge of it is very different from what was in the mind of Thomas Aquinas. Our mental universe, as William James would call it, has long ceased to be the same. We now know many things Thomas Aquinas never heard of. . . . Modern physics has deeply transformed traditional notions of matter, mass, energy, and the like. Microphysics . . . has changed our view of the world perhaps more radically than astronomy ever did. There never was a time when the reflections of scientists themselves on the nature of causality provided as much food for philosophical thought as the controversies among leaders of scientific inquiry in our own day. . . .

The opportunity thus opened up for philosophers arises from the fact that it is not the business of the scientist "to provide a clear philosophical elucidation of the principles involved in his own scientific theories. Only the philosopher is qualified to do so". Elucidation is needed not only in the physical sciences but also in the biological and social sciences, and in the arts. Hence, Gilson concludes, "in all these fields, modern Thomists are confronted with problems unknown to their master, and for which no answers can be found readymade in his writings". There is, then, ample work for philosophers in this domain, whether they approach it with a set of fixed principles, or with the purpose of discovering principles in the subject matter, or with the purpose of analyzing and clarifying concepts, principles and methods.

Two recent books may be mentioned to illustrate how English-Canadian philosophy has contributed to the understanding of other disciplines. The first is Dray's *Laws and Explanation in History* (1957). This book makes a fresh attack on the old controversy about whether history (i.e., historiography) is a science or an art. The controversy belongs, of course, to the philosophy of history not to history proper, and the point in it where Dray applies logical pressure is the topic of explanation. Those who hold that history is an art tend to say that it does not *explain* the events with which it deals but only describes, narrates, or tells a story about them. Those who hold that history is a science say that history does explain, or at any rate tries to explain events, just as physics does. Dray remarks that both parties make an assumption about what an explanation must be—that it is a logical schema which involves subsuming what is to be explained under a general law. He refers to this as "the covering law model". Positivistically inclined philosophers of history, by adopting various strategies, endeavour to make writings of historians fit this model, and Dray shows by some penetrating analysis why the endeavour fails and is bound to fail. Yet it does not follow that

historians only narrate or tell stories about the occurrences of the past. They also offer explanations of them. But the explanations are not of a "covering law" type.

The differences here are briefly as follows. A scientific explanation is an answer to a "why" question where we rebut a presumption that an event need not have happened by showing that in the light of certain initial conditions and general laws it *had* to happen. Dray calls this "explaining *why-necessarily*". He contrasts it with two modes of historical explanation. The first provides an answer to a "*how-possibly*" question, where we rebut the presumption that an event *could not* have happened by showing that, in the light of certain further facts not previously noted, there is no good reason for supposing that the event could not have happened:

This is a very common procedure where conclusions assume narrative form, as they do so often in history. Certain expectations are aroused by a train of events: an institution working well, gives every promise of weathering a crisis, but suddenly breaks down; a policy that appears to be the rational course for an individual to follow is suddenly abandoned. In the face of such an unexpected train of events, the historian's question, rather than "Why did this happen?" (meaning "What *made* it happen?") may well be "How could this have happened?" And such a question can be completely answered by rebutting the presumption that it could not have happened: by showing that, contrary to first appearances, there was no reason why it should not have happened.

In this procedure, there is no need to subsume the event under a law, universal or otherwise. All that is required is a demonstration of the *possibility* of the event by removing the basis for the expectation that it could not happen.

The second procedure generally referred to as explanation in history, Dray contends, is specifying what an event "really was" or what it "amounted to".

Once again, this is to be distinguished from explaining why the event occurred. The operative notion in such cases is less that of discovering necessary and sufficient conditions than of relating parts, at first not seen to be such, to a whole of some kind. Thus the historian explains a host of occurrences in fifteenth century Italy as a "Renaissance"; he explains a series of incidents in eighteenth century France as a "Revolution". In doing this, he undoubtedly traces connections between individual events, and these connections may be of various kinds—some might even be the kind envisaged in the scientific model. But the whole burden of explanation is in the synthesis of the parts into a new

whole. . . . It has no logical similarity, however, to explanation on the scientific model, as positivists have generally represented it."

The upshot of the analysis, then, is that history *is* an explanatory discipline, not just a descriptive or literary art; but that historical explanations, while different from scientific ones, are formally complete in their own right and do supply answers to questions that historians ask. Dray does not deny that historians may on occasion offer covering-law types of explanation. But if they do, it will be in answer to "why-necessarily", not "how-possibly" questions. Dray's book is a good example of the new *genre* of English-Canadian philosophy—a carefully argued examination of certain specific problems lying at the center of a larger issue. It has precipitated vigorous discussion, for positivists have tried to turn the edge of Dray's criticisms by giving a more adequate statement of their own case. As a result, the treatment of the larger issue has been impressively advanced.

The second book which makes a contribution to the analysis of another discipline is Charles Taylor's *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964). Taylor selects for investigation a limited but central problem in the science of psychology and explores it in depth. The problem is that of giving an adequate explanation of animal behaviour, including the behaviour of humans. Like Dray, he seeks to uncover the limitations of a theoretical model which has had wide currency in the discipline. The model is that espoused by behaviourist and neo-behaviourist accounts of explanation which utilize the two concepts of stimulus and response. Taylor shows by an incisive examination of experimental reports that classical stimulus-response theory is highly ambiguous. The notion of a stimulus, for example, easily slides over into that of a *situation perceived* by an animal, and the notion of response easily slides over into that of an *action performed* by the animal. Both of these slides adversely affect the interpretations given of such processes as learning, perceiving, and so on. In short, the mechanistic form of explanation sponsored by neo-behaviourism has set psychology on an altogether wrong tack. Many, of course, have made this point before. But where they have simply asserted it in general terms, Taylor undertakes to demonstrate it in particular and in detail by referring to cases.

To get psychology back on course, it is not enough to repudiate the behaviouristic model of explanation. An alternative needs to be espoused. This, Taylor contends, is the model of purposive or teleological explanation used by Aristotelianism, which he thinks can be formulated in such a way

as to be scientifically acceptable. For although in pre-Galilean thinking teleological explanation often did involve animistic, "mystical" or non-empirical elements, it *need not* do so.

To say that a system can only be explained in terms of purpose . . . does not involve making an unverifiable claim, any more than it involves postulating an unobservable entity. The element of purposiveness in a given system, the inherent tendency towards a certain end, . . . cannot be identified as a special entity which directs the behaviour from within, but consists rather in the fact that in beings with a purpose an event's being *required* for a given end is a sufficient condition of its occurrence. . . .

In the course of elaborating this position, Taylor makes a variety of interesting distinctions, such as that between teleology, purpose, and intentionality, the first and third of which are affirmed to be joint constituents of the notion of explanation in terms of purpose. It is too soon to say whether Taylor's book will substantially advance discussion of the subject, but present indications are that it may become at least as influential as the book by Dray.

These two works illustrate both in form and content the distance that English-Canadian philosophy has travelled since the days of Beaven, Young, Watson, and Murray. They serve to show how the subject has evolved during the century. One might summarize what has happened in this way. A hundred years ago, Canadian philosophers assumed that the truth on ultimate matters had been disclosed by the Christian religion. Their job was to support by intuition and argument what they already accepted as true, and to expose the errors in all non-Christian views of the world. Each man attempted to do this job in his own way according to his lights. For the majority of philosophers at present, the task is to *find out the truth* by patient, piecemeal inquiry into manageable issues, recognizing their complexity and difficulty, and seeking through the application of reason to dispel the mists of confusion, misconception and over-simplification which continually threaten to becloud human thinking. Most of us are prepared to recognize quietly that there is no royal road to truth. What we know is infinitesimal, compared to what we do not know. This means that the philosophical enterprise must be carried on by the combined efforts of many minds. As Charles Peirce remarked:

We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers. . . . Hence, philosophical reasoning should not be like a chain which is

no stronger than its weakest link, but should be like a cable whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided that they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected.

Most Canadian philosophers today are content if they can add a few lasting fibres to the cable which represents the on-going evolution of their subject, and which they hope will increase in strength during the century ahead.

## MAN OF MY TIME

*Giuliano Dego*

*(Translated from the Italian of Salvatore Quasimodo\*)*

You are still the man of the stone and sling,  
man of my time. You were in the cockpit  
with malignant wings, dials of death  
— I have seen you, — in the chariot of fire, at the gallows,  
at the wheels of torture. I have seen you: it was you,  
your exact science turned to extermination,  
without love, without Christ. You have killed again,  
as always, as your fathers killed, as they killed  
the animals that saw them for the first time.  
And the blood smells the same, as when  
a brother told his brother: "Let us go  
to the fields". And that echo, chill, insistent,  
has reached you, down to your day.  
Sons, forget the clouds of blood  
risen from the earth, forget your fathers:  
their tombs sink down in ashes:  
the black birds, the wind, cover their heart.

\*Salvatore Quasimodo was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1959. Translation by Professor Dego, formerly of the University of Leeds, now of Bedford College, University of London, is printed by permission of the Italian publishers.