BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Cockburn and Robert Gibbs, eds, *Ninety Seasons: Modern Poems from the Maritimes.* McClelland & Stewart, 1974. 160 pp. $6.95.

In the post-colonial age, designations neither of language nor nation alone seem to provide sufficient means for establishing the "location" of a particular literary sensibility. Another, third dimension, just now being fully explored in Canada, is that which would include what we usually call the "regional" element, and consists of a literature's links with its "*terroir*" or home-ground–its "state of place", in Peter Thomas's phrase. Therein a literature may articulate its characteristic ethos, and renew and reinvigorate itself from generation to generation. A finely executed example of this recent exploration–and renewal–is Robert Gibbs and Robert Cockburn's *Ninety Seasons.* The book is much more than a sampling of work of twenty-one poets writing in or about the Maritimes during the last thirty or forty year period. It is an act of critical judgement which operates through a complex affirmation of a distinctive literary consciousness rooted in locality.

On the initial level of an actual physical place, the book clearly originates in Fredericton, New Brunswick, which partly through tradition and partly through sheer determination has made itself the most active literary small town in Canada. What we have in *Ninety Seasons* is the reward of more than two decades of writing, publishing and general spreading of the word through teaching, criticism, editorial distillation, and unimpeachable good example by the U.N.B.–Fiddlehead group of writers: Fred Cogswell, Desmond Pacey, Alfred Bailey, Elizabeth Brewster and Alden Nowlan, among others. We need reminding in these days of fervor about things Canadian that for a time, Frederiction seemed the only University city in Canada that treated Canadian literature with the seriousness it deserved.

The present editors and many of the poets of *Ninety Seasons* represent the second generation of "Fiddlehead" poets, and the worthiness of the original enterprise is born out by the soundness and sophistication of their collective work here. Whatever the future of writing in The Maritimes may be, Fredericton has for twenty years been and still is at the heart of things. If it looks as if there is a preponderance of New Brunswickers in *Ninety Season,* it is because the Fiddlehead group created a local voice and a local audience through dogged effort over a span of years, while other places did not.

But at the same time as *Ninety Seasons* is a kind of Fredericton manifesto, a confident testimony of self-definition, it is also an easy directed to a larger audience. The collection bears the imprimatur of McClelland & Stewart rather than Fiddlehead Books. Even Frederictoners must pay homage to such emblems of recognition outside the region. And just how precarious and uncertain national recognition is may be judged by the fact that M & S closed its Maritime regional office (temporarily, it is to be hoped) at about the same time as this anthology was coming out. Perhaps though, this preservation of delicate balance between core and outline of a national culture is what gives Maritime writing its peculiar strengths. Spirited independence is an essential note of the distinctive voice in literature, but so is the demand for external acknowledgement. The Maritime voice is peninsular, not islanded.

On the one side, Maritime writers recognize that they are connected to some centre of things outside themselves, something fixed beyond immediate control, a set of circumstances that does not alter.

> Being is to become basalt.
> Black Rock on windy piles
> where sea finds fault along veins,
> along the grains of wood,
> gnawing
> rot from ancient logs.
>
> (Peter Thomas, "The Bait-Seller on the Fishing-Pier")

On the other side is openness, freedom of movement, and a self-sustaining concern with a total universe of gradations between certainty and uncertainty:

> by the black lines
> of a street-map
> I travel this city,
> recalling no north
> south east or west
> in its fragmented sky
> but when I go
> back to the place
> where my heart grew
> the sky inside my head
> I move as birds move
> when they fly
>
> (Fred Cogswell, "Direction")

Sense of place in the Maritimes is peninsular in time as well as in physical space. The anthology's entitling image from Charles Bruce's "Orchard in the Woods" reflects the editors' intention here. Once domesticated, the orchard now runs wild:

Clearing and field and buildings gone to waste—
But in the fall, a gunner going home
Will halt a moment, lift a hand to reach
One dusky branch above the crooked track,
And, thinking idly of his kitchen fire,
Bite back to the small black shining seed and learn
The taste of ninety seasons, hard and sweet.

(Charles Bruce, "Orchard in the Woods")

One had thought that the tradition of the decay of the works of man, venerable though it be in our traditions, had disappeared as surely as the age of sail. Yet here, still, amid overgrown farms and abandoned wharves and houses, the lament continues:

"Ubi sunt...?"
Where are the lumberjacks who came from the woods for Christmas,
Drinking, fighting, singing their endless ballads...?
Where is the shrill scream of the mill whistle,
The smell of a town built on sawdust and pine shavings?
Where are the logs afloat on the wide river?
Oh sad river,
Sing a song of pain for your children gone,
Oh glory gone.

(Elizabeth Brewster, "River Song")

Maybe the hardest part of this acrid taste of the past in *Ninety Seasons* is convincing the world that whirls beyond these shores that this old-fashioned art possesses an appreciable virtue; that our door step on a bygone age is an humane and habitable roost:

as if a mumbly old carpenter,
shoulder-straps crossed wrong,
laid it out,
refigured to the last three-eights of shingle.

(Milton Acorn, "The Island")

No doubt about it: *Ninety Seasons* shows very little of the raw experimentation that one would certainly find in a collection of printed matter (one hesitates to be any more specific) issuing, say, from Coach House Press, or from the writists at Vancouver's Western Front. Yet it is easy to mistake the form of novelty for its substance. Alfred Bailey's tough and sineway testing of the possibilities of thinking language, and Travis Lane's more delicate-subtle strugglings—like a moth at the pane—for shades of light, reassert the primacy of wit and word-play in poetry, and prove again that real discovery is often rediscovery or rather, perhaps, it is the steadfast breaking through mere cycle by maintaining a balanced ironic view of what one clings to—

My winter-time keeps healthy,
holds itself, put nothing forward—
a house canned smug in country cold
in plastic skirts, its door nailed shut,
stiff as a skate, all surface

(Travis Lane, "Spring Break-Up")

—and what one loses:

Drugged by water and wind
into the dream of the water's vertical eye,
armed with no measure of the fathom's track
we sink and die
and rise again unknown,
and knowing no release
no certain bound,
our misty bodies die and rise
and are nowhere found to us who never cease
and never return to the lost world
or a new world found.

(Alfred Bailey, "The Unreturning")

Such experiment as there is in this volume (which documents, for example, a regional revival of the descriptive sonnet) has little to do with notions of the momentarily chic in the world art. Rather, it issues from genuine concerns of the place itself, and constructed out of the materials at hand: "old stone coast, and beacon", "October Sun-Storm, Annapolis Valley", "Rock Pile", "Miramichi Lightning", "The Amazing Cannon at Liverpool, N.S.", "The Bait-Seller on the Fishing-Pier". A danger here is that such subjects might be considered merely picturesque, a version of what one finds in tourist brochures. The obvious reply to this is that any ad-writer can abuse substantial realities. But on the contrary, reality solidly inheres in this poetry, because it sees what is actually there and looks through it:

This bridge is no bridge
but a flowering over a flowing, hawkweed
& vetch crawling where ruts
once puddled up green beards
on the railing, wood black with age,
nailholes pinched in,
all beginnings disappeared

(Brian Bartlett, "This Bridge Is No Bridge")

Ninety Seasons does, however, contain something rare enough in contemporary writing and special to itself. It does not merely "follow", as the editors so modestly say "the methods of American poetry" (Depressing thought! One had thought that controversy over.) Gibbs and Cockburn identify this special quality as "the

continuity of the plain voice" in Maritime writing. The *Ninety Seasons* poets write "Poems for People", not for the editors of little magazines alone. Their language is usually as simple as clear light thrown suddenly out of clouds to beach, shingle wall, or forest floor. The plain voice illuminates its plain subjects:

> On Christmas eve, we killed the doe,
> parted her dazzled eyes, punctured her throat,
> and left small scarlet trenches in the snow
> where her warm blood ran out.
>
> (Alden Nowlan, "The Jackers")

But here again we have the peninsular sense. The plain voice holds firmly to its uncomplicated measure. Meanwhile, moral, even mystical inferences derive from its contemplative attention to ordinary and familiar objects, natural elements and ordinary people—this last above all, for the Maritimes landscape is essentially a human shore. I quote Fred Cogswell again in one of the most beautiful poems in the book:

> Young Ben with net and jar would run a mile
> To catch a brand-new butterfly to add
> To his collection; neighbors thought him mad—
> Hobbies like his are not New Brunswick's style.
>
> One day when Ben came back from useless chase
> His feeble-minded aunt who'd watched him run
> Gave him, bursting with pride for what she'd done,
> A bag of crumpled paper tied with lace.
>
> Impatiently he tore away the string
> And found a common Cabbage Butterfly
> Too spent to move a rubbed and tattered wing.
> He crushed it in his hand in quick disdain.
> Too late he saw a winged thing in pain
> Die in the round jar of her clouded eye.
>
> (Fred Cogswell, "The Butterfly")

Trancendental values surround a landscape of simple realities, simple truths and the ordinary acts of men.

Now I must make one or two complaints. The first, directed primarily to the editors, is hesitant, since a more thoughtfully edited collection can scarcely be imagined: in a rigorous selection of five or six of his "best" poems, every poet is given weight without overwhelming the others; older writers like Kenneth Leslie and Charles Bruce who may have written more than they should, Bailey, whose early work is almost embarrassing given the stature of his present development, and Cogswell whose best is his earlier work, are all shown to advantage, while young, barely published writers are given an impressive send-off. The fault here may be of

over-editing. I think that Gibbs and Cockburn have been a little too heavy-handed, a little too determined—perhaps almost unconsciously so, for they insist that the unity of *Ninety Seasons* was something that surprised themselves. If this is true, then they must beware, for their prejudices operate below the conscious level. I find the book almost too pat, too neat, too full of what we might expected from the editors of *The Fiddlehead.* The Maritime orchard may be wild, but there is little sign of wildness here. Altogether too much civilization and urbanity tightens upon the reader's collar. Why, for example, in a representative anthology is there nothing at all to be heard of Milton Acorn's outrageous politics, and none of Alden Nowlan's poems of social concern? How has it been possible in New Brunswick—or in any other part of the Maritimes for that matter—to ignore those lingering ghosts

A more serious and general objection—also consistent with the book's place of origin—is that not a single word in 160 pages reflects the fact of contemporary Acadian life. Of course the real question is not why the editors have not chosen, but, why have the poets not written about any Acadie they supposedly co-inhabit? The French become subjects of poems only when they have been distanced enough by time to provide the decor of a "Colonial Set".

Nevertheless, it is easy enough to accept the implicit, as well as the explicit admission of the book's incompleteness—its unfulfillment, "Words Are Never Enough"—as the appropriate contrition for too much zeal. This staunch and worthy example can not help but encourage the future cultivation of even richer varieties of *Ninety Seasons.* And the conclusion of Bailey's "Angel Gabriel", in which he transforms the genealogical history of the Cogswells and Bayleys in the New World into a regional myth, can provide the directional sense we need to know the territory through which we must move:

> And so to be
> 'burst in pieces & cast way in ye storme' was
> not the ultimate adventure; the road that ran
> from the Wiltshire plain to Fredericton's hill
> might be construed as sociological, but as we
> travelled over it, it became evident, at first
> however dimly, that something beyond awaited us,
> we did not know what to call it, but went forward to
> search for an answer.

College Sainte-Anne *Michael Estok*

The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature. By Marcelle Thiebaux. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974. Pp. 249. $13.50.

The Stag of Love is a survey of a number of German, French and English poems "in which the conventions of divine or earthly love were expressed metaphorically in terms of the hunt" (p.11). Professor Thiebaux's study opens (Ch.I) with a most

useful brief review of the ritualism of the late medieval hunt, of the iconography of the thirsting, serpent-slaying, nobly-antlered, harried or transpierced stag, and of the hunt as a literary structure, this latter consideration leading to the distinction of the sacred, the mortal, the instructive and the amatory chase. Chapter II looks at the first three of these categories through analysis of the story of St. Eustace's conversion and passion, the scene of Siegfried" death in the *Nibelungenlied* and the scenes of Gawin's tempation at Hautdesert in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Thereafter (Ch. III), the amatory chase is studied through initial consideration of some combined or transformed expressions of the sacred, mortal and instructive chase in Chretien's *Erec*, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and the *Tristan* respectively, followed (Ch.IV) by an investigation of the elaborate, detailed allegorical treatment of the more purely amatory hunt seen in late-medieval French and German poetry. In this fourth chapter, attention is principally paid to three French allegories which exploit in radically differing ways the device of the sanguinary stag (with the stag's bleeding and the "reiterated *paines, dolours, torments*...[signifying] the purifying process through which a lover must pass to be worthy of acceptance," p. 149), and to Hadamar von Laber's *Die Jagd* (ca. 1350), "a medieval *Clarissa*" by an author acutely aware of "the sexual dissonances of which the chase image is capable" (pp. 186-7). Throughout the survey, attention is paid to the relation of the literary *topos* of the hunt to classical and medieval literary tradition and to the extra-literary role of the hunt, while Professor Thiebaux recurrently emphasizes how the individual works "manifest the play of individual talent in controlling and enlarging the possibilities of the received subject matter of the hunt" (p.12).

Professor Thiebaux is most successful in relating the medieval to antecedent tradition and in her detailed exposition of some not well-known allegories. Brief reference to Oppian's and Xenophon's cynegetic manuals, to Plato's metaphors of the hunts of war and learning, to Sophocles' and Euripides' plots of the hunter his own victim (pp. 48-58) and to amatory uses of the chase in Aeschylus, Callimachus, Horace, Virgil and Ovid (pp. 89-102) help to place historically this literary *topos* so strongly influenced by the courtly tradition of the hunt in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, while the transition effected by the courtly culture is remarked in comments such as this concerning the feasting of the hounds following the consummation of the hunt, the slaying and breaking of the stag of love in *Li dis dou cerf amoreus:* "such a cynegetic feast of love is notably absent from the love chase among classical authors, where the hunt expresses mainly the harshness and necessity of desire, never the nourishment of lovers" (p. 153). On the other hand, brief reference to medieval Christian iconography of the stag and to the literary use of the chase in the thirteenth-century mystic Mechthild von Magdeburg's lyrics tantalizingly suggest religious applications of the *topos* without developing the subject, while in the latter part of *The Stag of Love* Professor Thiebaux is concerned only with selected secular love poems dealing with the stag. Thus, the fascinating use of the white hart on the Wilton diptych—in Richard II's gown, on his nobly-antlered stag brooch, and with golden chain on the attendant angels' brooches and on the reverse of the left panel—is not alluded to, although this

powerful iconographic representation of the hart in devotional art of the international court culture is presumably of central importance to a full understanding of the imagery of the stag of love.

The literary examples analysed are generally well-presented: the commentary on Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* is especially interesting, including an investigation of "the mysterious uniqueness" of the white, maned hybrid stag of the Minnegrotte episode, while the rhetorical dimensions of the *topos* are amply demonstrated in detailed exposition of the several allegorical devices of the love chase (the path, leash, stag and "sweet foot", food of love and wiles of the beloved) in Wolfram's *Titurel* and Hadamar's *Die Jagd.*

Occasionally, however, the emphasis upon the hunt seems disproportionate, and my principal criticism of this book is the rigidity of the categorical treatment of the chase *topos* apparent in some of the analyses of individual poems. In Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess,* for example, Professor Thiébaux points out that Chaucer sharply contrasted the presentation of Alcyone and Blanche, and that, with emphasis upon the word play of *herte* and *hert* and with "rich solar and venatic imagery", he urged the contrast of Blanche's immortal sublimation and her mortal role as the quarry of Death: "the hunt [which frames the encounter with the Black Knight] is the game that Death plays, in the guise of Octovien" (p. 120). This analysis has some very useful things to say about the use of contrast in the poem (Alcyone and Blanche, "White and the man in black, love and death, joy and sorrow, radiance and darkness," p. 125), but the emphasis upon the mortal chase is unduly great and I for one doubt if Blanche is generally remembered by "the three symbols" of stag, sun and phoenix (p. 127). For all the differences between the poems, Donne's apotheosis of the heroine in "The Second Anniversary" is comparable to that of Blanche in Chaucer's poem, and the comparison suggests just how muted is the metaphor of the chase and the suggestion of Blanche's being preyed upon by Death.

Similarly, emphasis upon the amatory in Fitt III of *Sir Gawain and the Green Kinght* unhappily overshadows the primary hunt metaphor which controls the poem from Fitt I through IV. Is it Lechery (as argued on p.76) or love of life, fear of death, which tempts Gawain to "cowarddyse and couetyse", "trecherye and vntrawpe"? The poet's explicit emphasis upon Gawain's nonlascivious acceptance of the girdle (11. 1844-61, 2364-66) argues that Gawain covets not the girdle *per se* or the love of Lady Bertilak, but his life, and it is ironic that Gawain falls as a result of his accepting this "magic" talisman when so clearly eschewing it as an amatory favour. The threatened beheading, initially construed in terms of physical mortality, becomes more clearly a metaphor of spiritual mortality as the mortal as well as venial aspects of Gawain's temptation are discerned, as Gawain's role as spiritual quarry is emphasized. Professor Thiébaux tentatively relates *Gawain* to various versions of the sacred hunt (pp. 81-4), but nonetheless tends finally to construe Bertilak's "malice" as "fiendish" (p. 80) rather than as comparable to the unrelenting spiritual rigour of God in the companion-poem *Purity*. This emphasis dichotomizes the poem, with the venial temptations of Fitt III—the amatory hunt, receiving undue emphasis while the characterization of the huntsman Bertilak and

the complex unity of the poem are undervalued. If Bertilak does remain the poem's "least comprehensible personage" (p. 74), the poem probably has not been seen in its own terms.

In short, the distinctions between religious and secular and between literary and plastic expressions of the *topos* of the chase are perhaps sometimes too arbitrarily maintained and occasionally the emphasis upon the metaphor of the chase in the separate interpretations of poems seems forced. By and large, however, *The Stag of Love* is a judicious and informative, well-written study on a topic of broad relevance and interest to all medievalists concerned with secular literature.

Dalhousie University *H. E. Morgan*

Fearful Joy. Papers from the Thomas Gray Bicentenary Conference at Carleton University. Edited by James Downey and Ben Jones. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974. Pp. xvii, 266. $11.50.

It was a happy thought on the part of Charles Beer of the McGill-Queen's Press to give this collection of conference papers the title *Fearful Joy*, taken from Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College":

> While some on earnest business bent
> Their murmuring labours ply
> 'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
> To sweeten liberty:
> Some bold adventurers disdain
> The limits of their little reign,
> And unknown regions dare descry:
> Still as they run they look behind,
> They hear a voice in every wind,
> And snatch a fearful joy.

That extraordinary poem, written in the spirit of the epigraph from Menander, "I am a man, a sufficient excuse for being unhappy," also includes the ominous lines,

> Alas, regardless of their doom,
> The little victims play!

—a sombre reminder to university professors enjoying themselves at any conference in these perplexed times. Even more sobering, perhaps, are the concluding lines,

> where ignorance is bliss,
> 'Tis folly to be wise.

Although the occasion was the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of this morale-dampening visionary, the participants in the conference, held at Carleton in

May, 1971, evidently had a good time. In the exultant words of the editors, "Rarely has a more congenial and interesting group gathered together for a conference of any sort." By the reader of this record of the proceedings the congeniality must be presumed. Certainly the interest level is well maintained, the galaxy of contributory talents is impressive, and the bliss of the book derives, on the whole, more from the wisdom it displays than from the ignorance it affects. While it might be too much to claim that the murmuring labours of the conferees have brought forth any hitherto unapprehended inspirations, it would be churlish not to recognize that some of them have indeed heard voices in the wind. A few have even disdained the limits of their little reign and taken a scholarly look at Thomas Gray for the first time, at least in public.

One of the bolder adventurers in the book is Donald Greene, who, describing himself as "an unreconstructed Johnsonian", indulges in some mind-teasing iconoclasm in a paper called "The Proper Language of Poetry: Gray, Johnson, and Others". After belabouring modern lexicographers for their anachronistic use of the abbreviation "poet.", Professor Greene, predictably enough, endorses Johnson's comment that "Gray thought his language more poetical as it was more remote from the common use," and goes on to subscribe to most of his other damning conclusions about the poet's archaisms and artificiality. Professor Greene depicts Gray as an inhibited, frightened person, a somewhat decadent worshipper of the past, and an inveterate self-pitier—a portrait which, one might have thought, Ketton-Cremer's fine biography had long since consigned to the basement.

Roger Lonsdale, in "Gray and Johnson: the Biographical Problem", assembles most of the basic facts about the relationship between these two great men, but does not entirely come to grips with the important question of why there was such hostility between them. The two never met. On the one occasion when Gray is reported to have seen Johnson, out for a stroll in London, he is said to have exclaimed to his friend, "Look, look, Bonstetten!—the great bear!—There goes *Ursa Major!*" With equal vehemence on his side, Johnson dismissed the bulk of Gray's poetry as monumentally dull, though he wrote of the *Elegy* in phrases warm with praise. As Dr. Lonsdale observes, Johnson saw in Gray's Odes all the deplorable tendencies that had appeared in English poetry since the death of Pope—wanton obscurity, the obfuscations of classical or primitive mythology, innovative or esoteric patterns of stanza and metre, and fustian vocabulary. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries, however, Johnson seemed to be "fighting a perverse rearguard action against inevitable developments and changes in taste to which he could not adjust himself." Unlike Professor Greene, who sees in this distaste for Gray an anticipation of Wordsworth's arguments against poetic diction and other unnatural bardic paraphernalia, Dr. Lonsdale, while striving for objectivity, appears to favour the view that Johnson was "obstinately resisting every sign of nascent Romanticism." Nonetheless, within another generation, critical enthusiasm for the Odes had waned to the point where Johnson's opinions took on a fresh validity.

When we read Jean Hagstrum's paper on "Gray's Sensibility", one of the most sensitive and perceptive pieces in this collection, we realize some of the temperamental difficulties which the poet unwittingly shared with *Ursa Major*, such

as his persistent melancholia and his inability to find a satisfactory intellectual substitute for "the more dangerous personal passions" that haunted him. Charles Victor de Bonstetten, who according to Roger Martin, was Gray's "premier amour", contended that the poet had never loved. Professor Hagstrum argues convincingly that his sensibility *was,* for him, love, and recalls the rare intensity with which he entered into his friendships with West and Walpole—friendships which provided the matrix of the *Elegy;* for both the earlier stoical conclusion and the later sentimental ending of that poem are "exquisitely sober renditions of Gray's own experience in passionate friendship..."

Space permits an uncomfortably few words about the other contributions to this volume. Ian Jack's "Gray in his Letters" draws a rather pointless comparison between Gray and Keats as correspondents, but an interesting and useful one between Gray and Gibbon. Arthur Johnston, in "Thomas Gray: Our Daring Bard", discusses the poet's fascination with war and warriors. Eli Mandel, writing on "Theories of Voice in Eighteenth Century Poetry: Gray and Smart", reveals some points of similarity between Gray's Pindaric Odes and Smart's "Song to David" and *Jubilate Agno,* and considers the implications of the two poets' metaphoric identification of music and poetry. Kenneth MacLean explores recurrent imagery (rivers and roads, vicissitude, pleasures and pains, slow movement and time, colours and coruscations, architectural forms, doors and portals, sculptures and frescoes, weaving and tapestry, but, above all, water) in Gray's poems and letters in "The Distant Way: Imagination and Image in Gray's Poetry" and finds in his spiritual and emotional concerns a strong foretaste of Wordsworth.

George Whalley's "Thomas Gray: A Quiet Hellenist" suggests, in what might be described as charmingly euphuistic prose, that the poet's study of Greek was "one of the absorbing preoccupations of his life", and discovers in him "a Greek way of mind", not unlike that of Coleridge, much of whose early verse "resounds" to Gray's poetry. Alastair MacDonald makes two appearances: as the writer of a dedicatory poem "For Thomas Gray" which probably made a sweeter impact in the conference room than it does on the printed page, and as the contributor of one of the more enlightening essays, "Gray and his Critics", which is particularly strong on the early nineteenth-century commentators. Louis Kampf's paper, "The Humanist Tradition in Eighteenth Century England—and Today", which was intended to provide the basis for discussion at a symposium on "Humane Studies in the Modern University" held on the last day of the conference, consists of twelve thought-provoking "theses", none of them especially fresh, but all offered in a suitably aggressive spirit. Clarence Tracy's "Melancholy Marked Him for Her Own" is an authoritative and agreeably presented study of the *Elegy*, given at a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada shortly after the conference. James Steele, in "Thomas Gray and the Season for Triumph", discusses the poet's interest in "the prosaic world of politics, business, and empire", and concludes that Gray's "world vision was consistently that of a whiggish, imperialistic bourgeois..." We must be grateful that he refrains from adding that weary cant phrase of our time, "chauvinistic pig".

Finally, two papers on Gray and his illustrators must be mentioned. The first, by Irene Tayler, originally took the form of an illustrated talk entitled "Two

Eighteenth Century Illustrators of Gray: Richard Bentley and William Blake". The second, by Ben Jones, "Blake on Gray: Outlines of Recognition", notes that Blake's illustrations show how carefully he had read Gray's poetry and how accurately he had recreated details and patterns in the poems, while responding to them in a highly imaginative and independent way. These stimulating pieces are accompanied by twenty-five plates of engravings, reproduced clearly at the centre of the volume.

In a brief *Afterword* Donald Davie provides a forthright critique of the conference proceedings which reflects something of the liveliness of the various discussions.

This book, one of the most handsome offerings to date by the McGill-Queen's Press, obviously required some hard editorial work by James Downey and Ben Jones for whom the task of harnessing the energies of so many different contributors must have been quite formidable. It is not their fault that the scholarly apparatus of the volume suffers from some inconsistencies. The number and quality of footnotes, for instance, vary greatly from one writer to another, the prize for paucity going to Kenneth MacLean, who contents himself with seven, and for generosity to Alastair MacDonald, who achieves a century, averaging more than five per page. By footnotes, alas, as Dr. Johnson once observed, the mind of the reader becomes refrigerated.

Dalhousie University *James Gray*

The Colonial Century: English–Canadian Writing before Confederation.
The Canadian Century: English-Canadian Writing since Confederation.
Edited by A.J.M. Smith. Toronto: Gage, 1973. Pp. xxii, 261; xx, 652.

In this heyday of Canadian anthologies, when thick and fast they come from publishing houses old and new, it is heartening to see the pioneer and old pro still at his editorial desk. A.J.M. Smith has long been known as an expert anthologist of poetry, one whose excellence as a creator and critic of poetry has extended to the difficult business of compilation, selection, and editing. His latest venture in choosing samples of other men's wares is confined to prose and naturally invites comparison with his earlier editorial work. Probably the difficulties to be faced are greater for the anthologist of prose. In addition to being constantly plagued by sheer bulk, he must look for self-contained units if he is to use sections or chapters from novels or books, he must decide upon a balance of fiction and non-fiction or exclude one of the two. Then, like the anthologist of poetry, he must choose to stress or disregard themes or ruling ideas, and to distinguish or not between the representative or historically important and the aesthetically superior when the two are not found together.

When he was working with Canadian poetry, A.J.M. Smith chose to look for excellence without much attention to merely historical interest, to theme, or to the expression of an elusive national identity. His introduction to the first volume of

his prose anthology takes a rather different tack: "The purpose of this book is to make available a representative selection of texts which illustrate the special character that geography, climate, and politics have imposed upon the sensibility and thought of the Canadian people." Furthermore, he points out that generally "the writing in the present book differs from he verse of the same period and from most of the later literature. It is more practical, more purely expository, usually simpler, and generally less sophisticated and literary." His concern with a Canadian "sensibility" as formed by "geography, climate and politics" naturally leads him to emphasize the writings of travellers, explorers, fur-traders, and politicians, and he justifies his emphasis by concluding that the "characteristic" (and best?) writing of the period is "practical and utilitarian", and less "self-conscious" and more "immediate" than later Canadian prose. The result of all this is a special kind of colonial anthology, one which may do what the editor sets out to accomplish but may still not represent fully the best and most vital writing of the period. No doubt the "sensibility", and even the "individuality", he is looking for is most clearly seen in the kinds of writing he selects, but other kinds of writing tend to be crowded out in the process, something that does not happen in his anthology of poetry. Moreover, his implication seems to be that colonial attempts at *belles lettres*, or at least the less immediately practical and utilitarian, the more literary and imaginative, are inferior and hardly worth representing. That this is true of the bulk of colonial literary prose as well as poetry is undeniable. Yet there are exceptions which rise above the rhetorical or melodramatic plain of mediocrity, but which many of our critics who grew to intellectual maturity in the 1930's have tended to overlook or undervalue. To be specific, Haliburton's *Old Judge* has moments transcending anything in the more "practical and utilitarian" *Clockmaker;* De Mille's *Strange Manuscript*, which is not represented in either of these volumes, is an anti-utopian fantasy of no mean order; a few of Howe's occasional pieces in the *Novascotian* are as well-written and lively as his better known public rhetoric here represented; Richardson's *Wacousta*, despite its obvious faults, has something to offer even the anthologist insisting on high standards; and McCulloch's *Stepsure Letters*, which certainly invites the charge of dullness if read for prolonged periods, lends itself well to selection for an anthology.

Smith's first volume, then, strikes this reviewer as good of its kind but as not adequately representative of the breadth of colonial writing. Of course, an editor has the right to fulfil his own special purpose, and this Smith has declared and acted upon. The only difficulty is that his special purpose is too exclusive. One further point about the volume must be added: it suffers from being an unrevised reprinting of the hardbound edition of 1965. Its lists of "selected criticism", excellent though they are, are out of date by nearly a decade — an oversight that the publisher should have been able to avoid. One also wonders if the editor would not have altered anything in his introduction or even in his selection if he had compiled the book more recently during the present extra-ordinary surge of interest in Canadian literary study.

The bulky second volume, which spans the century from Confederation to the near-present, is not directed or limited by a purpose similar to that of the first

volume. The editor does introduce the subject of "Canadian identity" near the end of his introduction, but only tentatively and without discussion or conclusions. Above all, he declares plainly that his "criterion has been in every case literary, not social, political, or historical" – and the Canadianisim of the literature is left to express itself. This volume is consequently less restricted than its predecessor and represents prose-writing of the period more satisfactorily.

The division of the volume into two periods ("The Expanding Dominion, 1867-1914" and "The Twentieth Century: 1914 to the Present") seems historically reasonable, and the distribution of writers and space (11 writers and 154 pages for the first part, 30 and 469 for the second) fairly reflects the marked increase in the numbers of significant writers and the relatively high quality of their prose from the 1930's to the present. Nevertheless, the neatness of the division is a little misleading. Fiction from 1867 up to Grove, Callaghan, and MacLennan is represented only by an animal story of C.G.D. Roberts, excerpts from Connor and Sara Duncan, and several Leacock pieces. The considerable body of respectable fiction which one might call transitional between Victorian romance and modern realism is represented only by *The Imperialist*, an excellent and early example. There is nothing of Stringer, Stead, Ostenso, Theodore Roberts, or Day to fill the void between the romanticism of Connor and the "critical realism" that began to develop in the late 1920's, and no indication that the two traditions were moving side by side in the twenties and thirties or that a few of the regional novelists were at least as strongly influenced by the new realism as they were by the old romanicism. The impressive chapter of Day's *Rockbound* (1928) in which the fishermen clean and salt their mammoth catch of herring, the eerie scene of the Chance Along scavengers boarding the flooded wreck in T.G. Roberts' *The Harbor Master* (1913), various episodes from the Western novels of Stead and Ostenso – these would have revealed something of Canadian fiction in transition and would not have invalidated Smith's literary criterion. But then what of the increased bulk? The answer, one suspects, is that the second volume was required to do too much, to cover a century of writing incomparably richer than that of the colonial period. The only way to get around the difficulty would perhaps have been to sub-divide, to have a second volume about the size of the first (250 pages) for prose from Confederation to the 1920's, and a third for the modernist period.

After all this fault-finding, it is with pleasure that one turns to the major portion of the volume given over to the last half-century. It is easy enough to think of other pieces that should have been included – particularly something from Birney's genuinely funny *Turvey* and a section from Buckler's magnificent *Mountain and the Valley* – but regrets cannot become grim complaints when the selections actually made from hundreds of possibilities are so consistently good. Just about everyone else is here, represented by some of their best writing and often by pieces not commonly anthologized – Grove, Callaghan, MacLennan, Sinclair Ross, Garner, Hood, Ethel Wilson, Raddall, Glassco, Davies, Mitchell, Ludwig, Richler, Alice Munro, O'Hagan, Klein, Lowry, Whalley, Sheila Watson, Margaret Laurence, Cohen, Godfrey. An unexpected bonus is the section called "Interpretations of Politics and

Culture", in which some of our leading men of ideas – Lower, Underhill, Creighton, Brown, McLuhan, Frye, Woodcock, and Cook – demonstrate the high level achieved in our critical and historical writing.

On the whole, this collection of prose does not quite live up to what Smith has so admirably done as an anthologist of poetry. It is not that his great strengths are absent – his refined taste, his avoidance of trendiness, his respect for incisive intelligence, his sensitivity to well-cadenced and clean writing. Consequently, his selections make good reading. But one cannot help feeling that he is somewhat out of his true element here, at least in the sections of the anthology before the 1930's, and that what he does with such authority, grace, and insight in the creation, criticism, and selection of poetry he does not do equally well as an historian of prose. As a collection of good Canadian prose the anthology is excellent. As a collection which one expects to be representative, as well as catholic yet uncompromising in taste, it leaves something to be desired.

Dalhousie University *M.G. Parks*

Conrad's Romanticism. By David Thorburn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974. Pp. xvi, 201. $8.95.

Professor Thorburn argues persuasively that modern criticism has tended to assure itself of what Leavis calls Conrad's "seriousness" by completely appropriating Conrad to the twentieth century and by overemphasizing his affinities with the contemporary prophets of alienation, disorder, and despair. While Thorburn acknowledges Conrad's deep concern for such things as the problematic status of language, the natural and social forces that threaten man's existence as well as integrity, and the lack of a firm basis of truth on which to act with assurance (serious concerns which seem very contemporary), he underlines the fact that Conrad is very much a nineteenth-century man whose works resemble in important ways the romances of Stevenson, Haggard, and Kipling, and even the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge. In a sense, Thorburn's argument is an elaboration of those perceptive early reviews of Conrad's works which pointed to their exotic and romantic surfaces and which also probed, somewhat tentatively, their psychological and moral significance.

When he began this study, Thorburn explains, he was primarily investigating Conrad's puzzling unevenness and even discontinuity as a writer rather than his place in literary history; and, so, he looked to *Romance* and to the lesser fiction for a clue to his artistic lapses. He finds in these works several elements characteristic of the *fin-de-siecle* adventure story. However, he finds the same elements even in Conrad's major works, and this continuity leads him, eventually, to the conclusion that throughout Conrad's career the raw material of his fiction–shipwrecks, revolutions, love and honour conflicts, jungle adventure, and so on–prompted him to the extravagance, lushness, melodrama, and sentimentality characteristic of a debased Romanticism. (Thorburn points to the enormously popular and much

imitated *The Prisoner of Zenda* by Anthony Hope as an example of the debasement of the serious romance during the latter years of the nineteenth century and as an example of the sort of unsophisticated escapism with which Conrad's fiction has a surprising affinity.)

Thorburn finds the clue to Conrad's successful handling of such material in the autobiographies, especially *A Personal Record.* Pointing out the flexibility of Conrad's impressionism in this work, he shows how despite the narrator's attempt to keep to the surface, to the world of men and action, the narrative presses to intimate and significant disclosures. Since a movement from exotic surfaces to significant psychological and moral disclosures is characteristic of Conrad at his best, Thorburn concludes that the first-person method of narration represented a crucial artistic advance for Conrad because it could chasten the potentially extravagant subject matter of his fiction. Thus, as Thorburn sees it, the danger Conrad faced throughout his writing career was the danger of allowing the matter (the exotic world of adventure and romance) to overwhelm the manner (the intelligence that seeks passionately for the significance underlying events).

Concentrating his attention on Conrad's manner, on this authentic Conradian voice that we generally associate with Marlow, Thorburn hears a distinct echo of the Romantic poets. In such stories as "Youth," *Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness, Under Western Eyes*, and *Chance*, he says,

> the narrating voice is explicitly separated temporally and ontolgically from the protagonist of the story, and this separation–which often determines both the shape and the meaning of Conrad's fiction–links the author of *Lord Jim* to the Romantic poets even more decisively than his fondness for exotic settings or his frequent reliance on variations of quest romance. It is striking, in fact, how closely Conrad's most characteristic works resemble what M.H. Abrams has identified as the greater Romantic lyric, a poetic form whose defining features are the play of memory across time and the juxtaposing of an older poet with his younger self.

The geneology of the Conradian narrator is not as important, however, as the artistic control that his narrative strategy provides Conrad. (One remembers James' comment that the first-person method is "the darkest abyss of romance" because it encourages looseness of all kinds.) As Thorburn sees it, the narrating voice deflects the reader's attention away from the potential extravagance of the material to the narrator's own tortured doubt about his ability to know the story adequately and to express its inner truth, thus providing Conrad with the distance and control he needs for artistic success.

It might seem that here if anywhere we are touching on an aspect of Conrad's mind and art which is "modern"; in other words, Conrad's deep and abiding concern with what J. Hillis Miller in *Poets of Reality* calls "the mendacity of words" seems to suggest the twentieth century rather than the nineteenth. However, Thorburn even sees Conrad's radically sceptical attitude toward language and art (evident in the narrative strategies and articulated repeatedly in letters and essays) as Romantic in spirit and origin: "Conrad...hold to a meager but partly

sustaining faith in the power of language to make sense of the world and however imperfectly, to recreate it"; and this faith, according to Thorburn, allies Conrad with the Romantic poets rather than with the "poets of reality". Whether or not one agrees with this, by now it does at least seem clear that the arc of Conrad's career is intimately related to his habitual reliance on Romantic themes, settings, characters, and modes of story-telling and has "much to tell us about the infirmities but also the resilience of the Romantic imagination at a century's distance from its original English flowering in Blake and Wordsworth."

In his challenging conclusion, Thorburn widens his perspective to look at writers who were Conrad's contemporaries and immediate successors. He says that in James, Ford, Joyce, Woolf, and even Lawrence, we find, as we did in Conrad, significant impulses which have their roots in Romanticism; for example, the impulse "to recover and to celebrate the ordinary". Thus, he finds in twentieth-century fiction less tendency toward outrage and apocalypse than is commonly supposed. Thorburn's treatment of these writers is brief, and his selection will seem to some rather arbitrarily limited. However, one cannot help feeling in his discussion of Conrad at least that he provides a corrective to such critics as J. Hillis Miller and Royal Roussell who have tended to overemphasize alienation and despair in Conrad to the neglect of his sense of human sharing and continuity (however precarious) and his respect for "the irremediable life of the earth as it is."

It seems to me that Thorburn's book is an important contribution to Conrad studies. He illuminates those aspects of Conrad's mind and art that have roots in Polish and English Romanticism. He provides a perceptive and well-balanced study of the often neglected autobiographical works and of *Romance*. Moreover, he offers new insight into the elusive Conrad-Ford collaboration. He provides another, and in my opinion more complete, explanation for the arc of Conrad's career than the Achievement and Decline theory elaborated on Freudian lines by Moser. Perhaps, in view of much current Conrad criticism, his most important contribution is his qualification of the generally accepted view of Conrad's radical scepticism. For me, however, the great pleasure of this intelligent and sensitive study is the opportunity to recover, to some extent, the Conrad his contemporaries saw. Many years ago Guerard pointed out the importance when writing about Conrad's work of being true to one's first response. Clearly, the excesses of many freewheeling "new readings" of Conrad (archetypal, Freudian, Jungian, or whatever) could be avoided by this close attention to what the first readers of Conrad would have realized immediately—his relation to such writers as Marryat, Stevenson, and Kipling.

Saint Mary's University *Michael J. Larsen*

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. By Annie Dillard. New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974. Pp. 271.

If, in recent years, we have been blessed with abundant supplies of literary fauna, it must be admitted that far too few have come to us without a telltale human overlay

of some sort. As that most engaging of zoo-keepers, Mr. Gerald Durrell, has suggested, the anthropomorphic attitude is difficult to avoid. He himself, it is worth noting, recalls only "about a dozen" animals who could "resist all attempts on my part to turn them into something they were not." Nor has this habit of mind been confined to avowed zoo-keepers, like Durrell; it lies at the heart, surely, of the stories of Farley Mowat, (to name a fairly obvious contemporary example), and of the great nineteenth century Canadian nature writers' works as well.

While recognizing that the anthropomorphic attitude toward Nature has its place–the conservation movement, for example, would be worse off without the contributions rendered by Mowat and like-minded writers–we should also recognize that other attitudes are not only possible, but perhaps equally consistent with an enlightened attitude on matters ecological. Annie Dillard's book could well provide the needed impetus for such a re-evaluation. Refreshing precisely because it avoids the anthropomorphic attitude, Dillard's book shows us that painting Nature's face "warts and all" need not mean doing so without awe and wonder at the marvels of creation. Indeed, the awe and wonder are heightened by the author's admission that Nature's ways may be callous, cruel, even senseless–and that there may be no way we can rationalize this away. A good example is the following:

> Parasitism: this itch, this gasp in the lung, this coiled worm in the gut, hatching egg in the sinew, warble-hole in the hide–is a sort of rent, paid by all creatures who live in the real world with us now. It is not an extortionary rent: wouldn't you pay, don't you, a little blood from the throat and wrists for the taste of the air? Ask the turtle. True, for some creatures it is a slow death; for others, like the stylopsied bee, it is a strange, transfigured life. . . Or it is the black burgeoning of disease, the dank baptismal lagoon into which we are dipped by blind chance many times over against our wishes, until one way or another we die. Chomp. (234).

Such prose–pithy, metallic, almost cruel itself–the type of prose that has inspired at least one critic to refer to the work as a "kind of gutsy *Walden*", is in my view salutary precisely because it at least suggests to us the possibility that man may not, in fact, be the measure of all things. For this lesson–the most valuable of all, if we learn it faithfully–as well as for its observations of nature, in and of themselves, the book is more than worth the price of admission. It is literally eye-opening–which I suspect is just what the author intended–to see what a trained observer can do in a year on a small creek in the Roanoke Valley of Virginia. One is almost tempted to try the experiment for oneself, at least on a smaller scale. And the prose is for the most part a sheer delight. In these days of literary as well as political and journalistic newspeak, it is an increasingly rare pleasure to spend time in the presence of one who both thinks and talks for herself. I suspect that Dillard is one of those who could write engagingly about even the stock quotations. Given a subject as intrinsically interesting as the one she has chosen, the result is one of the few truly memorable reading experiences I've had in this year of short rations and long bivouacs. As long as I continue to read, I expect to return to *Tinker Creek* every few years with renewed pleasure.

My only serious reservation—Dillard's massive literary documentation is often intrusive, but never badly so—concerns the role of the author, or, perhaps more precisely, the observer. Aside from the "natural" journey of seeing out the cycle of seasons at the creek, she leads us on an extensive mental pilgrimage ranging from Heraclitus to Heisenberg, from the Talmud to Thomas Merton. But it is—referring particularly to this larger dimension of the book—difficult to tell just what she has learned from all this seeing, reading, and thinking. How has her year at the creek changed her? How has it *altered* her perceptions of other people, or even for that matter of nature? Does she intend to go on living at the creek? Finally (and here one can hear the complaint of Thoreau, who addresses himself so majestically) to this question in the opening pages of *Walden*, why did she come to the wilderness? Surely no account of any pilgrimage could be satisfying or complete without a discussion of these important issues. Dillard would seem—as an avowed Heisenbergian—to believe that without making sense of the observer, and what he or she is doing, one cannot finally make sense of the phenomena. Yet, for all her talk about the Heisenbergian universe, she treats herself as a kind of static, almost Newtonian seeing-eye. Most unsettling, to say the least. Again, one cannot help speculating on the reason of this contradiction. Is it a kind of primal terror that makes this sensitive and intelligent woman back away from herself, when she is so fearless in confronting almost every other imaginable variety of fauna? Or do such matters simply not fall within her field of vision? In either case, her achievement, while considerable indeed, must inevitably fall short of that of Thoreau and Henry Beston, who are eloquent on precisely those fundamental questions on which Dillard is so strangely and, to my mind, at least, unaccountably silent.

Dalhousie University *J.C. Peirce*

A Maske: The Earlier Versions. By John Milton (edited by S.E. Sprott). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973. Pp. 230. $25.00

This volume is a masterpiece of palaeography, based on two manuscript renderings and the first printed version (1637) of John Milton's poem originally named *A Maske*, which was wantonly and illogically called *Comus* by John Toland in 1698, some 64 years after its first public presentation at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, in 1634. Leaves of the so-called "Trinity College manuscript", penned almost entirely in Milton's own handwriting and spattered with hundreds of his cumulative emendations, were accidentally discovered in 1725, "mangled and scattered like the limbs of Osiris", in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. They were clearly Milton's "foul papers", his working drafts of the poem. The "Bridgewater Manuscript", presented at the outset to John Egerton, First Earl of Bridgewater, Lord President of Wales, in whose honour the masque was written and staged, is a "clean copy" of an intermediate stage of the Trinity College manuscript.

The Trinity College document has long fascinated scholars. The year 1899 brought a facsimile reproduction and a transcript by William Aldis Wright. In 1943, Harris Francis Fletcher republished Wright's facsimile and transcript. In the present volume, Sprott presents a new transcript made by himself in 1968. While his work was being readied for the press in 1968-73, the Scolar Press Menston, Yorkshire, made new facsimiles (1970,1972) and reprinted Wright's transcript, but "does not reveal any substantial material not recorded in the present edition."

Sprott is not the first scholar to study the Trinity College manuscript from the palaeographical point of view. As early as 1933, Helen Darbishire, of Oxford, had written on "The Chronology of Milton's Handwriting", stressing particularly his earlier use of the Greek epsilon in English, as contrasted with a later Italian "e", a slow change whose beginning she dated from 1637. John T. Shawcross (in "Certain Relationships of the Manuscripts of *Comus*", PBSA, 1960) accepts this conclusion and on that basis maintains that all or most of the Trinity College manuscript was written not earlier than 1637.

Sprott goes back independently to the manuscript itself and undertakes a rigorous and minute examination of every word and letter in terms of the type of pen used, the colour and thickness of the ink, and the nature of the emendations. One is reminded of the techniques of modern archaeology, in which "horizons" in excavating multiple sites are determined by the sifting of soil and rubble for artifacts, level below level. The analogy is not exact, but Sprott actually discovers four horizons (not his term).

In the first of these, emendations were first made contextually, that is, "concurrently with the first writing of their contexts, up to line 885 . . . .On page 25, the pen was beginning to deteriorate. While it was thickening but not yet scratching, Milton probably used it to review all he had written from the start and to make the revisions listed above" (at least 10 items are identified). Milton then began to compose the song to Sabrina. "From here onwards, the pen was more and more prone to flood and thicken and now alternatively dry and scratch." After finishing the epilogue, "Milton apparently turned back to the beginning once more and from there reviewed the whole piece, emending from time to time in the flooding and scratching pen..."

In a second "horizon", some further emendations were made "with a distinctly sharper and clearer pen . . . then in a similar but perhaps more worn pen." When the heavily corrected copy had reached this stage, Milton (Sprott suggests) made a clean copy, which not only served as a prompt copy for the 1634 performance but was the version from which a secretary copied out the Bridgewater Manuscript, with his own habits in spelling and punctuation.

There were many further emendations and additions (Sprott gives six sub-categories) whose readings were first reproduced in the 1637 (printed) edition and which are distinguishable in the Trinity College manuscript in pen, ink and style of writing, all by Milton. Finally, at seven places in the manuscript, in a hand not Milton's, there are emendations that Shawcross describes also to preparation for the 1637 edition but Sprott to the 1673 *Poems*, when the poet was blind and needed secretarial help.

blind mouthings of misguided dislike. What we get from Professor Rosenberg is not so much a defense of the *Idylls of the King*, as a reading of it. Mind you, Professor Rosenberg is at some pains to put the *Idylls* in proper perspective. We are reminded that "the influence of Tennyson on Poe...and, through Poe, on Baudelaire and Mallarme constitutes one of the vital currents flowing into the poetry of our century". And Professor Rosenberg has no difficulty in showing us that the symbolist technique evident as early as "Mariana", "reaches its furthest development in the *Idylls*".

The Fall of Camelot, after the critical perspective is established and certain difficulties and points of failure in the poem are conceded, becomes at once a miraculous mirror and an echo-chamber of the total poem. Analysis gives way to the synthesis of timescape and landscape, of the purpose of the poet with the posture and personae of the poem.

The following passage will give some notion of Professor Rosenberg's touch and of his intention:

> The *Idylls of the King* is not only explicitly and constantly *about* the hazards of mistaking illusion for reality; it *dramatically enacts* those dangers, ensnaring the reader in the same delusions that maim and destroy its characters. Nothing in the poem is as it seems, and nothing seems to be what it is, with the possible exception of Arthur, who may himself be the most dangerous of illusions, the *homme fatal* of the *Idylls*. One passes through hundreds of lines of some of the most beautiful blank verse in English, green glades and shimmering towers, knights and maidens displayed in a rainbow pageant of music and color; yet the verse, fair as it is, at once unfolds and conceals a world of the rankest treacheries and vilest horrors: brothers murder one another, sadistic ladies drive their obsessed lovers impotent and insane, the King himself is a cuckold, and the faces of his traitor-knights are ground into featureless slime. The verse lulls and seduces at the same time that the events appall; grotesque sights entwine themselves upon a background of excruciating clarity and beauty...Holding a mirror up to itself, the poem is nowhere what it seems to be...a medieval charade—but rather the subtlest anatomy of the failure of ideality in our literature.

Perhaps it would be only meet, right and my bounden duty to go on quoting, to review the book by quotation only, or simply to stop now and say, "Go read it for yourself!" And really that is what I am saying, even if I am taking unconscionably long in doing so. And I must not, cannot stop without noting how perceptively Professor Rosenberg locates the symbolist core of the poem in such stuff as dreams are made on:

> The structure of the *Idylls* everywhere mirrors its meaning. Hence in his poem in which shadow and substance continually reverse their meaning, dreams and actions are indistinguishable because ultimately identical. Whether Leodogran dreams the *Idylls of the King* or his dream is an event within it depends entirely upon one's point of view. Throughout the poem dreams and symbols become literalized in events, which in turn generate the dreams and symbols that are enmeshed in the narrative. Tristram's dream in

> "The Last Tournament" illustrates this principle in a single idyll, just as Leodogran's dream illustrates it in the larger compass of the entire poem. Asleep in the woodland lodge in which he had formerly made love to Isolt, Tristram dreams of presenting her with a ruby necklace, which turns to frozen blood in her hands (412). As Tristram sleeps, the action shifts to the opposite end of the kingdom, where Arthur attacks the Red Knight of the North. But Tristram's dream of blood and guilt continues to color this parallel strand of the narrative, in which Arthur's "blood-red" adversary (442) is slaughtered and his hall rings with the shrieks of his massacred followers. The action then returns to Tristram, but with so deft an interweaving of the two narrative strands that it is as if the dreaming Tristram were awakened by distant shouts from the Red Knight's hall:
>
> Then, out of Tristram waking, the red dream
> Fled with a shout, and that low lodge returned,
> Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs. (486-488)
>
> Two events widely spaced geographically but temporally simultaneous—Tristram's journey westward to Tintagil and Arthur's to the North—are fused in Tristram's dream, which in turn propels the narrative into the future, as Tristram rides from the forest to his impending slaughter at the hands of the shrieking Mark.

What astonishes me is that *The Fall of Camelot,* not counting notes, bibliography and index, is a little less than one hundred and forty-four pages long. This is a fact. I can prove it. But I do not believe it. True, I read the book at one sitting. But, like *Camelot* itself, the book

> ...is built
> To music, therefore never built at all
> And therefore built forever.

It goes on (and it will go on) reverberating in the mind, re-echoing the music that is so richly echoed in Professor Rosenberg's book. How deaf or daft the ear which will not hear such music now.

Dalhousie University. *Malcolm Ross*

The Canadian General: Sir William Otter. By Desmond Morton. Toronto: Hakkert, 1974, pp. xix, 423. $12.95.

Desmond Morton's biography of Sir William Otter is a scholarly and comprehensive study of a soldier whose life-long commitment to the profession of arms in the service of his country intersected most of the more exciting events of Canadian history from 1860 to 1914 — the Fenian Raids, the North-West Campaign of 1885 and Canada's participation in the South African War. It is a much larger and more comprehensive study than Professor Morton's *Ministers and Generals: Politics and*

the Canadian Militia 1868-1904. The Canadian General and John Swettenham's three-volume biography of General A.G.L. McNaughton are the only two scholarly biographies of any of Canada's military leaders.

This is not an easy book to read, particularly for those unfamiliar with post-Confederation Victorian history. For those interested in Canadian military and social history, however, it is fascinating and rewarding reading. The small number of printing errors is offset by maps and a centre section of contemporary photographs. It is an exceptionally well documented and indexed study. During his lifetime, Otter carefully accumulated the material necessary for a typical Victorian autobiography. Professor Morton's use of newspapers of the day gives *The Canadian General* a social dimension often missing from biographies.

Sir William Otter was very much a man of post-Confederation Victorian Upper Canada. Lacking wealth and political connections, but determined to succeed to the honours of his day and to re-establish his family name, Otter in large measure achieved his ambitions. In so doing, he played an important role in transforming the Canadian militia from a "colonial auxiliary to a national army of a sovereign country". Otter did not have the mind of an Andy McNaughton or the tactical ability of a Guy Simonds. He did have an extraordinary capacity for hard work, often of the most monotonous kind, in the face of public apathy and government disinterest except when political patronage was involved. He strove to be apolitical when politics and the militia were inseparable parts of the spoils system. He believed deeply in soldierly virtues, but his attempts to instill discipline into the militia and develop the permanent militia into a professional force modelled on the British Regulars were not well received, even by imperialists such as George Denison.

He participated fully in the social life of Toronto to the limit his sometimes meagre finances would allow. As he grew older, his financial position, under the guidance of Sir Henry Pellatt, greatly improved. His family life was one of almost continuous disappointments, and he found solace in his soldiering and sporting activities. He maintained himself in excellent physical condition and at the age of 56 was fully capable of commanding the first Canadian Boer War contingent of battalion strength. At 64 he was offered command of a British brigade and at 71 returned to uniform as the organizer of First World War Canadian internment operations. He did not finally retire until he was 77. He lived a very full life for any era.

Professor Morton eschews any explicit historiographic interpretation of Otter's career. Otter could be classed as a Canadian imperialist but he does not seem to have had any intellectual interest in the Canadian imperialist movement. Neither Carl Berger in his *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* nor Norman Penlington in his *Canada and Imperialism 1896-1899* mention Otter. He was first and foremost a practical, apolitical soldier devoted to raising the professional military standards of the Canadian militia; a most daunting task. That he and a few others succeeded as well as they did was remarkable. Considering the state of pre-war militia, the Canadian military performance in the First World War would seem to have been near miraculous.

Professor Morton is not favourably disposed to Sir Sam Hughes but Sir Frederick Borden is given considerable credit for the increase in professionalism in the militia before the First World War. Biographies of these two gentlemen would be most welcome additions to our knowledge of Canadian military history and post-Confederation Victorian Canada. Desmond Morton has provided an example to follow in his biography of the first Canadian Chief of the Canadian General Staff.

Dalhousie University *B. Cuthbertson*

Cohen, Matt. *The Disinherited.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1974. Pp. 240. $8.95.

What lifts a novel out of the bleakness it records? This is the question that seems to remain after a reading of Matt Cohen's book. Set in the rocky, grim country north of Kingston, Ontario, the novel treats of the decline of the Thomas family over four generations and the struggle of wills between father (Richard) and sons (Brian, the adopted and vital son, and Eric, the natural son, a typically alientated city-dweller). The action centres on the events surrounding Richard's death. Taken to the sterility of a hospital ward after his heart attack, he remembers his life on the farm and these recollections constitute the main interest of the book. His detailed memories of family feuds, marital quarrels and infidelities, and the daily life on the farm provide a foil for the character of Eric, whose urban life is empty of the drudgery of farm-life, as well as of its warmth and tactile reality. Eric is presumably the protagonist of the novel, and his very facelessness and rootlessness and *angst* make him typical of twentieth-century anti-heroes. The syndrome he represents has been depicted before in Canadian writing in, for example, Warren Pryor, David Canaan, and even Duncan of *The Edible Woman.* The book's closing scene underscores Eric's alienation and solipsism: "at the end of the row, identical to all others but cut off from them was his own face, transparent and desperate that there would be somthing to forgive him. . .." This characterization is in contrast to that of his coarser, more robust forefathers and throughout the novel, the implied comparison creates most of the book's tension.

Cohen's prose is uneven. At times it is utilitarian and spare but at others it affects a style imitative of the Gertrude Stein effects in *The Double Hook:*

Richard swinging his legs
    Swinging down to the floor
        Waiting for
the skin on wool: friction skin grip stands and stretches on the braided rug.

There is also a melodramatic quality in some of the writing which weakens it:

Richard Thomas coughed again. It tore apart his throat: he gagged and tried to spit the blood. The pressure built up but didn't hold. It rose and then relaxed, slashed open, coughed free a long red waterfall. Footsteps...Falling. The forest rising all around, swallowing the light. Leaves and earth.

In reading *The Disinherited*, one can scarcely avoid comparing it with the classic Canadian treatment of rural disinheritance, Buckler's *Mountain and the Valley*. Both books treat the theme of sophisticated, urban encroachment upon rural life and in so doing, record with great accuracy of detail the life of a farm in all its variety. However, while Buckler has recorded the drabness of farm life, his prose is not itself drab: it is charged with his deep emotional ties to the life he portrays. Moreover, his *leitmotif* – the rug Ellen braids – provides an appropriate unifying device for the book. Cohen, on the other hand, writes what becomes heavy prose and his book suffers from a certain diffuseness – one simply loses track of the characters, past and present, as one never does in Buckler's book. Not all the melodramatic moments in *The Disinherited* (the conception of a child on the day of a funeral; a graveyard fight between brothers brandishing a broken bottle) nor its moments of raw humour (as one reviewer noted, the humour is largely concerned with liquor or sex) can really lift this book out of a certain plodding fidelity to detail. What remains in the memory are the figures in the past, the "characters" who are put into relief by the sheer colourlessness of disinherited, end-of-the-line Eric. Cohen's book seems to be notable mainly for its effects of local colour, its description of a specific area of northeastern Ontario. Beyond this, its "slice of life" realism makes the book a rather naturalistic chronicle of a declining dynasty, which, while earnestly and carefully designed and written, seems to this reviewer to lack a certain vital spark.

Dalhousie University *Janet Baker*

The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume X, 1847-1848, Edited by Merton M. Sealts, Jr. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973. Pp. xxix, 615. $25.00.

The tenth volume of the new edition of Emerson's *Journals* contains the journals and notebooks he kept during and shortly after his second visit to Europe, a visit that lasted about nine months beginning in October of 1847 and ending in July of 1848. It is an interesting volume because it deals with the material that went into *English Traits*, published in 1856, and because there is much gossip and commentary about the literary greats and near greats of the time with whom Emerson spent many of his days while abroad. His lecture tour through the Midlands and Scotland occupied much of his time in the late fall and winter, but by March he was able to settle down in London, where he gave additional lectures in June after a four-week visit to Paris.

Emerson visited, met, and conversed with Wordsworth, DeQuincey, Rogers, Wilson, Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, Arnold, Clough, Hallam, Macaulay, Robert Owen, Leigh Hunt, Wilkinson, Disraeli, Monckton Miles, and de Tocqueville, but of all his literary and intellectual relations it was Carlyle who most engaged Emerson's

imagination. Carlyle talked almost as compulsively as Coleridge, and Emerson listened and argued. He sums up the Scotsman's character by recording that "Carlyle is *malleus mediocritatis.*" Fortunately for their lifelong correspondence and cordial personal relations, their trip to Stonehenge shortly before Emerson's return to America restored to their friendship that happy tone that forever marked their intellectual disagreements whether in person or in letters. After one of his visits to Wordsworth, the "bitter old Englishman that he is—bitter on Scotchman too," Emerson records Wordsworth's crotchety comment: "No Scotchman can write English . . . Nor could Jeffrey, nor the Edinburgh reviewers write English; nor can Carlyle, who is a pest to the English tongue. Gibbon cannot write English." There are many striking thumbnail sketches similar to that of Carlyle, who as "An immense talker" is described at one point as "not mainly a scholar, like most of my acquaintances, but a very practical Scotchman, such as you would find in any saddler's or iron dealer's shop,—& then only accidentally, & by a surprising addition, the admirable scholar & writer." Emerson feels he is unhappy, "profoundly solitary", and like Daniel Webster in that he is sure of his own value. At several points in the journals and notebooks, he compares his English acquaintances to American friends of longstanding, such as when he says, "Take away Hawthorne's bashfulness, & let him talk easily & fast, & you would have a pretty good Tennyson."

During this second visit to Europe Emerson was greeted as a well-known American writer, but he was often puzzled about the intellectual milieu. His observation on the neglect of Thomas Taylor's works in England is significant for anyone interested in the influence of Neoplatonism on English and American writers in the middle of the nineteenth century: "We talked of English national character, &c. I told him, as I usually did all English scholars, that it was not creditable that no one in all the country knew anything of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, whilst in every American library his books are found."

Emerson's four weeks in Paris changed his mind to some degree about the French but most importantly gave him a chance to know Paris, which, he says "has great merits as a city". "A special advantage which Paris has is in the freedom from aristocratic pride manifest in the tone of society. It is quite easy for any young man of liberal tastes to enter on a good footing the best houses. It is not easy in England . . . . So that on the whole I am thankful for Paris, as I am for the discovery of Ether & Chloroform; I like to know, that, if I should need an amputation, there is this balm; and if hard should come to hard, & I should be driven to seek some refuge of solitude & independency, why here is Paris." Emerson's closeness to Paris at this time might explain why many years later he did not seem to Henry James as they strolled together in the Louvre as excited with the city as the younger American was. Once again in his prophetic manner Emerson forecasts the attraction that Paris was to have for the expatriate American writer, whether of the generation of Henry James or Ernest Hemingway.

Aside from his four weeks in Paris, the 1847-48 visit to Europe is dominated by his growing familiarity with English society from the home counties through the Midlands to Scotland against which Paris stands in relief, helping to refresh

Emerson before his return to Concord. Volume Ten is a continually captivating collection of the journals and notebooks. Once again the editing is excellent and the format well conceived. The price has changed however. Volume One was $11.95.

University of Alberta *E.J. Rose*

Some Facets of 'King Lear': Essays in Prismatic Criticism. Edited by Rosalie L. Colie and F.T. Flahiff. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1974. Pp. xi, 237. $15.00.

The phrase "Essays in Prismatic Criticism" may initially lead readers to suspect that *Some Facets of 'King Lear': Essays in Prismatic Criticism* is a disguised version of yet one more of those numerous "Studies", "Interpretations", "Views", "Perplexes" and "Casebooks" which nowadays increasingly clutter the shelves of university libraries. However, whether or not one accepts the late Rosalie Colie's use of the metaphorical term "prismatic criticism", which she defines in somewhat over-apologetic detail in the Preface in order to justify bringing together the views of eleven different authors, one quickly recognizes that the twelve essays involved are nothing like the heterogeneous bundle of reprints that one may have expected. Only one of the essays has previously appeared in print, but more important is the fact that the collection possesses an integral unity. This, I assume, derives from the initial editorial selection of contributors, in part from the decision to limit the "perspectives" of the book to historical ones, in part from the arrangement of essays so that frequently a concern touched on in one is amplified in the next, and in part from the careful cross-referencing which has been introduced. A further unifying element is the common debt almost every essay owes to Maynard Mack's *'King Lear' in Our Time* (1965), a work which contains some of the most superlative thinking about *King Lear* to date, and which here has provided the initial suggestions for ideas which are worked out in greater detail in the individual essays, whether the subject be the play's anti-pastoralism (Nancy Lindheim's essay), its use of the archetypal elements of folktale (F.D. Hoeniger's essay), its use of sub-plot (Bridget Lyons' essay), or its use of the "emblematic mode" (Martha Andresen's essay).

The collection begins with Sheldon Zitner's essay on "*King Lear* and its Language", which deals sensibly and sensitively with matters of linguistic decorum and Shakespeare's concern with the inadequacy of language. His suggestion that the "silences" in the play are "the emblems of the play's motifs of nothingness" introduces a term ("emblem") which recurs constantly throughout the collection, but most particulary in John Reibetanz'a "Theatrical Emblems in *King Lear*" and Martha Andresen's " 'Ripeness is all': Sententiae and Commonplace in *King Lear*". Repeated discussion of the clothing motif in the play (see especially Maurice Charney's essay), of the themes of Truth and Time and of the relationship of sub-plot to main plot also lead naturally in many instances to a related discussion of the "emblematic" means by which they are presented and the iconographic

traditions familiar to Shakespeare and his audience. Equally fashionable in terms of current scholarship, though no less valid with regard to the fresh light it throws on the play, is Thomas Van Laan's "Acting as Action in *King Lear*" which explores "the world-as-theatre" *topos* in the play, as do several of the other essays in passing, and its use of "plays-within-plays".

Particularly valuable are Rosalie Colie's two essays. "The Energies of Endurance: Biblical Echo in *King Lear*" is a complex discussion of the nature of paradox in the play, the very subject one would expect from the author of *Paradoxia Epidemica.* It considers the manner in which Biblical echoes are used "to remind us both of man's predicament and of the options he has within that predicament" and faces squarely that much debated problem of whether *King Lear* is a Christian play. Colie concludes that "there is little evidence of that in the text itself" though "it is a play that . . . rests upon generally assumed Christian principles of morality." Such brief paraphrase, however, does no justice to the many telling insights provided in an argument which ultimately concludes that "The literary problem [of the play], like the moral problem, is to present so stark a view of human life . . . that there seems no hope for humanity, and, at the same time, to make such a life seem worth the living of it, to make it seem better, somehow, to be a living dog than a dead lion." Her second essay, "Reason and Need: *King Lear* and the 'Crisis' of the Aristocracy", indirectly provides a salutary critique of the familiar Lovejovian-Tillyardian thesis as applied to *King Lear.* She finds, as have several recent critics, that "the abrogations of degree, priority, and place" provide "a less than necessary cause for tragic, or even significant action" in the play, and she experiments instead with the quite different historical scheme provided by Lawrence Stone's *Crisis of the Aristocracy*. Whatever its weaknesses, Stone's analysis of the changing situation of the aristocracy has the virtue of taking into account, in a way that Tillyard never did, the "inconsistency, anomaly, disorder, and disruption" which historians have consistently seen as characteristics of the English Renaissance, and which seem on reflection, and as Colie demonstrates, to be far closer to the dramatic experience of *King Lear* than the more familiar Tillyardian view.

If the book has any weakness, it is that, though the individual authors provide "Notes" for their essays, they are curiously inconsistent in the ways in which the work of other scholars is acknowledged. Why, for example, does Maurice Charney admit his debt to Russell Fraser's important study of the iconographic background to the play (*Shakespeare's Poetics in Relation to 'King Lear'*, 1962), while Reibetanz does not? Why is Jill Levenson's essay on silence in *King Lear* (published two years ago by University of Toronto Press) ignored by Zitner? And why does David Young's Mack-inspired essay on *King Lear* as anti-pastoral (in *The Heart's Forest*, 1972) remain unmentioned by Nancy Lindheim? One would have liked too some reference to Soji Iwasaki's *The Sword and the Word* (1973), the most complete study since Fraser's of the emblematic nature of the play. Apart from this admittedly minor point, *Some Facets of 'King Lear'* maintains a consistently high level of writing and scholarship and is, as F.T. Flahiff suggests, a testimony to the special kind of scholarly and critical co-operation which the late Rosalie Colie describes in the Preface.

Acadia University *Alan R. Young*

A Celebraiton of Ben Jonson. Edited by William Blissett, Julian Patrick, R.W. Van Fossen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973. $8.50.

Published to coincide with the 400th anniversary of Jonson's birth, this collection of essays brings together papers by scholars from Canada, the United States, Britain and New Zealand. The contributors are well-established in Jonsonian studies and include L.C. Knights who, in the words of the tribute paid him by another contributor, G.R. Hibbard, was a pioneer in the modern revaluation of Jonson by means of which "the accumulated dust of pedantic learning, which had hidden Jonson from view for so long, was blown away" (63). In his essay, Knights defines neatly the problem which still faces Jonson's admirers and which all the writers here tackle in their diverse ways: "What values do the poems [and the other works] embody and help to keep alive?" (73)

All the offerings make stimulating reading. Clifford Leech writes of the "incredibility" of the comedies, how the plays customarily defy our ability to believe in what they present to us" (5), pointing out how in *Volpone*, "in the end we are on Volpone's side, though of course it is deplorable, and incredible, that we should be" (10). Jonas A. Barnish writes persuasively on Jonson's anti-theatricalism and discusses his view of the play "as a reading experience rather than a theatrical experience" (33), developing the interesting argument that Jonson's plays do not shed his antitheatrical bias: "rather, he builds it in; he makes the plays critiques of the instability they incarnate" (42). Hibbard shows the extent to which Jonson "insists . . . on those things which man shares with the rest of the animal creation" (59), and develops his analysis of the plays to show how Jonson concentrates on self-deception and illusion. In a closely argued essay, D.F. McKenzie looks at Jonson's increasing self-exclusion from his audience, pointing out that his "social conscience is as alert as ever, the fighting spirit as strong. . .. It is just that nobody any longer listens . . ." (87). He discusses *The Staple of News* in the context of the growing importance of news-sheets, and his essay maintains a fine balance between his admiration of Jonson and his judgement that Jonson becomes "ineluctably elitist and escapist" (112). Hugh MacLean provides some fine close readings of the epigrams and odes while discussing the wit of Jonson's poetry, and Knights looks at Jonson's "Public Attitudes and Social Poetry" in a civilized but slightly superficial essay that certainly would have sounded better than it reads.

So much wit, talent and perceptiveness – but a "celebration"? In an earnest, academic way, perhaps. With the original conference atmosphere pared away, it is uncanny how all the contributors, in fact, concentrate on building up their cases by discriminating negatives. It is not just, as Knights puts it, that Jonson himself "often defines his values by negatives" (173), it is that Jonson by his own nature encourages the judicious and discriminating admirer, certainly, but hardly enthusiasm or love. Leech and Barish stress the unpopularity and anti-theatricalism of the plays, Hibbard comments that Jonson's imagination "only seems to have worked at white heat when he was dealing with the follies, the vices, and the crimes of which man is capable" (78), McKenzie's argument is precisely about Jonsons failure "of artistic, and human sympathy", (111) while MacLean's and Knight's

essays are clearly aware that Jonson's poetry is hardly "the kind of poetry that we are perhaps most attuned to today – not many of them are poems that one returns to again and again" (172–173, 168).

My qualifications (obviously not about the quality of the papers or, indeed, the occasion) are neatly epitomized by McKenzie when in an aside he remarks to his audience: "By now you will have discerned in this Jonsonian induction a familiar note of unease surfacing beside the slightly too insistent affirmations" (86). Our unease is that Jonson seems to underplay a whole dimension of human experience. It is perhaps significant that Knight's paper catches fire when he brings on a discussion of Donne and Shakespeare (*The Tempest*, of all plays!); the pace quickens, the emotional level is suddenly heightened.

One would not want to press the point further. It might be more judicious to insist (partly *contra* Knights) that Jonson's poems should be read today precisely because of very important historical reasons. Apart from McKenzie's paper, one noticeable weakness in the collection, indeed, is any penetrating consideration of Jonson's role in his age's intellectual and social revolution – of the gradual desacralization of Renaissance thought or of Jonson's fascinatingly ambivalent attitudes (often only half-conscious) towards the age's social changes. Some remarks by Raymond Williams' recent *The Country and the City* at least point in the right direction, but it is a sobering thought that with all the interesting and just revaluations of Jonson that have occurred since the 1930s (to which tradition this volume makes an impressive contribution) that our understanding of Jonson in his age remains where Knights left it in *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*. It is yet another rebuke to our academic tendency to compartmentalize our studies.

Dalhousie University *G.F. Waller*