

Editorial

Allan Bevan was editor of *The Dalhousie Review* from 1970 to 1979, and a member of Dalhousie's department of English for thirty-two years. An issue of the *Review* dedicated to his memory can serve as a sort of intersection point where many of the lines (though by no means all!) of Allan's professional life seem to meet. The issue, in itself, reminds us of his quiet genius as an editor, working unobtrusively for many years, always risking judgement and taste by being open to the new, the untried, the innovative; always having to try to distinguish between the genuine scholarly article that adds to tradition on the one hand, and what merely repeats without adding, on the other. Allan traditionally understated his achievements, and if he could read this would dismiss it with a self-deprecating joke.

This issue, like others, is various in its content. The *Review* has always had an extensive reach, and Allan's personality seemed particularly suited to the rich variety of intellectual and aesthetic stimulation the *Review* seeks to offer. He himself was an expert in 18th century literature, and in Canadian literature, but he didn't let his expertise take over his intellectual life. For him the life of the mind needed to be available to the non-specialist (but intelligent, committed) reader. So too, his conversation and his teaching understated the expertise. His teaching made one believe that precious gems must be easy to find, he presented them so casually. He instilled confidence in students and created an easy and stimulating atmosphere amongst his colleagues.

So, in this issue, we have contributions from his teachers, his colleagues and his students. He would welcome his colleagues' contributions, perhaps with another ironic joke to cover embarrassment. He would be honoured by the contributions from those who taught him. He would secretly be most delighted to see that his students continue to produce first-rate work.

The topics included range from Canadian literature, to Renaissance literature, Academic freedom, American literature and university politics. Allan Bevan was always active as scholar and teacher, but he also made a significant contribution to that third area of responsibility, administration, not only as Head of the English department for many years, but also

in the myriad other ways that a committed academic finds himself involved in the life of his community. Some of the life of the university is captured by Peter Waite's reminiscence. The mannered manoeuvrings of university committees is reflected in the last piece, "Inside: Looking Out".

If I seem to have spent time in describing the *Review* instead of sentimentally recalling Allan Bevan, well, that's probably how it should be. He was the most personal of men, but stoically kept to himself his personal trials. He seemed especially to befriend those who were willing to recognize what was being left unsaid. There was something of Hemingway in him perhaps, something too of the artist, working by indirection.

Millar MacLure reminds us of the humanist's delight in digression. Allan could digress with the best of them, and was certainly a humanist—a breed that itself seems in need of a memorial. His digressions were always pointed. After I had known him for a few years I stopped being mildly annoyed at the way he so often introduced some digression into the middle of the argument. I began to see the digressions as parables, examples, and they always presented a useful addition to the discussion, without seeming to.

At times the indirection, the reticence, had a darker side. He and I were teaching a class together over a period of three months. During that time his wife, Lura, was dying of cancer, but he gave no indication of his suffering and carried on. After her death he still carried on, although many of his friends thought he did so out of pride, out of sheer stubbornness, to demonstrate that he could carry on without her. He probably could, but clearly he didn't want to have to. He knew he was going to die all during his last year, and he faced it simply and directly.

One can't sum up a life. Here, all we can do is to bring together a few threads of his career. We can also recall how, during his last year in particular, one of his private heroes was much in his mind, much in his conversation: the artist hero, Gulley Jimson of Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*. Allan would have said that he liked that book just because it has a horse in the title. He liked horses, especially fictional ones. However, it was the figure of Jimson that was crucial. Jimson stands for the understatement of grievances (never get a grudge against life), the necessary acceptance of reality, and the undying joy of the creative intelligence.