

BOOK REVIEWS

Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: The Making of Recent Policy in Canada. By Richard Simeon. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Clearly this is one of the best books on Canadian politics and government to appear in recent years. In it Professor Simeon seeks basically to answer the question: What are the consequences of federal structures and institutions for the processes of decision-making and policy-making? More specifically, his task is to make intelligible the mysteries of "executive federalism", i.e., the process of direct negotiation between the executives of different governments, federal and provincial, which is a distinctive characteristic of the Canadian federal system.

While there are enormous difficulties in showing the relationships between all the elements of a process that is as complex as federal-provincial diplomacy, Professor Simeon succeeds in devising a framework which is eminently suited to his purpose. Broadly he sees a set of interdependent *actors operating* within a certain *social and institutional environment*, and possessing varying *political resources* which they use in certain *strategies and tactics* to arrive at *outcomes* that have *consequences* for themselves, for other groups in the society, and for the political system itself. By carefully adhering to this model throughout the book, the author provides a satisfying explanation of the process of adjustment within the Canadian federal system.

It is a truism to point out that students of the policy-making process invariably run up against serious road-blocks whenever they seek to probe the innermost recesses where decisions are made. For that reason Professor Simeon is to be especially congratulated for his success in penetrating deeply into the mysteries of federal-provincial negotiations. Undoubtedly it is an indication of his own tact and diplomatic ability that he was able to get the officials of the six units which he selected for intensive examination—Canada, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick—to tell him as much as they did. It is true, too, that by cross-checking the information from the different respondents he has managed, as he had hoped, to eliminate any glaring inaccuracies, even though a few smaller ones may still remain.

A few specific matters invite attention by way of comment and not of criticism. While Professor Simeon rightly suggests that party does not play a substantial role in federal-provincial negotiations (pp. 194-6), this reviewer—from his observations while acting as an adviser to the Nova Scotian government during the earlier constitutional conferences—would accord it a somewhat greater importance than Professor Simeon does, and place it in the category of inarticulate minor premise. Provincial governments are normally reluctant to take a strong stand against a government of their own party at Ottawa, and this phenomenon is all the more

marked in the case of the have-not provinces. Thus, after 1967, the Liberal governments of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland were prepared to accept almost anything that the federal government offered in the way of constitutional proposals, apparently in the hope of improving their position in the negotiations on financial and economic matters. On the other hand, provincial governments of a different complexion from that at Ottawa may drag their feet if the federal government's proposals are calculated to accrue to its political advantage unless, of course, the provinces in question feel they may be harmed politically by a negative approach.

More important considerations flow from Professor Simeon's reliance for purposes of analysis on three case studies: the negotiations leading to the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans of 1965; the round of debates, culminating in the fall of 1966, that led to the taxation agreements for the period 1967 to 1972; and the review of the constitution that began in 1967 with the Confederation of Tomorrow Conference. As Professor Simeon is careful to point out, the case study method has an inherent danger in that the unique takes precedence over the general. Thus the successful outcome of the negotiations on the pension plans resulted from circumstances which were unique and not likely to be repeated, while the negotiations on finances and the constitution were conducted in a context in which Quebec's goals were more strongly related to a well-articulated ideology of nationalism than was true in the immediate past and, while this is by no means certain, than may be true in the future. Although Professor Simeon does not fall into error on this score, these circumstances point out the difficulty of reaching a high level of generalization in studies relating to the decision- and policy-making process.

Idiosyncratic factors add further to the difficulty. Clearly the diplomacy and style of Lester Pearson were crucial to the success of the negotiations on pensions; if Pierre Elliott Trudeau had been prime minister at the time, he could hardly have reached an accommodation with Quebec, since its demands on pensions had incorporated within them a form of the special status that he abhors. Personal factors were no less significant in the initial stages of the negotiations on the constitution, which took the form they did because of Mr. Trudeau's obsession with the idea of an entrenched bill of rights. That obsession had a somewhat ludicrous consequence: some Liberal M.P.s, perhaps wanting no more than to effect the designs of a philosopher king, but more likely hoping to create a favourable impression upon the prime minister and put themselves in line for cabinet preferment, sought to persuade the academics on the provincial delegations to accept the Trudeau point of view, apparently failing to realize that these advisers exercised little or no influence. But what neither Mr. Trudeau nor his followers could accomplish, the provincial electorates were able to do, at least in part. In 1968 no one would have been bold enough to predict an agreement of any kind on the entrenchment of rights, but a series of provincial elections which produced new premiers with new

styles and outlooks led to the limited, and admittedly half-hearted, entrenchment of some political rights in the Victoria Charter.

These are the kinds of difficulties which confront anyone who seeks to bring order into, and arrive at generalizations on, federal-provincial diplomacy and policy-making in general. Despite all the difficulties, Professor Simeon has produced an excellent and valuable book.

Dalhousie University

J. MURRAY BECK

A Reading of Stephen Crane. By Marston LaFrance. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Pp. x, 272.

As Marston LaFrance emphasizes in his "Acknowledgements" and exemplifies in his very thorough bibliography of "Critical Works Cited", *A Reading of Stephen Crane* comes toward the end of roughly twenty-five years of selective re-editing and re-evaluation of Crane's work. Thus, in spite of its (ironically?) modest title, the book is not a private, partial probe of its subject, but rather, as its auspices and format might suggest, an excellent, full-length, near-definitive critical commentary, the fit culmination of a quarter century of scholarship and criticism by other students of Crane. It is a book that does honour to its author and its subject in several ways, a book that is limited, if at all, only by its underlying, deliberate—though never total—bias toward thematic and ethical analysis, rather than close technical dissection.

Professor LaFrance's extended, detailed commentary covers all Crane's writings, published and unpublished, uncollected and collected. In the first chapter, he establishes Crane as a Kierkegaardian ironist, engaged with the ethical relation between an outer finitude and an inner infinitude; he demonstrates the compatibility of this identity with Crane's early life and apprentice writings; and he develops out of these early writings "the form of a psychological progression to awareness of reality" (34), "the pattern of psychological action which allowed him to take direct advantage of his ironic vision in fiction" (35). The second chapter tests *Maggie*, *George's Mother*, and Crane's earlier stories against these ideas as well as against the misconception that Crane was exclusively or primarily, a naturalistic writer. The third chapter analyzes *The Red Badge of Courage*, in great detail, to set aside both symbolist and naturalist readings of that novel for a systematically ironist reading achieved by "the technical feats attained through the use of the third-person limited point of view, and the fact that Fleming emerges from his experience with self-knowledge and moral growth" (103). The next chapter, "The Ironist's Moral Norms", looks closely at Crane's poetry and certain related materials so as to "understand Crane's acute sensibility which had to adapt itself, emotionally and spiritually, to his own awareness of a world dominated by pain, chaos, and rampant human weakness" (132).

In his discussion of Crane's poetry Professor LaFrance fulfills Kenneth Burke's view of the critic's responsibility: to use all that there is to use. He adopts, with full acknowledgement, the convenient scheme of Daniel Hoffman's *The Poetry of Stephen Crane* (1957): "man's relations to God, to nature, to women, and to his fellow-man" (Hoffman, p. 20; LaFrance, p. 129). Less concerned than Hoffman with the poems as poetry and as a part of a poetic tradition, LaFrance uses Joseph Katz's complete edition of 1966 to scrutinize better and lesser known poems and establish an interpretation which, free from Hoffman's special convictions about Crane, differs interestingly from Hoffman's conclusions, and at times from my own previous ones. During this extensive re-assessment of the poems, LaFrance also draws on criticism of the poetry since Hoffman, especially Westbrook's essay on "Stephen Crane's Poetry: Perspective and Arrogance". And at the end of the chapter he recapitulates by examining Crane's statements of belief in letters written to Nellie Crouse in 1896 and now included in Stallman's and Gilkes' *Letters* (1960), to show how they match what LaFrance has already found to be the main import of Crane's poetry.

The fifth chapter of *A Reading of Stephen Crane* surveys briefly the more commercial writings of Crane's last four years, but the sixth chapter examines, again in great detail, the eight stories and one sketch, of the same, ironically short period, in which Crane handled "the matter that pleased himself" (192). I found these long explications especially challenging, for they re-interpret and re-value several famous stories within the controlling context of LaFrance's special but very persuasive version of Crane.

In the short final chapter, "Reader's Notes", along with other conclusions, Professor LaFrance sums up once again, with characteristic eloquence, the relation between the poems and the fiction: "As Crane himself suggested, the full scope of his thought is available in his poems: a mature philosophy—thoroughly examined and subject to proof in the furnace of his irony—which has the satisfying solidity of completeness, the whole moral truth which Crane's perception allowed him to accept, and which was not to be shaken by either natural forces, the inevitability of final death, or the actions of other men. Crane's poems reveal a man who looked carefully at the realities of human life and judged them wisely. The recurring pattern in his fiction concerns the most dramatic incident in the normal individual's progress towards the body of truth set forth in the poems, and thus it should point the reader towards that whole which defines the full significance of the fictional protagonists' archetypal experience". (250)

University of New Brunswick

LAURIAT LANE, JR.

Surfacing. By Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972. Pp. 192. Cloth, \$6.95.

It should come as a surprise to no one that *Surfacing* is a brilliant piece of writing. Margaret Atwood's new novel is as witty and incisive as the very best of her poems. Over and over again she zeroes in on the stock situations of twentieth-century fiction and turns them inside out. We may think we have read all there is to read of a man and a girl in the back seat of a car, of two disappointed women discussing marriage, of a group of enthusiasts catching a fish. We are wrong:

I say "Keep the line tight", but David is oblivious, he's reeling like a mixmaster and saying "Wow, wow" to himself and it's up to the surface, it jumps clear and hangs in the air like a framed photo over a bar only moving . . . when it jumps again David jerks the rod with his whole body and it sails across and flops into the canoe, a dumb move, he could've lost it, on top of Anna and she lurches, screaming "Get it off me! Get it off me!" and we almost tip. Joe says "Holy shit" and grabs at the side, I bend the other way, counterbalancing, David is snatching at it. It slithers over the canoe ribs, flipping and snapping.

We have been rescued from the followers of Hemingway and fishing has come to life again.

This masterful avoidance of cliché extends to the larger more complex areas of the novelist's craft. Like Leonard Cohen's *The Beautiful Losers*, *Surfacing* is knitted together by a fine network of images which accumulate greater and greater significance as the novel unfolds. Here, however, the images are derived neither from art, nor from history, nor from religion. They emerge directly out of the life of the heroine, and they take their meaning from her own personal associations with them. The frogs her brother once kept in jars become suggestive not only of all natural victims but of living embryos and the indivisible nature of head and heart. The severed arm of the storekeeper gradually becomes the atrophy of creative power which the heroine finds at last in the recollection of her mother, "as simple as a hand". Miss Atwood remembers, too, that she is writing a novel, and her images are used not only to tie ideas together but to develop character and to direct the plot.

And her plotting is excellent. She has chosen one of the most difficult motifs of modern fiction: the confrontation of a painful, half-forgotten past. Again the followers of Hemingway come to mind, with their "It's best not to think about it technique" which, far from whetting the reader's interest convinces him that it is, indeed, best not to think about it—or better still, not to read it at all. Miss Atwood approaches the problem from the opposite direction: her heroine tries very hard to think about it, and it is not until very near the end of the novel that we see how her mind has played tricks on her, telescoping incidents, superimposing one set of images on another, confusing the roles of various people with whom she has had relationships. Very subtly, we are made to feel there is something peculiar about her recollections: it does not ring true, for instance, that a husband should say "It's better this way" as he drives his bride away from the ceremony, nor that the young

lady should carry a suitcase to the registry office. We suspect that she is wrong; she is certain that she is not. This kind of double communication requires great skill on the part of the novelist. It requires perhaps even greater skill to set both reader and heroine straight without being heavy handed, intrusive or repetitious, and once again Margaret Atwood is successful.

It would be unfortunate if such a brilliant work should contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction, but there is a sense in which the high standards Margaret Atwood has set for herself undercut the effect of the book. It is, first of all, a very easy novel to misread. A reasonably sensitive reader will be quickly alerted to the narrator's growing awareness of herself, but the very wit and intelligence with which, from the first, she views her immediate situation make it difficult to adjust to changes in outlook and ideology. The early attacks on Americans, for instance, are so devastating (four stuffed moose dressed in Macy's best and waving the stars and stripes from the roof of a service station in northern Quebec) that it is easy to miss the later important redefinition of American as twentieth-century man, and the fact that the fishermen who conduct the senseless crucifixion of the heron are not Americans at all, but a man from Sarnia and one from Toronto. Another red herring presents itself in the early references to linguistic isolation: since the scene is Quebec, and the heroine's inadequate French is so graphically demonstrated in her request for "viande haché" at the grocery store, the later subtler explanations of the inadequacy of words might be sloppily construed as further references to the bicultural problem.

To view the book as an exploration of Canadian identity would be to miss the point completely. The gods which the heroine comes to worship are "against boundaries"; if a man is not even to fence in his own garden, it is not likely that the message of the book is to set up a tariff wall against American goods and drum the Yankees out of the country. Further, the hope for the unborn child-god is that she will "never teach it any words"; French immersion courses are certainly not being suggested here. The quest of the novel is, in fact, for a surfacing or birth of an unlabelled and unlettered individual, on the far side of national, professional or even personal distinctions. And the means toward this birth is to throw off the rational consciousness, of which language is the outward and visible sign.

And so it is toward a wordless naturalness that the novel moves, and here we run against a more serious problem than simple misreading. The heroine throws off her friends, her job, her house, her tools, her clothes. She throws off almost everything, in fact, but the inescapable dilemma which Margaret Atwood faces is that, whatever her theoretical views of the matter, she cannot, as a novelist, throw off words. She does what she can with the problem. She drops the wit, the conversation, the complex and confusing thread of memory. She renders her style as simple and transparent as she can make it. At one point she even uses blank spaces to communicate what cannot be spoken. The result is a little disappointing. The

concluding chapters of the novel ought to raise us to the heights of mystical experience. They do not. They seem, in fact, a little banal. Such is the uncompromising nature of Margaret Atwood's stance that she will not approximate wordless ecstasy with verbal lushness as Crashaw would do, nor with complex distortions of verbal logic such as Faulkner does in *As I Lay Dying* where he, too, openly attacks the medium to which he is committed. We would have to say that Margaret Atwood is more honest than either of these other writers. But it is as if she has chosen an impossible means of dealing with an impossible task.

Foolishly, perhaps, we regret that she should attack the very thing wherein her own excellence lies. *Surfacing* is a novel which turns on itself with a savagery which is almost unique in fiction. Is this a real weakness? Is it our own shallowness that tempts us to misread, that makes us prefer the sad witty girl in blue jeans to the wild-eyed mystic naked in a blanket? Is our disappointment in the conclusion simply a sign that we are not ready to face the simplicity that attends all truth? These are difficult questions to answer. Inevitably, Satan is more interesting than Christ. And just as inevitably, described evil is more aesthetically satisfying than indescribable good. Since the surfacing Margaret Atwood is dealing with is finally beyond definition and description, it may very well be beyond art.

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FRANCES DAVIS

A Whale for the Killing. By Farley Mowat. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972. Pp. 239. \$6.95.

A Whale for the Killing, Farley Mowat's twentieth book since *People of the Deer* (1952), is all of that which we have come to expect from one of Canada's most vigorous and prolific writers: principally a narrative of events, it is also partially social history, part natural history, and occasionally commercial history, all with a flavour of crusade.

Anyone reading newspapers or watching television reports in the rather dull and innocent news days of January, 1967, will recall the brief but intense international curiosity focussed on the little town of Burgeo, Newfoundland, when an eighty-ton fin whale became trapped in a salt water pond there. At first the whale was used for high-powered rifle practice by some of the local sports; then it became an object of compassionate care directed by Farley Mowat (who, at one point, was facetiously designated "Keeper of the Whale" by then-premier Joey Smallwood). Efforts to free the whale, and to feed it, ultimately failed when it died from infection from its bullet wounds; its rotting and stinking carcass was towed out to sea, and Burgeo settled back into the foggy obscurity from which it had briefly emerged.

Throughout the chronicle of these events is woven the story of the people of Burgeo and what has happened to them as their older, more stable society is confronted by the twentieth century "with its March Hare preoccupation with

witless production for mindless consumption; its disruptive infatuation with change for its own sake; its idiot dedication to the bitch goddess, Progress". The whale and her fate is a symbol of this confrontation as the people of Burgeo divide along lines of sympathy for the beast, or attack with rifles and mail-order speed-boats; it is a confrontation of what Mowat calls "natural" men of the older society and their "civilized" counter-parts.

As natural history, the book is a good updating of popular cetology from the days of *Moby-Dick* and *The Cruise of the Cachalot*—we learn much of what is now known of whales and their feeding, breeding and travelling habits. Indeed, much of what Mowat himself observed came from his early recognition of the valuable and unique opportunity to study one of the great whales living in a natural aquarium. The author is at his best in writing of the whale's life in the pond and the attendance upon her just outside its entrance of a sympathetic "guardian"—perhaps her mate—who spouted in unison with her and for days appeared to try to drive herring in to her for food. Most impressive is the almost mystical awe with which Mowat writes of hearing, four times, the low, vibrant and thrilling "voice" of the whale.

A Whale for the Killing is perhaps at its weakest when it becomes commercial history and crusade. We are given a brief history of whaling from 2000 B.C. to the present, with special emphasis upon the terrifying deprivations of the last century, and, while one cannot deny the importance and even urgency of the statistics there presented, there is the feeling that the attack upon the abuses of the whaling industries of Japan, the Soviet Union and Norway really has very little to do with the story of Burgeo's whale. One could wish that such a fertile writer as Farley Mowat, instead of splitting the personality of this book, might have chosen to write two: one for the events of Burgeo, another for the whaling industry and its enormous threat to the "whale nation"—the community of creatures probably closest to man in intelligence and character.

But withal, we get what we have come to expect from Farley Mowat—a vigorous, controversial writer, sometimes biased and hyperbolic, sometimes sanctimonious, but never mincing words and conveying with colour and energy the world as he sees it (Joey Smallwood: "A messianic little man . . . a persuasive demagogue"; the southwest coast of Newfoundland in a winter gale: "a roaring rock wall"; man's understanding of whales: "an immense psychic gap"). Mowat also has an excellent ear for Newfoundland dialect that he puts to good use in vivid portrayals of his friends among the fisherfolk ("They whales never hurted we and we never hurted they"). It is one such phrase that perhaps best sums up the whole episode and its relation to the town (where the author no longer lives): "'Twas no great credit to us folks in Burgeo'".

Dalhousie University

R. L. RAYMOND

Time as History. By George Grant. The Massey Lectures, Ninth Series. Toronto: CBC, 1971. Pp. 52.

Time as History constitutes one further contribution on the part of George Grant to the attempt "to think what we have become". In *Lament for a Nation*, Grant analysed the specific causes for the collapse of Canadian independence within that larger context furnished by the more pervasive forces of modernity. The collection of essays that constituted *Technology and Empire* aimed severally to clarify the meaning of our fate as inhabitants of the North American centre of the technological empire which institutionally most fully represents the spirit of the modern world. It is the underlying assumption of these and the present lectures that in order to understand ourselves and our situation we must bring our own conception of ourselves to perfect clarity. To begin to free ourselves in thought from the constraints we inherit as inhabitants of this era we must appreciate that our world is not an unquestionable reality but in part, at least, a consequence of certain terms and concepts we take for granted. "Like food language not only makes human existence possible, but can also confine it" (p. 2). In *Time as History* Grant argues that we can make one great stride towards understanding ourselves by clarifying what it means for us that we conceive of our temporality as history. *Time as History* is the clarification of that conception through the analysis of the philosophic writings of Nietzsche. Grant turns to that analysis in lieu of a complete probing of the complex genesis of what we are "because Nietzsche thought the conception of time as history more comprehensively than any other modern thinker before or since" (p. 22).

The claim that we can better make explicit what is implicit in our modern existence through an investigation of the works of Nietzsche is exposed to doubt both because much that Nietzsche argued is now commonplace and because of the dubious reputation of that philosopher in the English-speaking world. Grant argues convincingly that Nietzsche cannot be plausibly viewed as a half-crazed poet or sponsor of the anti-Jewish racist banality of the Third Reich. If Nietzsche can be held culpable for that obscenity it is only because his devastating critique of their moral and religious tradition did free his countrymen from the restraints of that tradition; if he is blameworthy it is only because perfect clarity about the modern situation is inconsistent with continued human decency. That many of his major notions have become platitudes is all the more cause for a return to Nietzsche especially because as platitudes those notions have become detached from the radical inquiry within which they have their full meaning. "Most men want it both ways in thought and in practice; the nobility of Nietzsche is that he did not" (25).

Nietzsche can be said to have thought the conception of time as history most comprehensively because he attempted both to radicalize that conception far beyond those philosophers who had sought knowingly or not to exclude reason, truth, or some notion of human nature from the domain of historicity and, at the same time,

to think out the kind of human doing possible for men who know their own historicity. All human life, according to Nietzsche, has occurred within sets of absolute presuppositions or horizons. The quest for rationality initiated by Plato, popularized through Christianity, and culminating in the modern science of Newton and Darwin teaches finally that all such horizons are only relative or man-made. The fundamental problem for Nietzsche became the possibility for human doing in the face of the recognition that man as such has no purpose, is finally no more and no less than he has chosen and will choose to become. The most likely consequence of the death of all horizons will take the forms of "the last men" who use technology "for the bored pursuit of their trivial vision of happiness" and "the nihilists" who resolutely and violently will to mastery but find no joy but only revenge in that mastery. Grant easily demonstrates the plausibility of Nietzsche's prophecy from our own perspective, (pp. 32-35). For Nietzsche there is a possibility of something other than the "last men" or "nihilists" but that possibility of joyful doing or creating beyond the life-sustaining framework of all past horizons requires an overcoming of that desire for revenge against others, ourselves, and our temporality which has animated the history of the race since Socrates' revenge on tragedy. Such an overcoming can only consist in a love of fate that does not seek to transcend becoming or willing, (pp. 38-43). Such an overcoming will result not in passivity but in joyful doing that proceeds from "a positive love of the earth" (p. 46).

To attend to Nietzsche's thinking of the conception of time as history is, according to Grant's lectures, to raise to clarity what it is to recognize fully that human doing is part of no order other than what is created by that doing; it is to grasp exactly what is implicit in the modern project of mastery over human and non-human nature and to begin to be able to judge that project. Grant's own conclusion is that human doing cannot proceed on the basis of that conception, specifically that joyful human doing is not possible on the basis of a love of fate that "comes forth from the contemplation of the eternity (not timelessness, but endless time) of the creating and destroying powers of man and the rest of nature" (p. 47). Grant does not claim to demonstrate that conclusion; he does no more than assert his final incomprehension that the love of fate and finality of becoming can be conjoined (p. 46). What he does argue is that to question Nietzsche's argument is to question the modern account of man and nature and time. To even begin to engage in such questioning is enormously difficult precisely because our language, thought, and existence are given to us by that modern account. Such a questioning will require a reconsideration of the pre-modern account of man and philosophy. Those who cannot accept that becoming is final are called to an immensely arduous task of remembering, loving, and thinking. If, as Grant points out, that thoughtful recollection is a cowardly insulation of ourselves from our fate to the extent that we discard the conception of time as history "as if it had never been", this little

book must be an invaluable guide to those who accept that call.
Dalhousie University

W. R. MATTHEW

Shakespeare and the Critics. By A. L. French. Cambridge University Press
 Macmillan of Canada, 1972. Pp. 239. \$12.50.

Mr. French's view of Shakespeare and of his critics is succinctly summarized in a
 quotation from *Middlemarch* which stands at the beginning of his book. Mr.
 Casaubon is lecturing Dorothea on Raphael's frescoes:

'They are, I believe, highly esteemed. . . . He is the painter who has been h
 to combine the most complete grace of form with sublimity of expression. Su
 at least I have gathered to be the opinion of the conosciuti.' (Chapter XX)

It is this kind of second-hand reverence and critical dishonesty that Mr. French
 seeks to challenge. At the same time, while admitting Shakespeare's sublimity
 expression, he is concerned to question his grace of form. But the author is
 mere iconoclast, and this excellent study should be required reading for all students
 of Shakespeare who are tempted to substitute a neatly definitive reading of the play
 for a more arduous moral confrontation. His proper objection is to those interpretations,
 more ingenious than sensible, which endeavour to set forth the perfection of
 Shakespeare's art rather than explore all the critical evidence, however widely contradictory,
 that his works afford. Mr. French also resists the tendency, to which the same
 method gives rise, to place all Shakespeare's art on the same plane of excellence.

His book is not an historical survey or a comparative examination of Shakespearean
 criticism but a detailed study of the fundamental problems of *Hamlet*, *Othello*,
King Lear and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, which recent criticism has attempted
 to tidy up. He enquires whether *Hamlet* possesses any ascertainable meaning, why
Othello grows insanely jealous, whether *Lear* is redeemed and why so much, and why
Anthony and Cleopatra is almost genial in tone. By discounting the notion that
 these are necessarily answerable questions, however, he does not evade critical
 responsibility, for his closely articulated discussion of these plays continually strives
 to grapple with their ambiguities and blunt contradictions.

Mr. French discerns critical danger not only in the search for perfect form
 or in the apologetic perspectives of historical relativism, but, interestingly, in the
 seductive quality of Shakespeare's poetry. More specifically, he identifies the
 formal problems. First, he argues cogently that because of the comprehensive
 nature of Shakespeare's sensibility it is a critical error to select a limited point of
 view and examine the action of the play through the eyes of only, for instance,
 Hamlet, Othello, Lear or Anthony, for this is a process which inevitably elevates
 them into glamorous, heroic and even redeemed figures. As T. S. Eliot points out,
 the hero's sudden transformation from an emotional and moral chameleon into

rather complacently tragic figure in large measure accounts for the incoherence of *Hamlet*.

The second problem lies in assuming that the unusual significance of Shakespeare's closing scenes is the product of a deliberate design which informs the whole drama. On the contrary, the author contends, close critical attention to the development of each play reveals that Shakespeare worked out his technical problems as he wrote and the characters often abruptly change moral direction, thereby creating a hiatus between the rhetorical movement and the structure of the play's logic.

Although Mr. French's discussion of the *Otello* of Verdi and Boito is rather laboured, comparison with Shakespeare illumines the latter's perplexing refusal to dramatise a convincing love between Othello and Desdemona. Their formal rhetoric and her public embarrassment of him suggests an imperfect harmony. Indeed, her shrewishness and his incipient madness by the end of Act III Scene iii led Shakespeare into a difficulty which could only be solved by making drastically new commitments of characterisation in the final act, on which most critics base their view of the noble Moor and his spotless victim.

If *Othello* perilously skirts melodrama, and Mr. French is surely correct in suggesting that it does, then *King Lear* obstinately refuses to fit the Christian mould which redemptivists prepare for it. The author's contention is weakened here by his strenuous engagement in a battle which has already been won, but his judicious attention to the neglected points of view of Goneril and Regan reinforces the uneasy sense one has of Lear's growing paranoia. Their plotting of his death is thus seen as Shakespeare's desperate attempt to shift sympathy from the patient daughters to the ageing madman. It fails because a close reading of his magnificent speeches on the heath reveals not moral growth but frightening egoism as he ignores the stark reality of Tom o' Bedlam and later scarcely recognises the blinded Gloucester, while at the end Lear is content to foist his remaining illusions onto Cordelia. Dr. Johnson was right to be shocked by the play.

Mr. French is too fanciful when he suggests that Lear's poetry really creates a *persona* for Shakespeare like Yeats' Crazy Jane, but he unerringly suspects the seductive quality of the poetry of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, which is rarely in control of its own overtones. It is an amoral play, a play of postures, and a closer scrutiny reveals that this is reflected in the lovers' grandiloquent yet hollow rhetoric. Mr. French denies the accepted view that it is a play about a transcendental love and argues instead that the lovers use each other as foils for their egoism. The dramatic hiatus which occurs when the falsely genial tone of the play has to be muted to one of tragic dignity means that the dry pragmatism of Enobarbus has to be sacrificed to the sudden ennobling of Anthony and Cleopatra.

It would be ungenerous to carp at the occasionally long-winded paraphrasing of speeches in Mr. French's book, for this is part of its rigorous method, and in any case the reader is spared the cataloguing of critical attitudes to which a work like

60—DAL—WINTER

this is prone. He is content to outline the dialectic briefly, pointing out, for instance, that A. C. Bradley and F. R. Leavis can hardly both be right about *Othello* and he then proceeds to demonstrate how the error of each lies in his suppressing evidence which does not fit his view of the hero.

Mr. French's book is a provocative and lucid study, which implicitly suggests that, after all, the romantic critics were right in considering Shakespeare to be a brilliant poet yet often a careless or even indifferent craftsman. The author's attempt to give due moral weight to the points of view of all the major figures, his meticulous attention to the movement of the dramatic rhetoric, his scrupulous care with the meaning of the text, and his steady refusal to be lured into a definitive interpretation of the evidence, produce a refreshingly sensitive and yet tough-minded attempt to be true to Shakespeare. Moreover, it is an endeavour which stays firmly on the right side of idolatry.

Dalhousie University

G. M. HARVEY

Poèmes. By François Fleury. Rouen: Editions Lecerf, 1972. Pp. 132.

Eclate module. By H. A. Bouraoui. Montreal: Editions Cosmos, 1972. Pp. 129.

At the end of the nineteenth century two directions delineated themselves in French poetry: from Arthur Rimbaud came an alogical poetry, freed from form, from Stéphane Mallarmé came a poetry of the intellect, conscious of form. Rimbaud's work is characterized by an explosive violence and excitement within dismembered, asymmetrical forms wherein a dynamic, free world sinks back into pristine chaos. Mallarmé's poetry is an abstract, hermetic, intellectually driven language in which the poetic vision perceives objects robbed of their material reality and swimming in a penumbra of absence. Descending from these two illustrious poets, contemporary poetry embodies the polarity between pristine and cerebral forces. Fleury and Bouraoui are to a lesser and greater degree representatives of the two lines of development. They are both transatlantic poets; their time is divided between France and Canada.

Poèmes by Fleury brings together three previous publications of verse (*Jours d'Arès, Vers l'Orient, Etudes*) with ten new poems added and various textual rearrangements and changes. It belongs to that poetic approach where the tone is established by traditional linguistic precedence and usage. Consciousness of classical form is inspired by Mallarmé, but the content is deeply imbued with romantic concern. The book is a panorama of poetic dreams about love. It is a vision of traditionally recurrent themes. The poems sing love, regret, aging and loneliness; they celebrate the dying falls of autumn moods and mourn the death of the withdrawing mistresses.

In a classical language, the quiet voice of the narrator dreams of love, the never-ending source of youth and inspiration. Love is incarnated in the sylphids,

the fleeting, evanescent young women named in *Etudes*. Femininity bestows a state of grace similar to that extolled by the mystics. The poet receives from woman purity and a kind of eternity where time is abolished, where there is a happy immersion in beauty as a presence. All this is reminiscent of the religious vocabulary of the romanticists. Woman is spiritualized, she is cast as an Edenic creature: for her femininity rests on chastity and seduction. However, the poetic dream does not focus merely on the celestial side of woman. She is sung as "a landscape of pleasure and purity". She is both innocent and sensuous. To the first look of the poet she is delicious, already imaginatively possessed by caresses. Love can then be ambiguous, even guilty, and the only joy can spring from the remembrance of times of oneness and harmony.

Like the "azur", woman can also withdraw. Then the thoughts of the poet pursue her. His eyes rove over her dress which lead to a hidden and concealed body. Touching the dress with the eyes is touching the skin and returning at least in mind to the initial experience of freshness, ardor and purity. True possession occurs only when the perception of the woman is concomitant with the creation of the poem about her.

H. A. Bouraoui's volume *Eclate module*, his third book of poems, descends directly from the style of poetry that was initiated by Rimbaud and that traversed the surrealist movement. Unlike Fleury, whose settings are most often in forests, near rivers, on silent paths, Bouraoui is a complex urban poet who is seeking the place of the individual in contemporary society. Underneath Bouraoui's broken language there runs no time-honored subject matter. The myth of those civilized ills that may yet destroy us in body and spirit find their expression in savage new rhythms.

The poetic experience in *Eclate module* sets out in search of a "new intoxication", and the poet finds it in the fascination with urban eroticism. These poems have a true sense of immediacy; they speak to us of a hard love which consumes itself in an intense carnal dynamism. Nonetheless, the poet is no longer confident of his own time and place. This is a vision of man out in the open, not tuned in to a private cosmos with its little mysteries. Here man is subjected to the tense and dark landscape of the urban jungle.

One of the poems sings the "rediscovery of the immense wonder within disorder". It is in the flashes of dramatic vocabulary, in the inventiveness of the language, in the poetic innovations that the reader experiences this wonder. Bouraoui's dissonance and linguistic iconoclasm correspond to our historical situation, his verbal excitements encourage the adventure of poetry. With magical words he calls forth what is otherwise abstract, with sensuous fragments of images he evokes the invisible, with hermetic metaphors he leaps into the unknown and unheard. For him, as for Rimbaud, disorder and chaos harbour the mystery of poetic creation.

Bourauoi's volume closes on a poem which is a reflection upon the enterprise of writing poetry and which gives a last definition to the poetic existence. The poem's title playfully melts laughter and writing into one word (*rirecrire*), and the poetic mind is seen feeding on an agony at once screaming and creating. Out of this moment of crisis, this ambivalent hour, a new event springs forth; it is once more the broken dialogue of poetry.

Mount Allison University

LILIANE WELCH

Fenian Fever: An Anglo-American Dilemma. By Leon O'Broin. London: Chatto and Windus, 1972. Pp. 264. \$12.00.

Over the past seventy-five years or so the Fenian movement has been the source of a steady trickle of books, from the personal memoirs of old rebels to the monographs of recent historians. This flow is justified both by the political significance that the movement had in England and the United States as well as Ireland, and by its historical importance as a forerunner of militant Irish nationalism in the twentieth century. Also, the story makes good telling. The early exploits of James Stephens touring Ireland in his beggar's disguise, the feuds which poisoned both the Irish and American branches of the movement, the attacks on Canada in 1866, the Irish rising of 1867, and the final violent eruptions of the movement in the Manchester rescue and Clerkenwell outrage are all filled with that mixture of comedy, melodrama, and blood tragedy that characterizes so much of Ireland's past and present. In his new book, Leon O'Broin makes an outstanding contribution to our knowledge of this Fenian phase of Irish history.

O'Broin makes extremely effective use of official and private papers from British and Irish archives, especially from the Fenian collection in the Dublin Castle. He is little concerned with simply stringing his material together in another reconstruction of Irish defiance and purposely plays down such sensational episodes as Stephens' escape from Richmond Jail and the execution of the Manchester martyrs. While he does not tell us quite as much about the rebels as other historians of the movement, he more than atones for this omission by his extensive and intimate record of their antagonists in the administration. We get an insider's view of the government's day-to-day activities as it set about to defuse the Fenian threat. O'Broin's research turns up all sort of interesting information on the government's use of agents to search out Fenians in the army, on preparations for the defense of Dublin down to the ordering of sand bags and iron boiler plates for the Castle gates, on the controversy within the administration over the deployment of troops, and finally on the successful quelling of the rising and the round of arrests and trials that followed. The government's use of informers is a recurrent theme. In one of the communiques that O'Broin quotes, a British official in Washington complains of being "fairly run down with informers". The same sort of traffic was

also moving in London and Dublin. With the help of traitors like Pierce Nagle, John Joseph Corydon, Red Jim McDermott and General F. F. Millen the government knew more about the secret workings of the society than most sworn Fenians did. O'Broin gives us a detailed record of how the information was gathered, paid for, and then used to sink the Fenians at Campobello, Chester, and Tallaght.

O'Broin also provides useful material on the international implications of Fenianism. He devotes two chapters of his book to the movement's activities in the United States, focusing on the interactions of the Fenians and the Johnson administration and on the power struggle within the society that finally led to the abdication of Stephens. He also exposes the touchy state of diplomatic relations between England and the United States after the Fenians set up their "executive government" in New York and began to mobilize for the Canadian campaigns. His account of the careful approaches made by British Minister Sir Frederick Bruce to the American Secretary of State indicates just how nervous the British were about pushing the United States into active support of the Rebels. The military actions against New Brunswick and Ontario seem ridiculous today, but the British government that had to deal with them was not amused by the prospect of war with the United States, which might have been their result.

Ordinarily a book that relies heavily on official documents has a built-in excuse for dullness. Happily, O'Broin doesn't need to make use of it. He has a fine instinct for the small detail that touches an historical character into life. He writes with an engagement that springs from a human rather than a partisan concern for his material. This is an honest and sensitive book and will be appreciated by anyone with an interest in nineteenth-century Irish and British history.

Dalhousie University

M. A. KLUG

Joseph Gold. *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralizer*. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972. Pp. xii, 279. \$9.50.

The boom in Dickens studies during recent years has made it increasingly difficult for critics to come up with readings of the novels that are both genuinely original and wholly convincing; and although his book has solid merits, it must be said that Professor Gold shows in places a somewhat desperate striving after novelty. "It seems not to be possible", he observes at one point, "to read criticism of *Little Dorrit* that does not deal with or at least mention prisons and families . . .", and this may be an understandable reaction from one who tries to keep abreast of current Dickensian scholarship; but perhaps, one is tempted to retort, prisons and families turn up so often because they are indeed central to the novel. The price to be paid for avoiding the excessively familiar may be to place undue emphasis on elements which are subordinate or even trivial. Professor Gold's chapter on *Pickwick*, for example, so firmly rejects the traditional view of that work as a great

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BOOK REVIEWS

comic novel (there is a passing and patronizing reference to "brilliant fun") that one has difficulty in recognizing the book from his account: for him, a joke is never simply a joke but a gnomic utterance or veiled allusion which challenges the ingenuity of the critic as a professional solver of puzzles. Sam Weller's innocent jest about his employer's being "half baptized" (a joke which reappears in *Bleak House*) prompts solemn reflections on "exclusion" from "the community of fallen humanity"—reflections which in turn prompt the reader's suspicion that the meaning of the expression has been imperfectly understood; a harmless pun on "dead letters" is seen as hinting at the decline of both the epistolary novel and of organized religion; Mrs. Gamp's "living in a wale" occasions two pages on the relevance of the Jonah story to *Martin Chuzzlewit*. It is surely not too reactionary to suggest that for Dickens a joke could often be an end in itself, and that the details of humorous allusion and verbal invention in which his novels are so extraordinarily rich may sometimes be no more than decorative flourishes. As George Orwell, to whom Professor Gold pays tribute as one of his main influences, pointed out thirty years ago, "The unmistakable mark of Dickens's writing is the *unnecessary detail*". There is a slightly rueful reference near the end of the book to "the critic who would say something new"; and in his anxiety to "say something new" the author has at times put more pressure on his interpretations of particular passages and details than common sense will tolerate. Jerry Cruncher *may* be "a parody of Christ", but the passages adduced in connexion with this reading provide little support for it, and one is driven back to the old-fashioned view that Jerry's function is very largely to provide the occasion for comedy in a novel which is unusually lacking in that ingredient. A revealing instance of what is probably a purely fortuitous similarity being pushed further than it will legitimately go is the claim that an incident in *Hard Times* is "a clear allusion to Donne's famous Meditation XVII", when Professor Gold means no more than that it reminds *him* of Donne's passage. His claim is seriously weakened by the subsequent admission implicit in "If Dickens knew this passage . . ." and by the statement "I have no external evidence to substantiate my suspicion": a "suspicion" is something very different from the recognition and demonstration of a "clear allusion", and no useful critical or other purpose can be served by confusing them. Some other insights, however, carry more conviction, and the comments on the drowning motif in *David Copperfield*, on the name Magwitch, and on the concept of class in *Our Mutual Friend* add to our understanding of these aspects of the novels in question.

Professor Gold's central thesis is that Dickens is "a moralist, supported by a religious faith"—the Christianity of a humanist; to move from the earlier to the later novels is to exchange an emphasis on social goodness and charity (the "Anatomy of Society") for a concern with self-knowledge and the recognition of human mortality (somewhat awkwardly labelled the "Autonomy of Self"). His method is to deal in turn and chronologically with the fourteen novels from *Pickwick* to

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Our Mutual Friend, adding *A Christmas Carol* but excluding the other Christmas Books and, more surprisingly, *Edwin Drood*. (His interest in Dickens's "psychological exploration" of such characters as Bradley Headstone would surely have found an interesting case-study in John Jasper.) This method means that the fullest statement of the general thesis is relegated to the short introduction and conclusion, and it may be questioned whether the author has hit on the ideal mode of organizing his material—whether the "impression of coherence that it is possible to feel in a survey of the Dickens canon" (to use his own words) can best be demonstrated through examinations, *seriatim* and largely self-contained, of individual works. A further query may be raised concerning the unexplained unevenness of distribution of attention to different novels: *Oliver Twist*, for example, rates more than twice as much space as *Martin Chuzzlewit* and nearly four times as much as *Bleak House*—a curious hierarchy which, whatever it may reflect, hardly indicates the relative artistic stature of those works. These reservations apart, it must be said that Professor Gold's main argument contains much of interest; it is unfortunate that the exegesis of particular items so often seems to weaken rather than to strengthen his case.

The book is attractively printed, but there are a number of misprints; the only disastrous one I noted is a misquotation from *Bleak House* ('Loved' for 'Bored') on page 187. Cruikshank's "Oliver Asking for More" is reproduced as a frontispiece. An index is lacking.

University of Alberta

NORMAN PAGE

Virginia Stephen, 1882-1912. Volume one of *Virginia Woolf. A Biography*. By Quentin Bell. London: Hogarth Press, 1972. Pp. XV, 230. \$12.00.

The title of this book is rather misleading in that Quentin Bell concerns himself at least as much with the Stephen family and the Bloomsbury group as he does with his stated subject. Indeed, in the first part of the book Virginia often emerges as a mere background figure, overshadowed particularly by her remarkable father, Leslie Stephen, and her more vivacious sister, Vanessa. Later, Virginia is allowed to play a larger part in her own biography, but Quentin Bell often seems to have to restrain himself from pursuing in detail the lives of his own parents, Clive and Vanessa Bell. As a result I did not leave the book feeling that I knew Virginia or had any coherent picture of her. In some of her letters, particularly those preceding her acceptance of Leonard Woolf's marriage proposal, she reveals herself to be a deeply sensitive person, tortured by her periods of madness. Yet Quentin Bell's accounts of her often suggest that she was little more than a rather unworldly, sometimes rather silly, young woman. Perhaps the sense of dissatisfaction I felt at not getting enough of Virginia will be removed by the second volume of Professor Bell's biography, since it was of course in the years after 1912 that she



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experienced her finest personal and artistic flowering before encroaching madness drove her to suicide.

As a biographer Quentin Bell's greatest limitation is his inability to encompass the full range of human feelings. His dealings with the more eccentric fringes of the Stephen family, and they include some marvellous Dickensian types, are almost entirely successful. His dry and cutting but usually affectionate tone is just right for the description of James Pattle, who was "the greatest liar in India", or Lord Henry Somerset, who was the author of *One More Passionate Kiss*, but who reserved his own embraces, not for his wife, but for the second footman. It also serves him well when he wishes to debunk some of his more awe-inspiring subjects. The account of the parsimonious Leslie Stephen's outrages over any hint of excessive spending and his dismissal of Lytton Strachey as "an impossible character" and "the arch-bugger of Bloomsbury" are richly comic. However, in spite of these lighter interludes, the history of the Stephen family between 1882 and 1912 was essentially a rather grim affair, and Quentin Bell fails to convey this adequately. We are told of the untimely deaths of Sir Leslie and Adrian Stephen, and of Virginia's occasional lapses into madness, but we are rarely made to feel the deep sorrow which pervaded the family on these occasions. True, Quentin Bell's comment that Sir Leslie Stephen was "reluctant to die because his children had at last got to an age at which he could know them, and knowing, love them" has considerable poignancy, but he quickly dissipates the mood he has created by entering into a macabrely witty account of the bedside manner of some of the Stephens' awful aunts.

In some ways *Virginia Stephen* can be approached more profitably from a social viewpoint than a biographical. The history of the Stephen family coincides with and is deeply involved in the great transformation of values which took England out of the Victorian era and into the Twentieth Century. Quentin Bell is acutely aware of this and often makes excellent use of the Stephens as cultural signposts. Sir Leslie comes to epitomize much of what is best and worst in Victorian England, Vanessa stands for the new attitudes of Bloomsbury and Virginia represents those who tried to find a middle ground between the two. Other key figures play similar symbolic roles—Henry James, for example, stands alongside Sir Leslie from time to time, and Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell and Roger Fry all illustrate aspects of the changing moral and aesthetic standards of the early Twentieth Century.

Virginia Stephen, then, is in some ways a rather disappointing book. But it has great value as an account of important movements in English society, it does give us some insight into Virginia Stephen and her family, and last, but certainly not least for the general reader, it is as readable as a good novel.

Mount Saint Vincent University

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume IX, 1843-1847. Edited by R. H. Orth and A. R. Ferguson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. Pp. xxiii, 500. \$17.00; *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume I. Edited by R. E. Spiller and A. R. Ferguson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. Pp. xxxviii, 333. \$15.00.

The ninth volume of the new edition of Emerson's *Journals* covers that period in Emerson's life when he was well on his way to becoming America's foremost man of letters. His reputation at home and in many places abroad was clearly established. In 1847, in fact, he was ready to leave for his second visit to Europe. It is somehow fitting that as the Harvard University Press reaches this point in the publication of the journals and notebooks, the Press also begins publication of its new edition of Emerson's complete *Works* with the first volume, "Nature, Addresses, and Lectures". This volume includes the *published* works of the years 1836-1844 and wisely follows so far as the contents are concerned the first volume of the Riverside edition of 1903. Even the order is preserved. Considering the great body of Emerson scholarship and the use scholars have made of the 1903 edition, the convenience of having the editions match each other volume for volume is very great.

The editors have chosen for the *Collected Works* the earliest printed form of the text of Emerson's essays, addresses, and lectures as copy-text. This choice sits, as Thoreau would say, as many risks as it runs. Their defence of their decision on this point includes references to Whitman's death-bed edition of his works and Henry James's New York edition of all his fiction, early and late. The analogy makes sense, but the result is not entirely satisfactory. Although a poet in prose, Emerson was fundamentally a man of ideas for whom ideas were passions. By choosing the earliest printed form as the copy-text, the editors often strike down Emerson's aphorisms (a polished literary form of expression anyhow). Compare, for example, the common 1849 form of a familiar sentence from "The American Scholar" with the jarring effect of the less familiar form: "The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages" is replaced by the earliest printed version, "The scholar must needs stand wistful and admiring before this great spectacle". Harrison Hayford (an editor of two volumes in this edition) in his Norton edition of *Moby-Dick*, and, I presume, in the Northwestern edition of *Moby-Dick* he is preparing for the complete works of Melville, does sometimes make poor editorial choices, but avoiding a choice altogether by rigidly holding to the earliest printed form is not I think the safest or the wisest of decisions. True, the later version is supplied in the notes, but the text goes forward forever in its first dress, to be seen and quoted in less than its Sunday-best. As Emerson says "The theory of books is noble", but only "Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing".

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Volume I of the *Collected Works* has a good format and a nicely printed page. The editors and the Press are to be congratulated for keying the *Works* to the new edition of the journals and notebooks, Emerson's "savings bank". Pages 269-280 include a list of parallel passages which will prove invaluable to many readers who are unfamiliar either with the way Emerson worked or with the journals and notebooks.

Perhaps what makes volume IX of the *Journals* especially interesting is that it covers those years in Emerson's life that coincide with Thoreau's Walden experiment and "brave" Henry's refusal to pay his poll tax, the "brave" epithet dating from an earlier journal. Loving and admiring Thoreau, Emerson agonizes over him: "If I cannot show his performance much more manifest than that of the other grand promisers, at least I can see that with his practical faculty, he has declined all the Kingdoms of this world. Satan has no bribe for him". Nevertheless, Emerson could not accept as effective the political protests of Alcott and Thoreau. Their "true quarrel", he felt, was "with the state of Man" and not with the "state of Massachusetts".

Readers of these very fine editions of the *Journals* and the *Works*, should not neglect Harvard's edition of the *Early Lectures*. Whatever disagreements or differences the scholarly reviewer may have with the various editors, he must admit that all-in-all the new editions of Emerson's writings from all sources, published and unpublished, are an achievement of no mean proportion.

University of Alberta

E. J. Ross

Pandora. By Sylvia Fraser. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972. Pp. 255.
\$7.95

Pandora is a first novel by award-winning journalist, Sylvia Fraser, and deserves reading. It is a wholly enjoyable book that rewards the reader with its depth even while giving him the feeling that he is reviewing something as familiar as his own past.

Pandora is about the growth of one small girl, Pandora Gothic, from July, 1937, when she is still a pre-schooler, to the spring of 1944 when she leaves the second grade. Pandora is a passionate, sometimes violent, little girl, daughter of a lower middle-class family, going to public school during the years of World War II; the war, though never of direct interest, tinges the atmosphere of the novel with black shadows and creates an underlying sense of strain and fatigue that is as effective as it is muted. Pandora's mother is an anxious, martyred woman whose life seems to consist in drab household economies, a religion that teaches acceptance, and a healthy terror of her husband. The father is a one-handed butcher who spends his evenings playing monopoly with imaginary financial giants, bullies his wife and children, envies his brother and is pathetic in his frustrated rage.

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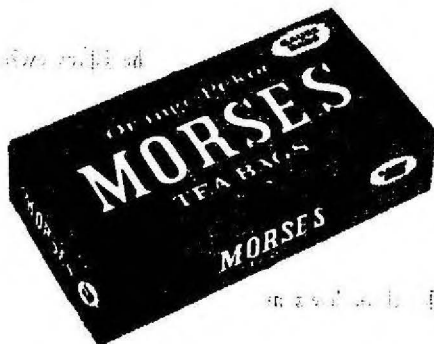
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One of the most singular features of *Pandora* is its point of view. Many of the observations and impressions are the little girl's own; Fraser has created an imaginatively direct, concrete and vivid language to support this device:

After that, Pandora will sit in front of the round mirror, at Rosie's blonde-maple dresser, and she will douse herself with *cau de smells* and *oooo de colours*, and then she will have her choice of sides in the pink-satin bed with its shiny wood grains running every which way, and Rosie, in her shocking-pink night-gown, will blow noisy kisses to the soldiers/sailors/airmen, both living and dead, on her blonde-maple highboy, and she will say, "Well, toots, into the arms of Dreamland—and others!" and she will yank the charm on her organdy bed-lamp, and they will all go to sleep, with Ruby snoring good-heartedly on the pullout divan.

Pandora knows that's what will happen, because that is how she has asked for it, and that is how Rosie has promised it.

This is not all. Extending beyond the central core of Pandora's consciousness, yet merging smoothly with it, is the voice of the narrator who sees and re-creates a world around Pandora while recording the child's reactions to it.

This multiple viewpoint results in several layers of matter and meaning. There is Pandora's personal story, full of her growing awareness, her sensual notation of objects, people, and experiences as she makes friends, plays around the neighbourhood, goes to a birthday party, visits her grandmothers, and so on. Though much of this story is told in the innocent manner of Pandora's own thought, Fraser blends into it such a richness of authorial humour and insight that almost every reader will recognize some of his own experiences in those of Pandora.

Then there is the matter that goes beyond Pandora and scans the environment in which she is placed. Fraser's observations of society sometimes recall the gentle irony of a Leacock recording the foibles, laughable, but not unlikeable, of his people:

It is spring.

All up and down Oriental Avenue families have switched from Red River porridge to Rice Krispies. The first robin has been seen, and eaten, by the Stintons' Persian cat . . . Mrs. Newton's orange-plastic flamingoes are out; ditto her birdbath, green frogs, seven dwarfs, darkie lantern-holder and petunia window-boxes.

The baker has hot-cross buns. The vegetableman has over-ripe strawberries, veiled like whores in red netting. The girls of Thor Munitions offer up their painted calves and sweated bosoms to the fantasies of Oriental men, dourly calculating the cost of grass-seed. The junkman returns from Florida.

At other times, the tone darkens to a grim objectivity that bespeaks an underlying rage against the wrongs of society; occasionally, this objectivity assumes the pose of a dispassionate and analytical sociologist:

It is a chattering group, but not a casual one: Georgia Brooks, Lucy Ford, Marjorie Maitland, Flora Thwaite—they are all under pressure to find a "bestfriend", and

to find her quickly. The mechanics of classroom and playground life, as painfully learned last year, demand it. Ideally a girl's best friend will reflect her status or improve it. *At least*, she must provide security—someone whose warm, preferably unpimpled, hand can be counted on when partners are called for gym or class projects. Someone to spare a girl the humiliation of being paired, forcibly, by the teacher with another "leftover".

Fraser is adept at brushing obliquely across nerves, across pain and ugliness, without invoking them directly. The effect is to build up a kind of tingling suspense and an acute consciousness of the forms that mask our evils. Perhaps the one weakness of *Pandora* is that this type of social satire in places ceases to be oblique and gains a prominence that becomes a trifle heavy handed. For instance, when Fraser names the triumvirate of school boys who are beating up a Jewish classmate Jessie Christie, Horace Ghostie, and Godfrey Trumps, the allusion to the Trinity seems to me to add very little to the novel, and the chief impression is of a too-contrived device. Though Fraser is concerned with the sense of guilt with which our society burdens the natural child, the same point could have been made without the rather awkward religious symbolism.

However, the great strength of Fraser's novel, the quality that redeems its flaws, is its larger awareness. Fraser has taken *Pandora* beyond mere notation and anecdote and beyond social comment and made it, ultimately, a compassionate expression of her understanding of man's existence. As the little girl gropes painfully between social compromise and some truer self, as she learns to hide her instinctive fear of her peers in a show of bravado, as she grapples with what she feels and what she is told she should feel, as she meets the devastating fact of death, she becomes the representative of mankind. Pandora is not only an appropriate name for this particular tempestuous child; it is Fraser's word for man's whole troubled condition. The final section of the novel is entitled "Love", and love, as Fraser sees it, is man's only hope. Pandora's parents, themselves the deformed children of mankind's mistakes, in an inarticulate spirit of loving sacrifice, decide to try to give Pandora "Another Sort of Life". In the context of the novel this gesture becomes the sign of our hope for the future. And finally, it is the quality of love in Fraser's presentation of her people that raises this novel above the merely skillful.

Many books are written that win our admiration, but not our affection. I recommend that you read Sylvia Fraser's *Pandora* because it does both.

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