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What is Canadian Intellectual History?

Although Clio's muse is probably the most encompassing of all in the humanities and social sciences, Canadian historians have been reluctant until recently to engage in the diversification their discipline warrants. No area has been more ignored or remains more ambiguous and confused than Canadian intellectual history. During the past decade Sydney Wise, Ramsay Cook, Carl Berger and others have produced excellent studies in the general field, but most of this new development has transpired in a vacuum. Anyone perusing the categorization of theses in the annual *Register of Dissertations* or the course descriptions of the many social and intellectual history courses across the country must conclude that there is a serious absence of definition, direction and concepts employed. Indeed, there are some professional historians who remain openly satirical of the very idea of the existence of a Canadian intellectual history.

Many have blamed a colonial mentality for lulling Canadians into a belief that their thinking and their imagination were either inferior or derived entirely from a higher culture.¹ But perhaps even more important than the colonial mentality as an agent of retardation has been a European-centred historiographical tradition or frame of reference which has fostered the belief that Canada lacked a significant intellectual tradition because it produced no John Locke, Karl Marx or Edmund Burke. Canadian historians therefore concentrated on the more traditional political, constitutional and later economic achievements while never losing sight of the pragmatism of the politicians or the importance of material progress as determining factors in Canadian development. Until the past decade Canadian intellectual history simply did not exist as a separate entity. Prior to this time, discussion of

Canadian intellectual history centred upon very non-intellectual studies in the fields of education, religion and journalism.² In spite of the recent dramatic expansion of Canadian intellectual history both in courses and on the printed page, the definition of its nature and scope has not progressed far beyond James C. Marlin's now dated conception that defining intellectual history was like trying to nail jelly to a wall.³ Many of the existing university courses still appear to be rooted in the vagueness of studies incorporating both social and intellectual history, a phenomenon which characterized the American approach of the 1950's.⁴ While Canadian social history has achieved greater independent status within several conceptual frameworks during the past decade, intellectual history has not experienced a similar evolution.

Although usually labelled as the most amorphous and the most difficult of all history, the intellectual branch is neither without definitions nor conceptual frameworks. For F.C. Baumer, the intellectual historian is interested not in the value of ideas in the ultimate scheme of things, their accuracy and logical consistency, or the aesthetic satisfaction they give, but their development and relation to each other in time, how and why they appear and spread at a particular time, and their effects on concrete historical situations.⁵ Similarly, both Crane Brinton and Merle Curti view the task of intellectual history as "one of analysing ideas in terms of their historical framework or environment."⁶ The most prolific American writer on the nature of intellectual history, John Higham, sees it as scrutinizing "the relatively enduring organizations of thought and emotion, knowledge, opinion, faith, attitudes as they develop and operate within particular historical contexts."⁷ In short, intellectual history is concerned with what society thinks of itself through its major thinkers and its lesser individuals and a more general concept that leads on to a consideration of the climate of opinion or the spirit of an age. It sees events as a demonstration of ideas; it deals with essence over function, but it never loses touch with a frame of historical reference in time and place.

Because of the nature of the material, intellectual history demands very careful research, organization and interpretative techniques. There are internal, external and environmental causations to assess and distinguish. Care should be taken to avoid a categorization of individuals, groups or ideas in water-tight compartments of time and place. Society changes only gradually from the influence of new ideas

or emotions, and the impact of an idea is not always or even usually continuous. Above all, intellectual history must be more than a study of vague, mystical powers or ideas divorced from a proper historical setting or a proper historical perspective. There is little point in blindly excavating facts without some well-defined approach or conceptual framework. The acquisition of these tools should begin at the undergraduate course level. In the final analysis the climate of opinion or the spirit of an age is of the greatest significance in intellectual history, but this is the final stage which follows a wholesale analysis of the significant individualistic forces and individuals and their impact on a particular period.

Although it is important not to lose sight of the Western European intellectual tradition in seeking the Canadian intellectual heritage, such studies should begin within a Canadian framework and lose what Alan Gowans has referred to as "irrational inverted snobbery".⁸ One can and should analyse the influence of a Karl Marx or an Edmund Burke on Canadian society, but one should also avoid employing the western intellectual tradition as the only touchstone. Much of Canada's derivative thought has variation from its parent, and there are also thoughts more distinctly Canadian without traceable European origin. As Canadians live in a more egalitarian society than their European or British counterparts, it is also important for the scope of investigation to include the common man as well as the elite of the society. Also it is not the task of the intellectual historian to judge a Canadian idea or its spokesman as inferior but to accept what exists within the national boundaries and relate that where possible to external intellectual influences.

Intellectual history in its broadest definition can provide one of the major avenues through which the historical profession can maintain and even capitalize upon its position as the primary interpreter of mankind in its historical setting. During the past decades, social scientists and literary scholars have assumed, almost by default, much of the historians' responsibility to examine and interpret Canadian society. Even some of the professional historians who remain skeptical about the study of Canadian historiography and culture have welcomed the entrance of sociology or literary scholarship into these fields. The benefits for political history and biography are also obvious. Far too often by ceasing to be a life-and-times study, political biography has

tended to ignore the prevailing climate of opinion with its many barometers. Intellectual history can also provide a means of broadening the horizons beyond the national boundaries and a preoccupation with nationalism through consideration of the influence of international ideas on the country. It can also be a legitimate means of eroding the many centralist conceptions of Canadian development by creating a deeper understanding of regional diversity and regional similarity for, in intellectual studies, such derogatory labels as provincial and antiquarian are no longer necessarily inferior to national. Hopefully, as well, intellectual history could help in removing Canadians from the influence of those like Seymour Lipset and D.M. Potter and many colonially-minded citizens who tend to deny Canada a cultural identity separate from that of the United States, England or France. Finally, intellectual history can provide a greater depth and dignity for Canadian history. By encouraging an analysis of habits of mind, a training valuable for all history, it can supply the philosophic background which many students have hitherto found absent in Canadian studies.

There are three separate approaches to Canadian intellectual history: the more traditional history of ideas or, stated more correctly, ideas in history; the history of historiography; and culture. It is possible to use both historiography and culture in a thematic study of ideas, but they can and should also exist as independent fields of study. Although the emphasis to date has been on the ideas in history approach, if the discipline is to acquire an overview of the spirit of any particular Canadian period, emphasis must move beyond the consideration of social and political pressure groups and embrace a broader perspective of historical and cultural thought.

I

The traditional ideas in history approach, in which liberalism, nationalism, imperialism, toryism and other forces are defined and analysed, remains by far the most prominent approach to intellectual studies in Canada. While representing more than the older concept of the history of ideas, which was often more philosophic than historical, this approach studies the origin and nature of ideas, their impact on society, their interaction and significance in both a physical and

chronological setting. It represents more a study of ideas in history than a study of the history of ideas. Two important prerequisites are an acquisition of the basic historical knowledge of the period under study and a continuing awareness of historical perspective. Without these there are ever-present dangers of over-simplification, of assuming the autonomy of ideas, of losing oneself in abstractions and of freezing ideas in a particular period of time. "It is", as Hajo Holburn reminds us, "the task of history to recognize man in time."⁹

The precaution against premature generalizations is of particular importance to Canadian intellectual history in its infancy. One of the best examples of this pitfall appears in Lawrence Fallis Jr.'s study of "The Idea of Progress in the Province of Canada" published in a group of essays on Victorian Canada entitled *The Shield of Achilles*.¹⁰ Patterning his article on A.A. Erkirch's study of the idea of progress in the United States,¹¹ Fallis assumes a similarity of chronological development in both Canada and the United States and concludes that the 1860's represented in many ways the highwater mark of the philosophy. To substantiate such a contention would require more documentation than a mere catalogue of facts collected primarily from previously published works. The article demonstrates nothing more than the existence of a few people who embraced the idea of progress in Canada of the period and leaves some confusion as to the geographic area represented by Canada in its chronological evolution. A much more impressive approach to a single philosophy is S.F. Wise's probing of the "Tory mind" in British North America in its anti-American, elitist and religious phases.¹² It is unfortunate that his excellent article, "Sermon Literature and Canadian Intellectual History", remained buried in an obscure and inaccessible journal before being rescued by Jack Bumsted and published in his *Canadian History Before Confederation* in 1972.¹³ Influenced in part by the American William Haller, and the Englishman Christopher Morris, Wise provides both an impressive intellectual thrust into his subject and a probing into the scope and essence of Canadian intellectual history. Wise argues that because no connected history of formal thought is possible in Canada, intellectual history "must be primarily concerned with the inter-relationships between ideas and action."¹⁴ For Wise this involves both the tracing of externally derived ideas and their adaptation to the Canadian environment and analysing assumptions that are more

uniquely Canadian. It could be argued that a connected history of formal thought is impossible for any country, but certainly Canada with its regional diversity, ethnic mosaic and individualistic colonial development presents special problems.

Canada's character also presents problems for the inclusion of political philosophy in intellectual studies. For western civilization in general, political philosophy has represented the core of the intellectual tradition. For Canada political philosophy has been primarily derivative and constantly subjected to the necessity of compromise. Like Wilfrid Laurier the majority of our politicians have discovered that a compromise of principles was often a prerequisite for the retention if not the acquisition of power. "To temporize, to blunt divisive issues, might not be heroic, but it could ensure peace — and power."¹⁵ In Canadian intellectual history, therefore, the essence of a Canadian political philosophy must be found either in the compromise itself or in the minds of those political thinkers on the fringes of power. Perhaps Henri Bourassa, D'Arcy McGee, George Parkin, Robert Sellar, G.M. Grant and John Christian Shultz are more representative of Canadian political philosophy than either Sir John A. Macdonald or William Lyon Mackenzie King.

The most popular contemporary approach to Canadian intellectual history in recent years has been, for want of a better term, the "group approach" which traces the origin, evolution and application of ideas through a group of similarly-minded individuals. Both Carl Berger in his study of imperialism and Richard Allen in his study of the social gospel have employed this method.¹⁶ Although these studies will long stand as important and pathfinding works in their own right, possibly their greatest long-term contribution to Canadian studies will be in demonstrating the great need for further investigation and in encouraging others to embark on continuing studies. The group approach does, however, present two difficulties for the intellectual historian: the problem of the defining of terminology and concept; and the generalizations made necessary by a general thematic approach. It is important to be fully cognizant of British, European and American influences on Canadian thought, but it is also important to guard against either a wholesale application of external concepts to the Canadian experience, or, conversely, to attribute too much innovation to local Canadians.¹⁷ The historian must also avoid concentrating too

heavily upon a particular segment or group as the radicals in what is purported to be a broadly-based study. Even more important in the Canadian context is the avoidance of the application of a Central Canadian generalization to Canada as a whole. When E.R. Forbes challenges Professor Allen's treatment of the Maritimes in that author's study of the social gospel, he is pointing to a deficiency that is all-too-common in Canadian studies.¹⁸ At no time should a generalization in intellectual history be at the expense of the complexity of Canadian society. Many of the themes explored by Berger, including racism, nationalism, militarism, ruralism and anti-Americanism, have contexts far removed from imperialism. Each cries out for a separate thematic analysis. The same characteristics apply to the individuals present in both the studies of the social gospel and of imperialism. William Kirby, C.W. Gordon, William Irvine, Andrew Macphail and others are too complex as individuals to be confined to the limits of a social gospel or an imperial mentality. Not until there is a diversity through separate studies such as Ramsay Cook's treatment of John Dafoe and John Higham's study of American nativism can Canadian intellectual historians begin to generalize with authority on a Canadian intellectual tradition.¹⁹

II

Studies in Canadian historiography have appeared and increased greatly in popularity in the last decade. As long as the writing of Canadian history remained the prerogative of a few closely-knit individuals with even fewer general philosophies or approaches, an objective analysis of the nature and evolution of the writing of Canadian history in relation to our intellectual growth and heritage was nearly impossible. But now, with the reality of the recent expansion within the discipline, the diversification of approach and subject material, and increased sophistication and detachment, it is possible to assess the evolution of Canada's historical ideas and assumptions with an objectivity sufficient to merit classification as intellectual history. As history is written consciously or unconsciously under the influence of the attitudes, values and spirit of an age, it becomes automatically a part of both the intellectual heritage of previous history and the contemporary intellectual environment. Involved in this approach is

more than a study of history and its creators. It involves an analysis of the very essence of society.

For Canadians the relationship between historians and society may be of even greater than usual importance. Canada has been a young country with distinct regional, racial and political divisions in which a colonial mentality and a nationalistic surge often existed side by side. Most Canadian historians have found it difficult to avoid becoming identified with and commenting upon these factors of the country's heritage. It may be possible to learn more about Canadian Conservatism from Sir John A. Macdonald's academic successors than from Macdonald himself. The philosophies of Quebecois historians, past and present, represent a vital barometer of the evolution and variety of Quebec's thought and cultural outlook. Arthur Lower's career provides absorbing insights into the complexities of a Canada shaped by such influences as Calvinism, the Protestant ethic, liberalism, whiggism, frontierism, metropolitanism and various environmental influences. "It would almost certainly be helpful to the survival of Canada as one country," wrote F.W. Park while reviewing Stanley Ryerson's *Unequal Union*, "if as many English speaking Canadians were to read *Unequal Union* ...as have read *Federalism and the French Canadians* by Pierre Elliott Trudeau."²⁰ Yet Ryerson, who owes his present belated academic status to the new francophone universities, remains ignored and even scorned by many established Canadian anglophone historians. Francis Parkman remains a part of an American rather than a Canadian historical tradition despite his continued influence through his own writings and such successors as George Wrong, Arthur Lower, Mason Wade and the widely read five volume *History of Canada* series edited by Thomas Costain, which often stands alone representing paperback Canadian history on the newsstand.²¹ Parkman's particular racial, religious, social and political views remain almost unexplored in their proper Canadian context, and confused radicals such as Leandre Bergeron can with a great measure of success draw upon a dated, Parkman-like conceptual framework with revolutionary intent. Other historians, amateur or professional, who can provide remarkable insights into Canadian thought and society are E.H. Oliver, Alexander Begg, O.D. Skeleton, Chester Martin, George Mercer Adam, J.C. Hopkins and George Bryce.

To date, modern historiographic research in Canada has concentrated

upon either general surveys of an incident with little concern for the philosophic undertones or the in-depth analysis of a few individuals such as Lionel Groulx or A.L. Burt.²² Available literature has not yet progressed far beyond the history of history or the contribution of the historian to historical knowledge. Present trends, however, suggest that the next decade will be both innovative and prolific. The majority of Canadian historians have been reluctant to articulate their conceptual frameworks or, in some cases, to admit their existence, but there exists a selection of private papers, speeches and writings both formal and informal from which the researcher can delineate the influences upon a particular historian and his influence on society. Such research will involve a moving away from a narrow concern with national identity and an embracing of the complexity of the external, national, religious, environmental and other forces which have influenced the development of modern Canada. Acknowledgement of the American Progressive influence on Frank Underhill and Kenneth McNaught, of Max Weber on Arthur Lower, the influence of the classics on most of our early historians and the Germanic contribution to the staples concept of Canadian economic history can only lead to a deeper understanding of the country. Another beneficial result of analysing a particular historian or a particular philosophy is the insights it will provide into the forces of regionalism and centralism, the effects of the colonial mentality, anti-Americanism, and continentalism. As both individuals and society are complex, it will be necessary, above all, to avoid an oversimplification of either individuals or ideas. It is impossible to contain H.A. Innis within a simplistic staples or Laurentian concept. D.G. Creighton has moved far beyond the Conservative confines of the St. Lawrence valley. Fernand Ouellet is more than an economic determinist, and Michel Brunet's career involves more than a debate on the meaning of the impact of the Conquest on Quebec society. To study Canadian historiography properly requires rising above a narrow evaluation or gradation of the worthiness of the individual to a consideration with the greatest possible detachment of the individual's roots and role in Canadian society. Such studies can provide one of the best and most interesting means of understanding the foundations of Canadian thought.

III

The third approach to intellectual history through an analysis of the

Canadian cultural tradition is perhaps the most controversial and the least practised of the three under discussion. Although literature and history have traditionally been closely related, any dialogue between them has generally centred upon history as a creative art rather than on the separate status of literature as a historical source. Historians could use culture to help to characterize the general spirit of an age and then attempt to write with as much grace as a literary craftsman, but if they were interested in the history of culture they were in danger of being labelled literary historians who in Canada have been attached to departments of English rather than departments of history.

"Culture," wrote Augustin Yanez more than two decades ago, is the product of the "innate spirit of the race, developing its contact with the forces of nature, climate, and history."²³ Within the creative spirit is a writer's awareness of his heritage, the nature of contemporary society, and, in many instances, an understanding of the progress of the developing nation in which he or she resides. It is in these respects that culture can be of value to the intellectual historian. An American pathfinder, Bernard De Voto, states that "literature shows what a society experiences, what it thinks of itself, what it hopes of itself."²⁴

For Canadian observer Guy Sylvestre our creative artists are "interpreters of our way of life, of our traditions and aspirations"²⁵, and for Canadian poet and literary critic D.G. Jones literature represents "The mirror of our imaginative life."²⁶ A country's culture, then, taken as an independent body of historical literature or raw data, is able to provide an understanding and descriptive analysis of spirit and essence that may or may not be discovered elsewhere.

Amongst the disciplines interested in culture including anthropology, social history, literary history, cultural history and intellectual history, there are subtle differences of scope and methodology, which may at first appear confusing to the casual observer. The anthropologist with the widest definition tends to define culture as embracing the entire spectrum of human life, as a product of social interaction and an acquired but uncultivated pattern of behaviour and thought. Such culture can exist in societies lacking a written literary tradition or evolving artistic tradition. Although Renaissance scholar Jacob Burckhart differed in his approach from the anthropologist, he possessed the same breadth of vision. No historian since, however, has been able to pursue successfully Burckhart's dream of mastering such a

body of factual and symbolic material. Modern society tends to be too large and too complex for this type of treatment. The social historian may use realistic literature as a reflection of the manners, morals and lifestyle of a people, but he or she will select only that body of literature which realistically portrays a society and will use culture as only one avenue of approach to social history, which has demographic and other dimensions not found in culture itself. While placing analysis in a proper historical perspective, the cultural historian generally limits himself to the subject matter of the cultural experience. As a field of study, teaching or research, cultural history is not widely practiced in Canada. Along with intellectual history from a cultural base, it embraces the world of moods and ideas in literature, music and painting, but cultural history travels beyond the matters of the mind to publishing, literary tastes, styles, technology, distribution, sales, censorship and the influence of the support institutions. It assesses the cultural nature of a society and attempts to gauge the degree to which this cultural heritage reflects the life, the values and the aspirations of the citizens. To accomplish this successfully the cultural historian must be fully aware of the political, social and economic preoccupations of the period under discussion. Cultural history represents to a greater degree than can be found in literary studies an attempt to study a country's history through literature rather than an investigation of individual authors and their works. In its initial stage in Canada, however, it is difficult to envisage the generalization without substantial groundwork with the individual.

In Canada it is the combined literary historian and critic and the intellectual historian who have been the most closely related. It is also this relationship that poses the greatest problems for and the greatest threat to the intellectual historian. With the declining influence of the anti-historical "New Criticism" in university departments of English, more literary scholars are embarking on studies that encroach upon the legitimate territory of the cultural or intellectual historian. Meanwhile, any attempt at a legitimate cross-fertilization either within present departmental structures or under a new concept such as Canadian studies appears to be an exercise in futility. As recently as the early 1970's in a North American context it took the editor of *The Journal of Inter-disciplinary History* two years to collect sufficient material for an issue entitled "The Historian and the Arts". When only two

historians contributed to the volume, the editor found the situation "ominous and disheartening".²⁷

As long ago as 1928 the American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger wrote that "until the historian frees himself from the domination of the literary critic, his work is certain to fall short of its highest promise."²⁸ This does not mean that the cultural or intellectual historian should not be aware of what the literary critic or others investigating culture are doing. It does mean, however, that the historian should no longer rely upon an uncritical acceptance of literary studies, and the historian must create studies independent in approach and scope from those of other disciplines. There are marked differences between the methodology of the literary critic and that of the intellectual historian. Whereas the former is potentially interested in the totality of literature, the latter selects and comments upon only that body of material which reflects the trends of (and provides insights into) a particular era. Each selects and handles facts differently, with the student of literature often embellishing the facts with speculative insights and poetic images which may be neither good history or even have a sound historical existence. While the intellectual historian is preoccupied with ideas found in culture and their relationship to society, the literary critic often operates in a historical vacuum and concentrates on a close textual analysis and a preoccupation with symbol and myth which are potentially dangerous ground for the historian. A historian such as H.N. Smith in his *Virgin Land* can successfully analyse the world of literary mythology, but the process is not one that can be universally applied.²⁹ Most of all, however, the literary critic or historian consistently lacks either the historical knowledge, perspective or methodology necessary to focus a literary study in a proper historical setting.

Typical of the research into our literary past which has been used by historians are the studies of Charles Mair by Norman Shrive and Anna Jameson by Clara Thomas.³⁰ Despite Thomas' usage of secondary historical sources, she makes no real attempt to place her subject fully into the contemporary historical setting, nor does she begin to explain the continued and perhaps unwarranted popularity of *Summer Rambles and Winter Studies* in our educational institutions. Similarly, Shrive neglects to place Mair in a proper Whig, nativist and nationalist

perspective and provides too little incisive analysis or intellectual context to have *Charles Mair. Literary Nationalist* accepted as intellectual history. Other literary-minded scholars such as Ralph Curry, Donald Cameron and Robertson Davies have written on Stephen Leacock without reference to his role as a social and political commentator.³¹ Only recently have Ramsay Cook and Alan Bowker demonstrated the importance of Leacock as a social critic through an assessment of both his fictional and non-fictional writings.³² Now with an understanding of Leacock's attacks on materialism, the leisure classes, rampant individualism and the evils of industrial society we can more fully understand Leacock, the humourist. Such criticisms do not imply that the intellectual historian should not become aware of and employ the findings of the literary critic in his own work but that the historian needs to travel beyond such premises with individual investigation. In time, no doubt, some historian will tackle Northrop Frye's concept of the "garrison mentality" and Margaret Atwood's "survival and victims" philosophy and even move onwards to the hostile wilderness, the sense of exile and romanticism in Canadian culture, but as historians they must constantly guard against simplistic definitions of the concept, avoid applying the simple, single concept to our complex society and defend something as a national phenomenon when it has universal application.

For the intellectual historian the major concern should be not whether the country possesses a great culture on the international scale or that its people have been characterized as witless and unimaginative but simply to analyse what does exist. Some pride in the country and its cultural tradition, however, is a prerequisite for successful cultural studies. In a young, often internally divisive nation such as Canada, history and culture have perhaps been more closely interrelated and reflect the thoughts and aspirations of significant groups of citizens to an extent greater than in older, more stable civilizations. Now, however, in what may be described as a post-Canadian phase of literature, much of the contemporary culture is of less potential interest to the historian.³³

The two primary problems confronting any historian interested in culture are those of the validity of literature as a historical source and the degree of aesthetic sensibility and skill required in the analysis. Culture seldom purports to be an accurate chronicle of events or

anything more than an author's individual picture of society. Nevertheless, the literature of a period is a part of the evidence about the problems and the meaning of an age. Part of the challenge for the intellectual or cultural historian is the assessment of the degree to which any source represents significant general convictions of an era, the symbolic or mythological beliefs of a society or social realism. In many instances an author or painter has left autobiographical or other non-fictional documents of great value. And always, as in every approach to intellectual history, there must be a continual cross-checking with other historical barometers before there can be any significant and valid generalization. Poetry and art present an even greater challenge than prose. Given the time and the training, the historian can acquire the technical competence and the aesthetic sensibility of the poetry or art critic in arriving at a combined historical and cultural appreciation of culture, but to him the aesthetic appreciation will always remain of less importance, more individualistic and more controversial than the historical appreciation. Meanwhile those creative spirits whose work and lives have been linked to social comment, political action or national aspirations provide an excellent starting point. Such poets as Charles G.D. Roberts and Gaston Miron and artists such as the Group of Seven, Emily Carr and Paul Emile Borduas are representative of this type of creative artist.

Canada's first significant practitioner of intellectual studies from a cultural base was Alfred Bailey, who was trained in both anthropology and history and influenced by early sociology. Although Bailey still ranks as the most significant innovator in the field, "for over two decades he was a prophet without honour in his own country."³⁴ His contemporary colleagues either ignored or misunderstood his employment of anthropological and sociological concepts in his investigation into the nature and relevance of literature in society. Unfortunately for Canadian studies Bailey has devoted most of his life to administration and poetry, and it is only now in his retirement that he is engaging once more in serious cultural research.³⁵

As a field of study, research into the cultural base of intellectual history is virtually unlimited and can add much to the understanding of Canada's past. How different a conception of Canada's response to war is found in cultural sources than in the contemporary newspapers. The majority of our important commissioned war artists including Fred

Varley, Arthur Lismer and Alex Colville represented war as a bloody and horrible affair with little glory or false patriotism. In the poetry and prose there are recurring references to "spiritual dignity" and "duty" but little mention of national glory or British imperial collectiveness. As the poet Lloyd Roberts said:

"Well, hand me the gun—
If I must — if I must."³⁶

The character of the Canadian West can often be envisaged better from a literary than a historical perspective. In *Who Has Seen the Wind*, W.O. Mitchell as a native son explores the soul of his region.³⁷ Frederick Philip Grove finds solace in a West yet spared the evils of a materialistic society in a reaction common to many of his non-literary contemporaries. In one of the most significant books published on the West in the last decades, Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow*³⁸ relates the trials of growing to adulthood in a region which experienced a severe climate, an open frontier, a colonial mentality and a powerful neighbour to the south. The book explores regional roots with universal overtones more significantly than any Canadian volume published. The immigrant's reaction and adjustment to Canadian society and that society's acceptance or rejection of the immigrant are vividly portrayed in such volumes as John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, Laura Goodman Salverson's *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, and Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*.³⁹ Quebec's engaging relationship between man and land evolves from love through realism to hatred through Pierre Chauveau's *Charles Guerin*, Antoine Gerin Lajoie's *Jean Rivard*, Ringuet's *Thirty Acres*, and Marie Claire Blais' *Une Saison dans la Vie d'Emmanuel* and *Mad Shadows*.⁴⁰ Thus the Canadian creative spirit represents not only an indicator or barometer of Canadian thought but also social and political commentary of the evolving society. It is an important and much neglected source of Canadian studies.

IV

Although traditional ideas in history, historiography and culture are three distinct areas of Canadian intellectual history, there also exists a cross-fertilization of ideas between the three branches. In the 1860's, for instance, there was a marked similarity in the thought of Thomas

D'Arcy McGee, politician, Cornelius Kreighoff, painter, Charles Sangster, poet, and W.A. Foster, lawyer. In the late 1880's and 1890's, representatives from the world of business, the arts, the professions and the universities united to foster the growth of the attributes of a nation,⁴¹ and in the 1920's the Group of Seven, those involved with the launching of the *Canadian Forum*, W.S. Wallace and others displayed a similar nationalistic orientation. Finally, in the late 1960's in Quebec, Gaston Miron, poet, Pierre Vallieres, journalist, Rene Levesque, politician, and Michel Brunet, historian, developed a similar philosophic orientation. The final result of such investigations will be the definition and the analysis of the spirit of the various eras. Such definitions exist as the ultimate goal of the intellectual historian.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See Frank Underhill, *The Image of Confederation*, Toronto, 1964, p.3, and his "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition in Canada", in Carl Berger, ed., *Approaches to Canadian History*, Toronto, 1967, p.30; Carl Berger, *Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884-1914. A Conflict in Canadian Thought*, Toronto, 1969, p.5; J. Bumsted, ed., *Canadian History Before Confederation. Essays and Interpretations*, Georgetown, 1972, p.253; L. Upton, "The Idea of Confederation, 1754-1858", in W.L. Morton, ed., *The Shield of Achilles. Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, Toronto, 1968, p.184.
- 2 See R.W. Winks, ed., *The Historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth*, Durham, 1966, pp.84, 115-36. Both practical realism and materialism also have philosophic foundations. Consideration of these can furnish an analysis of the intellectual roots of the woman's suffrage and other movements.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p.84 and Berger, *Imperialism and Nationalism*, p.4.
- 4 John Higham, "American Intellectual History. A Critical Appraisal", *American Quarterly*, vol. XII (1961), p.230; John C. Greene, "Objectives and Methods in Intellectual History", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. XLIV (June 1957), p.67.
- 5 F.C. Baumer, "Intellectual History and Its Problems", *Journal of Modern History*, vol. XXI (Sept. 1949), pp.191-92.
- 6 Arthur A. Ekirch Jr., *American Intellectual History*, 2nd edition, New York, Service Centre for Teachers of History, No.53, 1963, p.2.
- 7 John Higham, "The Rise of American Intellectual History", *American Historical Review*, vol. LVI (April 1951), p.453.
- 8 Alan Gowans, "The Canadian National Style", in Morton, ed., *Shield of Achilles*, p.209.
- 9 Hajo Holborn, "The History of Ideas", *American Historical Review*, vol. LXXIII (February 1968), p.695.
- 10 Lawrence S. Fallis Jr., "The Idea of Progress in the Province of Canada. A Study in the History of Ideas", in Morton, ed., *The Shield of Achilles*, pp.169-83.
- 11 A.A. Erkirch, *The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860*, New York, 1951.
- 12 S.F. Wise, "Sermon Literature and Canadian Intellectual History", *United Church Archives Bulletin*, vol. XVIII (1965), pp.3-18; S.F. Wise, "God's Peculiar People", in Morton, ed., *Shield of Achilles*, pp.36-61; and S.F. Wise and R.C. Brown, *Canada Views the United States. Nineteenth Century Political Attitudes*, Toronto, 1967.

- 13 Bumsted, *Canadian History Before Confederation*, pp.253-69.
- 14 Wise, "Sermon Literature", p.3.
- 15 Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada: 1896-1921. A Nation Transformed*, Toronto, 1974, p.8.
- 16 Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power. Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, Toronto, 1970; Richard Allen, *The Social Passion. Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28*, Toronto, 1971.
- 17 See H.V. Nelles' review of *The Social Passion* in *Queen's Quarterly*, vol. 80, (autumn 1973), p.460; Douglas L. Cole, "Canada's Nationalistic Imperialists", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 5 (5 August 1970); D. Cole, "The Problem of Nationalism and Imperialism in British Settlement Colonies", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. X, no. 2 (May 1971), pp.160-82.
- 18 E.R. Forbes, Review of *The Social Passion* in *Acadiensis*, vol. II, no. I (autumn 1972), pp.94-96.
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