

## Book Reviews

*Midpoint and Other Poems.* By John Updike. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969. Pp. 99. \$4.50.

*Bech: A Book.* By John Updike. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970. Pp. 206. \$6.95.

The general deepening in seriousness that is to be found in the works of John Updike may be seen in two books that have appeared in the past year. *Midpoint* carries a collection of earlier poems, together with the long one which gives the book its name. *Bech: A Book* is a compilation of seven stories, five of which have appeared between 1965 and 1970 in the *New Yorker*. Neither book is to be faulted as a compilation hastily assembled because the author is running short of material or needs to produce a book-a-year. The consistency and direction of Updike's work cannot be more clearly seen than in these two books.

*Midpoint* is not to be entered into lightly or in advisedly. Updike calls it "a joke on the antique genre of the long poem and an attempt to write one". In fact *Midpoint* is a very modern poem, in point of view and in technique. The joke is on the reader if he cannot follow the meshing of form and content. Images are provided, using the techniques of concrete poetry and of picture transmission for suggesting when and how much intellectual distance is required in the reading. Dots suggest, too, how much has to be read into the spaces between what is seen as black-on-white type. Content, likewise, runs on allusion, so that what is not said is frequently of as much importance as what is said.

*Midpoint* demands a special knowledge of Dante, Pound, Spenser, Homer, Whitman, Pope, and modern scientific understanding of the atom. It would be useful to know other works by Updike, but this is less necessary. He is a humble and serious writer. But he is an exacting one, who demands an educated and alert audience.

*Midpoint* shows the central point in Updike's life as person and writer. "Me" is his early theme, as it is of Whitman. Consciousness of the world is accepted through the individual consciousness of man. He must accept the incarnation of the ego and find its place in the universe. Updike has now reached midpoint in life and must take stock of what knowledge he has gained and of what may come. As in *Bech: A Book*, he asserts that man must face what is dissoluble and what is indissoluble. If everything is dissoluble, then we live on the face of the void. Stoicism or terror must be our companions.

In the third canto of *Midpoint*, Updike uses modern scientific discoveries to assure man of the recognizable home that he can find in the "strange landscapes"

of the microscopic and macroscopic universes. He asserts that individual perfection is denied to all that exists and that total perfection is an ideal that torments man. Man is not complete in himself nor complete in his individual youth-health. Man's world and the world of the atom show seeming disorder. But knowledge of concrete material in science stresses the fact of order-within-disorder. What seems chance, in life, is in fact subject to final order. In other words, science supports Updike's Christian perspective.

The strange landscapes of science and poetry yield, for ordinary men, to the known landscapes of women and home. Love, for Updike, is the central point of knowledge. Sexuality plays a great part in his writings, but he does not confuse sexuality with erotic love, nor with the older view of sexuality solely for propagation. If, indeed, Updike ever thought of sexuality as the sole source of knowledge, he does not do so, now. His cry, in *Midpoint*, is to his father-Father to forgive him for his seeming waywardness of mind. Non-sexual pleasure and non-sexual performance must be accounted for. He suggests an "Archimedean point" beyond the world to which a more serious, post-midpoint view must relate.

This outright, serious face replaces the mask of Updike-the-jester. He has played the role of clown, since his school-days, to be accepted. But the clown's role is one frequently misunderstood and the misapprehension of the serious nature of Updike's writings is proof of this. He demands a better educated audience than his critics have afforded.

*Bech: A Book* will possibly find this audience, for it is written for the society that reads Updike, and cultivates the acquaintance of authors. Five of the stories that appear in this book have already been published in the *New Yorker*. The book depends on the ubiquitous author, Updike. *Bech: A Book* is the vehicle for Updike's thoughts, carefully concealed behind the masked-face of Bech.

*Bech: A Book* travesties the modern appetites for news about an author's life and feelings, rather than an appetite for the thoughts that are a book. It is a serious and often bitter parody of the modern biography of a writer, complete as it is with a foreword by Bech; an appendix of Bech's journal of his trip to Russia and the satellite states; a copyrighted letter by Bech to a former mistress; an appendix to his books (one of which he knows will never be written) and to the writings (often as brief as a portion of a page) on Bech. The squalid pretentiousness of the machine that keeps up interest in a writer, in order to sell his books, is laid bare. So are the squalid fears and shame of the writer who set out to express the meaning of the universe and gave up.

There are many writers assumed in the figure of Bech: I. B. Singer, Norman Mailer, John Salinger, Saul Bellow, John Updike, and others. He is a composite man. His Jewishness is stressed partly because so much that is the most virile in recent American fiction is Jewish. More than that, Updike feels that the New York Jew has kept an immense capacity for belly-laughter, holding on to the full-bodied

joy for a full generation beyond that of his compatriots. Bech himself feels that the sense of dignity, loyalty, stoicism, and creation that he knew in his race in the 1930s is a thing of the past. In them all. For expediency and greed rule everything.

The story of Bech is of a search in the writer for his mistress, Inspiration. New landscapes in Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria (comparable to those seen by Updike in the cultural mission in 1964) are offered to Bech, at forty-one. He sees (as his journal shows) little below the surface. And yet he admits to Vera Glavanokova, that his first book, *Travel Light*, had been written to show men gliding over a radiant surface, taking their colour from one another, the whole "melody of plot" riding above the "counter-melody of imagery". She knew what he meant, and proved, in her continued seriousness of purpose, that this vision must be pursued indefatigably.

In America and England, Inspiration appears to Bech as a series of women. "Bech Takes Potluck" shows Bech searching for inspiration through new women and a drug new to him. All that the new landscapes offer is the old vision intensified; man is mean, bitter, terror-stricken, moved by envy, jealousy, lust, infidelity, and a hunger for union on any terms.

A lecture tour to a girls' college in Virginia opens to Bech a landscape of over-fertile nature and sterile consciousness. He is dismayed by the view of himself about to "wink-out" into nothing. He is terrified by the clarity of his awareness that his early vision of art has gone. He cannot face defining the meaning of being a Jewess or of being a Negress. How then can he approach the task of finding meaning in the universe? Too patently he is Prufrock.

The last two stories "Bech Swings?" and "Bech Enters Heaven" show the society that Bech can blame for his failure, if he chooses to do so. London, seen in the context of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is as vile as New York. A night-club called "Revolution" crushes together a dreary, world-weary mass that wants only to be seen so that it can get on. Vision is reduced to observation; reflection on the vision will bring no joy. Back in New York, the vision will prove that heaven is now hell. Fame is the goddess that men seek, and it is given when men are past creative growth or decay. As soon as it is certain that Bech will never write another book, he is admitted to the heaven of fame.

These two books are serious. *Bech: A Book* adds to its seriousness a new element, for judgments are caustic and clearly expressed. *Midpoint*, in both the gravity of the long poem and in the pity of the shorter ones, is for people who believe with Valéry that poetry is the difficult art of finding the second line that chimes with the first, divinely given, line. Between *Midpoint* and *Bech: A Book* lies Updike's call to the serious art of the writer. Laziness and easy rewards must not extinguish the powers of the poet to wrestle language and meaning.

*The Making of George Orwell: An Essay in English Literature.* By Keith Aldritt. London: Edward Arnold [Toronto: Macmillan of Canada], 1969. Pp. 181. \$6.95.

Most discussion of George Orwell emphasizes his role as a political and social critic. Keith Aldritt takes a different approach; he examines and carefully elucidates Orwell's writings within the context of the literary history of the first half of the twentieth century. His argument is basically this: symbolism was the dominant literary orthodoxy of the thirties, and Orwell's long and futile rebellion against it helps us to a better understanding of the whole culture of which he was a part.

Accordingly, Orwell's early novels, *The Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*, are as bad as they are because of the symbolist influence. It was not for Orwell to write about the interiority of the individual, not for him to play the role of writer as isolated aesthete. His job, says Aldritt, "was to describe social life and to identify the valuable in social terms." To do that he had to rebel against the literary establishment, create or re-create appropriate forms of writing, and re-define the relationship between the writer and society.

It is the course of this rebellion with which Aldritt is concerned. He finds, naturally enough, most of the raw material for his study in the autobiographical writings—*Down and Out in Paris and London*, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Homage to Catalonia*, and the essays. He considers that these writings, taken as a single, continuous work, constitute Orwell's greatest achievement. That is no doubt true, but not for the reason he advances. He sees in them only Orwell's long struggle to find an alternative to symbolism.

That alternative was found only after Orwell's experiences in the Spanish Civil War. From then on his work is shaped by an impassioned political commitment to an egalitarian and libertarian society where human relations are characterized by warmth and directness. In such a community the writer would not be required to isolate himself from all except an aesthetic élite. He could be an organic part of it, infusing politics with reason and imagination and enriching literature with the stuff of real life.

Aldritt's analysis of Orwell's development, however academically narrow-minded that analysis might be, is at least interesting and stimulating. He forces the reader to undertake a more thoughtful re-reading of Orwell's non-fiction. But he presses too hard. In the fight between Orwell and symbolism he makes symbolism win in the end, as Orwell finally succumbs to it in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. His attempt to fit that book into his theory is, to say the least, contrived.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not, as Aldritt insists, Orwell's "final and most precipitous declension into despair". It contains no apathy, no cynicism, no panic, no despair; it cannot be considered pessimistic, because it is not a prophecy; rather, it is a warning and a rallying call. Throughout, it is permeated by its author's cour-

age, humanity, and decency. From his deathbed George Orwell shouted defiance in the face of Big Brother, and once again affirmed, more passionately and unequivocally than ever before, that "no bomb that ever burst shatters the crystal spirit."

Aldritt does not understand this because he does not understand Orwell. If we must choose between Orwell the political moralist and Orwell the renegade symbolist, there is surely only one correct choice. A century from now, Orwell may be of interest only to literary historians. But he does not speak to us today as some one out of history, because, though dead twenty years, his times are still our times, his attempt to act humanely and bravely in an inhuman and frightened world still an example to us. To ignore or to contemptuously dismiss the political content of his writing is to misread him and insult him.

Aldritt's book is flawed, his whole thesis a mistake, although he can at times be an intelligent and perceptive critic. *The Making of George Orwell* is good only in bits and pieces. Fortunately, there are many such bits and pieces.

*University of Windsor*

DONALD LIVINGSTONE

*The Poems of John Milton.* Edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1968. Pp. xxii, 1181. £3.3.

This is the most extensively annotated edition of Milton's poetry now available; into its 1200 pages is packed a wealth of information sufficient to delight, inform, and arouse even the most jaded of Miltonists. It may not be the book one would take from the shelf if it were *poetry* one wanted, for the commentary tends to draw attention from the text; but it is a book to be studied and consulted so that one may return to the poems with a renewed awareness of their complex mastery. This volume is, in short, a wonderfully useful reference guide to Milton's poetry.

The book is the second to appear in the Longmans Annotated English Poets series, and annotated it is. The average page is about half text and (in a slightly reduced type) half commentary. If this is more commentary than the ordinary student needs, the scholar will not think it too much, nor more than Milton deserves. And if some of the annotations seem far-fetched, they may turn out to have been well worth the carriage. It is hard to tell. When one comes upon a gloss such as that for the *Nativity Ode*, line 83 ("He saw a greater sun appear") and finds a reference to Malachi 4:2 ("But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"), this knowledge of the possible relationship may not be immediately useful, but it is pleasing to have it, for it enlarges the boundaries of the poem. Similarly, when the note on the phrase "Day's harbinger" in the song "On May Morning" points first to the phrase "Aurora's harbinger" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* III. ii. 380, and then to the lines, "Daies harbinger, the bloody crested cocke," in *The Cuckow* (1607) by R.

Niccolls, the information may mean nothing at all, but one cannot be sure; with a creative mind of the order of Milton's, one must be grateful for every clue.

Such relentless tracking down of possible echoes is characteristic of the painstaking thoroughness with which the editors have suggested sources and analogues, classical, Biblical, and literary, for lines and phrases in Milton's poetry. Many of these have not appeared in previous editions, and their inclusion in this volume is a welcome contribution to Milton studies. It is, after all, no secret that Milton frequently converted the substance or riches of another poet to his own use, but what we do not know is *how* frequently; and when the reader opens this book at random to *Il Penseroso* 127-152, on page 145, and finds in these lines possible adaptations from Marlowe, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Drayton (twice), and Shakespeare (twice), he begins to suspect that the incidence of such echoes may be even greater than has been supposed. The matter is no idle concern, but one that bears directly on the creation of poetry; it would be good to know more about it.

The annotations in this book also serve to define unfamiliar words, to explain and comment on difficult material, to cite modern critical works, and to point to relevant passages elsewhere in Milton's poetry. In addition, the editors have provided each poem with an introduction that gives, as minimal information, the significant textual variants and the dates of composition and publication. The more important poems have longer introductions that include discussions of such matters as versification, style, genre, and modern criticism of the particular work. These are introductions that can be read with profit at all levels; the editors have brought together much useful information, and their writing is of the kind that C. S. Lewis once said he most valued: "Plenty of fact, reasoning as brief and clear as English sunshine, and no personal comment at all."

Not everything in this volume, of course, will be universally approved. There is, for one thing, the matter of text. The editors have chosen to modernize the spelling while retaining "with diplomatic faithfulness" the old punctuation. Punctuation, they argue, "is an organic part of the grammatical system, and as such its mode of operation is subtle and complex. Not only does it obey conventions of logic but also others whereby it renders the pauses and junctures and tones of spoken language. . . . Consequently, we ought to be almost as reluctant to alter the punctuation of an old text as we would be to alter, say, its word order." Orthographic symbols, on the other hand, serve mainly to "enable the reader to make the right vocabulary selection." Since modern spelling can easily do this for a seventeenth-century text, the editors have, in the interests of "readability", sacrificed the old spelling. No doubt there is much to be said for their decision; this reviewer is pleased to have the old punctuation, and he has long ago accepted the inevitability of modernized spelling. Still, a certain magnificence has gone from the printed page, and it is sad to miss it (even while it is recognized, of course, that the seventeenth-century reader would not have found the same sort of magnificence).

It will also be noted that the last line in this volume is not "And calm of mind, all passion spent," but "Home to his mother's house private returned." Like John Shawcross in his edition of the complete poems, the editors have accepted the late William Riley Parker's arguments on the dating of *Samson Agonistes*, and they have, accordingly, placed this work right after Sonnet xvi, assigning to it the tentative dates of 1647-53. Perhaps their decision will provoke new debate on this difficult question.

It is unfortunate that in a work of this scope the bibliography has not been more satisfactorily treated. There is at the end of the volume a "Bibliography of References Cited", but some important works have apparently not been cited and so are not listed. There is, for example, mention of only one book by Douglas Bush, his edition of Milton's *Poetical Works* (1966). Joseph Summers' *The Muse's Method* is missing, and so is the valuable collection of essays he edited, *The Lyric and Dramatic Milton*. Other absentees include A. J. A. Waldock's "*Paradise Lost*" and its Critics, Roy Daniells' *Milton, Mannerism, and Baroque*, R. H. West's *Milton and the Angels*, and Anne Ferry's *Milton's Epic Voice*. At least two of these are cited elsewhere in the volume, although unaccountably excluded from the bibliography.

Finally, to end on a positive note, this book is a triumph of design and execution. Despite its great mass of detail, the whole has been packed into a volume of moderate size, with clear type and ample margins. In addition to text, introductions, and annotations, it contains such welcome extras as a six-page chronological table of Milton's life and chief publications, reproductions of title-pages from the editions of Milton's poetry published during his lifetime, and eight plates of illustrations. All in all, this is an uncommonly useful and handsome book.

University of Massachusetts

ROBERTS W. FRENCH

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*Poetry Australia: Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Issue*. Edited by Leonie Kramer. Five Dock, N. S. W.: South Head Press, 1970. Pp. 84. \$1.00 (Aus.).

The voyages and discoveries of James Cook, whose claim to be the greatest seaman in history would be hard to dispute, may not be sufficiently renowned in the Northern Hemisphere in spite of his outstanding work on both coasts of Canada and in the St. Lawrence. In Australia and New Zealand, however, the bi-centenary of the first of his three explorations of the South Seas has received due acclaim, a small part of which is a special issue of *Poetry Australia* (number thirty-three: April, 1970). The poems are in two sections, colonial and contemporary, neither of which has any noticeable relation to Captain Cook, although there are two nicely contrasting poems on his chief scientist, Sir Joseph Banks. A sonnet (1823) by Barron Field begins "Here fix the tablet. This must be the place / Where our

Columbus of the South did land". Suzanne Hunt adds to recollections of present-day history classes the details of Sir Joseph's care for his plants:

So we were valued then  
for our uniqueness  
and you began  
to cut the cord at our nativity.

It must be confessed, however, that neither section has much that is of typically Australian parentage. The earlier offerings are either pious and derivative, or easy-going jingles, not to say doggerels, that are faint precursors of "How We Beat the Favourite" or "The Man From Snowy River". Less well-known poems are doubtless of value to Australian readers, but for others something of Adam Lindsay Gordon, "Banjo" Patterson, Henry Lawson and Norman Lindsay, or some of the unmistakably Australian contributions to the Sydney *Bulletin* would have provided a more distinctive touch.

In the second section, some poems are "modern", but not especially Australian, some are neither, few are both. One of the best and probably the best-known of Australian poets outside of his own country is A. D. Hope, but his "Apollo and Daphne" (*after the painting by Tiepolo*) has nothing to do with either Cook's Australia or his own. Possibly C. J. Dennis of *The Sentimental Bloke* does not qualify as a poet, but he does represent Australia as do few in this collection. One exception is Craig Powell, in "Counterpoint for a Native City".

Wollongong had me for a son, dumb and squalling,  
the year of the Japanese war. . . . At home  
Grandfather Makin (Air Raid Warden) sprang ready with a  
1914 gas mask, helmet, single shot .22— . . .  
Station Master Powell of Wollongong  
had an iron throat and a gift of his mother tongue  
that could raise the paint of thirty-nine church pews. . . .  
[He] died at sixty-four when he  
"Couldn't blow a bloody feather off a pillow".

The two sections are separated, as an Interlude, by an extract from *Five Visions of Captain Cook* by Kenneth Slessor. This is the one piece that really justifies its inclusion in a commemorative anthology. A note by Alan Frost in *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 3 (May, 1970), questions Slessor's historical and geographical accuracy in describing Cook's sailing to the Coral Sea after completing his circumnavigation of New Zealand in March, 1770. As Frost concedes, literature need not be history, and Cook's great decision, unlike those of Tasman and Bougainville, was to turn towards Australia: "So Cook made choice, so Cook sailed westabout, / So men write poems in Australia."

Thanks largely to Cook, men do write poems in Australia. It is a pity that some of the more Australian of them have not been represented in this book.



### Canadian Books

*Speaking to Each Other*. Vol. I. *About Society*; Vol. II. *About Literature*. By Richard Hoggart. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1970. Pp. 256, 280. \$6.00, \$7.00.

There are so many books of essays published these days that it may be asked why Richard Hoggart's two volumes of *Speaking to Each Other* should be any less ephemeral than the vast majority of such works, turned out by specialist presses for a very special audience. After figuring out who Richard Hoggart is, this reviewer wondered about the possible value of these books. Having read them, he can say that their value is high because a number of factors which do not usually enter into such writing are present in all of these essays. The only other recent collection (1967) that has been so engrossing is George Steiner's *Language and Silence*, and this should suggest how impressive Hoggart's work has proved to be.

The general title for the two volumes helps to "place" them, for Hoggart is interested in all facets of communication, and he refuses to act as a mere lecturer, telling us what to think. Rather, he wishes to provoke us to clear thought on a variety of issues, all of which relate to our present culture. As his essays on Orwell suggest, he has learned much from that writer: this, in itself, suggests the seriousness of his enterprise throughout, and the reasonable, balanced style that he has learned to use. Steiner, in the Introduction to his book, comments on the irrelevance today of the merely academic, nineteenth-century kind of criticism. It is this kind of writing that Hoggart admirably avoids throughout these books. Instead, he achieves, through a style which is never muddled, always easy to follow, and yet capable of encompassing real thinking—which is in fact a triumph of straightforward prose, no easy accomplishment today—a communication best described in Auden's words as "sane affirmative speech".

In the essays of Vol. I, *About Society*, Hoggart is addressing himself to the English cultural situation, but his thinking is not at all insular, and, in the essays on mass media and education especially, he has a great deal to say to people everywhere. His essays on television, especially on the role that the BBC should play in Britain's cultural life, evoked thought about their application to the CBC, and appreciation not only of the way he never raised his voice or used superfluous rhetoric, not only of the way in which he always presented both sides of a case, but even more the way in which, while achieving such a balance, he nevertheless made his arguments tell so compellingly that the reader is drawn into the dialogue with him, arguing and thinking about the very real problems he was bringing to light. He will discuss with great insight the problems that the medium of television presents for those who use it, and then sum up his observations with a passage like the following, which is so suggestively and engagingly right: "The relevant considerations here can range from the simple and obvious to the most psychologically obscure: from merely circumventing a shortage of cameras to dis-

covering new possibilities within the medium through a creative response to the challenge of that shortage. The parallels with, for example, the writings of sonnets are obvious" (170). Certainly his comments on the three possible kinds of television—"state controlled, commercially impelled, and democratic"—and on the *possible* role of the BBC should be read by everyone interested in the possibilities of the CBC's future service to all Canadians. His definitions of the three types are, naturally, clearheaded and sane, fully appreciative of the various currents in our society which partially control the kind of TV we get. Indeed, his comprehensive awareness of society is far greater than one would usually expect of such a man; this merely demonstrates how wrong certain accepted beliefs concerning professors can sometimes be.

Reference has been made to the balance and reasonableness of Hoggart's style, but it is not intended to imply that his style is bland. It is far from that, and it is here that one can see his greatest debt to Orwell, for, like Orwell, he has learned to avoid confusion and obscurity without sacrificing thought or wit. His essay on advertising will have a special appeal for many readers because, although it demonstrates his fairmindedness in every sentence (he bends over backwards to do admen justice), it is still a blistering indictment of the profession, all the more telling because it has obviously tried so hard not to weight the scales against advertising.

Vol. II, *About Literature*, will appeal more immediately to Professor Hoggart's colleagues, but it is meant to be taken whole with Vol. I. The two books should be read together by anyone interested in coming to grips with various problems involved in our evaluation of the place of literature in our lives. For one thing, Hoggart never separates the work from its milieu, whether of when it was written or of today. Yet, the purely critical essays are obviously superior to most such work appearing in the critical quarterlies, both in their clearheadedness, and in their attempts to be always fair to the writer by attending closely to his use of language. Hoggart has an extraordinarily fine ear for the nuances of a writer's style and he uses quotations with devastating effect. He is not afraid to make strong evaluative judgments, which can be argued with, but are backed up by a solid reading of the works in question, as in this statement on Graham Greene: "This rapid alternation of stripped narrative and highly charged scene is, I think, the second main cause of Green's attraction. He presents everything visually heightened, and with immense deftness. But his manner of composition promotes over-excitement, is not sufficiently complex and qualified. He never bores; he rarely even taxes. This is structure as caricature" (50).

One essay that stands out is "A Question of Tone". There, Hoggart, who has attempted autobiography himself, discusses with great insight those problems relating to tone and integrity of form. It is an honest and brilliant essay. But then, all of these essays demonstrate how self-aware the man is. He insists that we know

him and not his thoughts only, so that we can better understand the why and the how of those thoughts.

In the final two essays of the book Hoggart presents very powerfully his awareness of the profound difficulties associated with the use of language in literature today, with the artist's being somehow able to make it live, and with the teacher's somehow being able to make it relevant to today's students. He cares about the language, and he is passionately committed, as both critic and teacher, to bringing us all to the search for the well-springs of literature wherever we may find them. The two volumes of *Speaking to Each Other* are important. They will still be important some years from now when many flashier but less substantial collections have long been forgotten.

*University of Alberta*

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

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*The Journal of Gabriel Franchère.* Transcribed and translated by W. T. Lamb; edited by W. K. Lamb. Toronto: The Champlain Society [for members of The Society and Subscribing Libraries], 1969. Pp. ix, 330, xix.

The journal kept by Gabriel Franchère during the years 1811-1814 was originally designed only for the interest of his family but, as it became recognized as the best record of the fort of Astoria, it was given publicity in his own day. It suffered editings which diverged from his account and often transformed his simple narrative into misleading florid literature. The present version returns to the original French text and translates it into English as exactly as is possible. An introduction elucidates the tangled political and commercial circumstances leading to the expedition and then summarizes the whole. It is followed by the English translation with abundant footnotes, and ends with the French text.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fur industry was dominated in the North by the Hudson's Bay Company, along the Great Lakes and the upper Missouri River by the North West Company of Montreal, and in the United States by John Jacob Astor. United States policy, supporting Napoleon against the British, confused the industry by imposing sudden embargoes upon trade with Canada, and Astor, since he depended greatly upon supplies of fur from Montreal, was punished as severely as the North West Company. Recently, Cook had explored the Pacific coast, and Alexander Mackenzie and later Lewis and Clark had crossed the Rockies and reached the sea. Furs were abundant there, but the land route was expensive and dangerous. The sea route remained, and Astor and the North West Company planned a partnership to exploit it, but this was not confirmed. Astor equipped his own ship, the *Tonquin*, under Captain Thorn, to carry a party, chiefly of Canadians, and including Franchère, to establish a fort at the mouth of the Columbia River.

The narrative tells of this journey with its innumerable dangers, on the Falk-

land Islands, rounding Cape Horn, and in the misnamed Pacific Ocean. Concerning the Sandwich Islands, where they collected some men, Franchère's notes expanded into description and his observations were very keen. From there they crossed to the Columbia and made a bitter acquaintance with its dangerous bar. They built the fort as planned and presently were joined by a party of the North West Company which had crossed the Rockies. Soon afterward they learned that, on the declaration of the War of 1812, a British frigate was on its way to take possession of the fort. To save something of Astor's investment, they sold the fort, the furs, and much-needed supplies to the North West people, and Franchère with his party set off up the Columbia to cross the continent.

The journal is clear, simple, impersonal, and therefore not exciting reading but all the more valuable for its objectivity. It gives a detailed picture of the Indians, who demanded close observation. There is at present a tendency to return to the "noble savage" and to blame the whites for all the atrocities committed by the Indians. This party found them now helpful, now treacherous, and always uncertain. The fact that the small local tribes were in constant fear of each other makes it unlikely that this was a recent development. On the other side of the matter, we have Captain Ayres of Boston, who hired some Indians to hunt for him and then marooned them on a desert island. Captain Thorn of New York set sail to abandon several Canadians on the Falklands on the grounds that they had taken longer to bury a dead companion than he thought suitable, and he was prevented only when a nephew of one of the abandoned men threatened to shoot him if he did not turn back. Eventually, the combined brutalities of these two captains led to the massacre of all the *Tonquin* crew. Authority can become mania.

A facsimile of a page of the French journal makes one wonder that the editor could decipher it at all, yet it has been transferred into print conscientiously, keeping Franchère's phonetic and somewhat individual spelling but supplying punctuation. The fact that the word "*Ingumes*" has been Englished as "vegetables" suggests the difficulty of the script. If one reads the text aloud, however, it is intelligible French with the seventeenth-century flavour that lingers in rural Quebec.

The footnotes are valuable and clear up most of the inadequate descriptions of fish, animals, and trees. In one instance, *bonites* is translated "*bonitas*", though we usually call them *bonito*. Except for trees, identification of plants has not been attempted, but salmonberry and red-huckleberry, at least, can be recognized by Franchère's descriptions. There are maps of the areas crossed by these expeditions, and the whole book is worthy of the Champlain Society's productions.

Wolfville, N. S.

J. S. ERSKINE

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*Milton & English Art.* By Marcia R. Pointon. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. Pp. xliii, 276. \$14.50.

This volume is a superb demonstration of the influence of imaginative literature

on the painter's art. It is announced as "a historical survey of the illustrations to Milton's poetry between 1688 and 1860", a period during which some hundreds of editions were published. It deals with three different genres of pictorial art: the engraved plate commissioned by a publisher for inclusion in a book, the canvas painted for public exhibition, and the private field of an artist's drawings and sketches never intended for public viewing or for sale. By its terms of reference, it considers only English artists, in the stated period, and hence excludes a French painter such as Gustave Doré, whose famous illustrations to *Paradise Lost* first appeared in 1866.

The present volume begins in 1688, when Jacob Tonson published the first of all illustrated editions of *Paradise Lost*. Its chief illustrator, John Baptist Medina, was of Spanish stock, had been born in Brussels, and had come to London in 1686. His style is sometimes reminiscent of medieval manuscript illumination. In 1720, Tonson "brought out a much grander edition of Milton's *Works*," illustrated in a more fashionable style by Louis Cheron, a Protestant refugee.

Chapter II presents "Artists of the English Rococo, 1724-1764", especially Francis Hayman and William Hogarth, members of the Slaughter's Coffee House group, along with Fielding, Garrick, and Gainsborough. Hayman is lush and decorative but Hogarth marks a real advance in dramatic power.

Chapter III, "Milton and the Precursors of Romanticism", gives first an indifferent array of "Minor Painters of Sentiment", then "Artists of the Miltonic Sublime", among whom J. H. Fuseli is the most notable, and finally William Blake in a section by himself. The author reminds us that Blake's illustrations to Milton were not published until the twentieth century, but justifies his inclusion in her volume, partly because of his incomparable imaginative greatness and partly because his engravings were clearly intended for publication in his lifetime. Some 32 pages are devoted to a penetrating analysis of the individual drawings.

Chapter IV, "The Nineteenth Century, 1800-1860", is dominated by John Martin, whose mezzotint technique and creative imagination combined to produce a new sense of the sublime. Miss Pointon's comments on "Sin and Death Build a Path from Hell" and "The Expulsion" crave quotation:

Only Martin with terrifying conviction really shows this bridge which is to make Hell so near to Earth. The arches seem hewn from solid rock and resemble the new railway viaducts of his time. . . . The exaggerated perspective and the fact that Martin, embroidering on Milton's text, shows the bridge as being built through a tunnel, also contributed to this effect. . . . In this last illustration Martin, by means of the enormous granite cliffs, the pre-historic creature silhouetted on the plain and the great glow illuminating the sky above the lightning, manages to achieve an unprecedented combination of terror and hope. Terror lies in the gloomy cliffs, beast and storm, hope lies in the winding river and the glorious sky.

The present volume is admirably illustrated with 218 plates.

*Mandate '68*. By Martin Sullivan. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1968. Pp. viii, 439. \$7.95.

Political writing by "insider" reporters is becoming fashionable in Canada and it is to be hoped that this will increase public interest, if not knowledge, concerning politics and politicians.

Martin Sullivan, political correspondent for *Time*, knows how to write. He also seems to know the techniques of interview and research. As a result he has produced a book which is refreshingly lucid and extremely informative in its portrayal of men and events in the interesting months of late 1967 and early 1968 which saw new leaders chosen by the Progressive Conservative and the Liberal parties. The chronicle of events in the 1968 election is vivid and valuable. The two conventions were the largest, liveliest, and costliest in Canadian history. But their impact on their parties is illustrated by the change in Gallup-poll voting for the Progressive Conservatives. The last poll before the Convention gave them 30%, to the Liberals 41%. In mid-October they had 43%, the Liberals 34%. The dramatic change in the Liberal command again reversed the trend, as the Conservatives learned on the night of June 25, 1968.

While Pierre Elliott Trudeau is the hero of the piece and the Liberal Convention of 1968 its great moment, Sullivan's book also presents a balanced and perceptive account of the Progressive Conservative Centennial Convention which chose R. L. Stanfield as the party's new chieftain. With dramatic flair and minute detail (Duff and Mary Roblin breakfasted on rolls and coffee on the Convention's fourth day) Sullivan recaptures the excitement and optimism of the congregated Progressive Conservatives in the Maple Leaf Gardens. Stanfield's steady strides to victory are intelligently recounted and the role of Dalton Camp appraised with dispassionate yet appreciative comprehension.

The Montmorency Conference which preceded the P. C. Convention produced black clouds of angry misunderstanding among Progressive Conservatives and Canadians generally in the election campaign of 1968. Sullivan's calm appraisal of the late-summer gathering makes it quite clear that the Progressive Conservatives did not advocate the establishment of two nations in Canada. Those who ascribed such an intent to the participants are described as "either ignorant or mischievous and probably both".

In his account of the meteoric rise of Trudeau to leadership of the Liberal party, Sullivan gives an interesting and far-ranging account of the moves and motives of the men around Lester Pearson in the closing days of his Prime Ministership. Especially revealing is the account of political activity on the part of prominent Quebec Liberals in the carefully planned campaign to arrange for Trudeau's "spontaneous" adoption by the Liberal party. Sullivan's familiarity with the Quebec scene serves him in good stead as he deftly appraises the role of such potentates as Duplessis, Lesage, Favreau, and Marchand. But while he is most informative in

this area, it is possibly here that the author has greatest difficulty in retaining his objectivity. Surely Marchand, Pelletier and Trudeau could not have been such a consistently virtuous and vigorous trinity as we are led to believe. Were all members of the Union Nationale always totally iniquitous? Were there no redeeming features about Jean Lesage except his blond good looks?

This is a book which is worth reading. It throws new light into many hitherto gray corners. In the passage of time which this tardy review has allowed, Sullivan's judgment and analyses have in the main been borne out.

*House of Commons, Ottawa*

HEATH MACQUARRIE

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*Tremblé.* By H. A. Bouraoui. Paris: Editions Saint Germain des Prés, 1969.

Describing how the the inhabitants of Oran tried to escape the realization that the plague had occurred and would always re-occur, the narrator of Camus' *La Peste* remarks: "They were humanists, they did not believe in the plague." Humanism is seen here as an attitude which closes the eyes in front of what transcends human comprehension, which does not wish to come to terms with catastrophes, and which keeps telling itself "it will pass and what is human will prevail." An analogous situation is present today in the age of "plastics", in which man, with an ever increasing speed and frenzy, plunges himself into his world of materials and machinations, forgetting in effect what his humanity is for. In the race for mastery over nature and the amassing of further material goods we have not advanced one step towards thinking about the problem as André Malraux saw it already a few decades ago: "The only problem is to know how we can recreate man."

The title of this volume of poems contains in part the orientation which it defines for its readers. *Tremblé* attempts to shake our thinking in regard to the "plastic culture". Various of its poems recall the neglect of essential human values in a technological society. Indirectly and poetically it explores the social and cultural consequences of that neglect.

The movement of the meaning of *Tremblé* oscillates between the poems *Caresse individuelle* and *Caresse collective*. These two poems attempt to sound the significance of the event when the poet and his fellow humans come into contact with one another. Here the poet dreams of touching the masses of men and individuals separately, and of being touched by them. He leaves his intellectuality and aestheticism behind in order to experience the immediate. Then the contact is made and an indescribable ecstasy occurs, a true awakening. The vast miseries which ordinarily veil life disappear. A new universe will arise, for the poet moves into a world of dream and enigmatic wonder where he remains open to the mystery of things. These two poems seem to suggest that poetry will be true to its task when the poet will cease to lose his awareness of himself by an absorption in

inauthenticity and by falling into various literary poses. The Byronic pose, the dandy way of life, seem to be denounced in *Tremblé* as subtle screens which hide from the poet the locus and significance of what it means to be. For the true poet is by nature *with* other human beings and *in* a world. The authentic poetic existence, then, never implies hermit-like loneliness or stoic detachment from world events. The true task of the poet will always be "to bring an aesthetic culture to the people".

*Tremblé* testifies that poetry has a definite role to play in the critical situation which our occidental culture has entered. Poems provide paths which will open up for man a possibility contrasting with the eradication of his autochthony by machines and institutions. Poems keep within man the remembrance of his wholeness and open him up to the experience of being himself rather than ruling and serving, making and destroying. Poems remind man that as a working being he must keep himself distinct from the utensils of his work, that he need not become the slave of any kind of tyranny. We discover in ourselves, as we are reading these poems, a weird and uncanny feeling in which the whole familiar world seems to lose its normal significance. We are forced to focus upon ourselves as not being at home in the world which we have created for ourselves.

In France the book of Professor Bouraoui, who teaches at York University, has been received enthusiastically. In the *Figaro Littéraire* (March 2-8, 1970) Marc Alyn sums up his reactions by saying: "Through this book one can follow the metamorphosis which the words of our language undergo when they are transplanted into the American space and when they are undergoing there pressures and distortions which destroy little by little the traditional order of the sentence and of the verse to climax in a spoken rather than written poetry, in a constant communication with the concrete world." One can hope that, in North America, those for whom these poems were written will hear the voice which is trying to reach them.

Mount Allison University

LILIANE WELCH

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*Butterfly on Rock*. By D. G. Jones. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.  
Pp. x, 197. \$7.50.

Critic George Steiner believes "that literary criticism, particularly in its present cohabitation with the academic, is no longer a very interesting or responsible exercise. Too much of it exhibits the complacencies of academic or journalistic values and habits of statement developed in the nineteenth century." *Butterfly on Rock* is not a complacent book, nor is it a dryly academic exercise. Poet D. G. Jones here offers an intelligent and lively investigation of the roots of Canadian literature. As he states in the Introduction: "the approach here is cultural and psychological rather than purely aesthetic or literary." With such an approach, there are dangers, of course, such as generalizations which blur the distinctions between individual



authors and simplifications of the complexities of perception in individual works. Jones is aware of these dangers and has managed to avoid them almost completely.

For anyone interested in Canadian literature, the critical insights into individual works that abound in this book will prove to be of lasting interest. But this is not a book for only a few academics to read. It is the examination of a culture, specifically the "garrison culture" of a people who have never settled fully into the land, but have always remained colonists at heart, first to Britain, now to the American Empire. The poets and novelists of Canada have understood this culture, and have expressed it in all its complexity, perhaps better than any historian, economist, sociologist or journalist has done.

Jones points out that most Canadian literature has been written in reaction to the official culture of the garrison communities, or in open rebellion against it. Even the revered Poets of the Confederation—Roberts, Carman, Lampman, and Scott—expressed, in their finest poems, an extreme distaste for the official culture of the cities, for "progress"; they sought a fuller, richer existence in that Nature that most Canadians hated and feared. It is through an examination of the best poems and novels of this country that Jones has been able to analyse what he calls, not merely a Canadian, but a Western sickness of the soul that has been spreading like cancer in this century. Our best writers have known this sickness and have gone beyond it, escaping what Hugh MacLennan calls our Puritan heritage, the "futile, haunting sense of guilt" that has "enormously inhibited the Canadian character". The writers and artists have escaped *to* the wilderness, *to* Nature, *to* the natural life of the body where the soul may live freely in peace. Jones discusses the various ways in which writers have effected this escape, and in doing so he makes a number of profound comments about our cultural situation here and now. For today, more than ever before, young people, and especially young writers, are strident in their calls for an escape (or is it a return?) to the natural life, away from the varieties of pollution which form the city environment.

D. G. Jones may not be conscious of the fact, but *Butterfly on Rock* is, in its small way, a radical and revolutionary work. Radical because it continually refers us to our artistic roots and our roots in this vast, undefeated land; revolutionary because, if we listen to what our artists have to say (and anyone with even the slightest glimmering of the ecological disaster that is our way of life today will recognize that perhaps we had better start listening to our prophets again), we will see the necessity of changing our whole system of values and way of life.

Artists are the vanguard of society. D. G. Jones is one of our finest younger poets and a member of the vanguard, and it is a poet's intelligence that he has brought to bear upon our literature in this book. The result is perhaps the finest single work of criticism yet produced on Canadian literature, and a book whose meaning stretches far beyond the boundaries of mere literary criticism. It is also a

book of great style and verve, and a book that anyone interested in Canada and her culture will want to read.

*University of Alberta*

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

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*The Howling Arctic.* By Ray Price. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1970. Pp. vii, 284.

This book is a sympathetic study of the last two centuries in the eastern Canadian Arctic, told in illustrative anecdotes rather than in generalizations. It begins with the early contacts with the Eskimos, a people with human capacity for friendliness and human mistrust of any people but their own. The anecdotes justify both attitudes. The fur-traders had no ill will towards Indian or Eskimo but sought to use them for the white man's advantage. The missionaries sacrificed their own lives to save the souls of the Eskimos, yet it may be doubted that they accomplished, or could have accomplished, much more than to attach a new mythology to the old one. The tale of religious mania on the Belcher Islands is not less gruesome for its familiarity, and its one encouraging feature was the sympathy with which the murderers were tried. There were other groups, however, whose contribution was ruthless or blind. The courage of the whalers cannot be denied, but their treatment of the Eskimos was brutal, and the self-centred DEW-Line brought the declining culture of the Eskimos to a sudden end.

The author treats his period almost dispassionately, neither disparaging the expansion of white exploitation nor providing a remedy for the unfortunate people whose environment has been swept from around them. The writing is colloquial at times but adequate, and the presentation of the period, if neither vivid nor profound, is sincere and easily read.

*Wolfville, Nova Scotia*

J. S. ERSKINE

---

*Wordsworth as Critic.* By W. J. B. Owen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969. Pp. 239. \$7.50.

W. J. B. Owen's book is a careful study of the major formal critical works of Wordsworth. The criticism is treated fundamentally in chronological order, for Professor Owens has observed that Wordsworth's is a developing criticism; he finds that "it is a progress, by instalments, toward mastery and clarity, whereby a concept hinted at in an early work is more fully developed in later, and (if necessary) irrelevancies, difficulties, and inconsistencies are silently abandoned."

Wordsworth's desire to define a permanent rhetoric, a rhetoric resembling the permanence which he found in natural objects and in the basic feelings of men, is singled out as the consideration of prime importance in the *Preface of 1800*. The discussion explains the confusions and equivocations arising out of an endeavour

to arrive at an adequate definition of what constitute the permanent elements of language in relation to the perennial experiences of mankind. At the same time, the discussion clarifies Wordsworth's rejecting of what he considered to be the impermanent poetic artifice of neo-classic usage, while at the same time accepting metrical arrangement as a natural and permanent part of the heritage of poetry.

Wordsworth's short undeveloped discussion of "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in the *Preface of 1800* is seen as a foreshadowing of a later shift in emphasis in the 1802 additions; by that time, Wordsworth conceives poetry as being not primarily objective but an expression of the poet's own mind. Using Lovejoy's exposition of the eighteenth-century mode of thinking as a touchstone, Owen, in perhaps his best chapter, depicts the accomplishment of the change from Classical to Romantic through changes in emphasis "rather than by utter rejection and opposition". Wordsworth is seen as having, even as neo-classic writers, a strong sense of the uniformity of mankind. Unlike the neo-classics, however, he is concerned primarily with concrete expression of the norm rather than with the expression of deviations from an implicit norm which reason merely suggests. Owen sees two important results deriving from this concern to express the norm: an inevitable departure from the neo-classic satiric mode; and an excessive pre-occupation by Wordsworth to find normality in the seemingly abnormal.

Further delineations of difference between the Augustan mode and the Romantic are discovered in the *Essays Upon Epitaphs*; chiefly, however, the discussion establishes that the epitaph is an ideal form through which Wordsworth can clarify his idea that lasting poetry is produced from the poet's involvement with his subject matter rather than from the simple observation of it.

The most important considerations in the *Preface of 1815* and its supplement are Wordsworth's attempts to differentiate between poems of fancy and those of imagination, and the appearance of passages endeavouring to define poetic "power".

Though Wordsworth makes strong differentiation between the faculty of the fancy and that of the imagination, an incisive analysis by Owen demonstrates that some poems of the fancy are unjustifiably included among poems of the imagination in the 1815 edition of Wordsworth's poems. Apparently, Wordsworth's justification was that certain events and scenes acted upon him in much the same way as an imaginative poem, and he therefore assumed a similar response to a scene or event simply reported in a rather literal context.

To explain the concept of power in Wordsworth, the author initially draws upon De Quincey's differentiations between literature of knowledge and literature of power, then proceeds to show a Wordsworth forwarding the idea that power is an attribute of the mind. Owen conjectures that had Wordsworth continued with formal criticism, his next attempt would have been to elucidate the concept of power.

Professor Owen's acquaintance with documents, related criticism, and literary currents is never in question; but the presentational manner of his work will doubt-

less defeat widespread dependence upon it as a standard source for explication of Wordsworth's criticism. Needless complication is characteristic, authorial phrasings and editorial arrangements frequently impede rather than clarify. For instance: "Again, at 49.23 ff. we are informed that the language which the poet utters, when he 'confound[s] and identif[ies] his own feelings' with those of his dramatic characters, is 'suggested to him' [by the feelings]; and again, 'that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature', and so again at 50.7, 53.16-33; and, to some extent, at 55.1-8, where it is implied that poetic diction 'interfer[es] . . . with the passion', that is, prevents its authentic presentation to the reader, whereas metre does not."

In addition to such irksome arrangements, non-provocative questions, along with repeated phrasings and examples, periodically give the reader an impression of circularity rather than progression. Significantly, some needlessly complex presentations are followed by quotations from Coleridge which provide more lucid commentaries on particular points than do those supplied by the author.

The discrepancy between compelling content and a less than satisfactory method of presentation is, unfortunately, one of the most forceful impressions left by the work.

*University of Calgary*

STANLEY K. FREIBERG

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*The Office of Proclamation in the Theology of Karl Barth.* By Carl F. Starkloff, S.J. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press (Saint Paul University), 1969. Pp. x, 160. \$5.50.

This publication, number XCIII of *Les publications s riees de l'Universit  d'Ottawa*, is unashamedly a dissertation complete with scholarly apparatus. It is not the less readable for that, and it is actually much more free of academic jargon and pretentious circumlocution than many similar works that have been dressed up to look like offerings intended for the common reader. Any one who knows a little about the general outlook of Karl Barth, and who is not afraid to tackle a book of undiluted theology, should find it very rewarding fare.

Since the theme of preaching as witness to and proclamation of the Word of God has been central to Barth's thinking from the time he first came into prominence as the originator of the Theology of Crisis, nearly everything that has been written about Barth has had something to say on this topic. Father Starkloff's treatment, therefore, does not break new ground. Most of the material he surveys has been examined before, and often in great detail. The merit of his book lies in the way he has been able to cover the ground both comprehensively and succinctly, taking note of previous commentators without being drawn into lengthy critical debates. He is able to show the continuity of Barth's concept of Proclamation in spite

of some changes in emphasis. Thus he avoids the trap (into which others have fallen) of imagining the existence of an "early Barth" who was an altogether different person from the "later Barth". As a result, he is able to vindicate thoroughly the overall consistency of Barth's stand, from first to last, upon the centrality of the Word of God.

One point that Father Starkloff makes is, if not entirely original, at least striking enough to set his judgment apart from most previous ones. This is his conviction that Barth's whole approach to Proclamation is best seen against the background of Kierkegaard's distinction between a *genius* and an *apostle*. Although Barth first approached the subject with Kierkegaard's distinction in mind, in view of his later declaration that he had said "good-bye" to Kierkegaardian existentialist modes of thought the continued relevance of Kierkegaard here might well be queried. Father Starkloff argues, however, that Barth's rejection was of existentialist philosophy and not of the insight into the relation of God to the world which he first gained from Kierkegaard. The argument is one with which the present reviewer agrees wholeheartedly. If it is granted, a perspective is gained which allows Barth's theological vision to stand out clearly and compellingly.

It is of real interest to observe how, at a time when Protestant theologians have largely turned away from Barth—giving the explanation that Barthian "neo-orthodoxy" has run itself into the ground—, Catholic thinkers are actively engaging themselves with his work in renewed appreciation of the breadth of his appeal. This is partly because, as Father Starkloff notes, the spirit of Barth was an influence felt at Vatican II. (Barth's own deep interest in the "reform" initiated by the Council is evidenced by his testimony in the record of his visit to Rome to discuss the Constitutions of the Council, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*.) But, long before 1963, Barth's theology was the subject of acute and sympathetic debate among Catholic theologians. Naturally, Father Starkloff gives some prominence to Catholic interpretations of Barth, among which he finds that of Hans Urs von Balthasar particularly to the point. And he is concerned to see where Barth's thought makes contact with traditional Catholic theology, and also where its influence as a "corrective" may point to new directions in the future.

*The Office of Proclamation* is to be welcomed both for its intrinsic merits and for its worth as an example of genuinely ecumenical theology transcending ecclesiastical boundaries. One minor infelicity may be noted. Father Starkloff refers, apparently at random, to Doctor Barth, Professor Barth, Dr. Barth, Karl Barth, and (plain) Barth. If his book is reissued, perhaps this overabundant variety could be pruned.

*The Papers of the Prime Ministers. Volume II: The Letters of Sir John A. Macdonald, 1858-1861.* Edited by J. K. Johnson and Carole B. Stelmack. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969. Pp. xvii, 626. \$10.00.

This second volume of MacDonal'd's letters is, like the first, handsomely turned out and edited. The footnotes are amazingly comprehensive, almost, one might say, a work of art in themselves. Perhaps its most signal contribution is to remind us that cabinet ministers are not only politicians but, perhaps more fundamentally, also administrators. A great deal of Macdonald's time and effort was clearly taken up with the workaday routine of being Attorney-General. This salutary reminder need not, however, have been made at such length. As in Volume I, there is too much space devoted to routine matters.

One had always suspected that Macdonald was no businessman. His private financial affairs were always, it seemed, in something of a mess. Isaac Buchanan of Hamilton had this to say in 1859:

I would not have supposed it possible that a man of so much intellect and general versatility could on this one matter [finance] be such a child—But that the Attorney General does not know anything at all in regard to large monetary arrangements is well known both here and in England (p. xiv, n.).

Macdonald in this volume is now a man of 43-46 years of age, and many of the characteristic turns of his mind and his *métier* come through:

Politics is a game requiring great coolness and an utter abnegation of prejudice and personal feeling (p. 268).

Write Isaac [Buchanan] civilly and without committing yourself. Keep your communications open with him. You may want him at the beginning of the Session (p. 183, to A. T. Galt).

We have great fun just now with the oppos[iti]on. They are quarrelling like fury and do not affect concealment. I pat Brown on the back occasionally by calling him the only man in the party worth *tuppence* & then I please his recalcitrant followers by pitching into him as a dishonest & inconsistent politician (p. 230, in 1860).

A final touch, to an old friend Sidney Smith, on Vankoughnet's trip to England about the Intercolonial railway:

I don't envy him his trip. He will be away 2 months of which one month will be spent at sea & the chances are much against his succeeding so long as Gladstone is Chancellor of the Exchequer. He takes . . . Sir Allan [MacNab] as bottleholder and if he had not taken his wife might have had some fun.

Dalhousie University

P. B. WAITE

## FOUR GROUPS OF CANADIAN POETS

*Putting the Birthdate into Perspective.* By Clifton Whiten. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1969. Pp. 80. \$3.95.

*A Cardboard Garage.* By Francis Sparshott. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1969. Pp. 61. \$3.95.

*The mysterious naked man.* By Alden Nowlan. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1969. Pp. 93. \$3.95.

Clarke, Irwin published these three books of Canadian poetry simultaneously, and the very act of doing so has its own crazy kind of glory. It is a noble effort on their part, or it would be if all three books were of the quality of Alden Nowlan's marvellous collection. This, alas, is not the case; but two out of three is a pretty good record—probably as good as we have a right to expect.

It is always easier to discuss a successful book than one that appears to be a failure. This soon becomes as obvious to the reviewer, who dreams of always reviewing works of genius, as it does to the reader of reviews. Such a reflection is not out of place here, for the first book under review is not really so bad; it merely fails, among the large number of genuinely interesting books published recently, to generate a true *frisson* for the reader. It suffers most from being found in close proximity to Alden Nowlan's latest book, for Nowlan succeeds just where Whiten fails, in dealing with the minutiae of everyday existence. Still, *Putting the Birthdate into Perspective* is not a complete failure. Whiten demonstrates just enough ability with the tools of his trade to make one wish that he had held off for a few more years. There are a few fine short poems here. But Whiten is attempting one of the most difficult kinds of poetry, the interesting and humorous (at least it appears to be meant to be funny) occasional poem. His topics, however, are neither relevant, nor large enough, and his verse rhythms often fail him. Such verse is best focussed in traditional forms and Whiten is moving away from them.

He has some personal poems that do connect emotionally with the reader, a few of the boyhood ones being very good when he can forget to be self-consciously cute, and unconsciously sentimental. He is at his best in such taut little, almost journalistic, note poems as "Three Notes in City Traffic". Such poetry is easily exhausted, and Whiten gives no evidence in this collection of having found a way to move beyond them to bigger themes and more profound poetry.

Francis Sparshott is quite at home with big themes, at least some of the time. He is a very scholarly or academic poet in some ways, and some of his poems display his erudition in the wrong way. This is especially true of the first section of *A Cardboard Garage*, "Brittle Bodies", which could easily be dropped from the book with little loss. The tone of many of the poems seems a bit off, and the reasons for this lack of precise focus seems to rest in the forms and the language used, although in the second part the forms, on the whole, are the same. Yet in "Soft Engines" language and emotion are better matched, and theme flows smoothly

from this marriage. Perhaps Professor Sparshott needs big themes, such as the Dresden fire bombings, or Hiroshima, to achieve the kind of noble anger which comes through so strongly in these poems. On the other hand, his "imitation" of "The Mu'Allaqa of Imr Al-Qais" is a very moving contemporary/timeless poem. But there the emotion is provided by the original. For Professor Sparshott's emotions are usually impersonal: he achieves, that is to say, a universal anger and regret in such poems as "Dresden", "Argument with Dr. Williams", and "Interview", which is exactly right for their subjects. On top of this, "Dresden" is a tour-de-force technically, since it calls into question, through its technique, the very reason for its existence. It is for a few such poems as this, then, and for the very interesting intelligence which is displayed throughout this volume, that *A Cardboard Garage* should be read.

Alden Nowlan is something else. It must mean something that on Canada's West Coast, John Newlove, and on the East Coast, Alden Nowlan, are turning out poems so barren of traditional poetic devices, and yet so intensely powerful as to make them among the most exciting poetry available in English today. Perhaps the Canadian landscape has finally been internalized in the style of these writers. At any rate, *the mysterious naked man* is another important Alden Nowlan book. In fact, Nowlan is a very aware poet, and his poems not not really so "prosaic", even in intent, as at first they might appear to be. Nevertheless, what makes his poetry so exciting is the integrity of the man, and his ability to present human situations with an emotional and intellectual honesty that is breathtaking. In his introduction to the American publication by New Books of Nowlan's Selected Poems, *Playing the Jesus Game*, Robert Bly discusses Nowlan's "psychic bravery" and in doing so he clearly pinpoints one of the reasons for which readers come to have so much respect for his work. Another is, of course, "the clarity of his language", of which, as Bly says, "it is clear so as to render chaos more clearly." Nowlan has seldom, since he found his mature voice some years ago, given in to the rhetorical impulse, and the poems in this book, like those of *Bread, Wine & Salt*, are all worth reading.

Nowlan tries a variety of modes in this book, and all of them are interesting. There is the long "Another Poem", a kind of poem which only Al Purdy has successfully managed, although this is Nowlan's own very personal statement. Right beside it, there is "Kind of a Love Poem", which is brutal, terrifying, and which yet, in the release it provides, is beautiful and truly involved with human feeling:

Don't leave me  
alone,  
I think,  
for Jesus' sake  
don't  
leave me



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                           that  
 is not so bad  
                           as being alone.  
 Not quite.

What it comes down to, of course, is that any book of Alden Nowlan's is required reading for anyone seriously interested in contemporary poetry. The man is still growing, still increasing his range, but he has already established himself as a major writer, one of those who expand our mental horizons when we read them.

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*So Far, So Good.* By Raymond Souster. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1969. Pp. 104. \$4.00.

*The Happy Hungry Man.* By George Jonas. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1970. Pp. 58. \$2.50, \$5.00.

*Body.* By Robert Flanagan. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1970. Pp. 94. \$2.50

It only appears that Raymond Souster has been publishing little books of poetry since before Confederation. At any rate it is good to see him finally gaining some of the recognition he so richly deserves. *So Far, So Good* gathers together a number of the poems that were not included in his other two books of *Collected Poems*, *The Colour of the Times* and *Lost and Found*. Many of the poems whose absence from the 1964 book was bewailed by Louis Dudek are once more available in this volume. The virtues and vices of Souster's poems in those collections are found here, too. The moral integrity which informs his vision is present throughout these poems, and the melancholy which so often suffuses his work can be found in various places in the book. "Today at Dawn" is an exemplary Souster statement from these early poems:

Today at dawn  
 for an endless minute  
 I listened to a bird  
 fighting for its life  
 in the claws of a cat,

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thinking: much the same way  
death will take us all.

The new poems continue to explore the same themes, but often with greater depth and at greater length than before. And there are a number of interesting experiments in prose poetry, which show Souster continuing to sharpen his skills, to employ them in newly meaningful ways. For, although Ray Souster is still involving his reader and himself in the lives of all beings around him, although he is carrying much the same message now as he did in the poems of 1938, he is not repeating himself. His poetry is as varied as the world he records, and he responds so honestly to it, he deserves to have us share it with him.

George Jonas also records a world: it is the world of the adman, the CBC executive, the noon martini, and it is not a world we are quite so anxious to share. The people he writes about are cool, slick, facile, and so, apparently, are these poems of *The Happy Hungry Man* (identified only as G. J.). But this is not necessarily so, and it would be doing Jonas an injustice to suggest that these poems are merely slick and superficial. The happy hungry man of the title is, in fact, an empty vessel, and the book records both the blessings and the curses of such a condition.

There are some problems, however, for these poems often approach the conditions of eighteenth-century ironic prose, without the cultural background to sustain such a stylistic pose in equilibrium. Are the poems satirical? They lack sufficient emotional or moral force. Are they merely gently cynical? If so, is that enough? Jonas is quite capable of showing us the ennui of contemporary man, and the book is valuable for that. Furthermore, its power derives from the fact that he sometimes reverses expectations by showing his central figure as better off than most of us precisely because of his condition. Still, too often he is overwhelmed by the problem that such an approach entails, for since the poems are about spiritual ennui, they contain it, and sometimes provide it. The reader's response remains, too often, as cool as the surface of those poems. It is an interesting experiment in writing a poem sequence, but it is by no means a complete success.

Robert Flanagan has produced, in *Body*, another kind of linked sequence of poems, a series of very short fragments which he has little chance of shoring against his ruins. Flanagan can write, he has a sense of style and of rhythm, many of his phrases are arresting and potent. Still, there is something about this book that is vaguely disturbing. By the end, one is not aware of a truly human involvement with these poems. Although the poems are ostensibly about people in relationships with one another, the people don't inhabit the poems. There are no names, and only occasional pronouns. For a book which promises in its very title a deep sensuousness, *Body* remains adamantly abstract. This may be a deliberate irony on Flanagan's part, but if it is it seems somewhat self-defeating for the poems. Involvement, as Ray Souster could tell both these poets, is not yet out of date in poetry. Robert Flanagan has talent, and as a first book, *Body* is an interesting, if flawed, work. We may expect him to do much better.

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*Neo Poems.* By John Robert Colombo. Vancouver: Sono Nis Press, 1970. Pp. 86. \$5.95.

*Songs of the Sea Witch.* By Susan Musgrave. Vancouver: Sono Nis Press, 1970. Pp. 69. \$5.00.

*Contemporary Poetry of British Columbia.* Edited by J. Michael Yates. Vancouver: Sono Nis Press, 1970. Pp. xv, 252. \$7.95.

The Sono Nis Press is turning out a number of beautifully printed hard-cover poetry editions. The only general complaint that could be levelled at these books is that the cost is very high. Readers will have to decide if they really want to invest so much in particular books, and some will just not be able to, which is too bad, especially when it concerns the really good ones.

John Robert Colombo, the *enfant terrible* of Canadian letters, just keeps socking them to us. *Neo Poems* is the latest scaling party he has sent out in his continuing seige of CanLit. Colombo's very serious gamesmanship is something every reader must come to terms with for himself. He writes prose poems that deliberately eschew any taint of "poetry", he continues to "find" poems everywhere, he makes long lists of everything, and he considers Borges his spiritual father. Is he creating work that deserves to be considered alongside that of Borges? It is an unfair question, perhaps. *Neo Poems* contains "poems" which interest this reader more than anything in Colombo's earlier collections. This is not a book for everyone, but readers who delight in intellectual and self-consciously witty writing will find *Neo Poems* to their taste.

Susan Musgrave is only nineteen, but her poems bespeak ages of experience. She is another in a seemingly endless line of really exciting woman poets, and this first book is a complete success. The title poem, "Songs of the Sea Witch", is a long sequence full of the primeval emotions of myth, and it is surrounded by a number of shorter poems, all of which speak, with stark self-control, of loss, of personal alienation in a dark and terrifying cosmos. Suffering is a central theme of this book, but, as art is supposed to do, these poems transcend the suffering they depict through the very act of realizing it in well chosen words and rhythms. Miss Musgrave is already a quite mature poet, and if she continues to write work of this calibre she will soon join the lady's pantheon with Atwood, MacEwan, and the others. Almost all the poems are worth quoting, but "At Nootka Sound" will serve to suggest the quality of her work:

Along the river  
trees are stranded  
bare as witches  
and dark as the woman  
who never learned to love one man.

(In the north  
a woman can learn  
to live with too much sadness.

Sometimes along the way  
the water cracks  
and Indians must mend the river  
after every other net—  
men with fat dog's eyes  
and humps  
who cast themselves  
toward fish in stone.

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The river is haunted  
with the slippery black eyes  
of drowned pika—  
you fish for something quite improbable  
expecting those thin dead eyes  
to begin to see.

What could only be one lifetime  
(who can go on pretending forever?)  
is when the ground turns cold  
and the night is so still  
you can't remember having anything to hear.  
You lose yourself  
and off into the distance  
the last birds are throbbing  
black and enormous  
down towards the sea.

*Contemporary Poetry of British Columbia* is a huge, beautiful anthology, and is well worth the price. As with any anthology of this size, there are bound to be selections that will not please every reader. But this book stands up rather remarkably well in this area, for the good taste and sense of editor Yates are of a high quality. Naming just a few of the finest contributors (there are fifty-four altogether) will indicate the over-all quality of the production: Robin Skelton, John Newlove, Rona Murray, Earle Birney (with only one poem), Elizabeth Gourlay, Susan Musgrave, Phyllis Webb, Dorothy Livesay, P. K. Page, and J. Michael Yates.

Dorothy Livesay's contribution contains some her finest recent poems, and that means poetry of a very high quality indeed. Rona Murray's "The Power of the Dog" is a poem cycle of great power, and Phyllis Webb's new poems display the intellectual and emotional clarity that is her trademark. John Newlove's poems are typical and therefore good, and Yates's meditations on the north are very fine. Among the many other contributions there is something for everyone.

There are a lot of good poets in British Columbia, especially when it is realized that there is very little overlap between this book and last year's *West Coast Seen*. But the fact of the two anthologies merely proves the assertion. This is a book for every serious reader of Canadian poetry.

*Other Marriage Vows*. By C. H. Gervais. Windsor: Sun Parlor Press, 1969. np.

*Wave*. By David Phillips. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1970. np. \$2.50.

*It Was Warm and Sunny When We Set Out*. By Joan Finnigan. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1970. Pp. 96. \$3.95.

*Procedures For Underground*. By Margaret Atwood. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970. Pp. 79. \$1.95.

C. H. Gervais' first book of poems is a nice-looking little book, full of small, personal poems, many of them concerned with his relationships with other people, especially the girls he has known. It is entirely possible that his approach to poetry may lead him up an artistic *cul de sac*, and no doubt he will have to broaden his horizons in the future, but in *Other Marriage Vows* he has found a method which completely suits his material and a tone which defines that material with a kind of emotional finality seldom found in young writers. Like many of our newer poets, Gervais



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appears to distrust language that is obviously symbolic or metaphorical, and even his images are rather barren of ornament. The basic metaphor is the situation the poem speaks of: two lovers share a bed, a walk, a dinner, and out of this sharing the poem arises to shed light on everybody's life. That at least appears to be Gervais' rationale as a poet—that, and the idea that to "tell it like it is" is to somehow avoid rhetoric and arrive at a form of poetic truth. That he quite often succeeds makes *Other Marriage Vows* a fine, small book of poems.

David Phillips has been around a bit longer: *Wave* is his second book. Like *The Dream Outside*, it contains poems which often appear cryptic but which continually speak to our need to reach out and touch others. For a young writer, Phillips is very sensitive to other people's loneliness and desire for communion. Sometimes his poems fail as pure artifacts, but never because he is not attempting to say something that will reach us where we live. His style is often staccato, and his poems are full of sudden turns and sharp jumps of meaning. Individual words, attaining almost to the stature of objects-in-themselves, also fascinate him, and he tries to find new ways of placing important words in special isolation within the poem. On the whole, the poems in *Wave* are successful, especially those such as "Poem for Malcolm Lowry" which manages to combine both his concern for people and his concern for language in a brilliant homage to the dead writer, and the long "The New Eyes" which demonstrates how visually literate he is. In the first half of the book there are a number of short confessional poems, in which he uses a very short line and stanza to very good effect, that warmly evoke the various moods of the lover. *Wave* contains poems that will strangely grow on you if you pay them proper heed.

There is much  
                   for new eyes to see  
 there is everything  
                   when the eyes look.

Joan Finnigan, unlike the previous two poets, has been writing and publishing poems for quite some time. Her new book is a book of hymns; to love, to life, to the unavoidable yet terrible loss of both. Many of these poems cut almost too close to the bone: the reader feels somewhat like a voyeur of emotion, eavesdropping on the private conversations of her soul and heart. Yet, as Yeats said, it is out of the quarrel with ourselves that we make poetry, and *It Was Warm and Sunny . . .* contains many poems that undoubtedly emerged from precisely such quarrels. Joan Finnigan comes across as a warm, loving woman, capable of close observation of the people around her, whatever situation she may find herself in. But she is not merely writing poems of social observation: every poem is informed by the emotion of love needlessly lost; she sees everything through eyes made clear and bright by the knowledge of such loss. What this means is that the poems that work are

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extraordinarily moving in their revelation of human feeling, but the poems that fail to do so because there is too much feeling present for the words to bear its weight, or the feeling has been allowed to slip out of poetry's firm grip into sentimental clichés. This is possibly the main and everpresent danger of the kind of poetry Joan Finnigan writes, and, on the whole, she avoids the danger with admirable finesse. Indeed, although the general tone of the book leads to the kind of response just outlined, she is capable of fine natural observation and some very real humour. This is not a book of dirges; it is a book of hymns. Most of the poems are long meditations in both form and content, but the shorter "snowed in" gives a taste of her art:

In a white hive we move, buzzing  
 in our cells this enforced hibernation;  
 stalled, suspended, time without an exit  
 or an entrance; we generate our own heat—  
 and laughter; the radio has its day  
 and I teach Martha to knit; seven blue-jays  
 fly in from the world to the feeding station.

All day the house is lit by snow and I  
 am tidying up a drawer when suddenly,  
 for no good reason at all, I remember  
 your coming in from work to find me  
 curled in bed; wordlessly you stretched  
 out by my side and took my hand  
 between your two hands and held it  
 on your chest and we lay, snowed in  
 by love and three windows full  
 of falling yellow leaves

Unlike Joan Finnigan, Margaret Atwood will never be accused of sentimentality. The reverse, possibly, but never sentimentality. Her poems are carved out of stone, and often it appears as if the carver is also made of stone. *Procedures For Underground* carries on in the same vein as her earlier books: the poems are hard-edged, finely crafted, sharp in their observation and vocabulary, and there is not a bad poem among them. This is not to say that there is no evidence of growth in Margaret Atwood's work; there is, but it is subtle, and not immediately apparent. Her preoccupations with our essential loneliness, with the fear and terror associated with the most ordinary happenings, have been a part of her poetry from the beginning. So has her particular understanding of place: in *Procedures*, Edmonton is usually the place, and a cold, wintry, inhuman environment it often appears to be. But there is a reaching out, a conscious effort to accept an other, the lover, in some of

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these poems, that has never sounded this loud before in her work. Of course, often nothing comes of the effort, but at least it is made. Finally—and this has been true of her earlier collections, too—there is really such a variety of subjects and concerns here, that it becomes obvious that it is a mistake to discuss her work as if it were all the same. Such an error arises from the consistency of her form, which leads one to think that what the form contains must be the same, always. In fact, the poems in this book cover a lot of ground, much of it mythical in character. And every poem offers further evidence of the strength and value of Margaret Atwood's vision and craft, as "Game After Supper" will show:

This is before electricity,  
 it is when there were porches.  
 On the sagging porch an old man  
 is rocking. The porch is wooden,  
 the house is wooden and grey;  
 in the living room which smells of  
 smoke and mildew, soon  
 the woman will light the kerosene lamp.  
 There is a barn but I am not in the barn;  
 there is an orchard too, gone bad,  
 its apples like soft cork  
 but I am not there either.  
 I am hiding in the long grass  
 with my two dead cousins,  
 the membrane grown already  
 across their throats.  
 We hear crickets and our own hearts  
 close to our ears;  
 though we giggle, we are afraid.  
 From the shadows around  
 the corner of the house  
 a tall man is coming to find us:  
 He will be an uncle  
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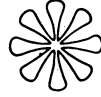
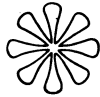
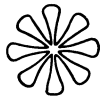
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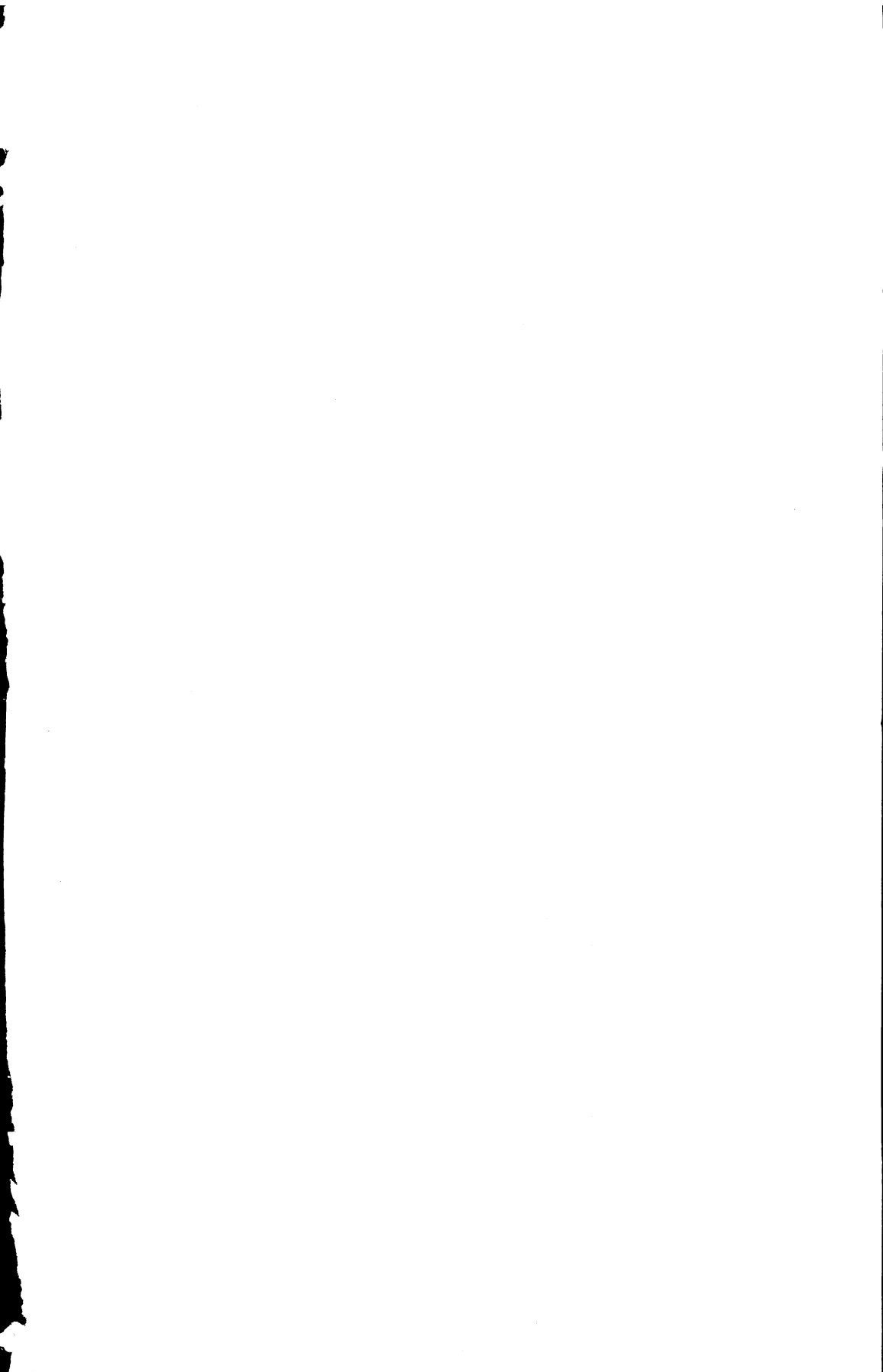
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