

THE ROLE OF THE LITTLE MAGAZINE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM IN CANADIAN POETRY

by



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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
and Research in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Department of English

McGill University

July, 1980

## ABSTRACT

Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian poetry have been introduced and developed in the pages of non-commercial "little magazines", beginning with F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith's McGill Fortnightly Review in 1925. Subsequent generations and schools of poets have made their first appearances and they have developed their ideas by producing their own magazines.

The aim of this dissertation is threefold: to investigate the phenomenon of the little magazine, its role as an essential alternative to commercial publications, and the sociological and aesthetic necessity for its survival; to investigate the progress that has taken place in Canadian poetry in the pages of the little magazine, as well as the evolution of the little magazine itself; in light of the fact that literary Modernism and Post-Modernism have not developed in Canada in isolation, to investigate the influence of European, English, and American poetic development in the twentieth century on Canadian poetry.

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## RÉSUMÉ

Le modernisme et l'après-modernisme dans la poésie canadienne ont fait l'objet d'articles parus dans de "petites revues" qu'on ne trouve pas dans le commerce. La première de ces revues a été McGill Fortnightly Review de F.R. Scott et A.J.M. Smith qui a commencé à paraître en 1925. Depuis lors, d'autres générations de poètes et d'autres écoles ont fait leur apparition et développé leurs idées en publiant leurs propres revues.

La présente dissertation vise trois objectifs: 1) étudier le phénomène de la petite revue, de son importance capitale comme substitut des publications commerciales et l'impératif sociologique et esthétique qui en assure la survie; 2) étudier les progrès réalisés par la poésie canadienne dans les pages des petites revues, ainsi que l'évolution de la petite revue proprement dite, étant donné que le modernisme et l'après-modernisme ne se sont pas développés en vase clos au Canada; 3) étudier l'influence, que l'évolution de la poésie en Europe, en Grande-Bretagne et aux Etats-Unis a exercée sur la poésie canadienne du vingtième siècle.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would, first of all, like to acknowledge a very great debt to the scholars who have preceded me in working in this area. Significant thanks are due to Frank Davey, Louis Dudek, Wynne Francis, C.H. Gervais, Michael Gnarowski, and Joan McCullagh. Their ground-breaking work has made my own work that much easier.

I would also like to acknowledge a large debt of gratitude to my director, Louis Dudek, for being a constant source of inspiration and support through all stages in the preparation of this dissertation.

I am grateful to the Research Grants Office of McGill for a grant covering the costs involved in travelling to the various archives where many of these magazines were to be found.

I would also like to thank the libraries and librarians of McGill University, Concordia University, the University of Toronto, and Simon Fraser University for their industrious compiling of little magazine archives and their help in solving difficult research problems. Thanks are also due to bp Nichol, Artie Gold, and John McAuley for allowing me access to their private collections.

Finally, I would like to thank all the little magazine editors who have undertaken the often thankless job of putting out magazines that rarely make money and consume all their time, purely for the love of poetry and a belief in its infinite possibilities.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE RISE OF MODERNISM AND THE ROLE OF THE LITTLE MAGAZINE

Modernism is a development that came comparatively late to Canadian poetry, establishing itself as the dominant mode in the 1940's, although there had been moderate stirrings and intimations of it in Canada since 1914. By the time Modernism had fully established itself in this country, literature in most European countries and even in the United States had begun what is currently being called its "Post-Modernist" period. Attempting to see Canada within the context of development has led Robert Kroetsch to assert that "Canadian literature evolved directly from Victorian into Postmodern."<sup>1</sup> This is simply not true of Canadian poetry. Its Modernist evolution has been gradual and, at times, fragmented; it can also be argued that much of what is considered to be Canadian Post-Modernist poetry bears a strong resemblance or kinship to the work of the early American and European Modernists.

An understanding of the nature of Modernism is an essential aspect of a study such as this, yet a simple definition of Modernism is hard to arrive at since the period is too deeply involved with the entire social process to warrant a simple objective summary. Modernism was a phenomenon that cut across all of the arts almost simultaneously, the literary part of it representing one small but essential branch of the tree. Often it seems difficult to reconcile movements such as German Expressionism, characterized by its passionate subjectivity, or Italian Futurism and its celebration of the machine and the liberation of typography, with the austere precision of the American and English Imagists; yet all of these are Modernist movements and at heart they share an environment and certain common assumptions.

The essential principle of the Modernist artist is that he felt very strongly a sense of the present, of living in a new age, and of breaking with the past and its accumulation of

traditions. In many respects twentieth century man has faced the greatest radical shift of values and of judgements bearing on man's role and place in the world since the Renaissance. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, great philosophical and social upheavals were to indelibly change the face of the Western world, conspiring to create a world for the early twentieth century man that was radically different from that of his Victorian predecessors. All of western man's values were called into question. The economic assessment of Karl Marx, the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin, the psychological probings of Sigmund Freud, and the relativity theory of Albert Einstein combined to place man in a new world, a new universe, and in a new relation to himself. Marx's critique of capitalism began the assault on an economic system that had thrived in Europe and America for close to 300 years; Darwin's findings and theories brought western religious answers to man's place in the universe totally into question; Freud provided man with a grammar with which to discuss the inner human process, and he began to bring to light the dark, unconscious side of man; Einstein's theory of relativity returned man to a Heraclitean world of flux and to a revalued sense of the nature of scientific objectivity. All of these endeavours represent severe and radical shifts in man's way of looking at himself and the world that he inhabits. Add to this other currents of thought like the philosophy of Nietzsche, the rise of the suffragette and feminist movement, the discovery of primitive cave paintings in France and Spain, the invention of the electric light and other technological developments, and we see the early twentieth century as a world totally transformed in both reality and appearance from the world of the Victorians. The old order was giving way to a new order which had as some of its main components radical criticism, skepticism, reappraisal, dynamism and doubt.

At a time when all of man's values and beliefs were being called into question, is it any wonder that artists also began to question the values and elements of their arts? This, too,

is an essential property of Modernism: a concern with reevaluating the role of art and investigating the elements that compose the medium. In the wake of the new discoveries made during this time, it is not surprising to find the artist in fact using something like a scientific method in the treatment of his art.

So far as the assessment of value of the arts is concerned we find different groups of artists emphasizing different values: the Dadaists are nihilistic in their attitude towards art and concern themselves with violating and debunking bourgeois values; for Marinetti and the Futurists one of art's purposes becomes the glorification of the machine age; the Surrealists desire to release the liberating and revolutionary powers of the unconscious; the Imagists are concerned with poetry as a precise art of charged visual depiction. The values, in each case, are different, and yet they share the urge to make art a vital life force--destroying, celebrating, releasing and crystallizing.

A central aesthetic concern in all the art movements is an investigation of the medium, giving credence to Modernism as a period in the arts of "high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life."<sup>2</sup> What results is a deeper penetration of art. Musicians investigate principles of tonality, painters of color and perspective, sculptors of form, while writers investigate how language communicates through visual and auditory cues. In a sense the arts are brought under an aesthetic microscope to study their structure; it is in this way that Modernism is a highly formalistic movement; in this it is diametrically opposed to the revolution of content represented by the Romantics. Although there is a consequent liberation of subject matter in Modern art, content often takes a second place to the investigation of formal problems. As Louis Dudek notes in his essay "The Meaning of Modernism", formal analysis is evident in all of



the Modern arts:

...we see that the Imagist method is as much an analysis and a dislocation of the elements of poetry as Cubism was in painting, or the atonal system was in music. The common principle of all these movements is that invariably the arts turn in upon themselves. Art for Art, which started the whole thing, has become art analyzing its own innards, or mechanically dismantling and reassembling itself in novel ways. Modernism is the disintegration of every art, after an expulsion of its subject matter.<sup>3</sup>

In locating the artist's concern solely in the artistic realm, relatively free of social implication, Modernism provided the artist with a new unprecedented freedom:

...it set the artist free to be more himself, let him move beyond the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of light. Now human consciousness and especially artistic consciousness could become more intuitive, more poetic; art could now fulfil itself. It was free to catch at the manifold -- the atoms as they fall -- and create significant harmony not in the universe but within itself. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Implied in this new freedom was the possibility of achieving a new consciousness, one that was commensurate with the new modern world; for the arts in the Modernist phase "modernity is a new consciousness, a fresh condition of the human mind."<sup>5</sup> Radical changes in the arts are in order if art is to participate and be a vital part of twentieth century life; the precision and order of form and orientation inherited from the Victorians does not serve the modern world. The moral Victorian concern is now part of an outmoded art, chained to an old world view; in contrast, the modern world, with all of its dynamism, is a world of uncertainty and chaos. These are elements that Modernism seeks to encompass; indeed, as Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane have commented:

...it is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty principle', of the destruction of civilization and reason

in the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaninglessness or absurdity. It is the literature of technology. It is the art consequent on the dis-establishing of communal reality and conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues when public notions of language have been discredited and when all realities have become subjective fictions. Modernism is then the art of modernization -- however stark the separation of the artist from society may have been, however oblique the artistic gesture he has made.<sup>6</sup>

The Modernist artist is intensely aware of living in a world that has been cataclysmically separated from the past; the sense is not only that the artist is living in the twentieth century, but also that the century is separated from those that preceded it by an unbreachable chasm. We find in Modernism an intense historicity which, ultimately, judges how different the present is from the past. For better or worse, the artist has been cut off from the great traditions that have developed in each art; this separation is acknowledged by either cries of joy or cries of despair. Part of the central dynamic of Modernism is the tension between artists celebrating their arrival in a brave new world and those who lament the loss of the past; these extremes in vision and sentiment are, perhaps, best represented by the Italian and Russian Futurist affirmations, on the one side, and the despair of Eliot's "The Waste Land" on the other. The modern world is seen as both a beginning and as a graveyard, and the artist can either be attracted or repelled by the prospect of living in such a world. Looking at the Modernist arts, Bradbury and McFarlane find these two tendencies almost equally active:

. . . Modernism was in most countries an extraordinary compound of the futuristic and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative, the naturalistic and the sym-

bolistic, the romantic and the classical. It was a celebration of a technological age and a condemnation of it; an excited acceptance of the belief that the old regimes of culture were over, and a deep despairing in the face of that fear; a mixture of convictions that the new forms were escapes from historicism and the pressures of the time with convictions that they were precisely the living expression of these things.

Whether in love with the modern world or living in terror of it, the Modernist writer was aware of having been cut off from previous history, of being, not a product of the past, but a fragment of the immediate environment. His art had also departed from "tradition" in order to express the new. Old forms could be employed but they would need to be totally reconstituted to serve the modern sensibility. For most, the past had become "a heap of broken images" and they would have to surrender to that real vision.

Before moving on to Modernist developments in English language literature and their interplay with the little magazine, it might be well for us, since we have looked at Modernism, to consider, at least briefly, the Post-Modernist phase. Despite the current emphasis that has been placed on Post-Modernism as a new artistic manifestation, we will see that it carries with it many of the assumptions of Modernism; indeed, many of the Modernist artists are looked upon as great artistic father figures by the Post-Moderns. Post-Modernism is, in other words, an elaboration of Modernist principles rather than an anti-Modernist movement. In his essay "Modernisms," Frank Kermode has presented much the same argument for seeing the continuity between Modernism and Post-Modernism:

Kermode holds that the contemporary art of the random -- the squaring out of a piece of space or time, the specifying and signing of an environment, as in Cage or Burroughs -- is blood-cousin to the earlier tendencies, though he draws a line across to distinguish early Modernism, which was much more formalist, or devoted to the paradoxes of form, from later or Neo-Modernism,

which is anti-formalist, though compelled to use form to subvert it. The use of loose structure or aleatory art (i.e. the art of conscious fictiveness, as in Nabokov, Borges, or Barthelme) is not outrightly at odds with its predecessors; it is a new disposition of old forces. Thus what Ker-mode calls Neo-Modernism and others have chosen to call Post-Modernism involves a change in what Harold Rosenberg calls the "tradition of the new" -- a change falling perhaps around Dada<sup>8</sup> -- but it is still that same tradition.

My tendency, then, shall be to consider Post-Modernism as part of the Modernist tradition. The evolution of modern Canadian poetry is one of continued and continuing Modernist innovation, elaborations upon rather than radical departures from the Modernist tradition.

In English language literature, as in most European literatures, Modernism manifested itself as a repudiation of the failing Romantic tradition. This was particularly true in the writings of the Imagist group, centered around Ezra Pound:

At the beginning, literary modernism was explicitly and polemically anti-Romantic. . . Pound, in part through Hulme's influence, denounced romantic emotionalism, vagueness, and sloppiness and preached the classical virtues of craftsmanship, economy, objectivity, precision. As they expounded it, the Imagist doctrine was primarily anti-Romantic, intended to produce hard, dry, classical verse.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding English language poetry, William Pratt has been correct in his observation that "the Imagist poem was both a beginning and an achievement" in modern verse, and that "taken as a whole, it is modern poetry in miniature."<sup>10</sup> The three basic premises of Imagism, as stated by F.S. Flint in his essay "Imagisme," published in the March 1913 issue of Poetry, were to have a major impact upon the way English, American and, ultimately, Canadian verse were to be written by succeeding generations. These three principles were:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm; to compose in sequence of the musical phrase; not in sequence of a metronome.<sup>11</sup>

These three principles were to lead to primary changes in the way verse was to be composed; the flowery language of the Romantics and Victorians, overbrimming with adjectives, was to be replaced by a poetry of classical sparseness and precision; the poem would also no longer be held prisoner by the trammels of end-rhyme and regularized metre; instead, free verse was to become the accepted form. In essence, both the form and content of the poem were being set free. Poetry would no longer necessarily have to concern itself with the "higher truths" of existence; a red wheelbarrow was now to be as relevant to poetry as a grecian urn. In terms of language, poetry would move closer to the patterns of human speech rather than sustain the stilted metre of a previous age. This Imagist movement, or philosophy, was to have an effect on all the major poets writing in English at the time. Although never considered Imagists, and not among the poets in the Imagist anthologies, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot were to show signs of Imagism in their verse, as did other poets such as Carl Sandburg, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, E.E. Cummings and Archibald MacLeish.

Imagism is, in many ways, one of the more conservative of the Modernist movements. The Imagists maintained that they were not doing anything that was radically new; rather, they were upholding the basic principles of good poetry. Yet, despite this assertion, we can see that the work of Aldington, H.D., Pound, Lawrence, Eliot and Flint went against the grain of the day's literary conventions as represented in the newspapers and periodicals of the time.

Now, in that their work was not aimed towards mass appeal, and in that it was highly unconventional, the Imagists, like many other of the Modernists, needed a specific forum in which to display their work. This forum was the little magazine. In magazines like Poetry and The Little Review the essential program of the Imagists was given an airing. In other magazines like Blast, The Egoist and The Exile Pound hammered home his programs. The little magazine was to exist as one of the essential outlets for the furthering of Modernism.

The little magazine is a magazine of small circulation, usually of no more than several hundred readers. Its function is to serve as an alternative outlet for literature, usually "for the purpose of attacking conventional modes of expression and of bringing into the open new and unorthodox literary theories and practices."<sup>12</sup> As the chief study of the little magazine notes, "one of the most significant contributions of these magazines to twentieth century literature is to give it an abundance of suggestions and styles which popular or academic taste scarcely could tolerate or accept."<sup>13</sup> The prime motivating force behind the little magazine is two-fold:

. . .rebellion against traditional modes of expression and the wish to experiment with novel (and sometimes unintelligible) forms; and a desire to overcome the commercial or material difficulties which are caused by the introduction of any writing whose commercial merits have not been proved.<sup>14</sup>

Louis Dudek has elaborated on the relationship between the little magazine and the commercial press:

The appearance of the little magazine in America coincided with the beginning of what is called modern in literature, modern poetry, and the modernist movement in the arts. The new magazines and the new literature are so closely related that the reader's opinion of the one is likely to be an in-

dication of his opinion of the other. Both are characterized by opposition to the dominant character in our society -- to the popular press, the advertising economy, and all those pressures which would reduce the individual to stark uniformity as producer-consumer of a mechanized super-state; on the other hand, both modern literature and its experimental magazines are characterized also by the effort to rehabilitate literature as living communication, to halt its decadence as the cultural property of an academic or a genteel minority. The new literature and the new magazines, therefore, are open to attack both from the side of popular taste, the rootless taste of the great majority, and from the side of the conservatively-traditional educated class.<sup>15</sup>

Although open to attack from the side of popular taste and also from the conservative educated class, the little magazine is also free to charge these two factions in turn: the first for their lack of a civilized aesthetic sensibility, and the second for clinging to the traditions of the past. Dudek's statement that the appearance of the little magazine and the new poetry of Modernism are closely inter-related is surely correct. The little magazine has served well as the primary vehicle for modern poetry. Magazines such as Poetry (Chicago), The Little Review, The Egoist and Blast provided a lively forum for the early Modernist activity of their time. In 1946, Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn F. Ulrich, in their study The Little Magazine, could definitively state the importance of the little magazine to the Modernist movement:

. . .the best of our little magazines have stood, from 1912 to the present, defiantly in the front ranks of the battle for a mature literature. They have helped fight this battle by being the first to present such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, T.S. Eliot--by first publishing, in fact, about 80 per cent of our most important post-1912 critics,

novelists, poets, and story-tellers. Further, they have introduced and sponsored every noteworthy literary movement or school that has made its appearance in America during the past thirty years.<sup>16</sup>

In defining the structure and role of the little magazine, Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich consider the motivation of the little magazine editor. He is one who seems destined to print a magazine of small circulation that loses money and is, essentially, a rebel against the literary standards of the time:

Such a man is stimulated by some form of discontent--whether with the constraints of his world or the negligence of publishers, at any rate with something he considers unjust, boring, or ridiculous. He views the world of publishing and popularizers with disdain, sometimes with despair. If he is a contributor and wishes to be published, he may have to abandon certain unorthodox aesthetic or moral beliefs. Often he is rebellious against the doctrines of popular taste and sincerely believes that our attitudes towards literature need to be reformed or at least made more liberal. More than that, he generally insists that publications should not depend upon the whimsy of conventional tastes and choices.<sup>17</sup>

At its best, the little magazine has a new program or poetics to put forward in opposition to established taste. In any case, the magazine is always a reflection of the orientation and poetic politics of its editor or editorial group, and can only be as good as editorial judgment permits:

For the most part, each magazine serves its separate purpose before it dies: that purpose generally is to give finished form and some degree of distribution to the personality and the convictions of its editor or editors. Often these convictions are given editorial form. The editorial statement may be simply an expression of generosity to those who are akin in spirit; it may be (or become) a program or platform; and it may very well be (or become) the expression of some school



of political or aesthetic thought  
which uses the magazine as its voice. 18

What we will see in looking at Canadian little magazines from 1925 to the present day is the progression and evolution of Modernism reflected in the contributions, editorial concerns and debates with which these magazines concern themselves. The development of the little magazine in Canada is different from that in England and the United States, as is the development of Modernism in Canada. To a very large extent this development differs because of social conditions that have prevailed in Canada. The cataclysm of western culture that was so apparent in Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century was not so evident in a country that was still evolving from a frontier community. The culture shock of the First World War that tore apart old Europe touched Canada much less significantly; though soldiers were sent to fight in that war, Canada did not experience itself as a battleground. Because of its physical distance, the English Canadian community could maintain a Victorian sensibility long after that sensibility had been considerably diminished in England itself.

It must also be noted that Modernism struck quickly in countries that had well established literary traditions. In Canada a sense of a national literature was just being developed at this time; indeed, it is only with the activities of the Canadian Authors' Association in the early 1920's that an emphasis began to be placed on Canadian writing. It is a well known fact that Confederation poets such as Roberts and Carman had to leave Canada in order to make their literary reputations, or else languish in relative obscurity like Lampman. Not a very high premium was placed on literature and cultural activities in what was still, essentially, a frontier society. Reminiscing about his return to Canada from Oxford in 1923, F.R. Scott has noted that there "was very little culture coming out of

Montreal at that time."<sup>19</sup>

In discussing the provocation for the little magazine, Louis Dudek has stated:

In literary terms, it is the embattled literary reaction of intellectual minority groups to the commercial middle-class magazines of fiction and advertising which had evolved in the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

What we must understand is that, at the time that Modernism was beginning to flourish in England and America, there was little of an intellectual majority group to rebel against in Canada. When F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith and Leo Kennedy began the first tentative steps towards a Modernist poetry, they were able to level criticisms at the C.A.A. and, to a lesser degree, the Confederation poets, but, in many real senses, they themselves had to establish a national setting in which their writing could be presented. Their poetry and magazines of the 1920's are not very bohemian or radically anti-establishment when compared with the kind of Modernism found in Blast or The Egoist. Also, at this time, there was not really operative in Canada a commercial magazine industry. Magazines available to the educated middle class tended to be American products such as Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly and Scribner's Magazine. Most of the Canadian periodicals that had attempted to compete with these publications in the late nineteenth century (among them Dominion Illustrated Monthly, Massey's Magazine and Our Monthly) simply could not match the American magazines' financial resources and so terminated publication after relatively short periods of time. A notable exception was the family magazine Canadian Magazine (1893-1923).<sup>21</sup>

Modernism, then, had a slow and tentative start in Canada simply because the modern world had not caught up with the country with the same rapidity as in Europe or even in the United States. It would not really be until the 1940's that Modernism, equipped with real little magazines, would begin to be realized; it can also be argued that, not until the 1960's, did truly avant-garde literary

periodicals begin to appear in Canada, some fifty years after the inception of radical European Modernism in the 1910's. Looking at the progress of the little magazine in Canada, Modernist evolution in Canadian poetry will turn out to be a series of gradual shifts, proceeding through stages of political and aesthetic development.

## CHAPTER ONE FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert Krcetsch, "A Canadian Issue," Boundary 2, III, no. 1 (Fall 1974), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," Modernism (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Dudek, Technology & Culture (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1979), pp. 87-88.

<sup>4</sup>Bradbury and McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," Modernism, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Bradbury and McFarlane, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>9</sup>Monroe K. Spears, Dionysus and the City (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>William Pratt, ed., The Imagist Poem (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, Inc., 1963), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>F.S. Flint, "Imagisme," reprinted in Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 129.

<sup>12</sup>Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn F. Ulrich, The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich, The Little Magazine, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Hoffman, et al, pp. 4-5.

<sup>15</sup>Louis Dudek, Literature And The Press (Toronto: The Ryerson Press and Contact Press, 1960), p. 140.

<sup>16</sup>Hoffman, et al, pp. 1-2.

<sup>17</sup>Hoffman, et al, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Hoffman, et al, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup>F.R. Scott, ". . .It is the Heart that Sees," Athanon, 1, no. 2 (Feb 1980), p. 5.

<sup>20</sup>Louis Dudek, "The Role of the Little Magazine in Canada," The Making of Modern Poetry In Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1967), p. 206.

<sup>21</sup>James Doyle, "Canadian Poetry and American Magazines, 1885-1905," Canadian Poetry, no. 5 (Fall/Winter 1979), p. 74.

CHAPTER TWO  
THE BEGINNINGS OF CANADIAN MODERNISM

Modernism made a gradual entrance into Canadian poetry, beginning in 1914 with the publication of a book of poems by Arthur Stringer entitled Open Water. As Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski have noted:

This book must be seen as a turning point in Canadian writing if only for the importance of the ideas advanced by Stringer in his preface. In a carefully presented, extremely well-informed account of traditional verse-making, Stringer pleaded the cause of free verse and created what must now be recognized as an early document of the struggle to free Canadian poetry from the trammels of end-rhyme, and to liberalize its methods and its substance. Stringer's arguments become even more striking from the point of view of literary history if we recall that in 1914 free verse was still in the experimental stage, and that the famous notes of F.S. Flint and the strictures of Ezra Pound on imagisme and free verse had appeared less than a year before this, in the March 1913 issue of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse (Chicago).<sup>1</sup>

The prevailing tradition in Canadian verse, at this time, was one that had been established by the poets of the Confederation: Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott. This poetry, although striving for a certain Canadian quality, was very much the offspring of English Victorian verse. The majority of versifiers in Canada were to cling to this mode of expression until the beginning of the 1940's. It was up to a few poets to begin infusing the Modernist spirit into Canadian poetry.

In 1920, F.O. Call published a book of verse, Acanthus and Wild Grape, which, like Stringer's book, was more important for what its preface had to say than for the poetry that the volume contained. The tenets of Modernism began to be ex-

exercised before there was a successful Modernist Canadian poem produced. Assessing Call's book, Dudek and Gnarowski explain that

Once more the reader was treated to something more than he might have bargained for in a preface to a small collection of poetry. Call took up the cudgels in the cause of free-verse, and argued with more than passing eloquence and conviction for the rejection of the hackneyed limitations imposed by end-rhyme. His message was identical to that of Stringer and he pleaded for a hearing and a chance to get poetry moving once more in the direction of a technically freed and spontaneous expression. His method was that of comparison, and as evidence of the worth of his experiment Call offered two widely differing types of poetry in his book. He wanted the reader to compare the traditional method as typified in the poetry of the "Acanthus" section of the book with the free verse of the section entitled "Wild Grape".<sup>2</sup>

The early 1920's saw a slightly increased activity in the writing of Modern verse in Canada. W.W.E. Ross, R.G. Everson, Raymond Knister and Dorothy Livesay were all poets who wrote in the Imagist mode, utilizing free verse during this time. "In short, a scattering of Canadian writers, in no way organized or identified with any Canadian literary magazine, already reflected the changes taking place in the early 1920's."<sup>3</sup> Their activity was individual and unrelated; their poems appeared in American and English literary publications. In Canada, there was no focal point, no center of activity as of yet. It would be the rise of the little magazine that would serve as the breeding ground for the true initiation of Modernism in Canada and the subsequent schools and innovations:

The little magazine in Canada has been the most important single factor behind the rise and continued progress of modernism in Canadian poetry. The history of the little magazine covers a period of some forty years and closely parallels the development of modern

poetry itself from the mid-1920's to the present time. All the important events in poetry and most of the initiating manifestoes and examples of change are to be found in the little magazines.<sup>4</sup>

The programmatic introduction of Modernism into Canadian poetry as well as the first stirrings of the tradition of the little magazine in Canada began on November 21, 1925 with the printing of the first issue of The McGill Fortnightly Review, a periodical which continued publication until April 27, 1927. Two of the prime movers behind the founding and editing of The McGill Fortnightly Review were A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, two graduate students then attending McGill University. The previous year Smith had edited the McGill Daily Literary Supplement, a student publication which functioned as a supplement to the student newspaper. F.R. Scott, in recalling how he first met Smith, recounts the events of this time that led to the founding of the periodical:

He (Smith) was running the McGill Daily Literary Supplement and every Wednesday you opened it up and there was an insert with some bright poems, a few articles, and book reviews. This delighted me when I was a law student because the lectures were usually so dull that you had to read something during them. I sent the Supplement a translation of an old French chanson and Smith published it. To my delight at the end of the year I received a letter from a man signed A.J.M. Smith, whom I had never met, asking me to join the editorial board. Of course I accepted. Then we heard that the students' society had decided not to give any money to publish the Literary Supplement because it contained no advertising; the frustrated editors decided to found a new independent student journal, which we called the McGill Fortnightly Review.<sup>5</sup>

The "review" that followed was, in no strict sense, a "little magazine"; it was very much a student publication. It did not emerge with a fighting position with which to do battle



with the literary conventions of the time although, with succeeding issues, it took up this fight in subtle ways. The publication's name was itself modeled on a famous nineteenth century magazine published in London since 1865: The Fortnightly. In a manner typical of students, it would seem that the editors sought to ally themselves with the bastions of tradition and institutionalism (a sign of this is that their first editorial gives praise to a series of lectures that Bliss Carman had given at McGill. Four years later, having become engaged in the battle for a Modernist orientation in Canadian poetry, Scott would write an extensive critique of Carman's verse in The Canadian Mercury). The McGill Fortnightly Review's initial editorial is not a very fiery one. Interlarded with various editorial comments about Student Council Meetings, McGill-Varsity Games and the refusal of the Harold Lloyd Rugby Trophy, the magazine announces itself and its editorial policies as follows:

The Review is an independent journal and, as such, it has a right to an independent opinion of its own on all matters. The Editors will express that opinion in the Editorial columns. But this emphatically does not mean that we shall suppress the contributions of those who disagree with us. We shall be glad to receive and publish articles taking any attitude whatever. We reserve only that they shall be of sufficient literary merit. The body of the McGill Fortnightly Review will be devoted to purely literary, artistic and scientific matter, but space will also be reserved to do duty as an open forum, wherein students of McGill may voice their thoughts on the affairs of the student body, saying freely whatever they may feel.<sup>6</sup>

In most ways The McGill Fortnightly Review was a typical student publication. It mixed literature and opinion with the general concerns of university students. Because of its university affiliations and liberal approach towards submissions it is, as Michael Gnarowski has pointed out, "in no sense . . . a truly self-willed little magazine. Its

historic value is lodged in the fact that it brought a group of promising poets together, gave them editorial experience and finally pointed them in the right direction, thus starting a literary movement on its way."<sup>7</sup> The McGill group, as it has come to be known, consisting of Scott, Smith and Leo Kennedy (Klein was to join them later in the pages of The Canadian Mercury, had its first practical experience within the pages of The McGill Fortnightly Review.)

Despite the fact that the concerns of poetry were combined with articles about the McGill debating club, the McGill group began to put forward the new ideas of Modernism, and to dispute the present literary currents in Canada. F.R. Scott has commented upon their working principles at the time:

When we founded the McGill Fortnightly Review we were protesting against the literary standards of the time--particularly against the poetic standards; A.J.M. Smith organized this group around the Fortnightly because he felt that things were happening to modern literature which students here didn't know anything about. He wanted to begin a magazine with experimentation in new verse, which was then called modern verse; that led to a different approach to the idea of literary composition, and we were primarily concerned of course about poetic composition.<sup>8</sup>

The launching of Modernism in the pages of the Fortnightly was put forward as a two-pronged attack: firstly, there was criticism to be leveled at the literary temper of the times, which the McGill group saw as embodied by the Canadian Authors' Association promoting the quasi-Victorian verse of the twenties. The McGill group took pot-shots at the C.A.A. throughout the duration of the publication of The McGill Fortnightly Review and The Canadian Mercury. Second, there was the new program of Modernism to be put forward; this was presented in articles and in the poems themselves. The second issue of The McGill Fortnightly Review was the first in which

both aspects of the Modernist program were presented. The second issue's editorial included a criticism of the C.A.A. and of their promotion methods, and it contained certain basic convictions about the nature of writing which are worth noting:

Whatever sympathy one may feel for the aims of the Canadian Authors Association and however eagerly one may hope for the creation of a worthy national literature, it is impossible to view the excesses of "Canadian Book Week" in a favorable light. Publicity, advertising and the methods of big business are not what is required to foster the art and literature of a young country such as Canada, while the commercial boosting of mediocre Canadian books not only reduces the Author's Association to the level of an advertising agency but does considerable harm to good literature. After all, it is not so much Canadian books that we should like to see the public buy, as good Canadian books; and as there are not very many of these latter yet, we should be very well content with a public that would buy merely good books, regardless whether their writers are English, American, German or Japanese.<sup>9</sup>

The McGill group expressed a natural antipathy for "mediocre Canadian books," that is, poetry weighted down by a transplanted Victorian tradition living out a protracted decadence in Canada. In its stead, these poets sought to place the models of the new modern poets, such as the Imagist group, as well as W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot.

A.J.M. Smith himself was studying and liking Yeats; Eliot was beginning to write in England, and D.H. Lawrence was beginning to become known.<sup>10</sup> The changeover from the Georgian poets to the modern poets came mostly through the influence of the American writers and Smith was just soaking up this new American approach to poetry and its philosophy; he wrote an article for the McGill Fortnightly pointing out what was happening to science

in the world and the changing industrial conditions, and that it was ridiculous to go on in old poetic forms.<sup>11</sup>

It was Smith who, in a series of articles, was to be the theoretician of the new poetry and who would define for Canada the role of poetry in the modern world. His first article, "Symbolism in Poetry," appeared in the same issue as the denunciation of the Canadian Author's Association, issue #2. It stated the necessity for the use of symbolism in modern writing and provided some theoretical and historical background for this idea. In the final paragraph of the article Smith quotes Yeats on the role of symbolism in relation to modern poetry; it is a principle running strictly counter to the poetic indulgence of the previous fifty years. This symbolism is meant to effect "a casting out of descriptions of nature for the sake of nature, of the moral law for the sake of the moral law, a casting out of all anecdotes and of that brooding over scientific opinion that so often extinguished the central flame in Tennyson, and of that vehemence that would make us do or not do certain things. . ."<sup>12</sup> This denunciation of the excesses of Victorianism can also be seen to apply to the Canadian poets of Confederation, who, too often, became caught up in descriptions of nature and in extended moralizing. In the 1920's both Carman and Roberts received high praise from the C.A.A. and the Canadian critics, and had spawned such poetic heirs as Marjorie Pickthall and Wilson MacDonald. The McGill group felt the absolute necessity to get beyond this maple-leaf school of poetry. As Scott has recently observed, "when we were on the Fortnightly there was not a single Canadian poet we paid much attention to, certainly not an old poet like Bliss Carman, Charles G.D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman or Duncan Campbell Scott."<sup>13</sup>

Yeats and Eliot had a great impact upon Smith and Scott. Smith's second article on modern poetry in the Fortnightly, "Hamlet in Modern Dress," was an adept analysis of Eliot's difficult poem "The Waste Land"; this article again took

note of the poet's use of symbolism. Smith, here and in general, reveals his preference for the Yeats-Eliot axis of Modernism rather than for that of Pound and Williams, a point worth noting, since it is the latter two who were to have a great effect upon later generations of Canadian poets. Scott, too, has acknowledged the fact that, at the time, "The Waste Land" "had a terrific effect upon me as a poem."<sup>14</sup> Smith's article on Eliot was immediately followed by one of Scott's early satirical poems entitled "Sweeney Comes to McGill" which points ridicule at the processes of education.

It was in his article "Contemporary Poetry" (Vol. II, no. 4) that Smith defined most clearly his view of the purpose and quality of the modern. Smith began by noting that "our age is an age of change, and of a change that is taking place with a rapidity unknown in any other epoch."<sup>15</sup> Smith saw the vast technological advancements and simultaneous changes in attitudes towards philosophy, science and religion as transforming the universe of ideas in which we live:

Our universe is a different one from that of our grandfathers, nor can our religious beliefs be the same. The whole movement, indeed, is a movement away from an erroneous but comfortable stability, towards a more truthful and sincere but certainly less comfortable state of flux. Ideas are changing, and therefore manners and morals are changing. It is not surprising, then, to find that the arts, which are an intensification of life and thought, are likewise in a state of flux.<sup>16</sup>

This shaking up of the "erroneous but comfortable stability" of Victorian life and its well-metred but decadent Romantic verse was to be replaced by a new order of life and art.

Smith emphatically argued that the new poetry "must be the result of the impingement of modern conditions upon the personality and temperament of the poet."<sup>17</sup> This impingement could have many diverse results: the poet could enthusias-

tically welcome the birth of a new age and new prospects for the individual as Modernists like Lawrence and Williams did, or else he could lament modern man's divorce from the traditional world of values and culture, as did Yeats, Eliot and Pound in their poetry. But whatever the poet's response to modern civilization, Smith rightly saw "the peculiar conditions of the time (as having) forced them all to seek a new and more direct expression, to perfect a finer technique."<sup>18</sup> The experimentation in the forms of the arts that was so prevalent in the 1910's and 1920's Smith saw, not as something that stemmed out of a conscious choice on the part of writers, but as a condition "forced" upon them. The artist who had his eyes open could not help but see the disparity between the modern world and the world reflected in Victorian and fin-de-siecle works. The new world that was dawning demanded a new art. This new poetry could provide a change in form, that of free verse, although Smith saw the greater part of modern poetry, rather as "infused with the new spirit. . . written in the traditional metres and with the traditional rhyme schemes."<sup>19</sup> This was certainly true of the orientation and direction of his own poetry. This new poetry also reflected a change in poetic diction: "the deems, forsooths, methinks, the inversions for the sake of a rhyme, the high sounding pomposities and all the rhetorical excesses which make so much Victorian poetry seem overdressed and slightly vulgar--all these have been ruthlessly removed from the diction of contemporary poetry."<sup>20</sup> Smith attempted to provide the ultimate clarification of the workings of Modernism by quoting Harriet Monroe, then editor of the little magazine Poetry which played an important part in the development of early Modernism:

The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life; it would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness found in all classics not of the first order. It is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent than most poetry of the Victorian

period and much work of earlier periods. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity--an ideal which implies an individual, unsteretyped rhythm.<sup>21</sup>

The new potentialities of form and diction, and the direct and concrete realities of modern living were to serve to spark modern verse. This doctrine, or orientation, naturally led the McGill group to come into conflict with the writing that was prevalent in Canada at the time.

The poetry of Scott and Smith dominated the poetry department in The McGill Fortnightly Review. Under their own names and the pseudonyms Brian Tuke, Michael Gard, and Vincent Starr they published an outpouring of their early Modernist experiments. Quite often their experiments with form, such as that of the sonnet, or their strokes of satirical verse, appeared under pseudonyms. Most of their poems were not written in free verse but adhered to some principle of metre and rhyme; this is especially true of Smith's own work, which at times, seemed highly reminiscent of Yeats. From the very beginning Smith was intent upon working with traditional metres in the manner of Yeats and infusing them with "passionate speech." Clearly Smith was, and always has been, a highly formal poet. Scott also worked closely with rhyme and measured metres. It is in their poetic diction that they began to show a real Modernist orientation. Their poetry was written in an approximation of the modern idiom and strove to move away from the conscious poeticisms of the Victorians and their epigones. Early versions of some of their more successful poems appeared first in The McGill Fortnightly Review: Smith's "The Lonely Land" and "Epitaph" (Vol. I, no. 4) and Scott's "Below Quebec" (Vol. II, no. 3) as well as his broadside at the C.A.A., "The Canadian Authors Meet," in the last issue (Vol. II, no. 9-10).

The McGill Fortnightly Review terminated publication at the end of the spring semester in 1927. It ended because its editors had moved out beyond the university and had taken

their mission elsewhere. Over a year later they would launch The Canadian Mercury, an enterprise on a more ambitious scale, so that The McGill Fortnightly Review was very much a student publication, hardly yet an authentic little magazine. It involved itself in student and university issues and could just as easily take up an argument with the debating society as with the Canadian Authors' Association. The publications of Scott, Smith and Kennedy, for the most part, were in line with the talented work that appears in university publications. Within the pages of The McGill Fortnightly Review Smith tested out his critical theories and powers and the poets brought out their first poetical work. It was in the pages of the independent Canadian Mercury, which owed no affiliation to any institution or organization, that they next made a more vigorous and self-confident stand for the principles of Modernism in Canadian poetry.

The Canadian Mercury began publication in December of 1928 and ran for seven issues before it terminated with the great economic crash of 1929. Lou Schwartz, who had been the business manager for The McGill Fortnightly Review, served as The Canadian Mercury's "sugar daddy"; he published it and paid its bills. As a result, The Canadian Mercury enjoyed considerable freedom as an independent journal of literature and opinion. Its editorial board consisted of Jean Burton, F.R. Scott, Leo Kennedy and Felix Walter. A.J.M. Smith sent in his contributions from the University of Edinburgh where he was now attending graduate school; Leon Edel was in Paris, whence he filed reports on the literary activity taking place there. Liberated from the trammels of general university concerns, the editors could now more fully involve themselves in the problems of literature. There is a much higher proportion of poetry and fiction as compared with other writing in The Canadian Mercury than in the earlier McGill Fortnightly Review. The McGill group also appears to have become a tighter organization, for the magazine is marked



by the appearance of a consistent outpouring of poetry and other writings from a specific group of writers. This spirit of new confidence and independence is given voice in the opening editorial, which merits quoting at some length:

It is idle to say that in this considerable Canada of ours there is no place for a journal of the genre of The Canadian Mercury--no place, in effect, for a Journal of Literature and Opinion conducted along the necessarily liberal lines of an open forum. Nevertheless it is true that during the months of labor which prefaced our appearance this criticism was most prevalent, greatly enhancing the normal difficulties of organization. This attitude did not interrupt preparation. . . . it stimulated to further effort the few young people whose preoccupation with some definite standards of literary criticism and the development of a Canadian literature had led them to stake purse and aggregate intelligence on the venture. From a minority, however, we received nods of encouragement, and it is to these cordial and generous persons in particular that we hasten to dedicate our first issue.

The Canadian Mercury then, with nothing between it and the eyes of the judiciary but an ingenious and rather ribald colophon, appears, determined to preserve its policies in spite of all reactionary opposition; intent on offering the more thoughtful Canadian public the best available matter on subjects immediately concerning that public; demanding as we have said, a higher and more adequate standard of literary criticism in Canada, and striving to contribute in so far as it is possible to the consummation of that graceful ideal, the emancipation of Canadian literature from the state of amiable mediocrity and insipidity in which it now languishes.

To change the image, Canadian Literature is a lusty but quite inarticulate brat constrained in too-tight swaddling: you will know him by his red Mounted Policeman's jacket, and his half-breed guide's raccoon-skin cap. He has been sired by Decorum out of Claptrap. . .and we are

not resigned. He has not the faculty of self-expression which may be found in his adolescent American cousin; he has not reaped the benefits arising from an extensive immigration policy. He has retained the stifling qualities of Nordic consciousness and is likely, by present symptoms, to become idiot. We do not approve of this, and therefore gather behind our colophon, which at least symbolizes vigour and a modicum of intellectual health.

We must add that we have no affiliation whatsoever: we owe no allegiance to the Canadian Authors' Association, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Young Communist League of Canada, the I.O.D.E., the Y.M.C.A., the U.F. of A or the C.P.R.

In brief, it may be said that with the exception of a spinster aunt in London and a wild uncle in America, neither of whom would claim relationship--The Canadian Mercury is individual. . . and again we revert to our hobby. We have no preconceived idea of Canadian literature which we are endeavouring to propagate; our faith rests in the spirit which is at last beginning to brood upon our literary chaos. We believe that an order will come out of the void, an order of a distinct type, reflecting, as modern Canadian painting has begun to do, a unique experience of nature and life.

Above all, The Canadian Mercury is intended primarily for the younger writers in this country. The editors are all well under thirty and intend to remain so. We seek to ally with ourselves all those whose literary schooling has survived the Confederation, and whose thought and verse is not afraid of being called free.<sup>22</sup>

This is a wide open and freewheeling editorial. The editors offer to put forward a "more adequate standard of literary criticism in Canada, and they propose the "emancipation of Canadian literature from the state of amiable mediocrity and insipidity" in which they see it to be languishing. They oppose its parentage of "Decorum" and "Claptrap"

which is leading it down the path to idiocy, and they pose, as an alternative, freedom of expression in verse and thought. It is a positive editorial which identifies the enemy and begins to put forward a program of rectification.

The first issue of The Canadian Mercury shows the full scope of this new commitment to Canadian literature. Included in that issue is an article by Stephen Leacock, "The National Literature Problem In Canada"; Leacock argues for Canadian qualities in Canadian literature as opposed to a clinging to English-American models; as regarding the "boostering" of Canadian writing, he is firmly anti-nationalist in the sense of being anti-isolationist. He concludes that Canada cannot close its eyes to the literature of the rest of the world and only look upon the writings of its native sons. Also contained in this issue are individual poems by both Smith and Scott which are of a high quality. Smith's "Proud Parable" is an early version of the poem now known as "Like An Old Proud King In A Parable," the first poem in Smith's Poems New & Collected. There is a problem, at times, in looking at Smith's poetry to discover the precise elements of Modernity in it. Smith has always been a highly formal poet, a poet who has not dissociated himself from traditional forms and concerns. Though predisposed to rhymed, metrical verse, Smith's Modernist sensibility can be glimpsed in the directness of his diction and prosody. Scott's "Vagrant" is a more visibly "modern" poem, although it, too, incorporates metre and rhyme. In this poem Scott does not use capitals at the beginning of lines, utilizes modern typography in his spacing, and writes in a language fully employing a modern idiom.

Issues 2-4 present a wide diversity of material. Issue #2 contains a story by Dorothy Livesay, "Heat," a long poem of uneven quality, "The Haunted House," by Abraham M. Klein, and Leon Edel's "Montparnasse Letter" in which he discusses the periodical transition and the current literary atmosphere.

of Paris. The third issue of The Canadian Mercury includes the poem "Sequel" by Leo Kennedy (up until this time Kennedy's contributions to The McGill Fortnightly Review and The Canadian Mercury had been prose fiction or reviews), which was to open his first collection of verse, The Shrouding. This poem, like Smith's, is highly formal in structure. (Kennedy, in his preface to the current reprint edition of The Shrouding, says of his poems of the late twenties and early thirties that they "were written when the world was more formal and poets thought a lot about scansion and almost as much about rhyme. Like the farm boy who learned to make love by mail order, I had no proper tutor and learned my trade if I learned it at all by imitating every poet I liked in the Oxford Book of English Verse and Louis Untermeyer's Modern American Poetry."<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough, we see that Kennedy sought his models in English and American sources rather than in Canadian ones). Smith's essay, "A Note On Metaphysical Poetry," also appeared in the third issue; in it he followed Eliot in proclaiming the value of the English metaphysical poets; their poetry obviously had an impact upon his own writing. This issue also featured two poems by Scott: "Spring Flame," and an early version of Scott's strikingly beautiful "Old Song." Issue #4 contained an early version of Smith's poem "Good Friday" and an interesting review of Stephen Vincent Benet's John Brown's Body by F.R. Scott. Scott assesses Benet as a minor poet, but sees great value in Benet's varied use of poetic forms and views the poem as proof of the serious work being done by young American poets.

The first article to appear as one opens issue #5-6 of The Canadian Mercury is Leo Kennedy's "The Future of Canadian Literature," a striking polemic directed at the Canadian Authors' Association. Kennedy sees the Association as fostering everything that is wrong with Canadian writing

in the twenties; he sees the C.A.A. promoting archaic transplanted Victorianisms which are then to be judged by purely parochial standards. Kennedy maintains that, at this time, "the least attractive aspects of Victorianism still hold licensed Canadian creative writers firmly by the gullet. In poetry the Tennysonian and Wordsworthian traditions still rule, and are bolstered by none of the genius and technical ability of those poets."<sup>24</sup> Kennedy sees this Victorian sensibility sustained by

the highly respectable protestantism of a past era, coupled with a firm belief in Empire and the indelicacy of sex psychology and human anatomy; a credo based on the apothegms that all is not gold that glitters, a still tongue makes a wise head, and an Englishman's home is his castle; a pronounced Anglo-Saxon self-approval, a distrust of Latin influence (the naughty Frenchmen!) and new ideas. . . the prevalence of these evils may be partly responsible.<sup>25</sup>

Kennedy expresses a sure conviction that Canadian literature "will not readily be written by Canadian Authors,"<sup>26</sup> meaning, of course, by the partisans of the C.A.A. Kennedy recognizes that the future of Canadian literature resides in the sceptical young writers, a party to which Scott, Smith, and Kennedy himself do most readily belong. These young writers discuss Joyce, Hemingway, Shaw, Pound and Aldous Huxley rather than the Canadian poets of the Confederation and their third-rate imitators. Having begun to work their way clear of the dead philosophy and restrictions of the previous age, and having begun to comprehend the modern condition, it is these young writers who will be able to provide Canadian literature with a future. In the last paragraph of his article Kennedy speculates about this future:

Concerned then with writing something which is true and enduring, desiring to declare what is fine and not necessarily best-selling, they will commence, and come in time to express themselves with

gratifying clarity. They will approach the task of expression fortified by new ideas and original conceptions; they will learn the lesson of all precursors, discovering in a western grain field, a Quebec maison, or in a Montreal nightclub, a spirit and a consciousness distinctly Canadian. Just as the writers of the United States today are inclined to segregate, with Frost expressing New Hampshire and Sandburg exploiting Chicago, so I believe these younger Canadians when properly fledged will embrace this practice, and write each of the soul and scene of his own community. Only Whitman has comprehensively surveyed the whole American scene, and what is better, the whole American consciousness. Since Whitmans are purely accidents of birth, and may not be specifically begotten, these younger Canadians will continue their work of enlightenment and propagation, each striving at all times to be the national literary obermensch, and in due course will serve a fitting background for this inevitable man. The emancipation of Canadian letters will have been contrived; Canada, in effect, will assume position among those nations contributing to the universal betterment, but as it is, Gentlemen, very certainly there may be no future for Canadian literature until Canadian literature as such, is recovered from its present affliction of infantile paralysis.<sup>27</sup>

Kennedy's assessment is a fairly accurate one. The McGill group of poets would serve in the role of enlighteners and propagators of Modernism. He was also correct in his assertion that the Victorianisms of the time had to be eclipsed in order for Canadian writing to move forward, and in predicting a poetry of regional concern.

Until its termination The Canadian Mercury continued its critical attack upon the old currents that were still dominant in Canadian writing. The final issue, issue #7, includes a satirical poem entitled "God Bless the C.A.A." which, reportedly, came from an anonymous source in Toronto;

a review of Bliss Carman's latest book of verse, Wild Garden, written by F.R. Scott also appeared in this issue. Scott's opinion of the book was that it did not contain one good poem; he observed that "Carman's technique and form is undiluted 1880; he seems impervious to change. He has no conception of rhythm, but only metrical accuracy."<sup>28</sup> Scott also found fault in Carman's adding superfluous syllables in order to make a line metrically correct, his use of "poetical" words in order to make a rhyme, and the total lack of new ideas and metaphors. It is a relatively wholesale condemnation of an archaic poetic.

The McGill group of poets knew what was wrong with Canadian poetry in the 1920's and they knew where to find the remedy: in the English and America experimentation in modern verse that began sometime around 1909 and found its crystallization in Ezra Pound's Imagist movement. This had cleared the ground for the writings of T.S. Eliot and the later Yeats, both of whom profoundly influenced the McGill group. In putting forward reasonable grounds for rejecting the Canadian verse of the time, the McGill group, in the pages of The McGill Fortnightly Review and The Canadian Mercury, cleared the ground for the propagation of Canadian Modernism. Although these magazines were not, in the strictest sense, little magazines, they played an important part in Canadian literary history by bringing Modernism to Canada. A sound assessment of the early form this Modernism took in the poetry of Scott, Smith, and Kennedy is given by Peter Stevens in his book The McGill Movement:

Their poetry was in the nature of a critical rejection of overblown romanticism in Canadian verse taken over from late-Victorian and Edwardian sources. Poets throughout the 1920's with one or two exceptions were writing a kind of Canadian equivalent, I suppose, of the English Georgian Movement. The McGill poets drew much of their material and methods from imagism and its development, particularly in the work of Eliot. This

interest led them to the French symbolists, Metaphysicals and Yeats, and to all the trappings derived from Eliot's poetry and criticism.<sup>29</sup>

Their poetry was heavily influenced and occasionally imitative, but working with a new sense of form and an extended range of subject matter, they began to carve out a new poetry adapted to the age.

The age, however, was in a state of change. The atmosphere of the twenties was quickly shattered by the Depression. As Scott has noted, the crash of the stock market in 1929 brought a quick end to The Canadian Mercury, and the Modernist movement found itself in the renewed position of having to start from scratch in the thirties, trying to write a poetry that was relevant for the times. As Frances McCullagh has aptly noted:

The brand of modernism produced by the Montreal group was largely derived from Yeats and Eliot--an exciting antidote to the excesses and irrelevancies of romanticism in the twenties, but quickly rendered obsolete by cultural changes and new trends in British and American poetry in the thirties.<sup>30</sup>

Modernism put a tentative foot forward in the thirties in Canada. Little was published at this time by the McGill group and others of Modernist leanings; the decadent romanticism of the Canadian authors prevailed in the publications of the time. No little magazines firmly dedicated to the purpose of Modernism appeared in the 1930's (The Canadian Poetry Magazine, edited by E.J. Pratt, appeared under the auspices of the C.A.A. in 1936; Pratt sought to place what he considered "experimental" and "traditional" work side by side, but, in effect, Modernism was humoured like an ever insistent child), and the publication lists of the time read like a chronicle or continuation or everything the McGill group sought to combat in the 1920's:



Of the dozens of books of poetry published in the decade, the majority are patently not modern. Audrey Alexandra Brown, Mary E. Colman, Charles G.D. Roberts, Carol Coates, A.M. Stephen, Edna Jaques, Gordon LeClaire, Watson Kirkconnell, Robert Service, Arthur S. Bourinot, A.G. Bailey, Charles Bruce, Kenneth Leslie, Wilson MacDonald, Duncan Campbell Scott, Floris Clark McLaren, Leo Cox, Alan Creighton, and Ralph Gustafson (this list is not complete) all had at least one volume of poetry published, and several had more than one. In addition, annual yearbooks of non-modern poetry from various branches of the Canadian Authors' Association continued to be published through the Depression, and a number of very traditional anthologies appeared to supplement W. Garvin's 1926 Canadian Poets and A.M. Stephen's Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse of 1928.<sup>31</sup>

The publications of the Canadian moderns were sparse and, when they appeared, the Modernist qualities of their verse were "tentative and uncertain."<sup>32</sup> The publications of the McGill group were extremely slight. Only Leo Kennedy published one slim solo effort, The Shrouding, in 1933. Scott, Klein, and Smith would join Kennedy, as well as Robert Finch and E.J. Pratt, in the anthology New Provinces, published by Macmillan in 1936. The other volumes of verse by poets of Modernist inclination published in the 1930's were The Roosevelt And The Antinoe (1930), The Titanic (1935), and The Fable Of The Goats (1937) by E.J. Pratt, W.W.E. Ross's Laconics (1930) and Sonnets (1932), Dorothy Livesay's Signpost (1932), L.A. MacKay's Viper Bugloss (1938), and Anne Marriot's The Wind Our Enemy (1939).<sup>33</sup>

The tussling that Michael Gnarowski describes in his introduction to the current reprint of New Provinces illuminates the lack of solid ground and unified purpose that kept Modernism in its tentative state during the 1930's. Smith, in his letters to Scott concerning the anthology,

was insistently suggesting that Dorothy Livesay be included in the anthology, stating the need for the presence of left-wing political poetry. Smith clearly realized that the vital necessities of the time and an awareness of the social situation needed to be reflected in poetry. Scott managed to pass over Livesay by saying that she would be included in the second edition, an edition that was never to see the light of day. Smith was also aware of the vital necessity of sweeping aside and putting in storage the bulk of Canadian poetry, which he saw as being "romantic in conception and conventional in form,"<sup>34</sup> a position he elaborated on in his proposed preface to the anthology. Conventions that were 30 years dead still haunted Canadian poetry, and Smith insisted that they should be laid to rest. Instead, Smith's preface was laid to rest by E.J. Pratt, Robert Finch and Mr. Hugh Bayrs of the Macmillan Company of Canada, because they objected to the "nose-tweaking" Smith was giving to the Roberts-Scott crowd. Smith's controversial preface was replaced by a nondescript brief preface by F.R. Scott and Leo Kennedy; thus begging the issue, the poems were left to speak for themselves. On their own, they did not speak in a voice loud enough, or clear enough, to elicit interest. In the first year it was out, the anthology sold only 82 copies, ten of these purchased by F.R. Scott himself. The anthology failed to make an impact. It is only from a historical point of view that its value is now recognized.

Smith was not the only one among this group who felt that a vital change in the currents of poetry was necessary in the 1930's. In fact, there were other versions of Modernism. Leo Kennedy, in an article published in New Frontier in June of 1936, renounced the metaphysical and mythological basis of the early Modernist work in favor of a realism that was more relevant to the times. Kennedy, in presenting a case that differed from Smith's, also took a few well-aimed shots at the poets who dealt in romantic conceptions:

It is my thesis that the function of poetry is to interpret the contemporary scene faithfully; to interpret especially the progressive forces in modern life which alone stand for cultural survival. And it is my private recommendation that, setting theory aside, middle class poets had better hustle down from the twenty fifth floor of their steam-heated janitor-serviced Ivory Tower, and stand on the pavement and find out and take part in what is happening today, before the whole chaste edifice is blasted about their ears and laid waste!<sup>35</sup>

Kennedy saw the need for the poet to leave the dream world of beauty, nature, and love, which all too many Canadian poets of the day were still inhabiting, and to write a poetry that dealt with the real world and real people:

We need poetry that reflects the lives of our people, working, loving, fighting, groping for clarity. We need satire--fierce, scorching, aimed at the abuses which are destroying our culture and which threaten life itself. Our poets have lacked direction for their talents and energies in the past--I suggest that today it lies right before them.<sup>36</sup>

Non-Modernist poetry totally failed to consider this realm of the real that Kennedy saw as poetry's essential subject. Unfortunately, despite Kennedy's theoretical statement, Modernist poetry of the time lacked this kind of realistic substance. The early work of Smith and Kennedy was highly involved with neo-metaphysical and mythic realms. It had brought a level of thought and idea back into poetry, but it lacked a level of substantive reality. The world was filled with pressing social and economic realities. The poet would have to do battle with "the abuses which are destroying our culture"; his weapon, Kennedy claimed, would be satire. Of the McGill group, F.R. Scott developed in this direction as the leading satirist; much of his satirical poetry of the 1930's still retains a relevancy that the poetry of Smith and Kennedy lacks.

Kennedy was correct in assessing that the direction for modern poets now lay "right before them," in the mundane realities of life, in worldly situations. It would take the outbreak of the second world war to galvanize a whole generation with social concern. The thirties pointed in the direction of social realism, but to a great extent, this period could not deliver the new stage of Modernism, being rooted too deeply in the aestheticism of Yeats and Eliot. Given the absence of a relevant little magazine during this time, it is understandable that the political and humanitarian poetry being written by Auden and Spender found no opportunity to germinate in Canada until the forties.

## CHAPTER TWO FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, "The Precursors: 1910-1925," The Making Of Modern Poetry in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Dudek and Gnarowski, "The Little Magazines," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, p. 203.

<sup>5</sup>F.R. Scott in interview; Tess & John Lavery, "An Afternoon with F.R. Scott," Cyan Line, (Fall 1976), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>"Editorial," The McGill Fortnightly Review, 1, no. 1, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Michael Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, p. 216.

<sup>8</sup>F.R. Scott in interview; Cyan Line, (Fall 1976), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>The McGill Fortnightly Review, 1, no. 2, pp. 9-10.

<sup>10</sup>F.R. Scott's sense of time is a bit distorted here. By 1925 Eliot had been known in England and America for close to ten years, had already written and published "The Waste Land" and, in that year, published "The Hollow Men." Similarly, D.H. Lawrence's work had been appearing regularly since 1911.

<sup>11</sup>F.R. Scott in interview; Cyan Line, (Fall 1976), pp. 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>A.J.M. Smith quoting W.B. Yeats in "Symbolism in Poetry," The McGill Fortnightly Review, 1, no. 2, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>F.R. Scott in interview; Cyan Line, (Fall 1976), p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>A.J.M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry," The McGill Fortnightly Review, 2, no. 4, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>22</sup>The Canadian Mercury, no. 1, p. 3.
- <sup>23</sup>Leo Kennedy, "The Shrouding Revisited," The Shrouding (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1975), p. xix.
- <sup>24</sup>Leo Kennedy, "The Future of Canadian Literature," The Canadian Mercury, nos. 5-6, p. 99.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 99.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 100.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 100.
- <sup>28</sup>F. R. Scott, "Wild Garden," The Canadian Mercury, no. 7, p. 140.
- <sup>29</sup>Peter Stevens, The McGill Movement (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), p. i-ii.
- <sup>30</sup>Joan McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976), p. xxii.
- <sup>31</sup>McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse, pp. xxi-xxii.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. xxii.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. xxii.
- <sup>34</sup>A. J. M. Smith, "A Reject Preface," New Provinces (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. xxvii.
- <sup>35</sup>Leo Kennedy, "Direction for Canadian Poets," The McGill Movement, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE SOCIAL REALIST MOVEMENT IN CANADIAN POETRY

As Joan McCullagh has noted, by the time the forties began it was obvious that, for Canadian poetry, "new roots were needed, new shoots that could produce a rough, socially relevant, indigenous poetry."<sup>1</sup> This poetry would need a forum. During the forties several little magazines emerged that took up the cause of social realism, but it was Alan Crawley's Contemporary Verse which served as the first sign of this new poetic growth beginning in the fall of 1941. This magazine served as a meeting ground for all the concurrent "schools" of the time, and spanned the decade with its long record of regular publication. Thus far Montreal had provided the main arena for the development of Modernism in Canada; in the forties the new poetry became a truly national endeavour, and it was Contemporary Verse that encompassed the full panoply of activity within its pages.

The idea of Contemporary Verse began in the spring of 1941 when Dorothy Livesay was visiting at Floris McLaren's house in Victoria, British Columbia. Along with Doris Ferne and Anne Marriott they discussed the possibility of starting a magazine that would encourage the new poetic techniques, engage itself with a poetry of social relevance, and give young writers a place to publish and be heard. Floris McLaren, in a radio talk given on the CBC, described the events that led to the starting of Contemporary Verse:

. . . Dorothy Livesay said we could start a poetry magazine ourselves. I said, "That's a nice pipe dream." Dorothy said why? Then we began to talk. We knew nothing about the publication of a poetry magazine, we knew nothing about the financial problems involved, but we talked of it. Someone said who would edit, who would be an editor for such a magazine, and the three of us answered together, "Alan Cawley!" Dorothy agreed to talk to him when she went back to Vancouver and tell him of this suggestion, and see

if he would consider being the editor  
if it could be done.<sup>2</sup>

Crawley, a former lawyer who had been struck by blindness in the early 1930's, was a man passionately interested in modern poetry. After giving the proposition some consideration, Crawley agreed to edit the magazine.

The decision once made, the magazine took shape. Crawley proposed a working arrangement which was accepted by the committee. The board of founders--Alan Crawley, Floris McLaren, Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott, and Doris Ferne--would decide matters of policy and management; the editor would read all manuscripts submitted and "have the sole right of rejection or acceptance," and he would determine the content, the arrangement of material, and the "policy of type of material of each issue. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

The next steps were to calculate financing and to find material for the first issue. The working committee discussed printing costs with printers and decided upon using a lithographing process, whereupon they solicited subscriptions and manuscripts. Regarding editorial policy: "Crawley believed that the work of a poetry magazine was to publish poetry, and he had no particular literary approach to eschew and no axes to grind. He wanted to encourage and publish poetry that was alive and fresh and relevant; poetry that was sensitive and honest and of the best possible quality."<sup>4</sup> In response to this, Louis Dudek is correct in assessing Contemporary Verse as a magazine that "was not a fighting magazine with a policy; it was concerned only with publishing 'good poetry'--which, in itself, can embody an affirmation--but it did not in addition work out any program of ideas which this poetry could fire."<sup>5</sup> The affirmation that Contemporary Verse embodied was that it published, of those who were writing in Canada at the time, "every modern poet with the exception of W.W.E. Ross and Patrick Anderson."<sup>6</sup>



Contemporary Verse is an important publication, not because of its fervor or because of the fieriness of its editorials, but because of the breadth of social realist poetry it printed in the 1940's. Its first issue was totally exemplary of the path it was to take: it included poems by Earle Birney, P.K. Page, Floris Clark McLaren, Leo Kennedy, Dorothy Livesay, A.J.M. Smith, Doris Ferne, and Anne Marriott. These poets were geographically spread out across the country and represented different schools or non-schools of poetry. The poems were prefaced by a simple foreword by Crawley:

During a recent winter of forced inactivity my readings was limited to the books on my own shelves, poetry by the great writers of the past from Shakespeare to Whitman, all within easy reach of my hand. In the following year I spent more than two hundred hours reading poetry published in the preceding twenty years in Great Britain, Canada and the United States. It took about half as many hours in libraries and book shops and in searching through current magazines to find and get together these poems. Conviction was added to my belief that beauty and truth is not all told; that there are many writers of our own times who can speak to us in words and images and forms that interest and appeal; and that, for most of us, their writings are too hard to come by. A small group of readers and writers, sharing these feelings, send out this first issue of CONTEMPORARY VERSE, A CANADIAN QUARTERLY, in high hope that it and succeeding numbers may play a worthy part in the building of Canadian literature.

What came closest to a statement of intention and general editorial policy was expressed in Crawley's editor's note in issue #4:

A glance at the notes on contributors at the back of this number shows that CONTEMPORARY VERSE is not the chapbook of a limited or local group of writers. The contents of each number will at once

dispel any charge that it exists to press political propaganda, particular social readjustment or literary trend. The aims of CONTEMPORARY VERSE are simple and direct and seem worthy and worthwhile. These aims are to entice and stimulate the writing and reading of poetry and to provide means for its publication free from restraint of politics, prejudices and placations, and to keep open its pages to poetry that is sincere in thought and expression and contemporary in theme and treatment and technique.

Contemporary Verse was a little magazine totally devoted to modern poetry. Unlike The McGill Fortnightly Review and The Canadian Mercury it made no attempt to be a journal of liberal opinion; unlike Preview and First Statement it printed no fiction. It was a magazine filled with poetry and the occasional review of anthologies, chapbooks, and volumes by individual authors. Much of the criticism was written by Grawley and is laudatory and easy-going. He carefully pointed out each poet's achievements and flaws. At times, because of this, the reviews appear to be trivial and non-discriminating. Any reviews with bite were written by Dorothy Livesay.

Contemporary Verse published 39 issues from September 1941 until winter 1952, bridging the entire forties period, reflecting the initial poetic explorations of that generation of writers and, in later years, indicating the directions in which Canadian poetry would be moving. The young poets of the forties, many who had affiliations with Preview, First Statement, and later Northern Review in Montreal, did not face the same conditions as their predecessors. They no longer had to contend with the modern vs. nineteenth century conflict; the times clearly indicated what their writing should be concerned with. As Smith observed:

The poetry of the forties grows out of a sense of being involved in the whole complex life of our time--its politics, its society, its economics--and of being

involved in it in a deeply personal way that touches the sensibilities, the mind, and the physical being of the poet. This is perhaps the common attitude which unites all the very individual poets into a single recognizable school.<sup>9</sup>

This "sense of being" was expressed in the poetry of the early forties in various verse forms and in differing senses and uses of rhythm and metaphor, but the poetry, by and large, seemed to share, in McCullagh's words, three common qualities: "a lyric approach, an overriding social concern, and the focus of the war."<sup>10</sup>

As noted by Joan McCullagh in her study Alan Crawley & Contemporary Verse, the poetry of the forties developed in two stages. The first stage was the period 1940-1946, during which time the war held precedence in the minds of all Canadians. Regarding poetry, this period saw the birth of Contemporary Verse and the literary feuds of Preview and First Statement. The young poets were writing with a strong awareness of politics and psychology; they were highly cognizant of the movement that took place in English poetry of the 1930's, exemplified by W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Dylan Thomas. This first stage of the forties in Canada was anthologized by John Sutherland in Other Canadians, a book which firmly established the presence of Modernism in Canada. Other Canadians, in the eyes of Sutherland, also serve as the bridge point towards the second more amorphous phase, which Sutherland interpreted as the failure of the movement.

How suddenly it all changed! The First Statement Press had no sooner published Other Canadians, "An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada, 1940-1946," which I furnished with a bristling defiant introduction, than the whole purpose and driving spirit of the "new movement" were in a state of decay. We had barely rushed to the side of this challenger of tradition,

holding up his right--or rather his left--hand in the stance of victory, when the challenger laid his head upon the block and willingly submitted to having it removed. What were the causes? Not Other Canadians, or my introduction to it; it went deeper than that. With the end of the war, there came a realization that, in the world at large, Russia and the United States were not in a state of undeclared brotherly love, and that, at home, the Canadian socialist movement had very shallow roots. It would be foolish to base a literary judgment of this movement on the value of its political ideas: but there is no doubt that one of the reasons it lost part of its momentum was because it lost its political faith. There were, of course, other factors involved in its marked if temporary decline: for example, the slowing down of the tempo everywhere by the return from war to a partial peace; the tapering off of the Canadian movement of expansion; and, last but not least, the poor durability of the poetic talents.<sup>11</sup>

Sutherland, who was intimately involved with the forties movement, saw the realignment of poetry writing in the late forties as a sign that the movement had lost all direction. Joan McCullagh's assessment of this same time period is much different and is, perhaps, more objective and realistic:

The late forties' poetry in Contemporary Verse (as well as that from the first year or two of the fifties) is cooler and more personal than that of the earlier years. The anger, indignation, and political panaceas of the earlier poetry are gone and so (largely) is the gaucheness. The emphasis on specifics and the here-and-now of the "aggressively realistic poetry of early modernism" has given way to more universal concerns--the search for enduring patterns of myth, religion, the cycles of nature which would give coherence and meaning to life.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly the "common attitude" that Smith had talked of in

The Book of Canadian Verse had yielded to a renewed variety of attitude and opinion. This was reflected in the pages of Contemporary Verse. The poets who appeared no longer approached poetry from the same vantage point; the poetry reflects a wider variety of subject. Poets such as Dorothy Livesay, Earle Birney, P.K. Page, Miriam Waddington, and Louis Dudek, who had seen continual publication in Contemporary Verse during its first five years, continued to appear within its pages; they were joined, however, by several post-war poets who were to have an impact upon Canadian poetry, particularly in the fifties. James Reaney made his first appearance in Contemporary Verse in issue #18 which appeared in July of 1946. Reaney was to become one of the magazine's more prominent contributors during its later years. Issue #23 was devoted to the poetry of Dudek, Reaney, and Souster, three men who, along with Layton, were to dominate the poetry of the 1950's to a great degree. Issue #27 presented the first appearance of Jay Macpherson's work, a young poet with whom Crawley had corresponded for some time before printing. Macpherson and Reaney, in the 1950's, were to be two of the leading representatives of the "mythopoeic" school of poetry that gravitated towards the literary theories of Northrop Frye. This would provide a totally new direction for Canadian poetry in the years to follow.

By the time the 1950's began, most of the energy of the forties movement had been dispersed; each poet was testing his own voice and walking his own avenue. The vital insistence on a militant poetry was no longer necessary; Modernism, in the form of social realism and its offshoots, had become the predominant mode of poetry in Canada, one that was recognized by poets, readers, and critics alike. In the fall of 1951, Alan Crawley compiled the 36th issue of Contemporary Verse, an anniversary issue that marked ten years of publication. All the poets who had contributed to

the first issue were called upon to submit material for this issue and were joined by a few other poets, such as F.R. Scott and E.J. Pratt. This "reunion" was prefaced by a foreword by Alan Crawley in which he spoke of the original aspirations of Contemporary Verse and its hopes for the future. Also contained within this foreword, however, were the seeds of doubt that were eventually to lead to the demise of the magazine. It was as if Crawley were aware that the forties had come to their end and were soon to be supplanted by yet another stage of renewed vitality. Crawley indicated that during recent times he had "been wavering and distrustful" of his decisions.<sup>13</sup> The last paragraph of the foreword attempted to strike a note of affirmation and a continuance of purpose:

There is a job for CV in presenting the best of Canadian poetry written in the 1950's as it has presented that of the last ten years. If such poetry is written, then so long as it is possible, Floris McLaren and I will get out CV in very irregular order and with as great interest and pride in what we are doing as we have done for 36 times. The place occupied by Contemporary Verse has not yet above it a sign TO LET.<sup>14</sup>

In just another year Contemporary Verse would close its files. Crawley's doubt as expressed in his foreword to the anniversary issue continued to plague him; this, complicated by the scarcity of submissions of good materials, led Crawley to the belief that Contemporary Verse had declined from "its peak of usefulness."<sup>15</sup> The folding of Contemporary Verse signalled a true end to the forties' movement. Only Northern Review, edited by John Sutherland, who had, for the most part, totally renounced the forties movement, continued for another few years.

It would not be misrepresenting the truth to state that Crawley sensed that the times had moved past him, and that the sensibility he possessed was no longer relevant

to the poetry that was to come:

Alan Crawley was a forties' man. He grew up on modern poetry from England and the United States, and he was on hand, an enthusiastic welcomer and supporter, when modernism settled in Canada in the forties and took over Canadian poetry. Crawley was one of the main sponsors of this new poetry through his magazine Contemporary Verse, and no one worked harder than he to help get it naturalized in Canada. But just as he was sensitive to the beginning of this trend in 1941, he recognized its ending in the early years of the fifties and chose to close down his magazine with the termination of this distinctive period in Canadian poetry.<sup>16</sup>

Just as Contemporary Verse folded, however, Raymond Souster's Contact began publication; CIV/n was to follow a short time later. A new period had already begun. But, in respect to the forties, Contemporary Verse had provided the movement at large with a place to grow. Although Preview and First Statement provided much of the fireworks, Contemporary Verse provided a stable environment for the movement that spanned the decade. "In this manner Contemporary Verse fulfilled one of the most important tasks of a little magazine, which is that of attacking conventional modes of expression by bringing into print the results of new theories and practices in Canadian literature."<sup>17</sup>

The Modernist writings of the 1940's were composed of various elements and influences. In Montreal, two groups with different orientations towards poetry came into being in the early forties and centered their activities around two magazines: Preview and First Statement. For three years these magazines would unpeacefully co-exist before finally merging into Northern Review, which, ultimately, became the editorial vehicle for one man: John Sutherland. Both Preview and First Statement were distinctive little magazines, militant, at least for a time, in their political

and aesthetic programs. Behind each of these publications stood an important figure who spearheaded the magazine; in the case of Preview it was Patrick Anderson, and in the case of First Statement John Sutherland.

Preview, which made its initial appearance in March 1942, was put out by a group that had collected around Patrick Anderson, an Englishman who had come to Montreal from Oxford and brought with him certain specific ideas about poetry and politics. Anderson was very much influenced by the Marxist politics of the left; his poetic fathers were a group of British writers who had come to prominence in the 1930's: W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice. The magazine was mimeographed throughout the three years of its existence, and a list of permanent contributors was always present on the front cover. This was the Preview group.

The first issue of the magazine listed F.R. Scott, Margaret Day, Bruce Ruddick, Patrick Anderson, and Neufville Shaw as its permanent contributors. The first page carried a statement of intention which cited the group's reason for putting forward the publication and expressed the philosophy by which it was to be run:

This is no magazine. It presents five Montreal writers who recently formed themselves into a group for the purpose of mutual discussion and criticism and who hope, through these selections, to try out their work before a somewhat larger public.

As the group takes shape, it becomes clear that general agreement exists on several points. Among them are the following. First, we have lived long enough in Montreal to realise the frustrating and inhibiting effects of isolation. All anti-fascists, we feel that the existence of a war between democratic culture and the paralysing forces of dictatorship only intensifies the writer's obligation to work. Now, more than ever, creative and experimental writing must be kept



alive and there must be no retreat from the intellectual frontier - certainly no shoddy betrayal, on the lines of Archibald MacLeish, Van Wyck Brooks, and others, of those international forces which combine in a Picasso, a Malraux or a Joyce. Secondly, the poets amongst us look forward, perhaps optimistically, to a possible fusion between the lyric and didactic elements in modern verse, a combination of vivid, arresting imagery and the capacity to "sing" with social content and criticism.

Thirdly, we hope to make contact, as a group, with new writing movements in England, the United States and other parts of Canada. We will welcome such contributions as space and the aims expressed above permit. We have envisaged from the start a gradual widening of our group to about twice its present size.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout its publication a vast majority of the writing in Preview, particularly the poetry, would attempt to combine "arresting imagery" with "social content." Often, in the attempted "fusion between the lyric and didactic elements," the didactic and doctrinal elements present in the poetry took precedence. A poem such as Scott's "Recovery," which appears in the first issue, employs an excessive amount of violent imagery of war; this imagery literally overwhelms the poem.

The poetry that appeared in Preview was clearly in the "cosmopolitan" tradition, as Smith would call it in his Book of Canadian Poetry. Much of the verse in Preview is formal in language, utilizing a rather elevated British diction (F.R. Scott seems to be the one most exempt from this), and is often highly metaphoric and metaphysical. It was these qualities that the First Statement poets found to be extremely artificial and which they disputed.

Despite the opening statement "This is no magazine," Preview was very much a little magazine in format and intent.

It presented the work of a small group of writers who held some common beliefs about politics and art. It presented a continual barrage of writing that generally adhered to their stated aesthetic and political principles. In spite of its hard line, however, the magazine did open up its pages to other Canadian writers besides those who were members of the immediate group. Poems by A.M. Klein (before he became a contributing editor), Raymond Souster, Kay Smith, Miriam Waddington, Ralph Gustafson, Anne Marriott, Denis Gibling and James Wreford appeared in the pages of Preview. The magazine was not totally restricted to members of an in-group; in fact, certain First Statement contributors were welcomed to the pages of Preview. There were, also, certain changes in those contributors who were listed as permanent members on the front cover: P.K. Page was added with issue #2, Margaret Day dropped with issue #4, Neufville Shaw dropped with issue #16, Klein added with issue #9. The editor's note in issue #20 notes that James Wreford has become a contributing editor, although he was never listed on the cover. F.R. Scott, P.K. Page, Bruck Ruddick, and Patrick Anderson made up the true nucleus of the magazine. Anderson's poetry and prose appeared in great abundance and he composed many of the magazine's editorial statements. Ruddick contributed many articles and pieces of fiction, while Scott and Page were represented by a substantial number of poems as well as several reviews. By and large, it is apparent that Patrick Anderson was very much the center of the magazine, providing original poems, editorials, and a general direction that marked the magazine. In fact, British poetic influence is in evidence in much of the work printed.

The greater part of the Preview poetry reflected a social consciousness; the poems were sometimes satiric, like F.R. Scott's "Ode To A Politician" (Preview #2); at other times they offered social observations as in P.K. Page's "The Stenographers" (Preview #5). The work reflects an awareness of the war and a concern for its societal implications.

Issue #11 was entirely devoted to the effects of the war upon Canadian society. That issue, printed in February 1943, worked as a unit under the title "Some Aspects of the War: A Civilian Report." Permanent Preview contributors undertook the task of assessing the effect of the war upon the civilian population. P.K. Page reported the reactions of stenographers to the war and war-time conditions; F.R. Scott assessed the effect of the war upon the universities, Neufville Shaw upon the workers and workings of an electrical plant; Patrick Anderson studied the effect the war was having on painters, an unnamed political worker explored the state of national unity, and Anderson reported on the effect the war was having on the Preview members themselves. In this section Anderson defined what he saw as the literary task of the Canadian writer during this time of war:

Our task is clear: not only to help in the winning of the war by our literary work and our vivid enthusiastic embodiment of the issues for which it is being fought, but also to supply something of the personal, the graceful and the heroic to this half-empty Dominion.<sup>19</sup>

The outstanding characteristic of the work printed in Preview is its dedication to the economic and political issues which the Depression and, subsequently, the war had raised.

This political consciousness existed as an intrinsic part of the Preview group's poetics and aesthetics, and is continually reflected in the articles on poetry that appeared in Preview. In issue #7 (the first issue to have a printed cover) Patrick Anderson judges what he finds to be Stephen Spender's personal pessimism in Spender's collection Ruins & Visions against the background of war and social conflict. In the following issue (#8), P.K. Page provides an assessment of "Canadian Poetry 1942." In discussing the current scene, she points out the mid-Victorian parlor atmosphere of Canadian Poetry Magazine, cites the eclecticism of Contemporary Verse, criticizes First Statement for having

"a rather wild-eyed uncertain policy of inclusion,"<sup>20</sup> and also knocks Ralph Gustafson's Anthology of Canadian Poetry for excluding the social writings of the younger poets and including the Charles G.D. Roberts chestnut "Canada Speaks To Britain." Here ultimate assessment of the situation is based upon politically motivated notions:

Today with three new magazines -- CON-TEMPORARY VERSE, FIRST STATEMENT and PREVIEW -- the poet is no longer silent. He has yet to come to grips with himself and stop crying 'Help' from the prairies and woods and mountains. If instead he will hitch-hike to the towns and identify himself with people, forget for a while the country of his own head, he may find his age and consequently his belief.<sup>21</sup>

One can note several implications in Page's suggestion as to what route the young poet should follow. The thrust should be out away from the countryside and into the political involvement of the cities; along with this comes an identification with the people, the working class. There is also the suggestion that introspective work be left behind; writing should be involved with the more tangible realities. Page is making the case for a politically militant social realism.

As we have noted previously, the overwhelming presence of the Canadian Authors' Association had in no way been dispelled during the 1930's. The productions of C.A.A. members had far outweighed those of the Canadian Modernists during the Depression era. Although by the mid-forties Modernism was firmly established, in the early forties it was, by no means naturalized. In the ninth issue of Preview (November, 1942) F.R. Scott reviewed the anthology Voices of Victory in an article "A Note on Canadian War Poetry." This anthology was put together by the Toronto branch of the Canadian Authors' Association. Scott's overall assessment of the anthology was that judging "by this volume, nothing has altered in the realm of poetry or politics since 1914. Needless to say there is no new style or diction, no venture in

original modes of expression."<sup>22</sup> Scott found the poetry to be marked by an incredible colonialism, the poets included continually pledging their ultimate allegiance to Britain rather than to their own country. The most significant idea in this essay appears in the opening paragraph, where Scott describes his response to the changes taking place in poetry:

A live movement in poetry will reflect and often foreshadow the creative movements in its social environment. Poets sensitive to the growing forces of their age will give symbolic expression to those forces and will become a potent instrument of social change. The more revolutionary their epoch the more markedly will their writing differ from that of their predecessors, for they will be obliged to experiment with new form and imagery in order to convey their new ideas.<sup>23</sup>

The Preview poets were highly conscious of trying to be "instruments of social change"; to perhaps a lesser degree this was also the position of the majority of Modernist poets in the 1940's. Dorothy Livesay and Raymond Souster are two poets who stand out as poets engaged with the sociological and political implications of the war in their work of that time.

The year 1943 saw the first edition of A.J.M. Smith's The Book of Canadian Poetry. This anthology is extremely important in two respects: 1) in its attempt to discern a Canadian poetic tradition and to trace it from pre-Confederation to the 1940's (Smith, in fact, discerned two traditions or strains in Canadian poetry, what he called the "native" and the "cosmopolitan"); 2) in the amount of discourse and reaction the anthology generated. The strong repudiation of Smith's position was to appear later in John Sutherland's introduction to Other Canadians (1947). At the time of the publication of Smith's anthology, however, it generated a significant reaction in the pages of Preview,

and also in First Statement, where Sutherland began to refine the points of his final refutation.

In Preview itself, The Book of Canadian Poetry was reviewed by Neufville Shaw in an essay entitled "The Maple Leaf Is Dying" (Preview #17, December 1943). In appraising the validity of the anthology Shaw considers the quality of verse of the different eras of Canadian poetry. He finds the pre-Confederation work highly derivative of English models. His criticism of the Confederation poets is marked by a political undercurrent:

The newer "Golden Age" poetry was written in an age which was determined to find the gold and little else. While expanding Canadian industry was merrily chasing the dollar across a thousand miles of prairies, the poet drearily painted golden sunsets or found Pan and Eurydice under every Maple Leaf.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly Shaw saw the Confederation poetry as having no relation to the economic and political realities of its day.

In evaluating the moderns Shaw is highly critical of the work of Pratt, Finch, and Smith. He does not agree with Smith in viewing Pratt as the greatest of the contemporary poets and he is not impressed by the grandeur of Pratt's epic narratives. He considers Finch and Smith to have written "glittering inconsequential";<sup>25</sup> he does, however, find a validity and real contact with life in Klein's very often highly ornamental writing.

It is in the writings of the members of the Preview group that Shaw finds the affirmation of a new Canadian poetic tradition:

It is the verse of Scott, Anderson, Page, and Wreford which makes us quite contentedly proclaim the death of the Maple Leaf for here we find a complete disregard for a dictated chauvinism and a didacticism which, while not constituting political directive, is a ruthless analysis of social falsehood. It is on this tide of affirmation that the future of Canadian verse rests for it is by a union with the great wave of social

protest which is, at present, sweeping the country that a universalized statement can be made which carries within its scope all the proud and sweeping ramifications of mankind itself.<sup>26</sup>

Shaw is quite correct in viewing the poetry of social protest and social realism as the death of the Maple Leaf school. This socialized movement of the forties succeeded in totally establishing itself as the mainstream of Canadian Modernism. This social movement, however, was not limited to Scott, Anderson, Page, and Wreford, but, in fact, incorporated almost all of the Modernist poets of the time. It is the combined social consciousness of the poets of Preview, First Statement, Contemporary Verse, and Direction that succeeded in supplanting the last dying remnants of the Roberts-Carman tradition.

The 21st issue of Preview is a most interesting one. It is "An Explanatory Issue," one in which the poets supply a brief comment on their poems. Yet what is even more interesting than these brief notes is the explanatory statement that Patrick Anderson provides for the issue as a whole, a short essay in which he poses a list of aids or questions whereby modern poetry should be judged. This list incorporates much of Anderson's thought about the ideal form and content of Modernist poetry, and it is highly revealing of the underlying principles or guidelines behind the Preview poetry. The questions Anderson poses are:

1. Is the language vital and original?  
Are the epithets and images exact and fresh without being forced or overexotic for the general coherence of the subject?  
Is the poem emotionally evocative? If the poem passes this test you can say that you have at least the makings of a good poem.

2. Does the poem hang together? Does it seem to spring from a genuine experience? Is its development coherent, so that it seems to be all of one piece? Does it throw light upon the matter it treats? If the answer to all these

questions is yes, then you can safely say you are faced with a good poem.

3. Does the poem show a general awareness of life and its problems? Does it help you to understand what it describes within a general system of relationships? Here we are on more dubious ground, of course.

4. How does the poem tie in with other poems by the same author? What architectural expression do you get from his work as a whole - from the range of his subjects and the degree of general understanding he shows? This, like the preceding point, is less easy to establish exactly but one can be pretty sure that points three and four, or others like them, make the basic difference between the minor and/or occasionally good poet and great master. Between, shall we say, the poet of restricted range and the poet of wide human understanding.<sup>27</sup>

Anderson has several criteria for the making of a good poem which reflect on the Preview group's writing. There is a striving for originality in language and image that often does lead them into the forced and overexotic. Much of the Preview poetry has an elevation of tone derived from British poets which does not always fit comfortably into the Canadian idiom. Anderson, in particular, strives toward emotional evocation along the lines of Dylan Thomas; his poetry is often as richly ornamental as Thomas'. When the Preview poetry succeeds in its use of language it is because the English influence upon diction and tone has been placed in the background and a more indigenous Canadian speaking voice has been allowed to take over. Poems in which the imagery is grounded in reality rather than elaborate metaphor are usually more successful. Anderson insists upon the poem springing from a genuine experience; this is the basic stance of the realist movement, that the poem deal with the actualities of life. What also emerges from the 1930's influence in this push towards realism is a clarity of



meaning and intention. The obscurities of Eliot and Yeats which involved the inner realms of psychology and myth have been supplanted by the reality of political and social systems. The realist poem frames some aspect of the real and illumines it. Anderson's reference in point four to architecture does point up the sense of artifice that is so much more apparent in the poetry of the Preview poets than in the younger First Statement group. Again, this is a sign of the Preview group's link with the English tradition.

The last paragraph of Anderson's explanatory note defines what he sees as the state of poetry in Canada and the ultimate function of the poet and poetry:

. . . I believe that there are good poets in Canada and I believe that the poet has a real function to play in our society, particularly when social and economic progress is getting ahead of cultural and 'spiritual' development. I think that this is obvious when we reflect that the forces which are progressive politically are sometimes little more than reactionary culturally. Whether we define the role of the poet as being to stress the importance of the economic and psychological individual or to build up a rich associational background for our increasingly collective age or simply as a means for interesting the middle-class in social change, or all these things and more, I feel that he has an important part to play. He can be a humanist leader of the modern movement.<sup>28</sup>

Preview published 23 issues from March 1942 until 1945 (the last issue carries no date) before merging with First Statement to create Northern Review. The quality of poetry published in it was quite high, in that it was well-crafted and politically committed. It was a much more formal poetry than that produced by the First Statement group. John Sutherland would admit in his introduction to Other Canadians that, "judged by the pure aesthetic standard, the English colonial poets are producing the best work,"<sup>29</sup> but he saw in the group that had collected around First State-

ment "something of more significance for the future."<sup>30</sup>

If Patrick Anderson was the prevailing spirit of Preview, John Sutherland was even more so the ruling and controlling force behind First Statement. Wynne Francis gives the following account of Sutherland and the origin of First Statement:

The central figure, if not the leader, of the "First Statement Group" was John Sutherland. John came to Montreal from Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1941 to attend McGill University after a three year bout with tuberculosis. During his illness he had spent much time reading, writing poems, and corresponding with writers and editors of literary magazines both in Canada and abroad. By the time he arrived in Montreal, he was well acquainted with the Canadian literary scene and with modern American and British poetry. Shortly after arriving, he determined to launch a little magazine of his own and to this end he engaged the help of several undergraduates including R.G. Simpson and Mary Margaret Miller, and Audrey Aikman who later became his wife. Together, in 1942, these few friends turned out the first six or seven issues of an eight-paged mimeographed sheet which they named First Statement.<sup>31</sup>

One story has it that Sutherland was prompted to start First Statement when some of his poems were rejected by Preview. Whether this is true or not is unimportant; the relevant point is that Sutherland drew much of his early energy from a one-sided argument with Preview. Sutherland was intent upon airing his criticisms of what was, at the time, a rather superior magazine. What type of magazine Sutherland wanted First Statement to be seems to be, at first, unclear. Sutherland wanted a magazine before he had a program of a school of poets to present. In answering a question about the differences between Preview and First

Statement, in terms of their attitudes towards literature and their aesthetic views, Louis Dudek has stated at some length that it wasn't an easy question to answer, partly because Sutherland himself stood in an ambiguous position to the main issue:

It's a highly complicated question because John Sutherland, for example, who was the editor of First Statement, had a kind of affinity with the Preview-ites. He admired their work, he published P.K. Page at the very beginning in his own magazine; he published Patrick Anderson; he wrote criticism, rather important articles, about Page and Anderson, but he did not do as much on Raymond Souster, or Layton, or myself, or Miriam Waddington of the First Statement group. He also brought out a book of Anderson's, so that I feel Sutherland really admired the Preview group greatly--more, probably, than he did in fact the people in his own group. The editor of First Statement was essentially a Preview-ite. That complicates the question of opposition between the two parties. There was some opposition, however, because at the head of Preview stood Patrick Anderson, and he was a visiting Britisher in Canada, and around him were people who felt a strong attraction toward this kind of cultural representative. And that's the crucial thing about it, that one magazine, Preview, was associated with what I think of, historically, as the colonial attachment of Canadian literature; their poetry had affinities with the English poetry of the preceding decade--especially Auden and Thomas--whereas the First Statement people were more related to contemporary American poetry, Twentieth-Century American poetry stemming out of Walt Whitman--Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, and eventually Ezra Pound. And therefore what you had in these two magazines was a significant confrontation between the colonial pull toward British literature and the new native strain that would come right out of Canada.<sup>32</sup>

In many respects, though, First Statement was really three magazines or, more correctly, went through three periods. The pull towards an orientation of 20th century American poetry didn't occur until the magazine hit its

second phase, when Layton and Dudek became involved with it, and the magazine became the outlet for a specific group.

At the beginning, Sutherland put forward First Statement as something of a gesture, as indicated by the magazine's opening editorial:

Someone will say that we will be talking in a vacuum, to ourselves alone, and be making gestures that have reference to nothing. It does not seem to us an unreasonable criticism. In the present stage of Canadian literature, a gesture would appear to be important. A display of activity may symbolize a future, and plant a suggestion in someone's mind. The religious ceremonies which thrived many centuries ago must have arisen from a belief in the newness of living and the youth of the race. What had happened seemed rare, and it was not certain that it would happen again. Bread was broken to express the hope that bread would be granted again. We intend to go through the ceremonies, in our Canadian literary youth.<sup>33</sup>

First Statement, from the very beginning, was "A Magazine For Young Canadian Writers" as the printed cover indicated. What Sutherland initiated was a forum for these writers before he had contact with the writers themselves. The early issues of the magazine drew upon material from several members of the editorial board, Sutherland himself, Robert Simpson, and Audrey Aikman, as well as members of the Preview group; P.K. Page, Patrick Anderson, and Neufville Shaw all appeared in the first seven issues. First Statement, with issue #5, combined with the new west coast publication, Western Free-Lance, and it is probably due to this that the work of Dorothy Livesay and Anne Marriott appeared in the first eight issues. Sutherland seemed to find his first "discovery" in Kay Smith who made her first appearance in the third issue of the magazine.

The magazine was mimeographed with a printed cover. Issue #2 stated the intention that the magazine would appear every two weeks for at least a year. This was an ambitious

undertaking, never fully accomplished, since the magazine missed the occasional deadline. A statement made in the second issue indicated that First Statement would, in fact, be an eclectic magazine, that it would "contain as varied a representation of Canadian literature as possible. We shall try to exhibit the art of various groups of writers in Canada, rather than express any opinions of our own."<sup>34</sup>

The early issues of the magazine are generally unspectacular and do not show a definite direction. Sutherland spent much of his time commenting upon the flaws of the more refined Preview. In the first issue of First Statement Sutherland included an article, "On A Story in Preview Magazine," which was a criticism of Bruce Ruddick's story "Vi" in Preview #3. Sutherland disputed the doctrinal approach to writing that he saw present in Preview, maintaining that words are not mechanical, utilitarian, or a modern convenience used to put across a message, but that, above all things, language contains a certain magic. He boldly stated that "before an artist has any other creed, he has a religious faith towards words."<sup>35</sup> Sutherland was taking a stance for the autonomy of literature, as opposed to its being used as a political tool.

In the third issue of First Statement Sutherland repeated the eclectic position. He argued for a variety of literary approaches and held that good and bad are simply relative terms. He insisted that a Canadian literature does exist, and defined the purpose of the magazine as providing a forum for Canadian writers: "Hence our desire to exhibit, without discriminating against any, the various modes and types of writing as we find them in Canada. We would like to become the mirror of this variety, and so provide the Canadian reader with the freedom of choice that he requires."<sup>36</sup> In light of these early editorials Dudek's contention that "Sutherland had always wanted a nice, solid, intellectual magazine like Northern Review, not a fighting rag like First Statement"<sup>37</sup> holds up. Sutherland, at this

time, seemed more inclined toward a non-partisan literary forum than a militant magazine.

These early issues of First Statement represent an uncommitted period in the magazine's development. Sutherland was presenting no specific school and was opening the magazine up to every variety of writing. It must be noted, however, that the writing he was accepting was firmly Modernist; there is no trace of the Roberts-Carman tradition in the work printed in these early issues. Sutherland continued to render criticism of Preview, but not in any fierce or fiery manner. The sixth issue carried Sutherland's essay "P.K. Page and PREVIEW," in which he considered the effect of the Preview group upon Page's writing and he pointed out the positive and negative aspects of this supposed influence; he saw Page developing assurance, writing with greater fluency, and mustering more power in her generation of images; on the negative side he found both the emotion and language "overwrought," seeing a lack of ease in the writing style and an emotional unease with the subject matter. In the eighth issue, discussing the production of the little magazines, Sutherland argued that the Canadian Poetry Magazine should shake itself out of its doldrums and that Preview should produce a magazine for readers instead of writing for an in-group composed chiefly of writers.

It is the ninth issue of First Statement that we begin to see a marked change in the magazine. This change is introduced by the appearance of three poems by Irving Layton, a new poet whom Sutherland had just met for the first time. The issue also contains a review by Sutherland of Earle Birney's collection David & Other Poems. Here Sutherland reprimands Scott, Smith, Klein and Kennedy for excluding all sense of the Canadian landscape in their writing. This is the first indication of the full-scale attack that Sutherland would later launch against the "cosmopolitan" tradition.

Layton had been friends with Louis Dudek for over a year; three of Dudek's early poems appear in the next issue,

the tenth issue of First Statement. The true First Statement group was now coming together. The eleventh issue carried a first submission, a short story, by Miriam Waddington, and two poems by Raymond Souster, one being "The Hunter," perhaps the first published poem of Souster's that fulfilled the potential he had begun to show. With the tenth issue First Statement had changed its subheading: it was now "A Canadian Literary Magazine."

With this new group Sutherland was at last finding the native Canadian literary youth he had been looking for. With the appearance of the twelfth issue the magazine heats up considerably and begins to hit its stride. The twelfth issue is composed of the work of Layton, Dudek, and Kay Smith, along with an extended editorial by Sutherland in which he makes his case for these three young poets. He notes that none of them "has received any public recognition, and even less critical attention. Yet each one is producing work that may appear, in the future, as a valuable contribution to Canadian poetry."<sup>38</sup> Continuing the dispute he had started with the Preview-ites and the "cosmopolitan" tradition, Sutherland cites these three young poets as having certain links with nature; he sees their writing as having a certain "native" quality:

What I should like to stress about all three poets, Dudek included, is their common interest in nature. . . since Canada is an agricultural country it is hardly possible for the poet to avoid contact with nature. Nature not only rules great sections of our country, but it also invades a metropolis. It enters the heart of Montreal and sits down in the form of Mount Royal. We compared Kay Smith to Dorothy Livesay, and I think that her identification with nature partly explains one's feelings that Miss Livesay is so essentially a Canadian poet. Neither she nor Miss Smith nor Irving Layton are giving us nature pure and simple; or absorbing for other purposes a peculiarly Canadian landscape, as Earle Birney does. But their link with nature is inescapably

a part of their experience of living in  
Canada.<sup>39</sup>

Sutherland makes a stand on native grounds for these three poets: "Here are three poets, not lacking in imagination or intellectual power, who are producing work that is much more honest and wholesome than that of our modernist school. What they write is essentially readable, and it is valid and real as poetry."<sup>40</sup> Sutherland has found in them what he considers to be a real alternative to the Preview/A.J.M. Smith school of poetry. He sees in their work a writing that has imagination and intellect, and, at the same time, has a greater realism than the work of the Preview-ites, for it is readable and real rather than erudite and put up. Reading the poems themselves, one finds that Sutherland's enthusiasm is, perhaps, more for what they will write in the future than what they were writing at this time. Kay Smith's poetry is a highly formal series of verses, carefully metered and rhymed, with choric repetitions. It speaks in an attempt at the modern idiom that is no longer valid. Layton's verse, though highly structured, comes much closer to approaching the modern idiom. Dudek's poems are the closest to open poetry, a concept that will become more clear as we go on.

The new energy level is apparent in the next issue, number 13. The magazine is now subtitled "A National Literary Magazine," the issue's editorial announces the formation of First Statement groups around the country for the creation of a consciousness of Canada and of Canadian literature, and the magazine boasts a new staff:

FIRST STATEMENT is produced by the following group: John Sutherland, Betty Sutherland, Irving Layton, Glyn Owen, Audrey Aikman & Louis Dudek.<sup>41</sup>

Those involved with First Statement had become a purposeful group, and now included two poets of exceeding promise. This was supplemented by the frequent contributions of Miriam Waddington and Raymond Souster. Directed energies were now



quick in gathering. The fifteenth issue, dated March 19, 1943, stated in its editorial that the First Statement group was busy attempting to secure a printing press.

Issues 12-20 represent the real fighting First Statement. These were the last mimeographed issues. Once the magazine began to be printed it began to change tone, moving closer to what Northern Review would be. It would gradually cease to be what Dudek has termed "a fighting rag." Issues 16, 19, and 20 carry articles which militantly dispute the program of the Preview-ites. Dudek's article "Geography, Politics and Poetry" appears in issue #16. In this piece Dudek maintains that poetry should register an honest reaction to first hand experience. He saw, however, examples in the Preview group's work that went against the grain of this contention:

There seem to be, however, three tendencies in modern writing which war against the simple truth of the above argument. These three tendencies are hostile to the natural desire of poets to "react honestly. . . first hand". They corrupt the poets on every hand.

The tendencies, in order, are: (1) a clever aptitude for exploiting the unreal universe of language; (2) a pedantic absorption in the second-hand universe of books, literature, and erudition; and (3) a falsified devotion to a special universe of ideas, chiefly, sociological and political ideas.<sup>42</sup>

In stating that poets desire to "react honestly. . . first hand," Dudek is quoting the American poet Hart Crane. We see here that the First Statement group was influenced by the American impetus in poetry rather than the British. They chose to be influenced by the earthy quality of poets such as Whitman, Sandburg, and Crane rather than the eloquent sonics of an Auden. They began to approach the very American sensibility that William Carlos Williams would define as a basic principle of poetry--"No ideas but in things":

. . . First Statement poets prided themselves on writing a masculine, virile "poetry of

experience"--their own experience. They would not write of the phoenix and the hyacinth but of Berri Street and De Bullion. Scorning the artifice of metaphor and symbol, they preferred to shout huzzahs and hurl insults, to fight, spit, sweat, urinate and make love in their poems, and did so in a deliberate defiance of Preview. They eschewed all abstractions and swore that "words" would not come between their poetry and life. "Celebration, not cerebation" as Layton was later to phrase it.<sup>43</sup>

This world of experience is what Dudek is obviously offering in opposition to the "unreal universe of language" which is involved with a world of literature rather than life. Beyond this, Dudek also argues against social preaching in the form that he saw in the poetry of the Preview-ites:

In short, what is wrong with today's social preaching in poetry is that it is likely to be falsified preaching. It is likely to show the influence of "upper class", higher-cultured, intellectual spirit. Its writers may not be aristocrats, but they have learned the separateness, subtlety, and love-of-culture of the aristocracy. They are simply not plebeian enough. We have in Montreal a magazine, Preview, in which much of the work illustrates exactly this point.

By way of correctives, First Statement can suggest three slogans for the poet's masthead. No polyglot displays. No poetry about poets and poetry. No high party politics.<sup>44</sup>

Dudek's article is followed by a satiric poem of Layton's, "The Modern Poet," which is directed against the embodiment of "Modernism" that the Preview poets represented:

Since Auden set the fashion,  
Our poets grow tame;  
They are quite without passion,  
They live without blame  
Like a respectable dame.<sup>45</sup>

The First Statement-ers were "working-class poets." They argued against the high refinements of culture in favor of

life.

The art of the poison pen was also being refined in First Statement. In issue #16 there was an exchange of letters between Patrick Waddington and Irving Layton concerning Waddington's criticism of Layton's work; Layton's letter is early practice for the letters he would come to be known for in later years. The nineteenth issue contains the article "The Writing of Patrick Anderson," written by John Sutherland, which led to a libel suit from Anderson. The basic gist of this article is that "a sexual experience involving two boys"<sup>46</sup> lies behind Anderson's perceptions and influences much of the metaphor of his writing. Sutherland claims to be privy to the knowledge of some homosexual encounter in Anderson's past; he also passes the comment that one "would rather have wished that Anderson had employed his energies. . . to a direct description of abnormal sex."<sup>47</sup> There was a delay in the appearance of the next issue because of the threatened libel suit. When the issue finally appeared it carried a retraction relating to the statements in Sutherland's article.

The first printed issue of First Statement appeared in August, 1943. Subtitled "Canadian Prose & Poetry," it took on the atmosphere of a literary journal. The issue contained a section from Klein's "The Hitleriad," Souster's "Green, Wonderful Things," other poems by Miriam Waddington, Audrey Aikman, Louis Dudek, and Irving Layton, prose fiction by Marg Hughes and Anne Marriott, an article by Layton, "Politics & Poetry," which assessed the current political and literary atmosphere in England, and a book review section. The magazine continued the fine blend of poetry, fiction, and prose it had always presented. The new format already pointed to Northern Review, a magazine of general cultural interest. The thirteen printed issues that follow take on the air of a literary review; the magazine, in many ways, becomes less militant and opens its pages to contributors from outside the group. The war of aesthetics that First

Statement had undertaken is, to a degree, toned down, and it is now A.J.M. Smith's The Book of Canadian Poetry and the introduction to that book that come under fire.

John Sutherland's editorial in the fourth issue of the second volume of First Statement entitled "Literary Colonialism is Sutherland's first full-fledged criticism of Smith's introduction to The Book of Canadian Poetry and contains the gist of the points he would make in his own introduction to Other Canadians three years later:

A.J.M. Smith, in the introduction to his Book Of Canadian Poetry, makes a distinction between a "native" and a "cosmopolitan" tradition which he defines in these terms: "The one group (the native) has attempted to describe whatever is essentially and distinctly Canadian and thus come to terms with an environment that is only now ceasing to be colonial. The other (the cosmopolitan) from the very beginning has made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering into the universal, civilizing culture of ideas." I don't know whether this distinction has been made before, but it is a valuable one, and it throws a good deal of light on Canadian poetry of the past and present. But are the characteristics of the two traditions correctly defined by Mr. Smith?

Can Mr. Smith ignore the colonialism that stamps the work of Canadian poets; particularly the writers of the cosmopolitan group? As his scholarly and well-balanced anthology makes abundantly clear, no poetry movement has ever taken place in Canada that did not depend, in the matter of style, upon the example of a previous movement in some other country. In this respect, those modern poets who continued the native tradition also waited for the go-ahead signal to come from England and America. Those poets who continued the cosmopolitan tradition were approximately a decade late in acclaiming the work of Spender and Auden, Barker and Thomas. Mr Smith, who apparently sees a special virtue in importing other people's ideas and literary forms, believes that the future belongs to the cosmopolitan group, because they respond to every change of fashion. Yet he argues

that this group, the latest leaders of which did not leave England until they were in their twenties, is making "a heroic effort to transcend colonialism."

As he fails to understand that a poet preaching politics in the guise of Auden may be just as colonial as a member of the C.A.A. praising Britain in the metres of Tennyson, so he fails to see what Canadian poetry of the future might be. It will not be a poetry that is exclusively occupied with Canadian subjects, or is anxious to express a patriotic pride, or even to discover a form and an idiom that are adaptable to Canada. Primarily, it will be a poetry that has stopped being a parasite on other literatures and has had the courage to decide its own problems in its own way. Regardless, therefore, of the fact that the native tradition has so far failed to establish its independence, writers with the objective simplicity of Knister and Ross or the vitality of Pratt, Livesay and Marriott indicate much more hope for the future than do the writers of the cosmopolitan tradition.<sup>48</sup>

In three years time Sutherland would find an independent Canadian expression in the writings of Layton, Souster, and Dudek, and he would propose this trio as the contemporary outgrowth of the "native" tradition. Sutherland was basically correct in his stance that the "native" tradition promised more for the future than the "cosmopolitan"; unfortunately it was a position he would later repudiate, unable to make the adjustment to the changes that were leading poetry out of the forties into a new era. But, in 1943, he was beginning a campaign for the native tradition that would lead Smith, long out of the country and, in many ways, out of touch with the new Canadian innovations, to significantly change his point of view.

In that same issue (volume 2, no. 4) Sutherland also published the article "A Note On The Metaphor," in which he examined the work of Dylan Thomas and its validity for the Canadian poetic. Sutherland maintained that Thomas, in

his work, had made the metaphor the poetic standard rather than a mere element of poetic technique, thus distorting the poetic process. The verbal gymnastics of the English school would not suffice. The editorial in the fifth issue of the second volume stated the editors' dedication to foster a fundamental realism in Canadian writing.

The April 1944 issue (vol. 2, no. 6) presented continued criticism of Smith. A review of Smith's News Of The Phoenix by Dorothy Livesay was high critical of that collection. She claimed that Smith had chosen for himself a small corner of poetry and that it was in that slight area that he chose to work. She cited the effects this selection had upon his work: "lack of range, absence of rhetoric, an attitude of withdrawal. It means that the poetry is dated as of the twenties and early thirties; that it is cosmopolitan, without a grain of native, salty flavour; and that it speaks to a coterie of Eliot and Yeats devotees."<sup>49</sup> Her ultimate judgment was that "in the present mood of the world, such poetry will not give sustenance nor direction."<sup>50</sup> This review of Smith's book is followed by a formal review of the Book of Canadian Poetry by Sutherland. Sutherland soundly disputes Smith's contention that it is the "cosmopolitan" tradition that will supply the future of Canadian poetry:

Dr. Smith, in his haste to prove that the future belongs to the cosmopolitan writers, fails to see the native tradition in its proper perspective. He fails to see precisely what the native qualities consist of, and he does not take into account the cosmopolitan elements in the modern writer of the native group. Not only is the distinction, as he has made it, a vague one, but it is hardly possible to imagine a Canadian Literature of the future that lacks either native qualities or cosmopolitanism of outlook. The editor's thesis is not convincing because it does not notice a blending of the two traditions already taking place in Pratt and in Livesay, and in a group of younger writers who have recently appeared in Canada.<sup>51</sup>

The subsequent issues of First Statement carry work editorials of considerable merit and interest. The April and May issues of 1944 (vol. 2, nos. 6 & 7) contain a two-part article written by Sutherland on Nietzsche. The May issue also contains an article by Layton, "Let's Win The Peace," which calls for a political unity between the Allies after the peace has been won. The editorial in the August issue of that year maintains the standard of art over the political context of the work. That issue also includes Dudek's article "Academic Poetry" in which he takes note of the vast amount of poetry coming out of the universities. He sees this as poetry that is removed from the realities of life and calls for a revolution in thinking in order to liberate poetry from the trammels of academic culture. Issue number ten of the second volume is noteworthy for two poems: Souster's "Go To Sleep, World" and Layton's "The Swimmer"; the latter is one of Layton's finest poems and his most significantly successful poem to appear in First Statement. Volume 2, number 11 carries an ad for Layton's book Here & Now, published by First Statement Press, which was then trying to provide a viable publishing outlet for the new poetry. This issue also contains a highly favorable review of E.J. Pratt's Collected Poems by Sutherland. He finds Pratt to be a truly individual poet. This is the possible starting point of Sutherland's dedication to and love of Pratt's work which was to occupy him in his last years. The next to last issue of First Statement (vol. 2, no. 12) begins to point towards the merging of First Statement and Preview. For the first time since issue #7 (the pre-Layton-Dudek era), a Patrick Anderson poem, "Adam," appears in First Statement. The issue also carries an ad for Anderson's A Tent For April, the second book from First Statement Press. And the most impressive piece in the final issue was A.M. Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as a Nobody," later retitled "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," one of the finest Canadian poems written in this century.

The last issues of First Statement and Preview were to be followed by the new magazine Northern Review, uniting the two former magazines in an uneasy marriage. It was not a relationship that was to last long. The strife and conflict that had existed between Preview and First Statement did much for the young First Statement poets, defining for them a direction contrasted to their own. Much of the work that appeared in Preview might be described as the last remnants of early Canadian Modernism, all that "cosmopolitanism," as Smith had labelled it, highly influenced by Eliot and Yeats in the 1920's and by the Auden-Spender school in the thirties. It was a totally English influence. The young First Statement poets, on the other hand, saw the American influence as a more positive direction. There was a certain continental sensibility implied, as well as the commonality of the North American speech idiom. Clearly the American idiom was closer to the Canadian than the British. The American sensibility was also more closely situated to the Canadian. It was a working-class tradition, unrefined and unpolished, filled with a sense of the land, as opposed to the British tradition which still clung to aristocracy and the principles of art as artifice. The First Statement poets began, in effect, the second wave of Canadian Modernism. Layton, Souster, and Dudek would point the way and help to lead Canadian poetry into the 1950's and 1960's. In the process John Sutherland, very much a forties man like Alan Crawley, would be left behind; through Contact, CIV/n, and Delta the Cerberus threesome would push Canadian poetry into new realms. As Neil Fisher describes it in his short history of the magazine:

The major achievement of FIRST STATEMENT lies . . . in the issue of modernism. The group and the magazine appeared at an opportune time. A number of talented individuals came together, and their belief in themselves and in the direction that modern poetry should take was strengthened by their sense of group feeling. The magazine offered



encouragement and stimulation through publication and competition. As a result, the most vital poetry of the period appeared in its pages. CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE with its lack of taste and direction pales in comparison. The intellectual exercises of PREVIEW seem to be the last limpid laps of the first wave of modernism. CONTEMPORARY VERSE surges positively, especially in the early issues, but it lacks the character and variety of FIRST STATEMENT.

It was the poets of FIRST STATEMENT who represent the second wave of modernism in Canadian poetry, a wave which has proven to be of tidal consequences. . . . The honesty of both poetic and critical experiences, the anti-intellectual element present, and the North American bias have formed the basis for the development of contemporary poetry in Canada.<sup>52</sup>

The last of the little magazines to appear in the early forties was Direction, edited by Raymond Souster, William Goldberg, and David Mullen, who were all in the service at the time. The magazine lasted for 10 issues, from November 1942 until February 1946; it was produced by simple gestetter in various locations where its editors were stationed. Like Contemporary Verse, Preview, and First Statement, Direction was fully dedicated to the cause of Modernism in Canada. This fact was fully reflected on the front page of the first issue; the magazine took its impetus and name from a quotation from Henry Miller:

This may sound confusing but actually it is very clear and very simple. Everything that lives, that has being, whether it be a star, a plant, an animal or even a human being, "Even God Almighty" has direction. . . . Along the road which each of us is travelling there is no turning back. It is forward or dead stop, which is living death.<sup>53</sup>

The editors were clearly looking ahead to the possibilities of writing rather than back at the dying traditions. Also contained on that front page is a reproduction of a letter written to "Ada" by William Goldberg, run under the heading

"The Beginning," which describes how the magazine came into existence. It gives a sense of the general barracks environment but also presents the editorial thrust of the magazine:

"Let us make a declaration of our fighting faith."

"Let us denounce the Canadian Author's Association, including Sir Charles G.D. Tradition. God, they're dying on their feet. . . Ray says: "This has to be a blast. It doesn't have to be logical or sensible. . . We must attack, attack and attack. Let us call the Mag, the Attack or Sperm, anything that will shock the dull witted Canadian imagination out of its lethargy."<sup>54</sup>

Once again the Canadian Authors' Association and a certain bourgeois antiquated gentility that the organization always seems to represent to new generations of writers was coming under fire. However, although the editors of Direction agreed in general with the trend of Modernist little magazines in Canada, they were not entirely satisfied with the achievement of those magazines. On the second page of the first issue of Direction Souster offered his judgment of their performance:

Contemporary Verse of Vancouver has published much good, but little fresh and vital poetry. Preview of Montreal serves us with a rehash of Spender, Auden and MacNeice brought up to date with a Canadian setting, and any future claim to fame it may make will rest upon the fact that it first published Patrick Anderson. . . . First Statement, also of Montreal, has been the most experimental, and perhaps for that reason, the least successful. But its experimentation is healthy and it has less interest in names and more of literature than its contemporaries.<sup>55</sup>

Souster's assessments are not very far off the mark.

For the most part Direction served as a forum for the work done by its editors and other servicement, with occasional contributions coming from elsewhere. Poems by Irving Layton and Miriam Waddington appeared in the second and

third issues, a story by Patrick Waddington in issue #6. The outstanding outside contributor was Henry Miller; issue #7 presented "The Paris of Henry Miller," excerpts from Tropic of Cancer, which had thus far been treated as banned pornography. This was the first appearance of this material in Canada.

The magazine presented a mixture of prose and poetry; much of the prose was written by William Goldberg; Souster also wrote a significant amount of prose, but chiefly supplied the magazine with a goodly amount of poetry. Much of the writing in the magazine is directly concerned with the war; there seems to be an endless string of stories about soldiers on furloughs and countless poems about the distance between lovers as the poet sits alone and melancholy in his bunk. Souster's poetry is written in the long loping prose lines characteristic of his work in the forties.

Direction, like the three other little magazines we have treated, had its own contribution to make. This was extremely relevant to the state of Modernism in post-war Canada. Direction, like Souster's later magazines, Contact and Combustion, pointed towards an American connection that would become increasingly important to Canadian poetry. The second issue contains a piece by Souster, entitled "A Debt," which is a tribute to Henry Miller and Kenneth Patchen. Both writers are praised for their uncompromising courage and honesty in writing the truth about our civilization.

In the course of ten issues of Direction Canadian literature was also examined and given a fair assessment. The dismissal of the "Sir Charles G.D. Tradition" was carried out in the eighth issue in an article by John Sutherland, "Great Things & Terrible." Sutherland offered an extensive criticism of Charles G.D. Roberts, illustrating his shortcomings and attempting to show that Roberts' inclinations towards grandeur were what "prevented him from raising his writing up from the level of verse to that of poetry."<sup>56</sup> Sutherland denounced Roberts for having tried to use poetry

as a pedestal by which to elevate himself. On the other hand, Souster, in the last issue (#10), wrote an appreciative assessment of the writing of Raymond Knister. The editors of Direction were looking down on the "native" tradition of the Confederation poets and picking up on the later "native" strain represented by Knister and the realists.

A letter from Souster to William Goldberg that was reproduced in Direction #6 illustrates the principles of this magazine. The letter has been prompted by Souster's returned manuscript "from a well-known Canadian publishing house together with a letter, (well-intended of course), which revealed in its contents what seems to be pretty well the accepted slot into which all Canadian poetry must fall if it is to be tolerated at all."<sup>57</sup> In his letter Souster disputes statements made in the criticism of his work. He denounces discipline and restraints, as well as the suppression of freedom, vitality, frankness, and ideals in poetry. His closing paragraph represents the attitude of the entire forties generation toward the last vestiges of Victorianism that were still cluttering the Canadian literary scene as they saw it:

No, poetry cannot be healthy or even possible as long as such ideals are cherished and held up for future generations to follow. They must be stamped out, if need be, ruthlessly. It will be the pleasure of a few of us to fight this challenge and defeat it.<sup>58</sup>

Direction, along with Contemporary Verse, Preview, and First Statement, succeeded in decisively defeating the remnants of the Roberts tradition and creating a new poetic tradition that was contemporary to the times.

The appearance of Northern Review coincided with the beginning of the new post-war period. Theoretically a merging of Preview and First Statement, Northern Review was actually an absorption of Preview by the First Statementers

who, at the time, were in possession of the greater energy and also happened to own a printing press. Louis Dudek, who by this time had moved to New York to continue his studies at Columbia University, has assessed this "merger" as follows:

. . . as I understand it, the merger came about because Preview was going down anyhow. It could not have continued. It didn't have the people willing to take the responsibility for production and editing and so on, and Sutherland was therefore in a sense absorbing the other magazine. The easiest way to do that sort of thing is for everybody to get together at first and sing about the great union. But gradually you find that there is only one magazine and the other has vanished. Certainly after two or three years there was no Preview and there was only Northern Review.<sup>59</sup>

In the post-war period, the politics that had fired the social realist movement began to cool down; it soon became apparent that despite all hopes socialism was not coming to Canada. This severely undercut the impetus behind Preview. Northern Review was meant to continue the forties movement by providing it with a broader forum. The editorial board listed in the first issue shows an attempt to try to balance members of the Preview and First Statement groups as members of the staff. John Sutherland is listed as managing editor, with an editorial board composed of F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Irving Layton, Patrick Anderson, A.J.M. Smith, Audrey Aikman, R.G. Simpson, and Neufville Shaw. The magazine was also to have regional editors in the persons of P.K. Page, Dorothy Livesay, James Wreford, and Ralph Gustafson. In theory, the Preview-First Statement differences were to be put in the past in deference to the future of Canadian literature. The first issue's editorial does not proselytize for a sharply defined school of writing or a political commitment; instead it posits the magazine as a forum for the serious writer:

Northern Review represents the amalgamation of two wartime literary magazines, Preview and First Statement, but its editorial board has been fortified by writers from distant points and its scope is national; it aims to print the best work being done in Canada. Its purpose is to present Canada to itself and abroad as a country where political and economic changes have not taken place without a real, though as yet not a quantitatively comparable, literary and artistic advance.

We shall try to fulfill the classic function of the "little magazine"--to afford a means of expression for the serious writer who, without a reputation and without the advantages of commercial publicity, is nevertheless determined to make no concessions to the slick, the theatrical, and the popular. Canadian magazines, Canadian publishing houses, and even some government agencies, aided occasionally by the New York book supplements, are manipulating copious and superficial Canadian authors into the ranks of the "great". The "unknown country" is in danger of becoming a lucrative province in the empire of the publisher's blurb and the Book of the Month Clubs. We wish to provide a place where the young writer who has something true and unpleasant to say can say it without fuss or frill. We hope to maintain a critical and artistic standard that in Canada exists only in the quarterlies--and there only spasmodically. Valuable as the universities are in the field of history and scholarship they have only rarely shown themselves capable of sympathetic and intelligent understanding of the aims and accomplishments of our younger poets and story writers.

It is admitted that our standards cannot be perfectionist but they must be rigorously enforced; all work printed will be examined to the best of our ability not in the light of a dubious nationalism or regionalism, not in obeisance to "big Canadian names" or so-called national traditions, but in respect to that general cosmopolitan culture to which we all adhere.<sup>60</sup>

It can be seen in this editorial that much of the fire of

both of the prior magazines has been lost. Northern Review is not to be the militant production of a small group as Preview was or First Statement was in its middle period; instead, this editorial points in the direction of the eclectic periodical. It is also strange to note that the material in the magazine will be judged "in respect to that general cosmopolitan culture to which we all adhere."

Sutherland's opposition to the principles of cosmopolitanism in favor of a literature of native quality has, for the time, been dropped (in conversation, F.R. Scott has reminisced that it is quite possible that the initial editorial to Northern Review may have been drafted by Patrick Anderson, with changes then made by other Northern Review editors). This attitude is given further credence in that issue in an article by A.J.M. Smith, "Nationalism and Canadian Poetry," in which Smith argues that the universal element in Canadian poetry provides for a more vital art than a poetry filled with nationalist concerns. He maintains that "the claims of nationalism are less important than those of universality and that a cosmopolitan culture is more valuable than an isolated one."<sup>61</sup> Clearly, at this time, the cosmopolitan Preview-ites were making their presence felt.

The general quality that had prevailed in the later issues of First Statement continued in the pages of Northern Review. As Dudek has maintained, Sutherland had always wanted a quality literary review rather than a fighting magazine; this left Northern Review with little of the dynamism of Preview and the mimeographed First Statement:

Sutherland in his editorials in First Statement was always aiming at a larger audience, at the time the responsible middle-class reader, and something of the quarterly-review look and tone that Northern Review came to acquire. That type of magazine is Tamarack Review; later, it's Encounter or the London Magazine, the big ones--it's not Blast. You see, Northern Review was no longer the type of mag that, to me, is the

holy ground of modern poetry, where new battles are fought out on the aesthetic, intellectual front, programs that really mean a change in the shape of literature.<sup>62</sup>

Northern Review was very much the literary quarterly type of magazine, at first dedicated to the written arts, later dealing with various other aspects of Canadian culture. Rather than put forward a new program or push into a militant post-war period in poetry, Northern Review became an essentially respectable and harmless publication. The second and third issues featured articles on the writing of Rilke and Karl Shapiro by Patrick Anderson and A.M. Klein respectively. F.R. Scott's fine poem "Laurentian Shield" appeared in the fourth issue along with an evaluation of P.K. Page's poetry by John Sutherland. Issue #5 included four poems by the young James Reaney, a consideration of Kafka, and an article by Ralph Gustafson on the poetry of Archibald Lampman. Although much of this work is interesting, it is not pointed in any definite direction; there is no real center to these issues of Northern Review.

In the sixth issue of the first volume, dated August-September 1947, Sutherland published a rather vitriolic review of Robert Finch's book, Poems, that had just won the Governor-General's award. For a moment the critical spirit of Sutherland that had been evident in First Statement flared; this event had immediate and explosive consequences, breaking up the "merger" and the joint editorial board. The following issue presented a rather abbreviated organization: Sutherland remained as managing editor and his associates were now listed as being Audrey Aikman, R.G. Simpson, Irving Layton, Mary Miller, and John Harrison. Robert Finch had ties with members of the Preview group; he had appeared with Scott, Smith and Klein in the anthology New Provinces. A notice at the back of the issue noted the resignation of many members of the editorial board:

Certain changes have taken place in the editorial board of Northern Review, effective from the last issues. The follow-



ing editors have resigned: Neufville Shaw, Patrick Anderson, A.M. Klein, F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith. Two regional editors, P.K. Page and Ralph Gustafson, have also resigned.

The reason for these changes was a difference of opinion about editorial policy, particularly concerning criticism and reviews. The immediate occasion for disagreement was a review of Robert Finch's poems by John Sutherland, which appeared in the last issue. The editors who resigned maintained that this review, and similar pieces of criticism, were too harsh and unjust for publication, while the present editorial board held that criticism of this kind was badly needed in Canada. Our readers can form their own opinions in the matter.

Elsewhere in this issue we have printed a short letter from P.K. Page, at her request, stating that she was ignorant of the review on Finch. Perhaps we should mention that our regional editors never saw contributions to the magazine before they were printed and were not entitled to vote on them.

The present editors are John Sutherland, R.G. Simpson, Mary Margaret Miller, John Harrison, Irving Layton and Audrey Aikman. We intend to carry on Northern Review in its present form. We hope that the concentration of responsibility in the hands of a smaller editorial board will result in greater efficiency and a more interesting magazine. 63

This smaller editorial board may have resulted in "greater efficiency" but it certainly did not result in a more interesting magazine. As the editorial board became increasingly smaller, with participants dropping out one by one, more and more of the control of the magazine came to lie in the hands of Sutherland, who eventually ran the magazine entirely with the aid of his wife Audrey Aikman. Sutherland's gradual abandonment of the Modernist position of the forties turned Northern Review into a magazine that literally worked counter to Modernism in Canada. By the time the magazine ceased publication in 1956 with Sutherland's death, Northern Review had moved totally outside of the mainstream of Canadian

poetry.

Within the pages of Northern Review Sutherland was to wage a consistent mini-war with what he felt was the shoddiness of Canadian criticism. He held firmly to the belief that a literature cannot advance unless its progress is facilitated by a competent criticism. In his article "Critics on the Defensive" (October-November 1947) he stated his main complaints: 1) that Canadian critics continually took a defensive stance when writing about Canadian writing; 2) that Canadian critics had a tendency to overly praise Canadian writing for purely nationalistic reasons; and, 3) that Canadian critics tended to emphasize elements of tradition and traditional values in their critiques. Sutherland maintained that "These critics are on the defense because they cling to a past world in order to deny the existence of the present one."<sup>64</sup> He saw them as being "a drag on the vital movements of our poetry."<sup>65</sup> Among the critics he cited were E.K. Brown, W.E. Collin and A.J.M. Smith.

With the Preview group removed from Northern Review, the magazine went through further changes in format and organization. The July-August 1948 issue (vol. 2, no. 2) carries work under the headings Poetry, Film, Painting, Drama, and Reviews. This issue is also the last in which Irving Layton is listed as a member of the editorial board. Two of his poems appear in the September-October 1948 issue (vol. 2, no. 3); they are the last of Layton's work to appear in Northern Review. Sutherland was clearly turning away from the very members of the group he had praised in First Statement and Other Canadians. The April-May issue of 1949 (vol. 2, no. 5) features four poems by Patrick Anderson; most of the issue is taken up by a critical article written by Sutherland on Anderson's work in which Sutherland argues that Anderson's influence upon Canadian poetry has been significant, in that he has not only influenced the members of the Preview group but poets such as Layton and Dudek as well. Dudek's contention that Sutherland "was essentially a Preview-ite"<sup>66</sup> can

actually be seen to be quite plausible. Within the pages of Northern Review Sutherland printed appreciations of both P.K. Page and Patrick Anderson.

The October-November issue of 1949 (vol. 3, no. 1) shows that Northern Review has forsaken the ground of the little magazine to become a review of cultural opinion; the magazine is now entitled "Northern Review of Writing and the Arts in Canada"; the bottom of the front cover lists stories, poetry, film, radio, stage, music, painting, and books as the contents with which the magazine will concern itself. In an editorial discussing the state of the Canadian arts at the time, Sutherland put forward the following proposition:

The vital approach to Canadian art lies between the extreme of "cosmopolitanism" and of sentimental nationalism. . . We need the kind of Canadianism, cosmopolitan in its breadth of outlook that Lorne Pierce has expressed for us in "A Canadian People": 'No nation can achieve its true destiny that adopts without profound and courageous reasoning and selection the thoughts and styles of another. . . .' It is in this spirit that our criticism should approach what is its most important problem: the relationship of the arts in Canada to the English tradition. . . we believe that this is the logical critical approach to Canadian art in its present tentative state of development, and that, in fact, it represents the best practical way of understanding and employing our cosmopolitan background.<sup>87</sup>

Sutherland's orientation, by this time, had gone through some significant shifts. Having once rejected Smith's notion of "cosmopolitanism," he now picked up the term himself and here used it favorably, in contrast to the program of searching out a "native" tradition that he had expressed in his introduction to Other Canadians. What is also apparent is his concern with the relationship of Canadian art with the English tradition. The contact with North American influences that had begun to be made by Dudek and Souster in First Statement and Direction is here put aside in favor of exploring the ties between Canadian and English art. Sutherland,

with time, would become increasingly entrenched in tradition and would gravitate more and more towards the achievements of specific English writers. Paradoxically, he continued to speak at the same time of native Canadian work. Dr. Pierce's comment struck a note with Sutherland. It was printed on the back cover of every issue of Northern Review that appeared after this.

Convinced that the social realist movement of the forties had been a failure, Sutherland began to look towards other writers than the ones he had initially supported to find an indigenous Canadian poetry. The December-January 1949-1950 issue featured two poems by E.J. Pratt and included James Reaney, whose work continued to appear in Northern Review until the magazine's termination. Sutherland appeared to be quite impressed by Reaney's work; in a review of The Red Heart Sutherland stated that "James Reaney is the most interesting poet to appear during the relatively sterile period in Canadian poetry since 1945."<sup>68</sup> Apart from Reaney, the work of Anne Wilkinson began to appear fairly frequently in Northern Review. Kay Smith, whose work had begun to take a religious turn as evidenced in her poem "A Footnote To the Lord's Prayer," was the only original First Statementer whose work appeared on a regular basis. Dudek's and Souster's work began to appear quite infrequently; after Contact and CIV/n began publication their work no longer came out in Northern Review (Dudek has pointed out that they no longer sent any work to Sutherland because they disapproved of the trends evident in Northern Review). The shift in Sutherland's orientation can be seen quite clearly in the publication list of First Statement Press. The titles printed in the forties had been Layton's Here and Now, Anderson's A Tent For April, Waddington's Green World, Souster's When We Are Young, Other Canadians, and Layton's second book, Now is the Place. The two First Statement books printed in the fifties were Kay Smith's Footnote to the Lord's Prayer and Wilkinson's Counterpoint to Sleep.

Sutherland seemed to be intently searching for something to replace what he felt was the failed movement of the forties, and he found glimmerings of this in the "mythy" writings of Reaney and Wilkinson, the religious work of Kay Smith, and in the epic narrative of E.J. Pratt.

The December-January issue of 1951 (vol. 4, no. 2) is one in which the movement of the forties and attitudes towards it are openly confronted. Two articles, "Number Ten Reports" by Harold Harwood, editor of Protocol, a Newfoundland magazine, and Sutherland's "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry" attempt to evaluate the writing of the forties and where it has led. It was Harwood's contention that, standing "now beyond the end of that fruitful decade we must confess that Canadian poetry is in a bad way. . ."<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere in his article Harwood delivers his judgement of the accomplishments of the forties movement and the reason for its decline:

. . .with their obvious virtues their faults lay thick as dust. Not the least of their faults was the brevity of their artistic lives. Either they could not endure critical neglect, or they were lulled into slumber by the cradle song of uncritical praise. Or perhaps they were developing a style so narrow in its artistic implications that its limits were soon explored. Or again, they may have been incapable of development beyond the stage of all cases, though one reason would be common to all--the discouragement which must have assailed most sensitive persons when the war was won and the peace was destroyed at the same mad moment of history. Political disillusionment is a powerful force. Most of the young writers were socialists of various colors. And they sensed, after their first passion for reforming the world had spent itself, that socialism was not coming to Canada in the foreseeable future. This tendency to be ephemeral was only one fault. Others were intellectualism at the expense of emotion, and a habit of using rather clotted symbolism at the expense of the image.<sup>70</sup>

Horwood sees the principle of political disillusionment as the core of the dissipation of the forties movement. Political doctrines had led to the writing of a narrow form of poetry and the failure of socialism to become firmly rooted in Canada led some writers into a self-enforced silence. This sense of failure of the forties movement is given fuller treatment in Sutherland's essay, where he attempts to give a credible historical account of the workings of the movement. Sutherland notes that the political theme had been announced in the 1930's in Canada in the writings of such poets as Dorothy Livesay and F.R. Scott, but that it had taken until the forties for this political voice to be given its full expression:

The large group of poets who appeared then--James Wreford, P.K. Page, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Patrick Anderson, Miriam Waddington, Ronald Hambleton and several others--were all concerned, to a greater or less extent in individual cases, with the problems which they believed then arose from class divisions in society. Nor was the difference between the thirties and the early forties simply a quantitative one: there were also important differences in technique and in the approach to the political theme. The most clear-cut political group of the thirties--Birney, Livesay, and Marriott--was mainly concerned with the land and with the fate of an agricultural class: the new poets of the forties--nearly all of them residents of the East--saw the class issue in urban and industrial terms. The political poets of the thirties were essentially pragmatic in their outlook, prepared to adopt a cause and to devote their talents directly to its realization: the poets of the forties saw the contemporary world in psychological as well as political terms, and relied as much on Freud as Marx. The older poets had felt the impact of the English Marxist poetry of the thirties; but were relatively little influenced by the technical experiments of Auden and Spender or by those of Dylan Thomas and George Barker--while endeavouring to preserve the burden of the political theme. These main differences, and others that might be enumerated, make it clear that a new kind of Canadian poetry was being written in the

early forties.<sup>71</sup>

Sutherland saw this as an exciting time in Canadian poetry, a time when poets of merit were springing up everywhere and writing a poetry that reflected much critical variety. The termination of the war, however, did much to kill off the effulgence of the movement, and it was in the wake of this event that the entire atmosphere changed.

How suddenly it all changed! The First Statement Press had no sooner published Other Canadians, "An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada, 1940-1946," which I furnished with a bristling, defiant introduction, than the whole purpose and driving spirit of the "new movement" were in a state of decay. We had barely rushed to the side of this challenger of tradition, holding up his right--or rather his left--hand in the stance of victory, when the challenger laid his head upon the block and willingly submitted to having it removed.<sup>72</sup>

Sutherland insists that his publishing of Other Canadians had nothing to do with the failure of the movement, and while this is, on a superficial level, true, one can't help but wonder if in the very process of formalizing a literary movement there are not contained the seeds of that movement's dissolution or obsolescence. Once a movement has been defined it is limited to a set of precepts any writer in the process of growth is sure to outgrow. This can certainly be seen to be true of the Imagists; the more important members of the group quickly moved on to larger poem structures that maintained an Imagist base. In his introduction to Other Canadians, Sutherland may have too rigidly defined the social realists as Marxian, Freudian, and "anti-Christian," and therefore the immediate development of each poet that followed diverted from this orientation.

The failing of political impetus had led the lesser talents to cease writing. In some of those who had continued, Sutherland saw the birth of religious ideas:

For the new poets have come back, if not

always to religion, at least to a soul-searching which has strong religious implications, and to an attitude of mind more in harmony with that of earlier Canadian poets. In their writing they no longer attribute the present state of the world to class oppression, but to a guilt which makes no class distinctions and which involves every individual, including the poet. They speak now in a more personal way, exhibit a willingness to bear their share of the universal guilt, and seem to imply that the puritanical fury with which they once attacked the "middle class" was really a blustering way of hiding their own feeling of guilt. They look back to the poetic traditions, strive for a greater simplicity, and try to sing rather than to bluster forth protests.<sup>73</sup>

Sutherland saw in this poetry an affirmation of his own religious beliefs. He finds a religious note struck in the work of James Wreford, Kay Smith, Patrick Anderson, Miriam Waddington, and P.K. Page. Significantly, there is no mention of Souster, Dudek, or Layton in this context; these poets continued to bulldog their way forward into the fifties rather than follow the reactionary pursuit of many others who were following Auden and Spender in turning from a world of political beliefs to a world of religious beliefs. The pass that Sutherland now came to was diametrically opposed to the intention of the poetry of the forties. In evaluating the state of Canadian poetry at the beginning of 1951, Sutherland now presented the argument that it is the true place of the poet to work within the realms of society, religion, and tradition, rather than radically oppose them:

This, then, is a general picture of how the movement of the forties developed and of its present condition. What, you may ask, is the value of the recent poetry, as compared with that produced in the early forties, and what is its development likely to be? I will answer the second part of the question first: I believe the present religious trend may become more marked; if not, I believe there will be a reaction against it. . . .As for the first part of



the question, it seems obvious to me that the recent work of the younger poets is inferior to their work in the early forties, but that, nevertheless, the principles behind this recent work are potentially better principles for poetry. It is generally better for the poet to accept than oppose the values inherent in his society; it is better for him to aim at simplicity, than to perpetuate the obscurity which is gradually killing off the respect for poetry in the minds of intelligent readers; and it is better for him to use and not oppose the traditions of poetry--and for the Canadian poet not to completely ignore his relation to the traditions of poetry in Canada.<sup>74</sup>

Like the other important editor of his day, Alan Crawley, Sutherland could not go beyond the forties sensibility. When he saw the change in direction that took place after the war among the forties poets he took it as a sign that the social realist movement had failed; he could not see it as yet another stage in the development of Canadian Modernism. Because of this he denounced what he considered to be the remnants of the failed movement and looked for a revival of religious thought and traditional intention in Canadian poetry. It was this reactionary catholicism that Dudek and Souster would respond to in putting forward Contact and Contact Press.

By the spring of 1951 Dudek found himself in opposition to some of the ideas that Sutherland was putting forward in Northern Review, although his correspondence with Souster (Dudek was living in New York at the time) urged restraint in putting out another magazine; he hoped to have a positive effect upon Sutherland on his return to Montreal in September to take up a teaching post at McGill. In the February-March issue of 1951 (vol. 4, no. 4) Sutherland had written an article in which he pointed out what he felt was the high degree of imitation of Edgar Allan Poe in Archibald Lampman's late poems. In the course of a lengthy letter in response Dudek remarked that

. . .it seems to me that the present sort of criticism in Northern Review, if it

should succeed in its aim (that is, the aim to place the Canadian writer thoroughly on guard against outside influences, to make him aware of his "native" quality -- in other words to restrict both his experimentation and his assimilation of the modern tradition), if this should succeed it would actually set Canadian poetry back for the next thirty or forty years to where it was in 1925.<sup>75</sup>

In paying strict attention to the Canadian poetic tradition and in taking an isolationist and reactionary stance on Canadian poetry Sutherland was, in effect, trying to go back. Surprisingly, although holding to what is "native" in Canadian writing, Northern Review began to carry more and more poetry by English writers and articles about them. The December-January 1951-1952 issue was a special English issue; the poetry of Roy Campbell appeared in the April-May issue of 1953 (vol. 6, no. 1), along with an article on Campbell by Sutherland in which he adopted the aesthetic overview of C. Day-Lewis with which to evaluate Campbell's work. George Woodcock's "Recollections of George Orwell" appeared in the August-September issue of that year (vol. 6, no. 3); Sutherland's article on "The Great Equestrians" appeared in the following issue (vol. 6, no. 4), along with an article on Wilfred Owen by Dennis S.R. Welland and further poems by Campbell. The later issues also reflect Sutherland's conversion to Catholicism. The August-September issue of 1953 carried the article "An Excerpt from Poetry and Dogma" by Malcolm Ross which was a consideration of the use of Christian symbology in poetry. Issue #5 of volume 6 (December-January 1953-1954) published the article "Towards a Christian Aesthetic" by Dorothy Sayers. The Spring 1955 issue (vol. 7, no. 2), the first issue in which Northern Review became a quarterly and was published from Toronto, carried the article "The Religious Basis of Art" by Wladimir Weidle as well as numerous poems dealing with Easter and Christian symbology. Much of the poetry, by this time,

was religious in tone and temperament.

In terms of Canadian poetry, Sutherland became a fervent supporter of the work of E.J. Pratt. The February-May issue of 1952 (vol. 5, nos. 3-4) is largely devoted to Pratt's work. The cover of the issue notes that "This issue is devoted almost entirely to E.J. Pratt. It is published in the belief that Pratt's significance has been misinterpreted and that he deserves to be ranked as a major poet."<sup>76</sup> Pratt's long narrative "The Great Feud" is included, along with a lengthy critique by Sutherland, "E.J. Pratt: A Major Contemporary Poet," in which he cites the themes of power and compassion in the face of power as the primary basis of Pratt's work. Sutherland became thoroughly dedicated to Pratt's work. He spent the last summer of his life assembling the final issue of Northern Review and putting the finishing touches on his critical study of Pratt.<sup>77</sup>

Sutherland's utter repudiation of Modernism is expressed in his article "The Great Equestrians" in which, in no uncertain terms, he declares what was, for him, the end of Modernism:

There is not the slightest doubt that modern literary development is now on its death-bed. All that was fathered by Joyce and Pound is obviously on the verge of complete extinction. As Edward Dahlberg phrased it in a recent issue of Poetry Chicago, "By now James, Pound, Eliot, Joyce are dowds, jades, and trulls of Parnassus, and we are weary of them. It may be that they will be curios again in some other time, but now they do not provide the spectacle of remoteness so significant in literature." What is to follow this debacle of the moderns? There are increasing signs that the younger generation, weary as it is of a rabid experimentalism, is turning back to the School of the Great Equestrians. The Equestrians have provided one of the few oases in the wasteland of our times. While the rest of the literary world has been standing on its head, they alone have been seated firmly in the saddle. They have been vir-

tually the one healthy vein in a diseased and corrupt body. As the twilight of the "moderns" deepens into darkness, we can anticipate the moment when these apostles of Equestrianism will come riding towards us over the sunny, dew-besprinkled meadows of the dawn. It will be a glorious dawn--perhaps one of the most glorious in the whole of literary history.<sup>78</sup>

These "equestrians" with whom Sutherland would have liked to replace the moderns were G.K. Chesterton, D.H. Lawrence, Roy Campbell and C.S. Lewis.

Though Sutherland turned his back on Modernism it simply did not go away. In Canada, what we now consider the third stage of Canadian Modernism was developing in the pages of Contact and CIV/n, even while Sutherland was going through the motions of dancing upon Modernism's grave. Unlike Crawley, Sutherland did not recognize when his time as a significant spokesman was over; unable to understand what had happened to the movement he had so militantly put forward in Other Canadians, disappointed because the poets had not fulfilled his prophecies, he turned against social realism and Modernism as a whole and tried to encourage a new movement of Canadian writing rooted in religious belief and the English poetic tradition. Most of what Sutherland published in the last five years of Northern Review's existence was merely peripheral to the evolution of modern poetry in Canada. If anything, it served as an object lesson for poets like Layton, Souster, and Dudek of what they did not want their magazines and poems to be like.

In addition to the primary publications that appeared in the 1940's there were several other little magazines that began appearing after the war. Reading, edited by Allan Anderson, Ronald Hambleton (editor of the anthology Unit of Five), and Lister Sinclair, originated out of Toronto in 1946 and ran for several issues. Reading placed its primary emphasis upon prose, featuring short fiction, as well as commentaries on film, drama, music, radio, art, people, and books. Though resembling the little magazine in format it

did not match it in intent. Its opening editorial took careful pains to describe the publisher's and printer's futile attempts to find eggshell style paper upon which to print the magazine, to give it a high quality appearance. Although the magazine functioned as a general guide to culture it did print poems by Birney, Souster, Smith, Hambleton, Page, and Anne Wilkinson.

The periodical Here And Now was also based in Toronto. Edited by Catherine Harmon, it ran for four issues from December 1947 until June 1949. It bears the distinction of being the most impressively produced magazine of the forties, with expensive printing and layouts in sharp contrast to the humble efforts of the gestetnered and mimeoed little magazines of the time. Although its appearance gives it the sheen of a literary review, and although the contents of the magazine also tended in this direction, its editor and opening editorial sought to place it in the milieu of the little magazine:

At the present time there are, in England and in the United States, a number of excellent Little Magazines which play a very considerable part in the culture of these countries. Ever since the nineties of the last century, they have, with varying degrees of popularity, presented the greatest writers and artists of the time. That Canada has played a relatively small part in this movement is the result less of its being a "young country" than of a preconceived notion that Canada does not possess enough avant-garde writers and artists to warrant such publications. With the exception of Canadian Poetry Magazine and Contemporary Verse, two poetry magazines of a very high order, which have for many years been attempting to disprove this, there is no publication whose primary aim it is to provide an outlet for the wide variety of Canadian art that does exist.<sup>79</sup>

It is no mistake that the editorial cites Canadian Poetry Magazine and Contemporary Verse as models of little magazines "of a very high order": Here And Now followed in the tradition of eclecticism that these magazines displayed. Here And Now published a wide assortment of poetry and prose,

as well as articles on Canadian art and photography. As also noted in the magazine's first editorial, it opened its pages to occasional work from outside Canada, believing that Canadian writing could "not exist apart from the underlying literary currents"<sup>80</sup> of the day. The sensibility of the magazine was a modern one, and this was reflected in the magazine's diverse contents. The first issue included "A Greeting" by E.J. Pratt, an article by Northrop Frye, "The Eternal Tramp," on Charlie Chaplin, prose fiction by James Reaney and P.K. Page, an extended article by H. Reid MacCallum, "The Waste Land After Twenty-Five Years" which attempted to explore the levels of meaning in Eliot's difficult poem, sections of art and photography, and poems by P.K. Page, Patrick Anderson, Colleen Thibaudeau, Earle Birney, Roy Daniells, James Reaney, Ralph Gustafson, and W.W.E. Ross. The magazine represented no particular school of poetry but served, as did Contemporary Verse, as a forum for good writing.

Here And Now placed heavy emphasis upon prose writing. Its editorial in the second issue assessed the popularization of fiction writing, considering the ways that writers and readers are cheated by literature's Tin Pan Alley. Samples of non-commercial prose fiction by Ethel Wilson and James Reaney were featured in that issue. A critical concern for poetry was continued in Reid MacCallum's article "Coal and Diamonds" which considered the patterns of sound and sense in poetry. Northrop Frye continued writing on a variety of subjects by offering an appreciation of painter David Milne. Poetry by Page, Gustafson, Reaney, Souster, A.J.M. Smith and Stephen Spender was also presented.

The third issue continued to cover a variety of areas and interests. It included prose fiction by Roy Daniells and Ralph Gustafson, Jean Cocteau in translation, an extensive article by A.M. Klein on the complex structure of the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter in Joyce's Ulysses, and poems by R.A.D. Ford, Margaret Avison, Colleen Thibaudeau, Ralph Gustafson, Robert Finch, Robert Choquette, Louis Dudek, A.M. Klein,

Roy Daniells, and Anne Wilkinson.

In many respects the last issue was the most ambitious. It was a special issue in which most of the pages were devoted to criticism. The issue's editorial was, in itself, critical of the conditions under which Canada's literature was being written. It pointed out the geographical difficulties of finding an audience, the difficulty of getting published, the threatening proximity of American mass culture, and it took a swipe at the rise of creative writing courses, arguing that they did not teach creative writing because they failed to teach creative reading. The critical concerns of the articles themselves were varied. W.E. Collin's "The Literary Renaissance of 1934 in French Canada" discussed the founding of the French periodical La Relève and went on to a consideration of the work of Francois Hertel, Saint Denys-Garnéau, and Robert Charbonneau. A.M. Klein wrote a general critique of criticism and criticism conferences. Robert Weaver presented "A Sociological Approach To Canadian Fiction." Harry Roskolenko's "Post-War Poetry In Canada" was a criticism of most of the significant books of verse published in the post-war period up until June of 1949. Aside from other critical articles, the issue was rounded out by a section of Cocteau's Le Grand Ecart in translation, and poems by Dudek, Page, L.A. MacKay, Malcolm Ross, Anne Wilkinson, Earle Birney, E.J. Pratt and Alfred G. Bailey.

Here And Now attempted to reflect the literary climate of the times and, to a degree, accomplished that purpose. In format and orientation, however, it strayed from the basic premises of the little magazine and, in actuality, foreshadowed a periodical like Tamarack Review rather than continuing the true little magazine tradition carved out by magazines like Preview, First Statement, and Direction.

There were other relatively ephemeral publications that started up in the post-war period. In Montreal, Elan, "A Magazine For Young Writers," appeared in February of 1946. In spirit it was a sister publication to the early First

Statement; ironically Phyllis Aikman, Audrey Aikman's younger sister, was on the editorial board. The magazine was eclectic in spirit and printed work of writers within and around McGill University. Index, "A Guide to Good Reading," was edited by R.G. Simpson, and first appeared in March of 1946. In contrast to the coterie magazine, Index was meant as "a publication for the reader. . .not for the writer or publisher."<sup>81</sup> It was the hope of the magazine to "do something to encourage a greater volume of more pleasurable and more constructive reading."<sup>82</sup> These publications, as well as P.M., which originated out of Vancouver, Impression from out of the mid-west, and Protocol from Newfoundland, had little to do with the major poetic struggles and innovations of the time. Rather, they fleshed out the literary and cultural atmosphere of the forties. Fiddlehead, surprisingly, originated at the University of New Brunswick in 1945 and has continued to this day. It is only in its later years and by virtue of its longevity that it has become something of a prestigious magazine. For twenty-five years it has maintained an eclectic, fairly non-partisan position.



## CHAPTER THREE FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Joan McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976), p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup>Floris McLaren, transcribed in "Alan Crawley & Contemporary Verse," prepared by George Robertson, Canadian Literature, no. 41 (Summer 1969), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Louis Dudek, "The Role of Little Magazines In Canada," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1967), p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Alan Crawley, Contemporary Verse, 1, no. 1, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Alan Crawley, Contemporary Verse, 1, no. 4, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>A.J.M. Smith, The Book of Canadian Poetry (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Co., 1948), p. 32.

<sup>10</sup>McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup>John Sutherland, "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup>McCullagh, pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup>Alan Crawley, Contemporary Verse, no. 36, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Alan Crawley, "A Special Notice," Contemporary Verse, no. 39, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>McCullagh, Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Gnarowski, An Index to "Direction" (Quebec: Culture, 1965), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Preview, no. 1, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Patrick Anderson, "Ourselves" Preview, no. 11, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>P.K. Page, "Canadian Poetry 1942," Preview, no. 8, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

- 22 F.R. Scott, "A Note on Canadian War Poetry," Preview, no. 9, p. 4.
- 23 Ibid., p. 3.
- 24 Neufville Shaw, "The Maple Leaf Is Dying," Preview, no. 17, p. 1.
- 25 Ibid., p. 3.
- 26 Ibid., p. 3.
- 27 Patrick Anderson, Preview, no. 21, pp. 2-3.
- 28 Ibid., p. 3.
- 29 John Sutherland, "Introduction to Other Canadians," The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, p. 59.
- 30 Ibid., p. 59.
- 31 Wynne Francis, "Montreal Poets In The Forties," Canadian Literature, no. 14 (Autumn, 1962), pp. 21-22.
- 32 Louis Dudek in interview; John Nause and J. Michael Heenan, "An Interview with Louis Dudek," Tamarack Review, no. 69, pp. 30-31.
- 33 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 1, p. 1.
- 34 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 2, p. 9.
- 35 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 1, p. 5.
- 36 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 12, p. 1.
- 37 Louis Dudek in interview; John Nause and J. Michael Heenan, "An Interview with Louis Dudek," Tamarack Review, no. 69, p. 34.
- 38 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 12, p. 1.
- 39 John Sutherland, First Statement, 1, no. 12, pp. 2-3.
- 40 Ibid., p. 3.
- 41 First Statement, 1, no. 13, p. 10.
- 42 Louis Dudek, "Geography, Politics, & Poetry," First Statement; 1, no. 16, p. 3.
- 43 Wynne Francis, "Montreal Poets in the Forties," Canadian Literature, no. 14 (Autumn 1962), p. 27.

44 Louis Dudek, "Geography, Politics, & Poetry," First Statement, 1, no. 16, p. 3.

45 Irving Layton, "The Modern Poet," First Statement, 1 no. 16, p. 4.

46 John Sutherland, "The Writing of Patrick Anderson," First Statement, 1, no. 19, p. 4.

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48 John Sutherland, "Literary Colonialism," First Statement, 2, no. 4, p. 3.

49 Dorothy Livesay, First Statement, 2, no. 6, p. 19.

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59 Nause and Heenan, "An Interview with Louis Dudek," Tamarack Review, no. 69, p. 34.

60 "Editorial," Northern Review, 1, no. 1, p. 2.

61 A.J.M. Smith, "Nationalism & Canadian Poetry," Northern Review, 1, no. 1, p. 42.

62 Nause and Heenan, "An Interview with Louis Dudek," Tamarack Review, no. 69, pp. 34-35.

63 Northern Review, 2, no. 1, p. 40.

64 John Sutherland, "Critics on the Defensive," Northern Review, 2, no. 1, p. 23.

65 Ibid., p. 23.

66 Nause and Heenan, "An Interview with Louis Dudek," Tamarack Review, no. 69, p. 31.

67 John Sutherland, Northern Review, 3, no. 1, p. 3.

68 John Sutherland, Northern Review, 3, no. 4, p. 36.

69 Harold Horwood, "Number Ten Reports," Northern Review, 4, no. 2, p. 21.

70 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

71 John Sutherland, "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry," Northern Review, 4, no. 2, pp. 43-44.

72 Ibid., pp. 44-45. For complete quotation see pp. 46-47.

73 Ibid., p. 45.

74 Ibid., p. 47.

75 "Correspondence," Northern Review, 4, no. 4, p. 45.

76 Northern Review, 5, nos. 3-4, cover.

77 The Poetry of E.J. Pratt: A New Interpretation (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956). Sutherland saw the first finished printed copies of his book before his death.

78 John Sutherland, "The Great Equestrians," Northern Review, 6, no. 4, p. 21.

79 "Editorial," Here And Now, no. 1, p. 6.

80 Ibid., p. 6.

81 Index, 1, no. 1, p. 1.

82 Ibid., p. 1.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## SOCIAL REALISM'S SECOND PHASE

The McGill movement and the poetic activity of the thirties had provided the first tentative step in establishing Modernism in Canadian poetry. In the 1940's the spirit of Modernism prevailed and became the mainstream of poetic sensibility. When the movement faltered in the late 1940's a certain amount of reaction resulted, best exemplified by the attitudes expressed by John Sutherland in Northern Review from 1949-1956. As a leftist movement, the poetry of the forties failed to sustain itself. Many of the poets Sutherland included in Other Canadians stopped writing or ceased to produce valid work. Patrick Anderson slowly slipped out of the limelight, finally leaving the country in the early 1950's. Poets such as Denis Gibling, Guy Glover, Mark Edmund Gordon, Ronald Hambleton, David Mullen, Bruce Ruddick, Neufville Shaw, and Sutherland himself (as a poet) quickly slipped into obscurity. Kay Smith and P.K. Page never really went beyond the 1940's sensibility. The fact remains that a handful of those included in Other Canadians were to make an important impact upon Canadian poetry and push it on to a new stage of Modernist development in the 1950's. Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, and Irving Layton, because of their continuing development as poets and their involvement in the organizing and running of Contact Press, were to provide the most solid foundation upon which the work of the fifties, and consequently the sixties, were to be built. Margaret Avison, James Reaney, and Miriam Waddington, all included in Other Canadians, would also contribute to the new poetic environment of the 1950's and 1960's.

The renewed activities of Layton, Souster, and Dudek in the early fifties provided an impetus following the entropy that had set in during the late 1940's. All three were poets who were now coming into their prime years in their writing

and also in their attempts to define a new aesthetic. Souster had fallen into disfavor with Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse in the last few years of that publication's existence (Crawley had always had mixed feelings about Souster's work). Layton had never been much favored by Crawley and he quarrelled with Sutherland in the late forties. Dudek was the one who maintained the best relations with both of the forties editors but he too would grow tired of their direction, or lack of it. The kind of nationalism that Sutherland was fermenting in Northern Review ran counter to what these three poets wanted to see happening. It was Souster who was to provide the initial spark for a new push; in a letter to Dudek in 1951 he expressed his dissatisfaction with the current state of things:

I think you are probably as fed up with Contemporary Verse and Northern Review as I am, and I know there are plenty of others who feel the same way. I give them credit for publishing competent publications in the face of every obstacle and I support them but if we are going to move on something will have to take place. We need an outlet for experiment, and a franker discussion of the directions poetry is to take, not articles on lampman (sic) and the movies. What we need is in short a poetry mag with daring and a little less precious an attitude.

Dudek, at this time, was still living in New York, but was returning to Montreal in September. In his reply to Souster (July 17, 1951) he agreed with Souster about what was needed, but urged delay in putting out a new magazine. He felt that with his return to Montreal he would be able to exert an influence upon Sutherland and get him back on the right track. Having mulled over this thought for several months, Souster decided against Dudek's suggestion and, in October of 1951, announced his intention to produce a new little magazine:

. . . we plan to bring out the first issue of a new mimeographed magazine of verse to

be called Contact in February. We want to feature translations, experimental writing from Canada and the U.S.A., the odd poetry review, the emphasis on vigour and excitement, MAKE IT NEW is our unofficial slogan.<sup>2</sup>

Dudek was now quick to support Souster's idea for an experimental mimeographed magazine. At first Anne Wilkinson and George Nasir were slated to be involved with the magazine's production but they both dropped out of the project. Because of this Dudek became influential as Souster's main source of moral support.

Dudek became a main link in the development of Contact. Dudek had lived in New York for seven years, during which time he had become familiar with some American writers and had established a correspondence with Ezra Pound. As Gnarrowski notes:

It was this set of Dudek's connections with American writers and poets, to say nothing of his pre-occupation with Ezra Pound which urged Contact along the road of literary internationalism -- both North American and European. The pressure of this influence coincided neatly with Raymond Souster's own desire for a magazine with a policy of wider orientation, and placed Contact in diametrical opposition to the specially defined and circumscribed nationalism of John Sutherland and Northern Review.<sup>3</sup>

Souster had already demonstrated an interest in American writing when he was one of the editors of Direction, showing an admiration for the writings of Henry Miller and Kenneth Patchen. During the summer of 1951 Souster and his wife had briefly visited Montreal for a holiday and had met with Dudek. One incident that occurred was to have a major influence on Souster's poetic development. As he relates it:

I'll always remember the day at the farm on the Little Jesus River, with Louis Dudek throwing the first two issues of Cid Corman's Origin down on the picnic table and saying "this is typical of what the nuts in New York are doing these days". I remember casually

flipping through both copies and then giving them back to him -- I was not yet ready for Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. But the next year something led me back to those two issues, and then Louis came to Toronto in May and left me as a gift The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams. From that time on my world of poetry assumed largely its present shape.<sup>4</sup>

Souster, with time, was to establish literary relationships with the Origin group, and also with W.C. Williams. Most notably, Corman, Creeley and Olson were to have a significant impact upon Contact

The first issue of Contact appeared in January of 1952. It contained poems by Layton, Dudek, A.G. Bailey and Kenneth Patchen among others. Souster wrote a short review of Layton's The Black Huntsman, which had been privately printed, and he reprinted the title poem. The other piece of significant prose was the opening editorial/article, "Où Sont Les Jeunes?," written by Dudek. The opening paragraph of this article sounded the call for a new beginning in Canadian poetry:

Poetry in Canada needs a new start. To the young, the field is wide open. Our younger poets are getting grey about the temples. The work of the forties is by now old and yellow: it was a good beginning, but not yet the real thing. There is now a ready audience for any young writer with something fresh and bouncing to say, someone with a new technique, a vision, or a gift for making art out of matters of fact. But where are the young? Where is the "new" generation?<sup>5</sup>

In effect, there was a new generation that would emerge out of the middle 1950's, a diversified group including, among others, Leonard Cohen, Avi Boxer, Alden Nowlan, D.G. Jones, Phyllis Webb, Gael Turnbull, Eli Mandel, Henry Moscovitch and Daryl Hine; yet one gets the feeling that the generation Dudek was looking for was not this group; rather it was the New Wave Canada explosion of the 1960's that would fulfil these expectations, and then Souster was the editor willing



and eager to define the New Wave. Within the pages of Contact we do not see the emergence of a new generation; rather we see the forward movement of several poets who had begun in the forties, who had received their preliminary training in that era, and who now were ready to move ahead. It was Layton, Souster, and Dudek as much as anyone, who themselves sought to fulfil what Dudek defined as the needs of Canadian poetry: "Canada needs poets who will have learned from the experimental and realistic writing of the last ten years and who will go on from there."<sup>6</sup> In the course of his article Dudek cites what some of the elements of this forward moving poetry should be: raw imagination, an ability to write social realism, a knowledge of the craft of free verse, a concern with the concrete rather than the abstract, and a poetry that is alive with energy and thought. In his succinct summation Dudek avers: "Poetry today aims at making the major integration of life."<sup>7</sup>

In the course of their correspondence, Dudek had suggested to Souster that he contact Cid Corman, the editor of Origin. Souster sent Corman a copy of the first issue of Contact; he also included a letter requesting that Corman put him in touch with young writers who Corman thought were promising. Corman, in his reply, indicated his dissatisfaction with the material in Contact but approved of the energy behind the magazine and promised to relay some of the writers in the Origin group to Souster. Responding to the second issue of Contact, Corman was again critical of the Canadian content, finding it somewhat amateurish. It was at this point that Corman stepped in to really influence the direction of Contact and to provide it with much of its "international" flavor. Gnarowski has assessed the position that Souster found himself in with Contact after two issues as follows:

The alternatives were obvious. If Canada was not producing the kind of work that was needed, then Contact could either settle for second best, or go to the United States and Europe for more impressive

material. And here, Corman really came into his own. Not only did he impress the importance of Charles Olson and Robert Creeley on Souster, but his own far-ranging interests "internationalized" Contact to an extent to which no other Canadian little magazine had ever aspired. Corman supplied translations of the work of Gottfried Benn, George Forestier, Octavio Paz, Rene de Obaldia and Guillaume Apollinaire. More translated material would be forthcoming from other sources, so much that by the time Contact ceased publication, the magazine had featured selections from Jacques Prevert, George Seferis, Jean Cocteau and Anna Akmatova, providing in the case of the latter one of the rare occasions when her work found its way into English translation.

The third issue of Contact was the first to print a significant number of poems by members of the Origin group. William Bronk, Vincent Ferrini, Charles Olson and Samuel French Morse appeared in the company of Irving Layton, Avi Boxer and Phyllis Webb. The editor Souster, although he never contributed poetry to Contact, did write the occasional comment or article and, in this third issue, wrote "A Note on Origin" in which he attempted to familiarize the readers of Contact with Corman and his group. Summarizing the work coming out of Origin, Souster noted:

Olson is the key figure in this re-sourcing of creative effort. His distinction lies in his having assimilated the richest part of Pound's and Cummings' achievement and then adding his personal intelligence, a most penetrating and widespread intelligence, to a driving passionate voice. He has recognized that poetry derives from the speech we use; that that is its norm and no other. Poetry becomes the voices' most articulate strategy.<sup>9</sup>

Souster goes on to call Olson's "Projective Verse" essay a "brilliant article" and quotes from it several paragraphs dealing with speech and language. Comparing Olson's verse with Souster's, it is difficult to see the bearing of the one upon the other, or where the relation, if any, resides;

we note, however, that the great liberating principle implicit in Olson's "Projective Verse" is the notion that poetry derives from human speech in its common form. This approach to poetry is apparent in Souster's easy colloquial style. One might even argue that Souster, in his poetry, is more true to the language as it is spoken than Olson in some of his more syntactically complex moments.

While Corman was judging Contact by an international standard and finding it wanting, Dudek was looking at Contact in light of what it provided for Canadian poetry; thus he did not see the Canadian content as second-rate; rather he saw it as being miles beyond what was being printed in Sutherland's Northern Review. Above all, the purpose of Contact and Contact Press was to revitalize the flagging Canadian poetry scene. Whereas Sutherland sought to place the sickly Canadian poetry in a secluded oxygen tent, Souster decided that what it needed above all else was a transfusion.

Despite Corman's criticism of Canadian writing, Souster continued to publish Canadians amongst his international contributors. Issue #4 represents a blend of international content with Canadian, containing work by George Seferis and Rainer M. Gerhardt along with poems by Eli Mandel, Malcolm Miller, Louis Dudek and Irving Layton. Sections of Layton's and Dudek's prefaces from Cerberus are reproduced. Layton attacks the gentility that has overtaken Canadian poetry; as an alternative he proposes Whitman's "barbaric yawp." In the section quoted from Dudek's preface, he makes the point that "Language is the great saving first poem, always being written; all others are made of it."<sup>10</sup> Layton's attack upon "gentility," "propriety," and "respectability" is seconded by Charles Olson in his short poem "These Days," in volume 2, no. 1. Apart from its value as a statement of Olson's poetic intention, it represents an approach to poetry that was begun in Canada with the First Statement group and has become the abiding trend since the early sixties:

whatever you have to say  
 leave the roots on, let them  
 dangle

And the dirt

just to make clear  
 where they came from<sup>11</sup>

What Dudek and Souster shared with the members of the Origin group was their primary poetic sources, the joint masters of the Canadian and Black Mountain group--Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. The directives of these two poets, "Make it new" and "No ideas but in things," were the guiding principles that these young Canadian and American poets shared. Pound had made a terrific impact upon Dudek and Olson; yet, in many ways, their writing was worlds apart. Far from forming a united front or super-school of North American poetry, the Cerberus group and the Origin group merely appeared side by side in Contact; they never became, in any sense, a collective unit. At one point, seeking a greater internationalism, Corman suggested (in September of 1952) the merging of Origin, Contact, and an English little magazine, Window; this move was resisted by Dudek and Souster: "Dudek had practical objections as well, but worry about the work and influence of Contact being diverted from the Canadian scene was of prime importance."<sup>12</sup> Souster refused to become part of an international cooperative; at the same time, he resisted Dudek's suggestion that he and Layton take a greater part in the running of Contact. What must be recognized is that, despite the influence of Corman, of Dudek, of Layton, and despite suggestions from Robert Creeley, Contact was very much Raymond Souster's magazine. Although he accepted advice, the final editorial decisions were always his own.

What Souster was striving for was a magazine that would break through national and provincial boundaries. For too long Canadian writing had been shut in upon itself and had narcissistically looked at itself in a mirror of its own

making. As Sutherland had pointed out in his criticism, the Canadian critic was too quick to praise Canadian writing just because it was Canadian writing. This had led to the promotion of much second rate material. Sutherland himself, however, had by this time begun to judge Canadian writing in its relation to what he considered to be the established Canadian and English poetic traditions. This simply would not suffice. Contact #8 featured at the bottom of one of its pages a pertinent quotation from William Carlos Williams: "Think of 'English' and 'American' as one language among us called the 'old' and the 'new' language."<sup>13</sup> There was much more of a substantial relationship to be found with the new American writing than with the old worn out traditions and verbal machinations of the English bards. Yet another instructive note is included in the same issue, this one from Ezra Pound, taken from his correspondence with Dudek:

naturally to HELL with Canadian or any other  
 parrochial pt/ of view. . . .BUT a live review/  
 not merely one of these art-shop fly leaves/  
 has got to be based on understanding of LIFE"  
 . . . .NOT trying to get a teaparty or sup-  
 press data in favor of pink punks". . . .  
 "Hell No/ git yr/ eye off Canada and onto  
 internat/ criteria/"<sup>14</sup>

Clearly this is what Souster was trying to do with Contact, to place Canadian writing in the context of international writing and to have it judged on the basis of its inherent value, rather than upon its significance to a burgeoning national literature. Within this context, articles on writers who were not Canadian (George Seferis, W.C. Williams, and Gottfried Benn) appeared in the pages of Contact. What is also interesting is that certain Canadian books were reviewed by the Origin group. Cid Corman's assessment of Canadian Poems 1850-1952, edited by Dudek and Layton, appeared in the sixth issue of Contact (February-April 1953). Creeley's "A Note On Poetry" (vol. 2, no. 2) is a comprehensible explanation of the general ideas outlined by Olson in "Projective Verse" and his "A Note On Canadian Poetry" (Contact

#8) is an impressionistic recounting of a Frenchman who had written poetry while making the voyage to this continent with Champlain. The magazine ran upon its "contacts," following yet another idea proposed by Pound to Dudek in their correspondence: "A periodical runs by getting a lot of contacts/ NOT by isolation in a circle of diminishing purists or devotees of some one idea."<sup>15</sup>

Gnarowski, in his account of the history of the magazine, maintains that it was the decrease of interest in the magazine on the part of Dudek, Corman, and Creeley that led to Souster eventually terminating publication. The fact is that several other things were happening concurrently. Dudek, in 1953, became involved with the running of CIV/n, a new magazine in Montreal; Corman seemed more concerned with Origin, his effect upon Souster having waned; and Creeley was beginning to teach at Black Mountain college and to edit the Black Mountain Review. Souster's time was also taken up with the operation of Contact Press, which was then becoming the most vital small press in Canada. In February of 1954 Souster contacted Dudek, Creeley and Corman to inform them that Contact #10 was to be the last issue. The cover of that issue carried the following notice:

CONTACT, an international magazine of modern poetry. . .wishes to thank both readers and contributors for the support they have given it over the past two years. They regret having to give up the magazine, but find it impossible to continue it with the limited free time at their disposal. The companion magazine of CONTACT PRESS, CIV/n, is however still very much alive, and we know that many of our readers and poets will support this outstanding quarterly, which is now also international in scope and welcomes a wider range of material.<sup>16</sup>

Contact had been in existence for a little over two years; it had presented an alternative to the reactionary policies expressed in Northern Review. "Contacts" had been made; and yet, ironically, the Origin/Black Mountain poets were to have

a much greater impact on the poetry of the sixties generation which was to follow than on this group. The "Black Mountain" poetic would literally revolutionize Canadian poetry, stimulating the new wave that was to occur in the sixties, a direction that Souster, completely sympathetic to this development, would anthologize in his Contact Press anthology New Wave Canada. The shift in alliance from British to American influences would finally be achieved; Contact played an extremely important part in this shift.

Souster's attempts to counter the effects of Northern Review through Contact were bolstered by the appearance of CIV/n, originating in Montreal early in 1953. CIV/n was to run for a total of seven issues, the last two of which came out after the demise of Contact. Louis Dudek has recounted how CIV/n came into being:

It was a mimeographed magazine for the first five numbers, printed for the last two. The initial move to start the magazine came from the Editor Aileen Collins. She had with her two close friends and assistants who completed the nominal editorial board. Stanley and Wanda Rozynski, a married couple. . . When Miss Collins, however, put the suggestion for a magazine before me, I offered help and advice, and proposed that manuscripts be read by a larger group including Layton and myself, and that Aileen Collins and the Rozynskis edit the magazine in the light of our group discussions. There was always a tactful solicitude on the part of Layton and myself not to interfere with the editorial freedom of the actual editors. We read the poetry before a group at Layton's house, enjoying free comments and debate over the poems, but we made no decisions and left the final choice of what was to go into the magazine up to the Editor.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Dudek's contention that he and Layton tried to stay in the background, their presence was very much felt. The title of the magazine itself came from Dudek, and this was taken from a statement of Ezra Pound's: CIV/n not a one-man job." All of the production work and distribution were

handled by Aileen Collins and the Rozynskis but much of the interesting energy expressed in the magazine stems from Layton and Dudek, and particularly from Dudek.

Like Contact, CIV/n started out as a Canadian production and gradually worked towards a broader orientation. By early 1953 Contact had already headed off in the direction of international content, Souster being influenced by Cid Corman and the Origin group. CIV/n, at first, resisted this pull. The first issue features a selection of Canadian writers from both the forties and fifties generations: poems by Phyllis Webb, Dudek, Avi Boxer, Layton, Souster, D.G. Jones, E.W. Mandel, and Patrick Anderson (also Dudek under the pseudonym of Alexander St. John Swift) appeared in this first issue. The magazine offered no opening editorial. On the first page, below the somewhat cryptic title, appeared the explicit statement "Civilization is not a one man job." On the whole, the poems contained in this issue reflect a certain social consciousness, showing a concern for the prospects of civilization in Canada. Dudek's "Biology for Schools" ridiculed our sexual mores. Several of his socially satiric poems that would later appear in Laughing Stalks appeared in CIV/n under the pseudonym.

The second issue of CIV/n continued in the style of the first. This issue included poems by Layton, Gael Turnbull, Souster, Boxer, D.G. Jones, Ralph Gustafson, and Alexander St. John Swift. In addition there was a section called "Views & Reviews." Three reviews appeared: a review of Canadian Poems 1850-1952 edited by Dudek and Layton by James Boyer May; a review of Kenneth Rexroth's The Dragon and the Unicorn by Dudek; and a review of Cerberus by Neil Compton. In his review of Rexroth's book, Dudek argued for the vitality that was needed in poetry at the time:

The Dragon and the Unicorn may serve as an example of what can be done to give poetry the guts it needs, to win back from the pasty sold-out intellectuals and critics and place it in the centre of the fight for reality and reason.<sup>18</sup>



This fight for reality and reason is reflected in Compton's evaluation of Cerberus, the first publication of Contact Press which contained prefaces and poems by Dudek, Layton, and Souster. As Compton sees it, the fight is for a vital language and literature. In his short review, Compton concentrates on the common ground to be found in the poems included in Cerberus.

As Dudek says, "We three in this book share the same affirmations and therefore the same negations in the face of the present." More than that, they constitute a recognizable school in Modern poetry. All three are confident of the social value of art, and agree that the hatred of art which characterizes official culture in Canada is symptomatic of our social sickness; all three are non-conformists and iconoclasts of that most dangerous type (to flabby conformity) which finds its ideal subversive expression in the uninhibited yawp of positive affirmation: each manages to equate a healthy contempt for things-as-they-are with a (perhaps illogical) confidence in the possibilities for the future.

Generalizations about their work will be pretty shaky unless supported by detailed analysis, but let's go out on a limb in this final paragraph. The Cerberus Group ("Don't label us", says Souster) is probably the liveliest and the most certain of its aims of any group writing in Canada: their poetry is seldom dull, almost never merely academic, usually exploratory and experimental. Nevertheless, for all their defiant verve and confidence, they still face the problem of all poets in this country, the thinness of the Canadian "language". Since they rightly believe that poetry should have a living relation to the rhythms and tones of spoken discourse, they cannot help being limited by the grey and fuzzy unloveliness of our national tongue. All three heads of the beast may bark in protest at this view, but I believe it is so. I also believe that hopes for a language worthy of a poet's talents must chiefly lie in work of the kind to be found in this volume.<sup>19</sup>

CIV/n, in its poetry and critical views, represented an opposition, along with Contact, to the reactionary trends of

Northern Review, just as the writing of Layton, Dudek and Souster provided an alternative to writers such as Douglas Le Pan, James Wreford Watson and Charles Bruce. Yet, despite this, Ezra Pound, who was incarcerated at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., and who maintained a correspondence with Dudek, did not look favorably upon the work that CIV/n was doing. In a letter received by Dudek in late April of 1953, Pound, in response to the second issue of CIV/n, remarked that "surely among all these bright young things you OUGHT to be able to find the makings of at least one polemical writer."<sup>20</sup> Dudek himself has made an assessment of Pound's criticism:

The magazine was in fact extremely "polemical", but Pound only recognized as rightly polemical and "useful" those magazines which parroted his little program to the letter . . . We were very much for Pound, but we could not possibly serve him in the way he wanted. In fact, CIV/n had its own ego-personalities, and a very locally-focussed Canadian program, so that it could not be entirely subordinated to Pound's internationalist ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Pound's prodding for an internationalist content, CIV/n continued to be primarily "locally-focussed." The third issue featured poems by Waddington, Gustafson, Souster, Aileen Collins, Layton, Phyllis Webb, Gael Turnbull and Dudek. Three poems by George Seferis appeared in translation and a poem and article by Melech Ravitch were translated from Yiddish by Layton. Also included was an extended article by Dudek on two books by H.A. Innis and one by Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride. Dudek was highly critical of these two writers for "compounding with Madison Avenue instead of making a radical criticism of illiterate culture; and also [For] turning away from the major arts to an exaggerated concern with the vaporous media, treating them, rather than the traditional arts, as the shaping forces of society."<sup>22</sup>

In response to the third issue Pound wrote: "CIV/V o.k. for local centre / question whether D/ has contact

with anyone or any means interested in mag/ standing for maximum awareness,"<sup>23</sup> Pound also forwarded a statement signed by ten university professors which argued (in Poundist fashion) about the alarming state of the humanities at this time. This was reprinted in CIV/n #4.

Issue #4 reflects an expansion in the scope of the magazine, in that work by members of Corman's Origin group is now in evidence. This issue contains poems by Webb, Dudek, Creeley, Layton, Boxer, Leonard N. Cohen, Corman, Souster, and D.G. Jones. A vast majority of the prose writing in this issue is concerned with Pound. Dudek's review of Pound's translations considers Pound's skills as a poet and translator. This is followed by an "editorial" of sorts, written by Dudek, "Why is Ezra Pound Being Held in St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington D.C.?" which calls for an appeal to be made to the President of the United States to have Pound set free; two quotations from writers in Ireland also call for Pound's release. Finally, there is an article by Camillo Pellizzi, translated from the Italian, "Ezra Pound: A Difficult Man," which presents a personal view of Pound by someone who knew him in Italy during the war years and who maintains that Pound had never committed treasonable acts against the U.S. Although the magazine may not have subordinated itself to Pound's criteria for what a magazine should be, it certainly took up his political case in this issue.

Also appearing in the fourth issue is an article by D.G. Jones, "The Question of Language Prostitution," which contrasts the way that language is used in the cause of truth in literature and, in contrast, in the cause of sales in advertising. This concern with the mass media was quite noticeable in CIV/n. The magazine's contributors, particularly Dudek, were sensitive to the development of post-war media and saw in these a serious threat to literary language and to literature (it is worth noting that Dudek was completing his book Literature And The Press at this time).

It is in the fifth issue of CIV/n that the editor, Aileen Collins, wrote an editorial under the heading "Letters From The Editor." The first of her remarks appear under the heading "Canadian Culture":

Culture in Canada will remain at a stalemate until the country is given back to the Indians. This "civilization" - ugh.

Culture, however, is the main topic today, for CBC radio talks, letters in Saturday Night, etc, etc, etc.

One much-used excuse for Canada's lack of whatever-it-is, is the fact that it is a young nation. From a "young nation", one would expect fresh, rich, original products, with spirit, vigour - something to say to the old world - instead of the pasteurized leached products which are passed off as Canadian.

Now, to me, it doesn't matter half a damrr whether we ever achieve a "Canadian Culture" - or not. Nothing will be done until we start concentrating on producing poetry without qualifications as to nation. But a poet in Canada is forced to write with maple syrup on birch bark (which will insure his being included in any later anthologies edited by Birney, probably under the classification "Natural Resources").

The kind of poetry we want will be a vital representation of what things are, done in strong language (if necessary) or any language, but it will force the reader to see just what the world around him is like.

The Canadian mind has been protected and insured too long. It is time now to get it out of storage. For Kulchur's sake, at least, let's have a lot of bad good poetry in future, instead of more good bad poetry --- and let the dead-head critics hold their peace until the call of the last moose.<sup>24</sup>

This editorial is a call for a realistic and vital poetry. The call is again for the new and alive; in this sense CIV/n bears some relation to First Statement in the requirements it sets for Canadian poetry.

The second editorial note contained in CIV/n #5 an-

nounces the demise of Contact, leaving CIV/n as the only vital publication in Canada at the time. The magazine would continue, however, for only two more issues.

Issue #5 strengthened the relationship with the Origin group that had already been established; Robert Creeley appears in company with Layton, Turnbull, Dudek, Cohen, Souster, and Anne Wilkinson; and there is an extended review by Dudek of books by Paul Blackburn, Charles Olson, and Robert Creeley. We must note especially Dudek's remarks on Olson, who was the main theorizer of the Black Mountain group and who is today considered the poet among that group of the greatest poetic achievement. Dudek's remarks reveal why the Canadian Cerberus trio and the Black Mountain/Origin group never came together as a unified movement. Dudek is quite critical of Olson's method of composition. He argues that "One can see the private-monologue-in-private-shorthand menacing us all along the way from 1915,"<sup>25</sup> and he finds this in Olson's writing. Dudek sees Olson, to a large extent, as an imitator of Pound, and as one who has also been overly influenced by the poetic theories of William Carlos Williams.

The theory, bluntly, is that poetry is not an art form: it is a lump of coral that grows onto the living substance of life, or personality, and contains the shape and rhythm of reality. The test is authenticity.

But when life itself has lost all shape -- as the right flank, directed by Eliot, has long ago made clear -- you cannot make art out of the literal record. A vivid picture of the city dump, or of the private dump of one's own conscious or unconscious, makes no poem. Everyone knows that: but we are often heading more or less toward that last stand.<sup>26</sup>

Dudek stands in opposition to Olson's approach, which is composition by field, and opposes the looseness of his poetic structures. His criticism, however, is followed in this issue of CIV/n by Creeley's "A Note On Poetry," which is an affirmation of the Black Mountain poetic approach.

The last two issues of CIV/n were printed by offset

and continued to develop the contact between the American and Canadian groups. The sixth issue presented the work of Jacques Prévert, Creeley, Jonathan Williams, and Charles Olson, juxtaposed with poems by Aileen Collins, F.R. Scott, Gael Turnbull, Phyllis Webb, Anne Wilkinson, D.G. Jones, A.J.M. Smith, Dudek, Layton, and Souster. The magazine, as always, was very much rooted in the context of Canadian poetry, but this third stage of Modernism in Canada had its eyes open to the possibilities of poetry that existed beyond national and regional boundaries. The push was for Canadian poetry no longer viewed in provincial terms or limited to parochial perspectives. The seventh issue featured characteristic work by the young Leonard Cohen, and also by Dudek, Layton, and Creeley. In this issue Layton was the prime essayist, upholding, in his essay "Shaw, Pound, and Poetry," the basic validity of George Bernard Shaw's and Ezra Pound's view that power in our time is founded upon money; he also wrote a piece on Souster's Crepe Hanger's Carnival. Both of Layton's essays lashed out against some force or group that he saw as oppressors of poetry; in the case of the Shaw-Pound essay it is the bourgeois class that leads to the perversion of art and morality; in the Souster article the enemies are "pompous ignoramuses"<sup>27</sup>--the critics. It was Layton's contention that the monopolies of these groups must be broken.

In its time CIV/n, like Contact, served the important function of resisting the regressive tendency in poetry that stemmed out of the late forties and in also pushing poetry forward to a condition of Modernism resting on the most solid of foundations. Although the socialist verse of the forties had suffered a defeat, social force and consciousness were still necessary in verse, as well as a moral integrity and commitment to language. Also, the narrow tradition that still held Canadian poetry in the forties had to be broken, and this process was begun in the pages of Contact and CIV/n. Layton, Souster, and Dudek appeared side-by-side with Olson, Creeley, Corman and others of the Black Mountain group be-

cause they all shared a tangible commitment to poetry, to keep it moving ahead and to write it in the real language of the day.

When the Montreal magazine Yes appeared in 1956, the spadework that had been done by Souster and Dudek in Contact and CIV/n remained as an understood pre-requisite. There was no need to chart a new course for Canadian poetry; a positive direction had already been established. Edited by three young Montreal poets--Michael Gnarowski, Glen Siebrasse, and John Lachs--Yes first appeared in April of 1956 and quickly established itself as an eclectic magazine carrying on in the tradition of social realism and its early fifties aftermath. The founding editorial stated no hard-line program; rather it defined what the editors felt was the function of the little magazine and stated an affirmation of literary expression:

A new magazine has come to Montreal. Perhaps the thought of a city that could clothe its people in the periodicals it sells does not make this seem an impressive accomplishment. Yet a distinction must be made here; for the professional efforts that roll their paper like two-legged beavers are quite apart from the phenomenon known as the "little magazines". These productions, such as Fredericton's "Fiddlehead", are not devoted to making money (heaven forbid), but rather to providing a stimulating and indispensable literature. Especially in such fields as poetry, which is not commercially attractive, is this need fulfilled. Their other important contribution lies in the fact that they give encouragement to new talent by allowing them a medium in which to present themselves; people who, one day, might add weight to our cultural progress.

Unfortunately the little magazine movement in Canada has shown a tendency to lapse in recent years. It is to be hoped that this mimeographed effort will initiate a new phase of activity in this field so as to provide a suitable outlet for the commencing Renaissance of Canadian Writing.

Our magazine is called YES. This is its attitude. It has been created for the writing of the second half of the twentieth century

which we believe will once again be the expression of positive values. The world is a yes place - let us then say so.<sup>28</sup>

The appearance of Yes did, in fact, signal a new phase of activity: by the next year, 1957, Dudek had started Delta and Souster had resumed with Combustion. Yes would outlive both of those magazines, carrying on until 1970.

In saying "yes" to literature of the twentieth century and "yes" to quality the editors of Yes were also saying "yes" to the direction that had been established by the social realist movement. They felt no need to define a new direction for poetry. This was, in fact, to be the mark of the Montreal poets of the sixties: their utter willingness to follow in the path that had been established by Souster, Layton, and Dudek. Just as the Cataract poets were to come under the influence of Layton, Siebrasse and Gnarowski came to closely ally themselves with Dudek; this eventually resulted in their participation in Dudek's Delta Canada, a small press publishing books. At the time of the founding of Yes, however, the editors were resistant to Dudek's prodding to declare a more definite editorial policy than a mere "yes" to contemporary writing. This resulted in an editorial in the third issue, twice the length of the initial one, in which the editors defended their intention to remain free of any declared editorial policy:

In a letter to the editors Mr. Louis Dudek suggests that we come forward and state our views—advance an editorial policy. It seems to be an accepted custom with intellectuals since the days of the Marxian incarnation in 1848, to prepare at regular intervals manifestos in which humanity is neatly divided into two camps, the world interpreted in terms of a Manichaeian struggle of light and darkness, opinions are stated, policies outlined. A similarly incisive declaration of allegiance is demanded of all others, to aid the enterprise of cut and dried classification in the proper filing cabinets of the mind. People who talk little are not well liked; one does not know what to expect of them. If people do not "commit themselves"



on at least the subjects of party politics, economic theory, the status of atheism, the nature of art and the horrors of the machine age, they are denounced as cowards of as muddle-headed eclectics.

In our view it is not absolutely essential for a magazine devoted to publishing contemporary writing, to be factional and consequently to be unavailable to the majority of poets, who are then considered 'outsiders'. This is especially the case in Canada, where poetry has only just come to life a decade or so ago and where unfortunately so few little magazines serve the young poet.

To be a writer with no convictions evidently entails disastrous consequences. It is in fact a contradiction in terms, for to write is to communicate and if the author has no convictions, the element of honesty is removed. But we maintain that what holds for writing does not necessarily hold for the editing of a magazine. The policy of a magazine should not be preformed, as judgments are often preformed before the examination of the facts. Selection for publication should be determined by the quality of the material available, not by considerations of partisanship and the exaggerated need for energetic blasts. We see no advantage in forcing the selective sieve of a biased editorial policy on our eyes. We feel that all the editorial policy we need is expressed in our title, "YES".

"Ah," we can hear the voice of the determined classifier, "but then all you are saying is that you simply want 'good writing!'" Well, this may be a way of putting it. But we could also put it this way: we are giving our assent to value and we do not want to predetermine what kind of value—so long as what we get is value. Here the formulation ceases to seem trivial and we enter the field of the theory of values. Indirectly we are also giving our assent to life, since life alone—substantial activity, in the philosopher Whitehead's words—is the source of emergent value. Is this not enough of an editorial policy? Is it not enough that the poet when he sits down to write and subsequently sends in his work for publication, has already affirmed social community with other men? With such an editorial policy, the task of reducing to shambles with the sheer force of words, the

antiquated and repulsive features of human life is left to the individual writer. We are sure that if there are any authors who feel that such destructive work is necessary, as it certainly is, they will not be shy to come forward, train their guns on the enemy and say so.<sup>24</sup>

The editors made a strong avowal of their eclecticism and it is a policy to which they stuck for most of the magazine's life. Significantly, nine months later, Dudek began Delta in whose first editorial he states the need for sometimes saying "no". This kind of open door policy in little magazines makes them valuable only until another magazine with a pertinent policy emerges and declares war upon the present literary establishment. It is for this reason that Yes exists as a minor accomplishment when compared with Delta and Tish, two of its contemporaries.

The editorial in the first issue had made it clear that Yes was intended to be a medium for new talent, this new talent, of course, being primarily Gnarowski, Siebrasse, and Lachs. Gnarowski was to hone his academic and poetic skills within the pages of the magazine; poems by Siebrasse and by Lachs, for as long as he participated in the magazine, appeared regularly. These were accompanied by those of other Montreal poets: Dudek, Layton, George Ellenbogen, Daryl Hine, Henry Moscovitch, Lionel Tiger, F.R. Scott, Milton Acorn and Al Purdy. Through several editorial shakeups and moves Gnarowski maintained control. Lachs dropped out after issue #9 (he left to teach in Maryland, and to publish books of philosophy there), Siebrasse was removed from the masthead for two issues, being temporarily replaced by an American editor, Donald M. Winkelman, after which Winkelman in turn was dropped and Siebrasse returned with Hugh Hood in tow who took on the role of associate editor for issue 12-14; as of the fifteenth issue the sole editors were Gnarowski and Siebrasse until the magazine's termination. The magazine also changed location several times, as Gnarowski changed academic posts, moving from Montreal to Port Arthur,

Ontario, then to Pierrefonds, Quebec. In effect, Gnarowski took the magazine with him whenever he changed address. This was one reason why the magazine never came to encompass the burgeoning Montreal scene of the sixties. Cataract, edited by Seymour Mayne, K.V. Hertz, and Leonard Angel, appeared as an alternative publication.

As an eclectic magazine Yes really hit its stride with issues 13-16. The editorial in issue #13 recounts the latest developments in the early sixties Dudek-Layton feud, features a section of Layton's poems with an introduction by Gnarowski, and includes interesting work by Souster, Hood, Fred Cogswell, Milton Acorn and Siebrasse. Yes #14 contains sections from Dudek's Atlantis as well as notebook entries; this issue also includes poems by Everson, Gustafson, Douglas Barbour, and A.J.M. Smith. Yes #15 features John Glassco, along with poems by Barry McKinnon, Tom Marshall, Michael Harris, Don Gutteridge, Souster and Dudek. The 16th issue of Yes contains work by Purdy, Victor Coleman, Tom Marshall, Joan Finnigan, Michael Ondaatje, John Wieners, Henry Beissel and Alden Nowlan among others. Ironically, at a time when Yes seemed to be functioning closest to its original intention, a two-year silence ensued after issue #16; when #17 appeared in October of 1969, an editorial announced a turn-about in policy.

A question which has been much on our minds and one which needs raising in connection with the revival of this magazine concerns the sum total of what has been happening to poetry in the last few years.

When we started YES in 1956 we believed that the directions for poetry in this country were clear. We believed in the poem's relevance to life; we believed that the poem had to be rooted in real experience; we believed in a style and content which would be of this country but which would also recognize its North American contact. Furthermore, ours was a literary fundamentalism which saw the poem as deriving from an artistic and reassuring faith in the creativity of people, and we believed that literary

values and aspirations had been democratized. We believed that popular art could be great; we did not know that great art could not be popular. For us the line of descent was clear. From Whitman and along lines laid down by the man from Idaho. Since we believed in Walter Whitman more than in Professor Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, it followed that we would believe more in Raymond Souster than in Professor Arthur James Marshall Smith. The spirit of the man...damn it...it was the spirit of the man that was close to us. Had Whitman not--in a style which would become the hallowed modus operandi of little presses and their people, of First Statement and Contact--had he not designed and published his own first edition of Leaves of Grass..? Therefore, Masters and Sandburg and Williams were good and important. Therefore, Sutherland's position (which was ours and we don't give a damn about the Pratt bit)--Sutherland's position formed on the left with Layton and Dudek and Souster. Therefore, there was no need for manifestos in 1956. . .just a shift from the social realism of the First Stamenters to a sharper urban focus and a greater interest in the possibilities of the image the new context was beginning to provide. But it didn't work out. If we had valued the hard-edged directness of the colloquial poem, we saw it become amorphous and formless. If we believed in the technique of the unaffected, we have seen it transformed into spurious disquisitions on "poesy" and the artful poses of projectivism. If we believed that poetry was somehow 'against this sea of stupidities'; 'against this sea of vulgarities'; 'against this sea of imbeciles' we have found that stupidities, imbecilities and vulgarities have become the stuff of poetry. Someone had made the wrong move back in 1952-1954. Souster and Contact magazine may have helped to make that first move. Souster and Combustion may have helped to make that move again in 1957-1960. Tish ended the game. And after that the little Millwins, and the turbulent and undisciplined host of poets. And the audience. No, not the few, not readers and lovers of perfection; not with knowledge or a fine sense, but the tolerant, confused, parasitic consumers of mass-cult. Poetry has married a truly ugly

wife.

Now, where do we begin?<sup>30</sup>

This editorial is a denunciation of the Vancouver movement and of the "new wave" of poetry that had arisen in the 1960's, influenced by the American Black Mountain poets. This editorial is a reaffirmation of the social realism that had emerged out of the forties and continued to be the mode in Montreal poetry of the sixties. The young Montreal poets of the sixties took up the dominant mode of writing; as the Yes editorial states, "there was no need for manifestos in 1956" because a certain tradition had been established and these young writers elected to continue to write in that vein. By 1969, however, that mode of writing had been eclipsed by most of the young poets writing in Canada. Interestingly, at the time of the birth of the Tish movement in Vancouver, the editors took up no liaison or debate with them, as did Seymour Mayne and K.V. Hertz, two of the Montreal poets associated with the magazine Cataract. It was with hindsight that Yes finally put forward its denunciation of the new poetry with its "artful poses of projectivism." The intention was that Yes would now begin to work poetry back towards a more productive vein. Unfortunately, the new Yes was to last for only three more issues.

The emergence of Yes in 1956 was followed by the taking up of publication by two personal little magazines in 1957: Raymond Souster's Combustion and, later in the year, Louis Dudek's Delta. Both of these magazines reflected the personalities and tastes of their editors. In that sense they bear a similarity to Northern Review in the Sutherland-dominated years, since they put forward the programs of a single man. The point of contrast between Northern Review on the one hand, and Combustion and Delta on the other, is that the latter two were in no way reactionary. They continued to break new ground rather than return to outmoded poetic traditions. Both editors made a concerted effort to find the young poets who were to provide Canadian poetry with its next

generation. In this way the magazines functioned much in the same way as Contact Press, trying to give publication to those who had no access to the commercial publishers.

In 1952 Souster had started Contact in reaction against the current trends of Northern Review and Contemporary Verse. In opposition to what he considered their reactionary nationalism, Souster had piloted the first international poetry magazine in Canada. When Contact folded in 1954, CIV/n continued to maintain relations with Corman's Origin group. CIV/n, however, only outlasted Contact by two issues. By 1957 the general atmosphere of dullness had once again fallen upon poetry in Canada. In the United States the Origin/Black Mountain group continued to write innovative verse, just as north of the border Dudek, Souster and Layton continued to refine their art. It was not the impetus for poetry that was lacking; it was the general atmosphere, which the writers saw as increasingly academic, that was said to stifle creativity. Souster's Combustion, first printed in January of 1957, was an attempt to counteract the ill effects, as he saw it, that had befallen poetry. Combustion came out as a mimeographed review and it was sent to a select mailing list (this is a procedure that would later be adopted by Tish and GrOnk in the 1960's and several magazines in the 1970's). As in the case of Contact, Combustion was launched by a direct and straightforward editorial. Souster began his attempt to assess the state of poetry in 1957 by quoting some passages that had recently appeared in some of the better known poetry magazines, then quickly fired off his response to these opinions:

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! How we fumble about our skirts, looking for the one right rosary to talk ourselves into! Is it so hard these days to put two clear singing words together, singing and clear because the motion in and behind them is?

I would have thought that Lawrence put it straight enough often enough. But we are slow to learn, if ever we learn. But then again we resent the intrusion of being

taught, especially to be told what befits us. And that may be best. If only we could be intruded on, if only we were as sure-footed as we are twinkle-toed and diamond-eyed.

There have been many injunctions telling us to call a spade a spade. Or a shovel. But that doesn't take us as far as the shovel does, in the proper hands, when it digs into loam or grit. And we are so busy being right and honest, and clever at being right and honest, that we fail to realize anything out of ourselves that was worth a moment's effort on our part or anyone else's thereafter.

But to bring the matter closer to, rather than spread sententiously out like someone who's won all the marbles, what gets into poetry these days, by and too large, is either a wad of dough that only enjoys its own doughy consistency or such refinements, such icings of the soul, so many jimmies and gimcracks on the ice-cream cone, that it is work for a critic to sense the poetry for the sweet bye-and-bye packed in like a Twelfth-night wish.

Poets, ill-paid and ill-used as they are, have lost sight of either their proper wages and proper uses. They have only one true labor, to put some human being out where others can get at it and no perversion will help but confuse. What we have are poets using their poems like savings accounts, insurance policies or receipts, trying to corner the market on Immortality. You want to become Immortal, eh? Ok. Start at Harvard. Try a Rhodes Scholarship. Edit the School magazine. Win a few prizes. Study with Winters at Stanford or Ransom at Kenyon or crack the big time by sipping cocktails with Auden and talk Kierkegaard. Sour grapes? Baloney! All so much evasion, fear to get a grip on any single emotion or desire, or to find out what it is that grips.

What we have as a result is plenty of flatulent reputation. But damned if much reaches the ear that moves or penetrates it. For how can a poem composed in vacuity, so trimmed of passion and so correct, get up on its hind-voice and roar (as Smart long advised) or so pleased, incant a ditty or curse or dare to desire. Where are the emotions Pandora freed for us?

Where hate, anger, love that has been drawn to its well, pity sorrow, pain? Instead what? Exercises to keep professors employed and students fed by the lure of checks, the mechanics of profit, siphoning the most educated mind-narrow off to this or that greasing factory.<sup>31</sup>

Souster, existing outside of the academic establishment, has always opposed the academic tendency in verse, and that is what he is doing here. Once again, in the tradition of Lawrence and Henry Miller, he is proselytizing for writing that is vital and deals directly with human experience.

In looking at Contact one can see the pull exercised upon that magazine: Corman trying to influence Souster into forgetting about Canadian content and lobbying for a true international content, Dudek reminding Souster that the first purpose of the magazine was to help foster a viable and vital Canadian poetry. In Combustion it is the Corman influence that has won out. Combustion is a Canadian magazine by virtue of the fact that it was printed in Toronto and edited by a Canadian. On the basis of contents it could just as easily have been an American little magazine. Looking through the pages of Combustion one is struck by how much the magazine foreshadows those who were to be included in Donald Allen's anthology, The New American Poetry (1945-1960). American poets Jonathan Williams, Cid Corman, Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Michael McClure, Ron Loewinson, Denise Levertov, Theodore Enslin, Larry Eigner, Gary Snyder, Fielding Dawson, Robert Duncan, Philip Whalen, Louis Zukofsky and Leroi Jones all appeared in the pages of Combustion. To a great extent Combustion points in the direction of the American influence that was to be so prevalent in Canada with the young poets of the sixties. Many of these American poets would be looked upon as the "teachers" of the next generation of Canadian poets. Combustion did also print the work of Canadian poets, but one is impressed by the vast amount of work by this group of Americans and also by various European poets in translation; many of these



translations were provided by Cid Corman; in fact Corman may be said to have "edited" the foreign material in Combustion as Ezra Pound "edited" the London poetry in Harriet Monroe's Poetry in 1912-1913. Nevertheless, Souster, in Combustion, was opening up the poetic atmosphere in Canada; in its internationalism Combustion stands as the antithesis of Sutherland's Northern Review, since it presented translations of Japanese, German, Chinese, French, Finnish, Italian, and Latin American poets. Canadian poets are constantly juxtaposed to foreign poets in the pages of the magazine.

Souster ran Combustion much in the fashion of Contact. Except for commentary, his own work never appeared in the magazine. There are few editorial statements; the emphasis is on the quality of the poetry itself. No arguments are made for an approach to Canadian poetry; rather, an international atmosphere is posited as an approach. Canadian poetry is to be judged on the basis of international criteria, rather than upon a local, parochial basis. Poets who would be important to the development of Canadian poetry in the 1960's appeared in Combustion's pages, among them Alden Nowlan, Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, Margaret Avison and John Robert Colombo. In many respects the energy and interest generated in Combustion would continue in the 1960's.

Louis Dudek's Delta was the last significant little magazine to begin publication in the 1950's. The first issue of Delta appeared in October of 1957. Like Souster's Combustion, Delta was a personal magazine, run under the editorship of one man and serving as an extension of the editor's aesthetic sensibility and taste. Again, like Combustion, Delta emerged in response to the current environment of Canadian poetry in 1957. But Delta differed vastly from Combustion in that Dudek's response to the situation of Canadian poetry was different. The opening editorial is both a criticism of current Canadian publications, literary quarterlies, and little magazines, and a statement of intention and direction:

The premise to start with, of course, is that there can never be too much poetry. Even bad poetry often amuses, exhilarates, irritates or awakens understanding. All poetry nowadays, anyhow, is someone's effort to save his soul.

That is mainly from the poet's point of view. But a magazine for other people ought to give reasons for demanding attention.

Delta is primarily a local affair: it is a poetry magazine for Canada with a job to do here. We'll have, certainly, contributors and readers from outside but it is the situation in Canada that brings us into existence. Our literary magazines are very active at present, but for the most part dismally dull and misdirected; full of pretention, stodgy convention, narrow-mindedness, lack of scope. Our critics pontificate and go wrong perpetually; our young poets do not explore, do not expand, do not discover or perfect anything new. So here, tentatively, are a few things we will do, and not do.

Unlike the Quarterlies (Queen's, Toronto, Dalhousie), we will not pontificate about "The Future of Canadian Literature" without mentioning names and facts. Our contributors will make it a pleasure and a policy to give names and state facts--even, we hope, in poems. Our contributors will show knowledge of their subject, without pomposity, snobbism, or plying for prestige; and they will try to prove what they say on the page. (I think such contributors can be found.)

Unlike Tamarack Review, we will not pretend to be a "big magazine". We will try not to pretend to much of anything. We will try to publish poems in which the poet in advance tells you: "Reader, I am probably neither more intelligent nor more learned than you, but hear me." A revolution, no less!

Unlike The Fiddlehead, on the other hand, we will not publish pages of assorted mints without aim or purpose. We will not read manuscripts through a screen of anonymity; we want to know who is talking and of what. We want poetry as relevant and immediate as the most exciting prose writing you can imagine. (Can such a contributor be found? Ah!)

Unlike Souster's Combustion (valuable and kindred as that may be), we will not stuff our pages with translation, with Jacques Prévert, René Char, etc., set in good or bad English prose. The reasons for this may be given - to out-Souster Souster - in the words of King Alfred, himself a translator of note: 'for thara wilnunga hie hit forleton, ond woldon that her thy mara wisdom on londe waere thy we may gethioda cuthon' (which being translated states that the reason the learned Anglo-Saxons of yore did not do much translating was that they neglected it deliberately, wanting to bring greater wisdom to the land by encouraging people to know more languages). Let this be our policy also: to review some books not written in English (!) as if there might be a few English-speaking persons in Canada who can actually read e.g. French; to publish also the occasional poem in French, German, Italian, Yiddish, or Russian - if such should come our way (and then, perhaps, to give you a translation on the side)..

To continue with this: Unlike the Canadian Forum, we will not publish "everything that comes in the mail." That sort of thing may be "very encouraging" but a jungle results. In other words, we will try to discriminate, and to focus.

Finally, unlike Yes we shall say No to many things. But we shall often say Yes to Yes, to Combustion, to the Canadian Forum, and even sometimes to Fiddlehead.

In short, this will be something of a personal magazine, with an impersonal program. I take poetry to mean a special form of writing, rhythmic, whole, heated by imagination, but with no restrictions of subject or form placed upon it, and with the same vitality of interests that prose has: we must win back the ground we have lost to prose, and discover new ground. For this, we want scope, and air, and the help of youth. We want to act as a forum and an exhibition for some correctives to an old malady. We want to present examples of fresh experiment with poetry.

We hope that, given time (and we mean to last) all sorts of things will begin to sprout and germinate in this Delta.<sup>32</sup>

A primary difference between Delta and Combustion is expressed in this editorial, in that Dudek declares that Delta

will be "a local affair", a magazine whose primary concern is Canadian poetry rather than the broad internationalism reflected in Combustion. Delta differs from Yes in regard to the discriminating between what is relevant and important to contemporary writing and what is not. In many respects, Delta is the first avant garde magazine intent upon rooting itself firmly in Canadian poetry. The main body of writing that appeared in Delta was Canadian in origin and sensibility; at the same time, Dudek tried to maintain a level of awareness of developments taking place in writing outside of Canada. Because of Delta's dedication to native writing, along with an equal refusal to relapse into isolationism, it stands as the most important magazine of the Yes, Combustion, and Delta group.

It was the intention of Delta to inject some vitality into the Canadian literary scene, to try to redirect the route of Canadian poetry through pertinent articles and criticism (usually written by Dudek), and to try to foster some energy and promote new movements among the young poets. Delta published a significant number of younger poets, as well as those who had begun writing in the 1940's and early 1950's. Young poets such as Daryl Hine, George Ellenbogen, Michael Gnarowski, Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, John Lachs, Alden Nowlan, Gerry Gilbert, Joan Finnigan, Sylvia Barnard, Malcolm Miller, Michael Malus, Marquita Crevier, John Robert Colombo, Lionel Kearns, David Solway, George Bowering, Anne Szumigalski, Margaret Atwood, Frank Davey, Gwendolyn MacEwen, James Reid, Red Lane, John Newlove, Alan Pearson, Raymond Fraser, Pierre Coupey, Harry Howith, Tom Marshall, Steve Smith, Victor Coleman, and Seymour Mayne all appeared in the pages of Delta during its nine year run of 26 issues. Dudek was very much concerned with encouraging the young writer, as was also evident in his printing the books of young writers in the McGill Poetry Series and later with Delta Canada Press. When a new movement became evident in Vancouver with the publication of Tish, Dudek was quick to devote an

issue to the new Vancouver poetry and to have the editor of Tish, Frank Davey, make the selections (#19, October, 1962, New Vancouver Poetry). Although Delta was very much a magazine edited by one individual, it was incredibly open to contributors. Though Dudek was, by predisposition, a social realist, he was willing to print those who did not belong to the same "school" of poetry. In the first issue of Delta, Dudek reviewed F.R. Scott's The Eye of the Needle and Jay Macpherson's The Boatman; in this review he attempted to re-evaluate the current critical perspectives on these two books by pointing out the inherent value of Scott's experimental and realist book (one he was obviously more in sympathy with) and the defects of Miss Macpherson's formal mythopoeic work. Yet, despite this criticism, a healthy sampling of her work appeared in the next issue, illustrating that the editor was not restrictive in the type of material he would print.

Although Dudek can be considered to be somewhat "liberal" in his selections of material for Delta at times, this by no means suggests that he was publishing an eclectic magazine. In numerous editorials and articles he expressed his position on the current state of the arts. In several articles ("Julian Huxley, Robert Graves, and the Mythologies" Delta #4; "Frye Again (But Don't Miss Souster)" Delta #5; "Northrop Frye's Untenable Position" Delta #22) he disputed the mythopoeic doctrine of Northrop Frye, arguing against Frye's contention that literature exists as a self-enclosed world, a world in which it is continually relating to itself, and bears no relation to life. Dudek, ever the rationalist, was continually to argue in favor of a rationalistic approach to poetry, as against the mythopoeic approach of Frye and the Canadian poets who had been influenced by Frye's theories (James Reaney, Jay Macpherson, and Eli Mandel being the chief "disciples" at the time). He was also to defend the free-verse form in poetry against the reactionary pull of the 1950's that was evident in all North American universities,

a movement back towards more formalized structures. Dudek also continued to investigate the relationship that exists between literature and the commercialized press. He fought a constant battle for freedom, honesty, and integrity in poetry, opposing what he saw to be fallacious approaches and detrimental structures.

By the time that Delta printed its last issue in October of 1966 the general atmosphere of Canadian poetry had changed significantly. Many of the young writers Dudek had included in Delta had begun to develop their own individual voices and had begun to define a new age in Canadian poetry. Delta played an important part in the new poetic developments by providing a bridge from the developments of the fifties into the 1960's. The sixties would present new schools of poetry within the context of new little magazines. This generation would draw their inspiration from a wide variety of sources, but an indigenous tradition of poetic development via the medium of the little magazine in Canada and a Modernist foundation would already have been laid down for them by the preceding groups and magazines.

## CHAPTER FOUR FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Raymond Souster, a letter to Louis Dudek in his possession, dated at Swansea (Toronto), June 23, 1951. Reprinted in Contact 1952-1954 (Montreal: Delta Canada, 1966), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Raymond Souster, a letter to Louis Dudek in his possession, dated at Toronto, October 6, 1951. Reprinted in Contact 1952-1954, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Gnarowski, Contact 1952-1954, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond Souster, "Some Aftethoughts on Contact Magazine," Contact 1952-1954, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Contact, 1, no. 1, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Gnarowski, Contact 1952-1954, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Contact, 1, no. 3, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>Contact, 1, no. 4, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Charles Olson, "These Days," Contact, 2, no. 1, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Gnarowski, Contact 1952-1954, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup>Contact, no. 8, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Contact, no. 8, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Contact, 2, no. 2, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup>Contact, no. 10, cover.

<sup>17</sup>Louis Dudek, "The Making of CIV/n," Index to CIV/n (no publisher, no date), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Louis Dudek, CIV/n, no. 2, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup>Neil Compton, "Cerberus," CIV/n, no. 2, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup>Ezra Pound, in Dk/Some Letters of Ezra Pound, ed Louis Dudek (Montreal: DC Books, 1974), p. 101.

<sup>21</sup>Louis Dudek, Dk/Some Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 103.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

- 23 Pound, Dk/Some Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 102.
- 24 CIV/n, no. 5, no page number.
- 25 CIV/n, no. 5, p. 24.
- 26 Ibid., p. 24.
- 27 CIV/n, no. 7, p. 26.
- 28 Yes, no. 1, p. 1.
- 29 Yes, no. 3, pp. 2-3.
- 30 Yes, no. 17, inside front cover.
- 31 Combustion, no. 1, pp. 1-2.
- 32 Louis Dudek, "Why A New Poetry Magazine," Delta, no. 1,  
pp. 2-3.



CHAPTER FIVE  
NEW WAVE CANADA

Struggling to keep Modernism alive in the 1950's, Dudek and Souster and the other magazine editors could have had no idea or foreshadowing of the vast literary proliferation that was to follow them in the succeeding generation of the 1960's and 1970's. In the 1960's the course of Canadian poetry changed radically. In terms of the sheer quantity of books and magazines, that period saw an increase in publication that must stand close to the 1000% mark. In a country where great pains had been taken to establish poetry as something valuable and vital there was suddenly poetry everywhere; indeed, Canada at times seemed as if it had become a country of poets. In addition to producing a vast quantity of poetry, the sixties saw radical shifts in aesthetics, in that the possibilities for poetry, the ways in which it could be written, widened considerably. The different elements that had been evident in early Modernism began, at long last, to manifest and combine with the innovations of later poets and poetries.

There are many factors that go into explaining the sudden poetry explosion in the 1960's and these are worth considering before attempting to make some sense out of the many little magazines that have appeared over the last twenty years. Economic, sociological, educational, statistical and technological developments all have a bearing on the evolution of Canadian poetry during this time. Without becoming too deeply involved in the sociology of literature I would like to illuminate the more important changes.

The simplest point to be made about the 1960's is that it was the time in which the post-war "baby boom" generation began to come of age. Suddenly there was a population bulge that began to reflect itself in all aspects of society. This simply meant that there were more people available to all occupations and areas of interest; hence one would be able

to predict on this ground alone that there would be more young people writing poetry. Yet the number of poets suddenly writing in Canada at this time seems to increase all out of proportion, indicating that there are some other causes at work.)

The 1960's were years of significant social change in North America. In the United States, the Civil Rights movement and the Peace movement held the spotlight in the political arena, while rock music and a whole style of life that seemed to stem from it, or to accompany it, affected a changing morality; this new morality embodied changes in sexual mores, in physical appearance, in attitudes toward work and the job market, and in the use of drugs. An American generation which grew up in affluence seemed to reject that affluence as well as the morality and the exploitative economic system that had produced wealth. Much of that dissatisfaction with the social system was directed at the educational institutions since these, it was argued, engaged in war research and shaped students to the society's needs. Indeed, universities felt the force of the new social upheaval more than did the business interests which dominated the war economy.

In the universities, many students turned their backs on the business interests of their parents' generation and concentrated on the arts and humanities. Within the universities more emphasis began to be placed upon individual creativity than in the past, with a rise in creative writing classes, classes in all aspects of fine arts, even handicrafts. The university people of the 1960's were never very far away from the act of creation, and the number of young poets, artists and artisans multiplied.

All of these social changes in the United States made their influence felt in Canada as well. Students demonstrated against the war in Vietnam and held sit-ins at universities, even if they were merely a neighbour of the offending imperialist power. Changes in behaviour among youth became evi-

dent in Canada as well as in the United States.

For the young artist, economic conditions in Canada were also changing significantly. In 1953 the Massey Commission, after a two-year study, recommended that a governmental body be formed to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of work in the arts. This recommendation resulted in the formation of the Canada Council, which began its operations in 1957. Although it began by offering assistance to large performing institutions, it gradually began to offer aid in the form of grants to writers and publishers of books and periodicals. The young writer and magazine editor in the 1960's had a financial resource available to him that had not been available before.

A final point worth considering is the revolution in printing that occurred in the early 1960's. This made a new process, photo-offset, readily available to those who could buy the printing equipment itself or hire a printer to do the work. This technological advance was an important one because it broke ground into a much faster and cheaper method of printing than letterpress; in fact it has made possible instant-print facilities for little magazine publication. The photo-offset revolution of the 1960's followed quickly on the heels of the mimeograph revolution of the 1950's, and so made a broad range of new printing facilities available to the burgeoning young poet or group of poets.

What we find then, in the generation of the 1960's, is a body of young people who, in detective story parlance, had opportunity, motive, and weapon. As a generation that valued creativity and the act of "doing your own thing", with a new world view and a set of aesthetic and social values to get across, they also had access to funding and a fairly inexpensive print technology. Living in a time of affluence and change they stood in possession of an opportunity. All signs tended to indicate that the time and the country were ripe for poetry.

Whereas the little magazines of the 1920's and those

following, up to the 1950's, are easy to chronicle and assess, the magazines of the 1960's and 1970's are a bibliographer's nightmare, and they call for a selective evaluation rather than copious inclusion. An entire volume could be devoted to an indexing of the magazines of this period, another volume to a critical evaluation of the magazines. It is my intention, then, to plot a course through the labyrinth of little magazine publication of the last score of years in an attempt to emphasize the on-going Modernist development that has taken place in a fairly small number of them. It is the development of Canadian poetry within the pages of the little magazine that concerns us here, and so the objective must be to find a focus in the significant literary movements of this period and in the magazines where these movements were realized. Specifically, we are concerned with following the Modernist line of succession in Canadian poetry. Yet, before proceeding with this task, some light can be thrown on the little magazine movement as a whole for this period.

What we have witnessed in the proliferation of little magazines in the 1960's and 1970's is a kind of burgeoning of Canadian literary life. The writing of poetry is no longer concentrated in major city centers but has extended across the country and even into the territories. Every little magazine that appears has its own specific usefulness to the poets whose work it promotes and to the community in which it appears. Hundreds of magazines have appeared during this period. A short list, limited to those that have registered some impact, would include the following: Island, Moment, Cataract, Evidence, Alphabet, Blew Ointment, Ganglia, GrOnk, Tish, Imago, Open Letter, Intercourse, Blackfish, Vigilante, Repository, Grain, Applegarth's Follies, Copperfield, It needs to be said, Northern Journey, The Golden Dog, CrossCountry, B.C. Monthly, Anthol, Air, White Pelican, CVII, Ingluvin, Booster & Blaster, The Poem Company, 3¢ Pulp, Square Deal, Edge, Weed, Mountain, Hyphid, Is, Kontakte, Versus, Porcepic, Ellipse, Salt, Black Moss, Stuffed Croco-

dile, Mouse Eggs, Hh, Boreal, Matrix and The Front. There have been, of course, many many others, each serving its own function. The range has been very wide: there have been coterie magazines (Tish, Open Letter, Cataract), eclectic magazines (Grain, Evidence, The Poem Company), magazines with a regional orientation (Salt, Copperfield, B.C. Monthly), magazines printing concrete poetry (GrOnk, what is, Spanish Fleye), those emphasizing a policy of bilingualism (Ellipse, The Golden Dog, Boreal), those focussing on the relation between poetry and politics (Alive, It needs to be said), those that are anti-nationalistic (CrossCountry), those filled with "serendipity" (Applegarth's Follies, Is), and even some that try to develop serious Canadian criticism (CVII). Add to this the many campus eclectic magazines, and we have a very broad panorama of literary activity. If many of the magazines aspire to be conventional literary journals rather than true fighting little magazines, they at least all share a common commitment to literature.

It is important to recognize that the magazines of the sixties and seventies that we will be looking at are all, in their kind, avant garde periodicals; they continue to pioneer, to argue and debate the ground rules of poetry and the validity of specific aesthetic programs. Of course, much of the magazine activity in general falls outside this range; by and large the majority of magazines appearing today seem to operate on eclectic principles. Though interesting, they lack the bite of the magazine that promotes a shared aesthetic or specific point of view or orientation.

Before moving on to a discussion of the major magazines and movements of this period, I would like to briefly make mention of a few magazines that helped to create the early atmosphere of these times. These are significant magazines, yet they do not represent the most dynamic work of the era. Undoubtedly, there are other magazines that could be singled out as well but, in a sense, they share the same history as those being discussed. Most of these magazines appeared in

the early 1960's when Canadian poetry was in transition.

The first magazine worthy of mention is Teangadoir, originating out of Toronto. Teangadoir, edited by Padraig O Broin and Hazel Yake, began publication in 1953. For the first four volumes of its existence it was a Celtic literary journal. With the beginning of the fifth volume in July of 1961, the magazine reoriented itself to the presentation of Canadian work. This was due, in part, to the extensive reading series then taking place at the Bohemian Embassy.

The magazine's format was a small gestetnered pamphlet with a wrapping paper cover. Throughout its fifth volume it published work by O Broin, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Luella Booth, Fred Cogswell, G.C. Miller, Al Purdy, Alden Nowlan, George Bowering, Milton Acorn, Joan Finnigan and Gregory Cook. The March 1962 issue carried a review of the recently published anthology Poetry 62, which featured work by some of the more accomplished members of the new generation:

Evidence began as a rather lackluster quarterly published in Toronto (the first issue appeared in November of 1960) edited by Kenneth Craig, but soon became, under the editorship of Allan Bevan, one of the more important little magazines of the early 1960's. Eclectic from the start, Evidence published a wide variety of work of varying aesthetic orientations. Printed in a slick, professional looking format, the magazine served as an interesting crossroads for the different literary movements of the time. Poets from the Tish, Moment and Cataract groups all appeared within its pages. For many of these poets Evidence provided a first opportunity to see their work in real print as opposed to gestetner or mimeographed form.

Issue #5 and 6 are good examples of the magazine's eclecticism. In issue #5 we find a story by George Bowering, poems by Eugene McNamara, Al Purdy and Bryan McCarthy, and an essay by Milton Acorn entitled "I Was A Communist For My Own Damn Satisfaction." Evidence #6 featured poems by K.V. Hertz, Purdy, James Reaney, Acorn, Alan Pearson, Layton,

David McFadden and George Bowering as well as a section by Lionel Kearns, "Stacked Verse. .a definition and four poems," Interestingly, some of the most accomplished essays written during this period by the Tish poets appeared in Evidence; besides that of Kearns we find Bowering's "Poetry & the Language of Sound" in issue #7, and Davey's "Rime, a Scholarly Piece" in issue #9. Beginning with issue #6, the magazine featured a lively review section. Evidence #7 featured "Poems by the Ladies" which included work by Phyllis Gottlieb, Margaret Avison, Elizabeth Brewster, Jay Macpherson, Margaret Atwood, Denise Levertov, Miriam Waddington and Gwendolyn MacEwen.

Besides editing the magazine alone from issue #5 on, Bevan also performed a great amount of the production work. What started out as a quarterly quickly slowed down to being a magazine with a more sporadic appearance schedule. The editorial in issue #9 began by indicating that the ninth issue could possibly be the magazine's last; Bevan then went on to detail some of the frustrations he had encountered in bringing out the magazine: the amount of time involved, the lack of interest on the part of the academic community, and the generally unfavorable atmosphere for literary composition; on the positive side Bevan expressed the satisfaction he felt in having brought out good work and in having made the acquaintance of several of the writers. Issue #10, which appeared in 1967, carried an insert sheet which apologized for the long delay between issues and announced again that this was possibly the last issue. This time it was. Evidence had, in fact, outlived many of its contemporary publications and had published a considerable body of significant work.

One of Evidence's contemporaries was Mountain, edited by David McFadden out of Hamilton, Ontario. The first issue appeared in May of 1962 and carried the following editorial:

MOUNTAIN aims at a lively review of current poetry. Eight issues will be published in the group, at 2 to 3 month intervals. Each will contain 40 pages full of poems by

poets, the odd book review, and a short (if you're lucky) editorial. At the end of 16 months the faithful reader should have something to keep, still on the pages or in his heart. . . MOUNTAIN has very definite and rigid editorial standards, but they change from day to day.<sup>1</sup>

McFadden started Mountain with a specific number of issues in mind rather than conceiving of a magazine of an infinite run of issues. Distributed by mailing list, the magazine was gestetnered on 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 sheets which were folded in the middle and stapled.

Like Evidence, Mountain was extremely eclectic. The first issue carried poems by Acorn, O Broin, Davey, MacEwen, Wah, Hertz, Raymond Fraser, John Robert Colombo, David Cull and Seymour Mayne. Although McFadden's own poems were occasionally appearing in the Vancouver newsletter Tish, McFadden, as reflected in the second issue's editorial, tended to shun a group orientation:

To my mind there are some fascinating things happening in Canadian poetry. . . Canadian letters seem to be throbbing with a sense of life-essence, and sometimes with art. . . However, the old-bugle call of the flock instinct is still being heard by some of the younger fledglings. They seek to muffle or justify their individual voices by becoming groups, their tones bending to a common faulty chord. What will happen? The groups will eventually disband and old poets will once more walk the streets flockless with burnt-out eyes.<sup>2</sup>

This anti-group orientation is again made evident in a review of Frank Davey's D-Day & After, which appears in the same issue, in which McFadden says:

A first book by a talented young poet must be read for its own sake and not the sake of some stupid group of would-be Shakespeare assassins to which he is, or usually is, attached. One miraculously-flowering potato-peeling monk is far superior to the big sprawling monastery walls and gardens. The monastery is convenient



and comfortable and anonymous. The real work goes on individually, quietly, inwardly.<sup>3</sup>

McFadden backs up his assertion of the individual talent by presenting forty-four poems by K.V. Hertz in this issue, as well as poems by Bowering, Purdy, Fraser, Newlove, David Dawson and McFadden himself.

In issue #3 we find a large selection of McFadden's own early work which he presents as a centerpiece giving a clearer rationale to the magazine. We can speculate that he was, at this time, looking for a more definite focus for the magazine, or else just had a large bloc of poems that he felt like publishing. These poems are accompanied by work from Purdy, MacEwen, Bowering and others.

The final issue of Mountain (#4) appeared in October of 1963. It is a slimmer issue than the other three and includes a note which calls for poets to send poems. Most of the poems in this issue are by McFadden himself and we see the magazine losing the motive power that it had in its first three issues. McFadden himself must have felt this loss of power and rationale for he terminated the magazine after this issue. On the whole, Mountain was a lively magazine that reflected its editor's searching eclecticism and commitment to individual poets and poems.

Moving to the west coast, there is the founding of Talon in Vancouver in 1963 to consider. Talon began as an independent non-profit magazine owned and published by students with the purpose of providing students "with a medium for free expression."<sup>4</sup> For the first two years of its existence the magazine devoted itself to student writing. In May of 1964 David Robinson joined the Talon staff. Beginning in the fall of 1965 already established young writers, such as Seymour Mayne and John Newlove, began to appear in the magazine.

With the beginning of the magazine's fourth volume in 1966 we notice significant changes. Now being edited by Jim Brown, Talon published work by Patrick Lane, Barry Mc-

Kinnon, Helene Rosenthal, Seymour Mayne, Tom Marshall, bp Nichol, Raymond Fraser and David Philips. Robinson rejoined the magazine as editor in the second issue of the fourth volume; that issue included poems by bill bissett, Fred Candelaria, J. Michael Yates and Ken Belford. Talon was beginning to open itself up to the wider contexts of west coast poetry.

In the third issue of the fourth volumes, published in 1967, we find an important notice:

THE EDITORS WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE

TALONBOOKS a new series of books published  
jointly by TALON and VERY  
STONE HOUSE<sup>5</sup>

This notice signals the beginning of one of Canada's most important literary presses to date. The change in editorial direction that Brown and Robinson engineered brought the magazine into the larger context of what was occurring in British Columbia writing; out of that emanated the desire and machinery for a small press involved in producing book-length volumes of poetry. Talon is an example of the literary magazine that exists as a jumping off point to the literary press.

What these four magazines all share is an eclectic policy and a commitment to serving the needs of literary community, whether it be local or national. These are functions that many magazines serve and which gives them a significant part to play even although they are not pioneering avant garde publications.

In the chapters that follow discussion will focus on magazines that have broadening the range of Modernist techniques in Canadian poetry. Magazines like Alphabet, Tish, Open Letter, GrOnk and Blew Ointment present new aesthetic orientations striving for articulation. In the chapter concerned with Montreal poetry of the 1960's and 1970's we will see the transitional changes that can occur in a literary

community and its magazines. Finally, the last chapter will discuss the position and rôle of the little magazine today. What will become clear in these chapters is that what Raymond Souster, in his landmark anthology, called "New Wave Canada" has provided this country with a whole new period of Modernist evolution.

## CHAPTER FIVE FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Mountain, no. 1 (May 1962), inside front cover.
- <sup>2</sup>Mountain, no. 2 (August 1962), inside back cover.
- <sup>3</sup>Mountain, no. 2 (August 1962), inside back cover.
- <sup>4</sup>Talon, no. 1 (1963), p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup>Talon, 4, no. 3 (1967), inside front cover.

## CHAPTER SIX

## THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE IMAGINATION: ALPHABET

The first thirty years of Modernism in Canadian poetry reflect either a predominantly metaphysical or a social realist orientation. The McGill metaphysicals of the 1920's (Smith, Scott, Klein, Kennedy) found much of their early influence in the satiric poetry of Eliot and the lyrical precision of Yeats and the Imagists; their early political commitment also cannot be overlooked. In spite of Yeats' influence upon Smith and the infusion of Frazer's The Golden Bough, by way of Eliot, in Leo Kennedy's The Shrouding, the tendency towards symbolism and myth did not take root in early Modernist Canadian poetry. A full retinue of classical allusions can be found in Smith's verse, but on the whole the group strived for a dry, austere critical poetry which reflected very much an awareness of the age in which they lived. The commitment to social and political realities that was to come to full flower in the social realism of the 1940's was very much in evidence in the early Modernist efforts in Canada.

The social realist movement of the forties brought home a determination to write about the realities of modern life. The effort to bring poetry out of the ivory tower and down into the street that had begun with the McGill group became more fully realized in the 1940's. In the poetry of the Pre-view group, particularly in the work of Patrick Anderson, the striving for a cultured tone and an air of erudition was still in evidence, but the work of poets such as Dudek, Layton and Souster incorporated the language of common-speech in all of its beauty and even in its vulgarity. Time and time again these poets hammered home their desire for a direct poetry of first-hand experience. Their prime motivation seemed to be to break down the barriers between life and art, to let life be fully represented in art. They fought

for a freedom of form and content on into the 1950's, when a new tide of academic conservatism was washing across North America, allying themselves for a time with the American Black Mountain group with whom they shared Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams as primary liberating influences.

We can see in the work of the metaphysicals and the social realists a display of several elements that were prevalent in the literary Modernism of the early twentieth century: satire, imagistic precision, a throwing down of the icons of High Art, a revolutionary attitude towards both politics and poetry, a commitment to "Make it new," and to put forward a poetry that presented "No ideas but in things." These elements, however, were not an exhaustive catalogue of everything that Modernism had come to represent, and in Canada of the 1960's other Modernist tendencies began to assert themselves. Some of these tendencies were, in fact, simply other areas of interest taken from early English Modernists. In the imagism of H.D. and Richard Aldington we can already see a predisposition toward myth. The mythic backdrop that exists in the poetry of Eliot and Yeats and in the prose of Joyce, reflects the modern temper as much as Eliot's satiric tone, Yeats' passionate speech, and Joyce's intense prose style. With hindsight one can easily point out that this element in Modernism--the mythological--was bound to eventually become an influence upon Canadian poetry. With the dissipation of leftist political fervour that followed the events of the second world war and a return to more normal conditions, and with an increasing academic bent becoming prevalent in the period of entrenchment and conservatism that became the 1950's, a symbolic and mythic poetry for Canada arrived at a time favorable to its birth, with Toronto critic and scholar Northrop Frye presiding as mid-wife.

The stature of Northrop Frye as an important twentieth century literary critic is well founded. His central work, Anatomy of Criticism, brought him international ac-

claim as a leading literary theorist. What must be noted in this context, however, is the impact that he has had upon twentieth century Canadian poetry. Although he has written important essays on Canadian literature and he has been, perhaps, the most comprehensive critic of Canadian poetry during the 1950's (see his "Letters in Canada" reviews in University of Toronto Quarterly from 1950-1959, collected in The Bush Garden), it is Frye's "theory" of literature as set down in his Anatomy that has most influenced the aesthetic concerns of a number of Canadian poets. It seems, therefore, appropriate to devote a few pages to a discussion of Frye's Anatomy and his central hypothesis of literature before turning to give an account of the poets influenced by Frye who congregated about the mythopoeic little magazine Alphabet.

In From There To Here Frank Davey presents a tidy breakdown of the contents of Anatomy of Criticism:

The Anatomy is divided into four essays, "Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes," "Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols," "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths," and "Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres." The first essay proposes a classification of literature into myth, romance, high mimesis, low mimesis, and irony according to the relationship between the hero and both his fellow man and environment. The second proposes the classification of writing as literal, descriptive, formal, mythical, and anagogic and argues that "literature" comes into being as writing moves from the "discursive" or "literal" phase toward the anagogic and thus becomes increasingly indirect in its signification. The third essay suggests the continuing presence of myths and archetypes in literature of all modes and genres through the process of "displacement", and the consequent presence of Classical and Biblical myth within all western literature. The fourth essay attempts to distinguish between literary forms largely on the basis of rhythm; the rhythm of epos is recurrent, of prose-fiction continuous, of drama decorous, of lyric associative, and of non-literary prose logical.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly enough, all of Frye's theories about literature spring from his desire to develop criticism as a science or field of endeavour on its own. Frye's prime motive seems to be to revamp criticism, which he finds inadequately organized for the task of addressing itself towards literature; he contends that too often the critic must adopt the orientation of either history or philosophy in order to approach the literary work to analyze it. In addition to this, Frye finds that there is too much of a distance operative in the roles of critic as scholar and as public critic, the former being one who "studies" literature and the latter being one who passes judgment upon it. Although he finds some worth inherent in the New Critics, he sees their orientation as only a starting point:

It is right that the first effort of critical apprehension should take the form of a rhetorical or structured analysis of a work of art. But a purely structural approach has the same limitation in criticism as it has in biology. In itself it is simply a discrete series of analyses based on the mere existence of the literary structure, without developing any explanation of how the structure came to be what it was and what its nearest relatives are.<sup>2</sup>

In attempting to stake out a claim for criticism as a science of its own, Frye insists upon the separation of art from the systematic study of it which is criticism. He maintains that one cannot teach literature but only the study of it.<sup>3</sup> In relation to literature, he believes that "the critic should be able to construct and dwell in a conceptual universe of his own."<sup>4</sup> Stating first that a "theory of criticism whose principles apply to the whole of literature and account for every valid type of critical procedure is what I think Aristotle meant by poetics,"<sup>5</sup> Frye then goes on to make the following observation about the state of criticism:



It occurs to me that literary criticism is now in such a state of naive induction as we find in a primitive science. Its materials, the masterpieces of literature, are not yet regarded as phenomena to be explained in terms of a conceptual framework which criticism alone possesses. They are still regarded as somehow constituting the framework or structure of criticism as well. I suggest that it is time for criticism to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Frye tends to continuously fall back upon comparing criticism to science; he again utilizes the comparison when stating that the "first postulate" in attempting to organize criticism "is the same as that of any science: the assumption of total coherence."<sup>7</sup>

Frye's attempt to locate the central hypothesis for criticism takes him into a consideration of poetic image:

We say that every poet has his own peculiar formation of images. But when so many poets use so many of the same images, surely there are bigger critical problems involved than biographical ones. As Mr. Auden's brilliant essay The Enchafed Flood shows, an important symbol like the sea cannot remain within the poetry of Shelley or Keats or Coleridge: it is bound to expand over many poets into an archetypal symbol of literature.<sup>8</sup>

Frye defines symbol as "any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention"<sup>9</sup> and archetype as "a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience."<sup>10</sup> Frye sees archetypal criticism as an attempt "to fit poems into the body of poetry as a whole."<sup>11</sup>

He sees archetypes as an essential part of the coordinating principle upon which criticism can base itself:

It is clear that criticism cannot be systematic unless there is a quality in literature which enables it to be so, an order of words corresponding to the order of nature in the natural sciences. An archetype should be not only a unifying category of criticism, but itself a part of a total form, and it leads us at once to the question of what sort of total form criticism can see in literature. . . Total literary history moves from the primitive to the sophisticated, and here we glimpse the possibility of seeing literature as a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied in primitive culture. If so, then the search for archetypes is a kind of literary anthropology, concerned with the way that literature is informed by pre-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folk-tale. We next realize that the relation between these categories and literature is by no means purely one of descent, as we find them reappearing in the greatest classics--in fact there seems to be a general tendency on the part of great classics to revert to them. This coincides with a feeling that we have all had: that the study of mediocre works of art, however energetic, obstinately remains a random and peripheral form of critical experience, whereas the profound masterpiece seems to draw us to a point at which we can see an enormous number of converging patterns of significance. Here we begin to wonder if we cannot see literature, not only as complicating itself in time, but as spread out in conceptual space from some unseen center.<sup>12</sup>

What serves as the "unseen center," according to Frye, is a central informing myth:

In the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year, and the organic cycle of human life, there is a single pattern of significance, out of which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the sun, partly vegetative fertility, and partly a god or archetypal human being.<sup>13</sup>

It is the quest myth, and that quest being to return to the lost garden, that Frye sees as constituting the essential axis or subject matter of literature; he says that it "is part of the critic's business to show how all literary

genres are derived from the quest myth."<sup>14</sup>

Having formulated a fixed idea as to what lies at the center of literature and what constitutes, in essence, the only story that literature is ever trying to tell, Frye makes several statements about the nature of art which tend to a) divorce art from life and in so doing b) make literature a kind of snake that is eternally swallowing its own tail. Concerning the presence of the "real" in literary art, Frye notes:

Art deals not with the real but with the conceivable; and criticism, though it will eventually have to have some theory of conceivability, can never be justified in trying to develop, much less assume, any theory of actuality.<sup>15</sup>

Frye is inclined to see works of literature as being enclosed in a world of literary art in which they are nourished by other works of literature:

Just as a new scientific discovery manifests something that was already latent in the order of nature, and at the same time logically related to the total structure of the existing science, so the new poem manifests something that was already latent in the order of words. Literature may have life, reality, experience, nature, imaginative truth, social conditions, or what you will for its content; but literature itself is not made out of these things. Poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels.<sup>16</sup>

In seeing poems as being made out of other poems we are far from the premises of social realism and we have entered a world of artifice. Much of the political power of the poetry of social realism in fact would probably be relegated to a minor place in Frye's consideration of those poems, their desire for social justice indicating to him a mythic desire for a return to the lost garden where human life is perfect, and this would be what he would tend to value them for.

There have been differing opinions as to the influence

of Frye upon poets such as James Reaney and Jay Macpherson, two poets who stand at the head of the mythopoeic movement in Canadian poetry. Reaney's The Red Heart (1949) and A Suit Of Nettles (1957) and Macpherson's The Boatman (1957) were the first books of poetry in Canada in which Frye's theories could be seen as an influence. Frank Davey has been quite critical of the ways in which poets such as Reaney and Macpherson have incorporated Frye's hypothesis about literature into their work:

A . . . misconception about Frye is that his theories of poetry require a conscious effort by the contemporary poet to incorporate mythology into his writing. This idea has led to the so-called "mythopoeic" or "Frygian" school of Canadian poetry, and to such ill-conceived works as Reaney's A Suit of Nettles and Macpherson's The Boatman. Rather than being Frygian, this school constitutes a betrayal of Frye's ideas. To Frye the significance of the mythological patterns evident in literature resides in their having arisen spontaneously and unselfconsciously from human life and in their thus reflecting desires and urges completely innate within man.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas Davey slams Reaney and Macpherson for failing to adhere to Frye's essential principles, Margaret Atwood commends Reaney for the individuality of his work:

Because Reaney cheerfully acknowledged an interest in Frye, hasty codifiers stuck him in a Myth School of their own creation and accused him of the sin of "being influenced," without pausing to consider that for an artist as original as Reaney, "influence" is taking what you need because it corresponds to something already within you.<sup>18</sup>

As often happens in such cases, the validity of grouping a number of poets together in a school is questioned by both Davey and Atwood. Unlike the early Imagists, the poets considered to be "mythopoeic" have put forward no manifesto or program, and yet the orientation fully exists in Frye's critical writings. To a certain extent they establish their

identity as poets who concern themselves with the "mythic" simply by comparison with those poets who choose to not work in this area at all. Alphabet, in putting forward its proposal of presenting "An Iconography Of The Imagination," took steps in a direction that had previously never been explored in Canadian little magazines.

As Margaret Atwood has pointed out, Alphabet's editorial decisions were based upon a particular set of premises about literature.<sup>19</sup> These premises were put forward in the editorial of the magazine's first issue. Editor James Reaney explained the motivation for and the gestation of Alphabet:

Perhaps the drive behind this magazine might be found in the following cluster:  
 (a) The most exciting thing about this century is the number of poems that cannot be understood unless the reader quite reorganizes his way of looking at things or 'rouses his faculties' as Blake would say. Finnegans' Wake and Dylan Thomas' 'Altarwise by owl-light' sonnet sequence are good examples here. These works cannot be enjoyed to anywhere near their fullest unless one rouses one's heart, belly and mind to grasp their secret alphabet or iconography or language of symbols and myths. A grasping such as is involved here leads to a more powerful inner life, or Blake's 'Jerusalem's wall.' Besides which it's a hell of a lot of fun. It seems quite natural, then, in this century and particularly in this country, which could stand some more Jerusalem's wall, that there should be a journal of some sort devoted to iconography. After all Ernest Cassirer defines man as a symbol-making animal.

But (b) there had to be more than this general feeling of our time. There had to be the particular pressure of friends, teachers and even scoffers also interested in symbolism in one way or another. I can remember about twelve years ago at Toronto feeling the final clutch of the so-called scientific world. Metaphors seemed lies. Poetry seemed to have no use at all. The moon looked enchanting through the trees on Charles Street, but the enchantment was really nothing but an illusion of clouds and fantasy covering up a hideous pock-marked spherical desert. When I told this part of my problem to a

friend, whose work appears in this issue, he showed me a passage from the Marriage of Heaven and Hell which had the effect of starting me back to the belief I had held as a child that metaphor is reality. Those were the months when young men and women sat up all night reading Fearful Symmetry which had just come out. I think I have been present at more conversations about the Fall than even Adam could have thrown a certain withered apple core at, and assuredly more speculations concerning Leviathan than Job scratched his boils to. Here in your hands lies one of the effects of those conversations--a small secret looking book devoted to the proposition that it is very interesting mankind should answer the terrors of the inner and the outer world with a symbolic fruit and an iconic sea-beast. Interest increases with exploration. This attitude is to me one of the most stimulating areas of intellectual life in Canada. A traveller from abroad would immediately pick it out. Ils ont parlé toute la nuit de baleines blanches! So base a mag on this fact, actually personally observed, this fact of our cultural life. It's a sturdy fact too; why else so much opposition? The tactics of the anti-symbol, anti-anagogy gang could only be described by making up titles for their mags, such as: Anti-Rot, ExeJesus, Values, The Lampman Review and True Feelers. However.

And (c) there was the desire to do the same delightful thing I had watched here and now, also Northern Review, do: publish real poems and real stories in a format and an area of subtle zoning that created a memorable effect (as distinct as a taste) on readers and also 'placed' the poems and stories to their advantage. This must be one of the happiest of civilized activities, akin to the proper arrangement of flowers. It was Kleiman's story I first felt I must see published; it was so imaginative and no one was doing a thing about it. No really live focus appeared to put the story in until a juxtaposition, mind and social, occurred: Jay Macpherson read a paper on myth at the English Club (part of it appears on pages within) and afterwards there was a party at an apartment on Yorkville. Here Hope Lee told the stories

about being a twin that we've also printed. It suddenly came to me that here was proof that life reflected art. The myth of Narcissus reaches out and touches with a clarifying ray the street scene where the two human beings glide by also in the toils of reflection. That's how poetry works: it weaves street scenes and twins around swans in legendary pools. Let us make a form out of this: documentary on one side and myth on the other: Life & Art. In this form we can put anything and the magnet we have set up will arrange it for us.

Two years later (printing lessons, type-setting, waiting for t's to come from Toronto, balancing trays of type on buses rolling in blizzards) here it is.<sup>20</sup>

Several of Reaney's main tenets or premises are quite interesting when seen in comparison with the Modernist influences that had made their presence felt in Canadian poetry up until this time. What Reaney finds most exciting about writing in this century "is the number of poems that cannot be understood unless the reader quite reorganizes his way of looking at things."<sup>21</sup> This may, in fact, be the most significant touchstone in Modernism: a demand for a total revolution in human consciousness. Although one could point to the clarity and precision of the Imagists as a refutation of Reaney's premise that much of the work of twentieth century poets is oblique and obscure, the fact remains that all of the "isms" that have come to constitute Modernism--Cubism, Imagism, Vorticism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism--have forced their audiences to "change their minds," that is, reorganize their modes of perception and patterns of imagination. Reaney, however, seems to take things one step further than this: he believes that many works cannot be apprehended unless one comes to understand "their secret alphabet or iconography or language of symbols and myths."<sup>22</sup> Rather than seeing Modernist poetry as a revolution in consciousness and techniques that bring poetry into the twentieth century, as the McGill movement and the social realists saw it, Reaney envisions a kind of Order of the Golden Dawn of

Literature in which there are secret rites and codes of knowledge. The ambiguous nature of Modernism is emphasized by the fact that it does in fact contain this tendency in the more elaborate symbolic poems of Yeats, in Joyce's Ulysses and Finnegans' Wake and in the copious referencing of Eliot's "The Waste Land," with its backdrop of quest and fertility myths. Image and symbol are both present and active in Modernist writing. Reaney here chooses to emphasize the presence of the symbol.

At the same time Reaney does not seek to exclude elements of reality from poetry, but rather to intertwine it with myth, for that's "how poetry works: it weaves street scenes and twins around swans in legendary pools."<sup>23</sup> Reaney envisions a poetry with "documentary on one side and myth on the other,"<sup>24</sup> but also sees a magnetic attraction between them that draws them together. It is Reaney's belief that a grasping of the truths of the "secret alphabet" and of the correspondences between life and art lead to "a more powerful inner life."<sup>25</sup>

By emphasizing myth and symbol, Reaney sees man as being able to escape "the final clutch of the so-called scientific world."<sup>26</sup> He sees metaphor as having as much validity (if not more) as scientific fact. This, again, represents a significant departure from the social realists' emphasis upon the hardcore reality of the experiences of life.

A knowledge of Frye is made evident in Reaney's discussion of the impact the publication of Fearful Symmetry made on young intellectuals at that time. The resultant conversations about the Fall, Job's plight and Leviathan, Reaney believes, have brought people in Canada a little closer to "Jerusalem's wall," to the extent that he sees discussions of myth and symbol adding to Canadian cultural life; hence a journal devoted to iconography is, at this time, desirable. With Alphabet the influx of a whole new set of influences began, radically changing the atmosphere of Canadian poetry in the 1960's and 1970's.



Beyond the polemics of its lead editorial, the first issue of Alphabet set the tone and pattern for the magazine's eleven year run of nineteen issues. Subtitled "A Semiannual Devoted to the Iconography of the Imagination," the first issue of Alphabet made its appearance in September of 1960 out of London, Ontario. Each issue was to center itself around a unifying myth, the first being Narcissus. The essential structure of the magazine also became established; section headings included "Editorial," "Juxtaposition: Myth and Documentary," "Articles," "Poetry," "Short Stories," and "Reviews." In later issues a section of visual presentation, either in compliment to written works or else standing on its own, would also become an essential part of Alphabet. The first issue was eighty-six pages, which set the general size for the magazine, remarkably large considering that editor Reaney was to handset and print the first ten issues on a letterpress.

The first issue contains an interesting blend of materials. The first article, "To Harpooneers" by Richard Stingle, reemphasizes the necessity for and validity of myth that Reaney had mapped out in his opening editorial:

When the new high priests of science tell us of their latest miracles we respond with a touching faith in their validity. Why do we trust science so much when most of us know so little about it, and mistrust poetic truth or myth? It is not because we have no knowledge of mythic truth; in fact, we know far more about it than we do about scientific truth. Everyone dreams, and in his dreams, he often expresses truth in just the way that myth does. However, we have been conditioned, by Freud, to regard dreams as irrational, and by our whole materialist civilization to give the greatest respect to empirical truth. Throughout man's history, truth has been revealed in dreams and visions, when men have, been, in sleep, released from the monster of time, space and social conditioning. And those visions have come clearest to poets.<sup>27</sup>

Glimmers of those visions are then presented in the poetry in the issue. Poems by Colleen Thibaudeau, Daryl Hine, Jay

Macpherson, Reaney, M. Morris and Norman Newton appeared in Alphabet #1. Hine's two poems had specific reference to the issue's chosen myth; appearing under the heading "Two Lovers" are the two poems "Narcissus" and "Echo." These poems are extremely formal in style. Jay Macpherson's poems also have a strong formal component and are reminiscent of Shakespeare's songs and the lyrics of the seventeenth century:

We'll wander to the woods no more,  
Nor beat about the juniper tree.  
My tears run down, my heart is sore,  
And none shall make a game of me.

But come, my love, another day,  
I'll give you cherries with no stones,  
And silver bells, and nuts in May  
--But make no bones.<sup>28</sup>

Looking through the poems one is immediately struck by their subject matter. The poems in this issue speak of Eternity, Labours of Hercules, queens, Homer and Euripides, dancers, Heaven, Hell, Artegall, Adonis, Azazel, Abel and Adam, Ophelia, mermaids, Penelope and Death-Angels. Consciously mythic, they are also consciously crafted. As I have stated before, they represent a new departure in what had essentially been a reality-oriented Modernist Canadian poetry.

Also present in that first issue were short stories by Edward Kleiman and Colleen Thibaudeau, a commentary on the icon of the Fool found in the Tarot pack, a review of Layton's A Red Carpet For The Sun and an interesting "Juxtaposition: Myth and Documentary" section. Hope Lee's account of being a twin was juxtaposed with Jay Macpherson's myth-studying essay "Narcissus: Some Uncertain Reflections." In this essay she discusses the myth of Narcissus as it appears in Renaissance and Post-Renaissance English poetry. The essay is an attempt to glimpse the underlying "pattern" of the myth present in a body of English poetry that includes Milton's Paradise Lost, Blake's The Four Zoas, Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and the poetry of Gray, Goldsmith, Macpherson, Byron and Shelley. The essay is replete with Frygian termin-

ology.

Although it has a strong central orientation, the magazine does not go so far as to become absolutely programmatic. Margaret Atwood has explained the magazine's organization in this way:

To those unfamiliar with Alphabet's actual methods, the terms "iconography" and "myth" may suggest rigidity and a tendency to collect and categorize. But the editor's faith in the correspondence between everyday reality (life, or what Alphabet calls "documentary") and man-made symbolic patterns (art, of what Alphabet calls "myth") was so strong that in practice he left interpretation and pattern-finding to the reader. He merely gathered pieces of writing, both "literary" and "non-literary," and other subjects. . . and let the echoes speak for themselves; coincidences were there, he insisted, not because he put them there but because they occur.<sup>29</sup>

Atwood's defense would seem to suggest a greater sense of random selection than Reaney actually shows; it is Reaney, as editor, who juxtaposed the materials or put them between two covers and "let the echoes" be allowed to speak for themselves; I point this out merely to suggest that there was a controlling editorial consciousness guiding Alphabet, bringing materials into close proximity with each other so that patterns could become perceivable. Although the magazine, with time, did come to be more loosely organized, the first few issues reflect a strong guiding hand in what was presented.

Beyond this, it should be stated that one can see a strong scholarly bent in the first issue of Alphabet and this is something that pervades the magazine for much of the duration of its publication. Besides the unconcealed presence of Frye's critical thinking, there is a certain scholarly air about the magazine which makes its presence felt particularly in the literary essays; these, more often than not, are the works of critics rather than of poets. Also, built into the aesthetic orientation of poetry as artifice there is always.

present the danger of poetry lapsing into what one might call a merely literary sensibility, that is a poetry derived from other poems. From the Frygian point of view there is no danger; nevertheless, at times, some of the poems seem over-controlled and overly constructed.

In the editorial to Alphabet #2 (July 1961; Myth: Dionysus) Reaney writes a few significant sentences in which he attempts, more clearly, to delineate the role of the central organizing myth which is to serve as the focus for each issue; commenting upon the fact that many of the thematic echoes in the first two issues are purely coincidental (and he is prepared to swear to this "on a heap of mandalas"), Reaney goes on to describe how each myth serves only as a kind of a key:

Actually the same thing happens if you take the face cards out of a card deck; then put a circular piece of cardboard near them. Curves and circles appear even in the Queen of Diamonds and the Knave of Spades. But place a triangular shape close by and the eye picks up corners and angularities in even the Queen of Clubs. What every issue of Alphabet involves, then, is the placing of a definite geometric shape near some face cards. Just as playing about with cubes and spheres can teach an artist and a critic a better sense of composition. Alphabet's procedure can have the same result with iconography and symbolism. 30

In Alphabet #2 we find contained a notice announcing the merger of Waterloo Review with Alphabet, poems by Richard Outram, Alden Nowlan, and an extensive series of parodies of T.S. Eliot by R.K. Webb. Already in his selections of poetry Reaney was showing a commitment, not to a school of poetry as much as an idea of the arts, leaving room for Nowlan's Maritime realism and Webb's cutting humour. The issue is also heavily laden with myth-oriented articles. Daryl Hine's "The Childhood of Dionysus: A Bacchic Dialogue" records and interprets the myth of the birth of Dionysus and his childhood; Jay Macpherson's second installment of "Narcissus: Some Uncertain Reflections" concludes with sections

on Narcissus as hero of Romantic elegy and Narcissus in later fiction; and Norman Newton's "The Lyric Poetry of Ancient Mexico (Anahuac)" tells of an Aztec Dionysus and of the poetry that celebrates him. Alphabet #3 (December 1961; Myth: Prometheus) continued the string of mythy articles with Ross Woodman's "Shelley Prometheus," detailing how the "Promethean myth provides an account of the psychic conflict within man between his godlike creativity and his mortal dependence."<sup>31</sup> In this issue there also appeared poems by two young women who would come to represent most fully a mythic orientation in the poets of the sixties generation: Margaret Atwood (publishing at this time as M.E. Atwood) and Gwendolyn MacEwen.

In the editorial to Alphabet #4 (June 1962; Myth: Icarus) Reaney turns his attention away from myth towards another pressing issue: the status of the indigenous Canadian artist:

In an issue devoted to flying bodies that fall. . . it seemed natural to write an editorial on Canadian drama. One venture dedicated to the cause has just wound up with that fine old native drama L'Année Dernière a Marienbad. I seem to hear voices at this point, mocking voices saying 'What do we need a native drama for? Why all this absurd nationalism?' Because I don't believe you can really be world, or unprovincial or whatever until you've sunk your claws into a locally coloured tree trunk and scratched your way through to universality.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond a commitment to poetry as myth, Alphabet's pages testify to a concern for the Canadian arts; in this issue, for instance, drawings by Harold Town accompany fables by M. Morris. Alphabet would come to encompass a real concern for the arts in Canada. Reaney's interest in a native drama also began to manifest itself in his own writing of plays dealing with specific Canadian locales and situations.

The fourth issue marked the appearance of another poet interested in the mythic possibilities of poetry: Eli Mandel. In his early work, Trio (1954) and Fuseli Poems (1960), Mandel wrote poetry located more in a world of myth and literature

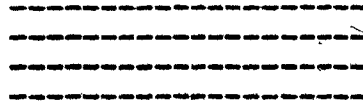
than in a world of actuality. Alphabet #4 contains an essay by Mandel, "Lapwing You Are. Lapwing He--A Note on Icarus in Myth and Poetry," as well as a review in which he gives favorable critical notice to Double Persephone and The Drunken Clock, two myth-oriented first books by Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen. Interestingly, contained in the same issue, is a review by Reaney of several books, among them being D-Day & After, a first book by Frank Davey, who was editor of the Vancouver poetry newsletter Tish, which represented an entirely different orientation towards poetry. Reaney has few kind words for Davey's work or the creative impetus that it represents, particularly if we compare this criticism with Mandel's glowing accounts of Atwood and MacEwen.

If Shakespeare had owned a typewriter would the dirge in the Tempest have looked like this?:

Full fathom

		five
		thy
father		lies
	and of His bones	
		are
		coral made.

Warren Tallman who introduces Frank Davey's poems seems to think so and the similar arrangement of the Davey poems stems from a theory (out of Charles Olson) that the typewriter can show you 'the poem, as it were, caught in the act.' The old fashioned poem that goes like this:



can only express, but the typewriter can bring the poem right onto the living room floor where you can watch the poet's voice do grumbles, fumbles and gropings with emotions. In short 'variable measure' or our old friend 'Free Verse.' If you actually read Mr. Davey's poems aloud you'll probably

find that there's too much white space and margin manipulation for the light personality of the themes. I'm not too sure that instead of projecting himself through his typewriter, his typewriter isn't projecting itself through him.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from his not liking Davey's work, we can see Reaney's antipathy towards a particular poetic orientation in this review. Reaney's sense of form is a much more conventional one than Davey's and one senses a prejudice on the part of Reaney toward "our old friend 'Free Verse'." Whether admitted or not, there is contained in the Frygian orientation a reactionary inclination towards convention as opposed to invention.

In succeeding editorials Reaney concerned himself with the question of Canadian culture. In the editorial to Alpha-bet #6 (June 1963) he came to the defense of Canadian intellectual life against charges that it lacked boldness and vigour by citing Frye's The Educated Imagination and McLuhan's Gutenberg Galaxy as two books that had recently appeared that represented important and exciting critical thinking. In the editorial in issue #7 he reached inside Ojibwa legends to find a key to Canadian cultural identity:

In a recently published collection of Ojibwa legends. . . a creator-magician. . . is said to have fallen asleep on Thunder Cape near Fort William. Nanabozho has become the Sleeping Giant, whose outlines appear as you sail from Fort William. I was fascinated by the idea of a being who had made Northern Ontario as we know it; thrown the glacial boulders at his father the West Wind, whipped black marks on the white birches, stopped the bears from tramping everything to muskeg after the great flood and hidden all the silver deep in an island on Lake Superior.

This is our version of Milton's giant Arthur buried asleep and dreaming beneath English ground; Joyce's Irish Finn McCool who lies buried under Dublin and in whose dream Irish history unfolds.

I wonder if a country that sees itself, according to a recent national flag contest

featured in Canadian Art, as either a huge thumbtack or a series of small ones--will they ever see themselves as a sleeping giant near Thunder Cape.

Most people would say not, but we will go on recording his dreams anyhow, dreams he has had, dreams he might have by the waters that tumble down over a continent.<sup>34</sup>

This question of Canadian identity continues to be considered in the editorial to the next issue, Alphabet #8, which mourns the death of E.J. Pratt, whom Reaney calls "our great poet."<sup>35</sup> After paying tribute to Pratt, Reaney observes that

. . .the young intellectual living in this country, having gone perhaps to a Wordsworth high school and a T.S. Eliot college, quite often ends up thinking he lives in a waste of surplus USA technology, a muskeg of indifference spotted with colonies of inherited, somehow stale, tradition. What our poets should be doing is to show us how to identify our society out of this depressing situation.<sup>36</sup>

Reaney sees this activity of identification taking place in Pratt's poetry, and he also sees it as the task he was attempting with Alphabet. Issues #5-8 carried drawings by Harold Town, Jack Chambers, and Greg Curnoe, essays by Frye on Haliburton, Richard Stingle on the Donnelly's, as well as poems by Tom Marshall, Colleen Thibaudeau, Margaret Atwood and others. Academic literary essays also continued: "James Joyce and the Primitive Celtic Church" by Edward Duncan, "W.B. Yeats and the 'Electric Motor Vision'" by Edward Yeomans, and "Altarwise By Owl-Light" by Peter Revell, analyzing the sonnet sequence by Dylan Thomas. Issue #8 also contained "Jonah: A Cantata Text," set to music by John Beckwith with commissioned verse by Jay Macpherson; and "Mary Midnight: An Oratory" by Eli Mandel, a verse play. To a very large degree Alphabet was now ranging beyond poetry into a wider sense of culture. Film reviews, articles on drama, criticisms of earlier twentieth century writers, visual arts, calligraphy and music all became integrated into the magazine. The tenth and



eleventh issues signalled a greater broadening by featuring calligraphic poems by bill bissett and "ideopomes" by bp Nichol. Both bissett and Nichol were to make future contributions to Alphabet, working as they were in their own forms of radical iconography.

Interestingly, as the 1960's progressed, Reaney saw much of what Alphabet had stood for becoming the substratum of popular culture. This observation became the subject for the editorial to Alphabet #14 (December 1967):

Who would have thought 7 years ago that pop cultured would catch up to Alphabet? By catching up I mean singing groups such as The Fugs stomping out an ode from Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon or a Blake lyric: also lyrics by The Beatles that surpass those in Fiddlehead and most of those in Poetry Chicago. Kenneth Anger's underground film on the motorcycle cult uses astrology to show you how Death & Eros get mixed (well, a penis coming through a masquerade skeleton costume) and it's called Scorpio Rising.

Mandalas, gurus practically in Woolworth's. What Plotinus spent years trying to attain-- whatever that was--a mere record sleeve gives you a picture of. At Expo a very popular film with its own special building devoted to the Minotaur myth. The Doors sing almost a small opera about the Oedipus legend. The Mothers of Invention have instrumentals that sound like John Cage. And the Tibetan Book of the Dead inspires flipside. . .

It was always there--that society would penetrate through the ersatz to some real stuff simply because there was nothing else to do.<sup>37</sup>

If popular culture was being inundated by mythology and the elements of poetry, poetry was also beginning to be influenced by popular culture as Reaney notes in a later editorial: "Our collage of letters from poets is also noteworthy in that it shows so many different situations; also how much interests have changed since the CV & Northern Review decades. You never used to get poets interested in film, sound or building a special truck to stage their poetry-cum-light, show with."<sup>38</sup> This interest in popular culture also became evident

in Alphabet; despite his antipathy for his early work, Reaney published Frank Davey's essay "Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan: Poetry and the Popular Song" in Alphabet #17.

The poetry that appeared in issues eleven through seventeen was quite diverse and drew upon different orientations. Never one to publish poets who were inclined toward social realism, Reaney, nevertheless, began to publish a broad cross-section of younger poets. Pat Lowther, George Bowering, David Helwig, bissett, Nichol, MacEwen, Peter Stevens, Joy Kogawa, Robert Kroetsch, Lloyd Abbey, Anne Szumigalski, John Glassco, Patrick Lane, Jay Macpherson, Michael Ondaatje, Robert Gibbs, Elizabeth Brewster and Catherine Buckaway all appeared in Alphabet between December 1965 and December 1969.

Although Reaney stated an intention to publish 26 issues of the magazine in the editorial of issue #15, the magazine completed its run with a double issue, #18/19, in 1971. This issue encompassed two myths: Hieroglyph and Horoscope. The Hieroglyph section is, far and away, the most interesting. This section marked a significant consideration of concrete poetry, a concern that had made its presence felt in the magazine with contributions by bissett and Nichol. The issue opens with Eugene Royang's article "Concrete Poetry and the 'Concretism' of Chinese"; it is followed by a calligraphic concrete poem by P.K. Page, a typewriter concrete poem, "Pig's Blood" by David W. Harris, four poems by bissett, an interview with bp Nichol conducted by George Bowering, "Paleo Poems" by Child Roland (alias Peter Noel Meilleur), nine poem-drawings by Judith Copithorne which are visual configurations of the written word, and Jane Shen's poems based on chinese characters. This cross-section of concrete was facilitated by the consideration of the hieroglyph as having mythic power, but it also shows Reaney loosening up the strictures of the magazine to publish what he found interesting at this time.

Reaney's closing editorial attempted to sum up the role

of Alphabet during its period of publication:

I suppose it's a rather sad thing to write the editorial for the last Alphabet. Financially, energetically--#26 could not be reached; the end of a decade & almost twenty issues published seemed the best stopping place.

Alphabet started with a flash of electricity suddenly darting out from literature (i.e., the Narcissus myth) and illuminating some life (i.e. the experience of being a twin, of being a reflection). Readers might wonder if this went on in every issue, if it is going on in these last numbers. I hope so. . . Look at the very last pages of this double issue and there the first issue may still be seen reverberating. But this was why Alphabet was founded; to set up a magnetic field in which people could get ideas, patterns for almost anything civilized--gardens, ballets, cities, plays, paintings, lives, children--of all sorts.

Behind every Alphabet there always stood a group of people much larger than the actual index for an issue would suggest. . . My guess is that behind this network of Alphabet friends stands an even larger circle of people, just out of sight. I don't know them by name, but I do know that their presence is extremely important as far as the imaginative life of this country is concerned. Yes, I do know them by name, or at least a year ago I heard a good name for them:--they were called the Identifiers.<sup>39</sup>

In evaluating the achievement of Alphabet Margaret Atwood has commented that the magazine "was Canadian in form, in how the magazine was put together."<sup>40</sup> One senses a Frygian tinge to this, in that Frye, in presenting his central hypothesis of literature, seems to be suggesting that behind all literary content there is the form of the quest myth. Atwood, here, seems to be suggesting a structure that is Canadian in its shapeliness. She goes on to make the following observations:

What follows is hypothetical generalization, but it is of such that national identities are composed. Saying that Alphabet is Canadian in

form leads one also to say that there seem to be important differences between the way Canadians think--about literature, or anything--and the way Englishmen or Americans do. The English habit of mind, with its pre-occupation with precedent and the system, might be called empirical; reality is the social hierarchy and its dominant literary forms are evaluative criticism and the social novel. It values "taste". The American habit of mind, with its background of intricate Puritan theologizing, French Enlightenment political theory and German scholarship and its foreground of technology, is abstract and analytical; it values "technique," and for it reality is how things work. The dominant mode of criticism for some years has been "New Criticism", picking works of art apart into component wheels and springs; its "novel" is quite different from the English novel, which leans heavily towards comedy of manners and a dwindled George Eliot realism; the American novel, closer to the Romance, plays to a greater extent with symbolic characters and allegorical patterns. The Canadian habit of mind, for whatever reason--perhaps a history and a social geography which both seem to lack coherent shape--is synthetic. "Taste" and "technique" are both of less concern to it than is the ever-failing, but ever-renewed attempt to pull all the pieces together, to discover the whole of which one can only trust one is a part. The most central Canadian literary products, then, tend to be the large-scope works like The Anatomy of Criticism and The Gutenberg Galaxy which propose all-embracing systems within which any particular bit of data may be placed. Give the same poem to a model American, a model English and a model Canadian critic: the American will say "This is how it works"; the Englishman "How good, how true to Life" (or, "How boring, tasteless and trite"); the Canadian will say "This is where it fits into the entire universe." It is in its love for synthesis that Alphabet shows itself peculiarly Canadian.<sup>41</sup>

We can see Atwood here beginning to test out some of her theories that were to wind up in Survival, her own book of criticism that tends to be a large-scope work. Her thesis stated above is an interesting one; perhaps Canadian thinkers

are inclined to try to "pull all the pieces together," or perhaps they're more single-minded than people in other English cultures. In any case, Atwood is astute in pointing out that it is an "ever-failing but ever-renewed attempt," doomed to fail because the individual theories are never satisfying to everyone and always attempted simply because of the human desire to know and to integrate.

Whether Alphabet is Canadian in form is a debatable point; I would argue that the assertion is tenuous at best. Much can be said, however, of the magazine and its importance in representing a new orientation in Canadian poetry. In a run of nineteen issues it presented the reader with work magnetized by the unifying myths of Narcissus, Dionysus, Prometheus, Icarus, Bes, the Dwarf God, Job, Missepeshoo the Ojibwa Water Monster, Jonah, The Magic Square, The River, The Brother, The Sand-Reckoner, I Ching, The Four Elements, Fire, The Fool, The Chariot, Hieroglyph and Horoscope. Although it took much of its orientation from Frye, the pure mythic basis of the early issues widened out as the magazine progressed to include other possibilities as well, such as regionalism and the attempt to foster a Canadian culture. In spite of its insistence upon a central informing myth, Alphabet existed very much as a location for Canadian culture rather than as a militant literary periodical. Once its intention had been stated, policy relaxed, with few polemical arguments being voiced against other orientations. In later issues work by west coast aestheticists (Tish poets, bissett, Nichol) came to be incorporated into the magazine, and reviews of books by Montreal poets (Layton, Siebrasse, Mayne, Scott, Steve Smith) were evaluative but generally unargumentative. In Alphabet Reaney chose to embody rather than assert an orientation; as editor he operated according to a changing policy that aimed at retaining the essential objectives he stated in the magazine's first editorial.

## CHAPTER SIX FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Frank Davey, From There To Here (Erin, Ontario: Press Porcepic, 1974), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," Fables of Identity (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1963), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," Fables of Identity, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup>Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>12</sup>Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," Fables of Identity, pp. 12-13.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup>Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup>Davey, From There To Here, p. 110.

<sup>18</sup>Margaret Atwood, "Eleven Years of Alphabet," Canadian Literature, no. 49 (Summer 1971), p. 62.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>20</sup>Alphabet, no. 1, pp. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 4.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>27</sup>Richard Stingle, "To Harpooneers," Alphabet, no. 1, p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup>"The Woods No More," Alphabet, no. 1, p. 25.
- <sup>29</sup>Margaret Atwood, "Eleven Years of Alphabet," Canadian Literature, p. 61.
- <sup>30</sup>Alphabet, no. 2, p. 2.
- <sup>31</sup>Alphabet, no. 3, p. 25.
- <sup>32</sup>Alphabet, no. 4, p. 3.
- <sup>33</sup>Alphabet, no. 4, p. 74.
- <sup>34</sup>Alphabet, no. 7, p. 3.
- <sup>35</sup>Alphabet, no. 8, p. 5.
- <sup>36</sup>Alphabet, no. 8, p. 5.
- <sup>37</sup>Alphabet, no. 14, p. 2.
- <sup>38</sup>Alphabet, no. 16, p. 3.
- <sup>39</sup>Alphabet, nos. 18/19, p. 2.
- <sup>40</sup>Atwood, "Eleven Years of Alphabet," p. 62.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BLACK MOUNTAIN INFLUENCE: TISH AND BEYOND

Tish, "a poetry newsletter--Vancouver," is perhaps the most famous and controversial of the Canadian little magazines; it is certainly the best documented, with the first nineteen issues in a reprint edition and two book length studies (The Writing Life and Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish) already devoted to it. Much of its notoriety and interest springs from the view that Tish appeared at a crucial time in the evolution of Canadian Modernism and it represented a well-defined orientation and belief as to how poetry should be written. The readings of what Tish meant, however, have been, to say the least, various. Louis Dudek, having fought long and hard for a developing Modernist poetry in Canada, could see in Tish and its poets "the main line of continuing modern development" and the continuation of "the authentic modern tradition in Canada."<sup>1</sup> West coast critic Warren Tallman sees in the Tish group not so much a continuation of the modern tradition as a rejection of the humanist approach evident in earlier Canadian poetry (including that of Dudek and his colleagues Layton and Souster) and the beginnings of Post-Modernism in Canadian poetry. Viewing things from yet another point of view, Robin Mathews sees Tish as a betrayal of the native tradition in Canadian poetry and as a stage in the "U.S. invasion and colonization of a part of the poetic culture of Canada."<sup>2</sup> Surely then, in Tish, in its poets and in their orientation towards poetry, we find something that is controversial and possibly also central to the question of Modernism. If Dudek is correct Tish extends the tradition of Modernism that began in Canada with Scott and Smith; if Tallman is correct then the Vancouver poetry experiment of the 1960's represents a vitally new poetry that makes great departures from that which preceded it; and if Mathews is correct, Tish represents a betrayal of Canadian culture and



Canada's indigenous poetic tradition. An investigation of these possibilities is as much a part of the study of Tish as any recounting of the magazine's history.

Mathews' view of Tish differs from the views of Dudek and Tallman in that it is totally condemnatory. For Mathews Tish is a "bete noire", the most extreme example of the Canadian poetic tradition being invaded by American influence. The influence of the American Black Mountain poets upon the Tish group is seen as an aesthetic and political betrayal of something essentially Canadian. In fact, Mathews does not see Tish as the first case in which Canadian poets have become annexed to U.S. political and poetic ideologies:

The invasion has not been confined to the Pacific Province of Canada. It began, elsewhere, a half century ago, at least. It has, however, gone virtually unrecorded because U.S. "influences" and "cosmopolitanism" have often been offered as desirable. Canadians have been told that they must accept the leadership of foreign poets and styles if they are to be serious, contemporary, and good. The foreign poets are usually U.S. poets or poets who, for some reason, support the poetics U.S. poets claim are central in our time.<sup>3</sup>

In this passage Mathews is being rather cryptic, suggesting that the invasion had begun "elsewhere," and making passing reference to a term such as "cosmopolitanism" coined by Smith in the 1940's. In his essay "Poetics: the Struggle for Voice in Canada," Mathews spells out his views on the betrayal of the Canadian tradition in greater detail. First stating that the "battle about poetics has been a battle with an ideological basis, a basis in political reality, political power, and political influence,"<sup>4</sup> Mathews goes on to recount what he considers to be some of the prime determinants of the struggle:

One of the fundamental determinants of the struggle about Canadian poetics and a Canadian voice in more recent decades might be called the rejection of the Canadian tradition, or-- for those who want a less partisan phrasing--

the misunderstanding of Canadian poetry written before 1920. That rejection or misunderstanding is visible... especially from the McGill Movement onwards. . . Since the McGill Movement the hallmark of general misunderstanding has been the tendency to lump good and bad poetry into "the maple leaf school", dismissing the whole without examining the parts.<sup>5</sup>

Mathews fixes the cause for the second determinant as being an aspect of the first, believing that as "a part of the rejection of the Canadian tradition a number of Canadian poets and critics. . . have gone outside Canada as a fundamental policy, in search of major leadership, models, and theories of poetic imagination."<sup>6</sup> Mathews contends that the spurned Canadian tradition is replaced by elements of the U.S. poetic tradition, and that the initial "betrayal" by the McGill Movement led to a constant string of "betrayals" that bring us up to the present day:

As we must be aware, the McGill Movement eventuated in Sousterian colonial-mindedness, and it, in turn, was followed by the Black Mountain Imitation School, theories of "North American" poetic sensibility and publications like Boundary 2 and Cross Country, both of which serve to "continentalize" poetic imagination. The result is not to bring two poetic imaginations into fruitful dialogue. It is to assimilate Canadian poetic production into the U.S. tradition.<sup>7</sup>

What is most striking about Mathews' strident argument and his view of Canadian poetry is that it is essentially anti-Modernist. For Mathews it is the poets of the Confederation who serve as the genuine beginnings of a Canadian tradition to which we must hold; denouncing the American influences of the Modernists (which is, of course, a grand simplification, in that Modernism is, by its nature, an international movement, rather than an American movement of aggrandizement) Mathews is quite willing to allow the English Romantic influences and models that inundate the poetries of Lampman, Roberts, Cairman, and Duncan Campbell Scott. What

Mathews is denouncing is the Modernist movement in Canada because he cares for neither the aesthetics nor the inherent politics, as he sees it, of Modernism. His misreading of the sources in Scott and Smith is significant, in that he sees them as derived from American rather than English traditions. Tish, for Mathews, is only the latest instance in a long line of innovations of which he disapproves. The most significant weakness in his argument is the inability to provide an alternative to the poetry of the Modernists; he argues that we should ignore fifty years of Canadian poetry without replacing it with further developments in what he considers the genuine Canadian tradition. The Black Mountain poets, in attempting to reroute American poetry around Allan Tate and John Crowe Ransom, could note a continuation of Pound and Williams' Modernism in Objectivists like Oppen, Reznikoff, Rakosi and Zukofsky, who served as a bridge between the early Imagists of the 1910's and the Black Mountain and Beat poets of the 1950's. Mathews is incapable of bridging the gap in this way because there is actually no intelligent continuation after the Confederation poets. Whether Mathews accepts it or not, the Modernist tradition has fully incorporated itself into Canadian poetry and has prevailed as the most vital force in Canadian poetry in the last fifty years. The Canadian tradition has not been betrayed but has substantially been modified by the influx of a set of ideas that now imbue Canadian poetry with a genuine contemporaneity. It seems foolish on the part of Mathews, therefore, to indict the innovators in Canadian poetry for cultural treason when their real contribution is so positive.

Louis Dudek's view of the Vancouver Tish movement as an extension or continuation of the Modernist movement appears in his essay "Lunchtime Reflections on Frank Davey's Defence of the Black Mountain Fort" (Tamarack Review, Summer 1965). Dudek's essay was a response to an essay in the previous issue: "Black Days on Black Mountain," in which Davey tried to defend the presence of the Black Mountain influence in Canadian

poetry by detailing its basic premises and insisting upon its widespread influence. Dudek argues that it is a doubtful case for Davey to place everyone under the banner of the Black Mountain school when, in fact, the common source for all Modernist poets is Imagism and the poetry of Pound and Williams. Dudek rightly sees the new school of poets (Black Mountain and Tish) as a "hopeful continuation or would-be theoretical fulfillment"<sup>8</sup> of what the early Modernist fathers had proposed.

Interestingly, as we have seen in the chapter on the magazines of the fifties, Layton, Souster, and Dudek were contemporaries of Olson, Creeley, and other Black Mountain poets and united with them to form a kind of on-going spiritual beachhead of Modernism in the conservative and retrenching fifties. For the most part they drew upon Pound and Williams. This seems to be especially true in the cases of Olson and Dudek; Layton seems to have tried to steer his own idiosyncratic course though, paradoxically, he was the Canadian most readily embraced by the Black Mountain poets; Souster appears to have been the one of the three who fell most under the sway of Williams, and then of Olson, via the "Projective Verse" essay. What we see, on the part of these Canadian poets in the fifties, is an unwillingness to be drawn into too tight an association with their compatriots to the south. This, again, seems to be more true of Dudek and Layton; Souster's Contact and Combustion at times look like a version of Origin/Black Mountain Review North. Although deriving from common sources, the poetry of the American and the Canadian group developed quite differently, to the extent that Tallman can see the Canadian group as working within a humanist tradition while he places the Black Mountain group in the central modern tradition. The latter, for him, includes the poets associated with Tish. The main point I would make here is that Black Mountain poetry is a specific derivation from Pound's and William's Modernism, and that it differs clearly from the Modernism practiced by the Cerberus trio. When the

Black Mountain influence hit the shores of Vancouver it brought into Canadian poetry developments that were new and different from those practiced by the older east coast poets. In order to understand just how the Tish poets continue the progress of Modernism in Canadian poetry, and to also understand how their poetry differs from what preceded it, a short investigation of Black Mountain poetics may be in order.

In Canada the term "Black Mountain" has often been used too loosely to designate the influence of American poets of the fifties and sixties, and critics have gone so far as to include members of the New York School and the Beats under the general category of "Black Mountain". Without discrimination, all poets included in Donald Allen's seminal anthology The New American Poetry have often been seen as having a monolithic influence upon the west coast Tish poets. We should note, however, that although after the Vancouver poetry conference of 1963 a more general American influence came to be felt in Vancouver, the first editorial period of Tish (1961-1963) reveals the predominance of Black Mountain poetic thinking in that magazine; and we should be careful to remember that Black Mountain is a specific individualized group of poets rather than an inclusive Pan-American phenomenon. Donald Allen was careful to point out in his anthology that the ten poets whom he grouped under the heading of Black Mountain share their association by having appeared in the little magazines Origin and Black Mountain Review and in some, but not all, instances having had some association with Black Mountain College. The ten poets that Allen designated as the Black Mountain poets are Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Paul Blackburn, Robert Creeley, Paul Carroll, Larry Eigner, Edward Dorn, Jonathan Williams and Joel Oppenheimer. This, then, is a precise list of just who the Black Mountain poets are.

And yet, as with all literary movements, the placing of ten poets under a single banner is probably more convenient than it is exact. What this group shared was a certain

aesthetic sympathy rather than a manifesto, although one could argue that Olson's "Projective Verse" essay did much to embody just such a set of common assumptions. More than anything these poets shared a time and an outlook; if we turn to the work of individual writers we at once notice each poet's individuality as distinct from the other members of the group.

The beginnings of the Black Mountain group can be traced to the spring of 1951 when Cid Corman started a magazine called Origin. It served as a meeting place for many of the writers who later appeared in Black Mountain Review.

. . . these writers, in rebellion against the modalities then dominant in poetry and criticism, had few other outlets--among them, Golden Goose, Merlin and Rainer Maria Gerhardt's Fragments. Toward late 1953-early 1954 certain haphazardly related circumstances conspired to add one more, and probably the most significant: The Black Mountain Review.

Origin, having done its pioneer work, seemed to be faltering: "It's not tired," Creeley said, "but it's really been carrying a lot of weight for some time." There seemed to be room--even demand--for a publication that would admit some further possibilities. Creeley and Olson, for example, wanted "an active, ranging" section for critical writing that would be "prospective"--"would break down habits of 'subject' and gain a new experience of context generally."<sup>9</sup>

Charles Olson, who was at that time rector of Black Mountain College, served as prime mover for The Black Mountain Review:

The starting point was Olson's conviction that a magazine would help to promote the college, and that a reinvigorated college, in turn, would help to break the hold of the New Criticism and give needed support to literary expression with quite different concerns.<sup>10</sup>

One thing that unifies the Black Mountain poets is their rebellion against New Criticism and their discontent with the growing conservatism that had come in its wake during the 1930's and 1940's. The Black Mountain poets opposed this with

what they saw as central to the fathers of Modernism, Pound and Williams, and they concerned themselves with carrying on the innovations of Modernism. Robert Creeley, in interview, addressed himself to the question of the continuity of modern poetry:

I think that what's happened, at least in the context of the States, is that the poetry of the Twenties and Thirties, or that which was dominant at that time, publicly--let's say the poetry of Ransom and Tate and Bishop and that which then came from the younger men such as Jarrell--this poetry, in effect, tended to block off, not to smother but to cover, the actual tradition that was still operating in the poetry of say Zukofsky and Reznikoff and George Oppen, but I feel that the continuity is there, suffers no break, keeps going. I suppose for one thing the particular lives of the men involved made it impossible to have an apparently clear line all the time. Of those concerned, there's the fact that Pound was living abroad, H.D. was in Europe also, and Williams was living a life which defined him primarily as a doctor. Zukofsky is very quiet and not at all a man who enjoys asserting himself publicly. So I think that what happened was that once the social aspect of the Roaring Twenties died out in writing, people assumed that the actual work that had been initiated in that same period was done too, but we find that people actually worked continuously all during the time: besides Williams and Zukofsky there is H.D. and the younger men who were dissatisfied with the Ransom and Tate school went to them. They were happily available in some sense.

The Black Mountain group clearly took up the line of Modernism begun by Pound and Williams, a tradition which they saw continued by the Objectivists.

Beyond an antipathy to the poetry of the New Criticism, however, what is it that the Black Mountain poets share? It is Creeley again who attempts to supply some definition:

I think what did happen then, and what continues to happen among these people to join us, all together, is this: a very conscious concern with the manner of a poem, with the form of a poem,

so that we are, in that way, freed from any solution unparticular or not particular to ourselves. Olson, I believe, was a decisive influence upon me as a writer, because he taught me how to write. Not how to write poems that he wrote, but how to write poems that I write. This is a very curious and very specific difference.

I think of Paul Blackburn, he was really the first poet I ever knew, and I remember arriving in New York in a pretty hysterical fashion--we were about to take one of those boats--and Paul and I spent two and a half days and nights simply talking about how do you write a poem? We'd come, very respectfully, from Pound's influence. Pound, again, is back of all this, as is William Carlos Williams. We all had to find the character of our own intelligence, I suppose it would be, our own minds, the terms of our own living, and we did it by this preoccupation with how is the poem to be put on the page. Not "how do we feel generally"--are we good people or bad people--but how shall we actually speak to other people in this medium in a way that's not exclusively personal, but in a way that is our own determination.<sup>12</sup>

Creeley's noting of the preoccupation with "how is the poem to be put on the page" points out that Black Mountain poetics are essentially technique-oriented, the most central issue being one of poetic notation. Also, a central premise would seem to be that stated by George Bowering in his essay "How I Hear Howl," that "Poetry is a vocal art."<sup>13</sup> In seeking to free poetry from the trammels of end rhyme and a metronomic regularity of metre, the Imagists were ultimately attempting to bring the language of poetry into closer communion with the language of speech. Black Mountain poetry brings the language of poetry into the same realm as the speech of each individual. And it attempts to provide a notation that corresponds to real speech.

These central concerns validate Black Mountain as a literary tag, giving as much definition to the group as the three key propositions of the Imagists. As with the Imagists, who had Pound as their central figure, the Black Mountain poets had Charles Olson as their leading theorizer and rally-



ing point:

We did use Olson as a locus without question. We were variously involved with Pound and Williams. . . . We weren't leaning, I think, on Olson's condition, but we were using a premise which he of course had made articulate in projective verse. We were trying to think of how a more active sense of poetry might be got, and that's I think the coincidence we share, or rather the coincident commitment: that each of us felt that the then existing critical attitudes toward verse, and that the then existing possibilities for publication for general activity in poetry particularly, were extraordinarily narrow. We were trying in effect to think of a base, or a different base from which to move. And though we've all, each one of us, I think come up with distinctive manners of writing. . . . what's taken to be the case in writing is something we share very much. That is, we each feel that writing is something we're given to do rather than choose to do; that the form an actual writing takes is very intimate to the circumstance and impulses of its literal time of writing. . . . that the modality conceived and the occasion conceived is a very similar one.<sup>14</sup>

The Black Mountain impulse then shares much with that of the Canadian Cerberus group in terms of trying to keep Modernism going in the face of an encircling conservatism and formalism. At the same time the Black Mountain poets seem intent on finding their way to freedom in poetry through form, that form being the open form that Olson considers in his essay "Projective Verse". This essay merits some examination if we are to see precisely what the Tish poets were able to distill from Olson and the Black Mountain group.

Olson's "Projective Verse," on the strength of its influence, stands as one of the leading poetic manifestoes of this century; in its extension and elaboration of the early Imagist principles it transports modern verse in the English language into a new phase, quite often termed "Post-Modernist," to use the term originated by Olson himself. In many ways it makes free verse a more systematic poetic form.

As I have previously stated, the Black Mountain group

existed as a kind of dynamic tension and opposition to the traditionally-based New Criticism poets. Moving into the 1950's, New Criticism had already spawned a second generation of poets, a generation who were effectively anthologized in Donald Hall and Robert Pack's New Poets of England and America. If we contrast this anthology with Donald Allen's The New American Poetry we find two totally different lines of development. The poetic fathers of New Poets of England and America are Ransom, Tate, Auden, Spender, Sandburg, Frost and Thomas, whereas the Allen anthology poets seem to draw their influences from Whitman, Williams, Pound and H.D. This is perhaps an over-simplification, but we can see here the contrast between an essentially traditional line of poetry and a radically Modernist line. At the time of Olson's "Projective Verse" the traditional line was predominant, as it had been for most of the period since the mid-1910's, certainly from the 1920's onward, so that in many ways Olson was going against the accepted standards of the day in his attempt to move Modernism ahead.

In beginning to put forward his theory of "projective" or "open" verse Olson contrasts it with "non-projective" verse: "or what a French critic calls "closed" verse, that verse which print bred and which is pretty much what we have had, in English & American, and have still got, despite the work of Pound & Williams."<sup>15</sup> As opposed to this closed poetry which print has bred, Olson proposes a forward moving verse that puts into itself "certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listenings."<sup>16</sup> This verse he sees as having been preceded by the "revolution of the ear, 1910"<sup>17</sup> which is the revolution of Imagism which insisted on poetry being composed in the sequence of the musical phrase rather than that of a metronome. Olson here is striving for a free verse that moves off from something as abstract as "the musical phrase" and brings poetry back into total integration with the human voice.

"Projective Verse" is broken down into two parts; in

the first part Olson shows what his concept of projective verse is and how it is achieved, and in the second part he suggests "a few ideas about what stance toward reality brings such verse into being, what that stance does, both to the poet and to his reader."<sup>18</sup>

First, Olson provides "projective verse" with two synonyms, "open" verse and "composition by field"; these are opposed to a poetry of "inherited line, stanza, over-all form, what is the 'old' base of the non-projective."<sup>19</sup> Olson is objecting here to an accepted or "inherited" form into which a poem is molded; in the "non-projective" poem form precedes content or, at least, dictates the method of presentation of content. As Olson defines it, the three main concerns of the projective poem are "kinetics," "principle," and "process". Olson sees a poem as a way of transferring energy from the poet to the reader. Regarding the poem itself and its relation to this energy, it must "at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge."<sup>20</sup> In order to maximize the efficiency with which the energy is transferred, the composition of the poem must adhere to the essential principle of composition by field, defined in the formula "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT."<sup>21</sup> Finally, there is "the process of the thing, how the principle can be made so to shape the energies that the form is accomplished. And I think it can be boiled down to one statement (first pounded into my head by Edward Dahlberg): ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION."<sup>22</sup>

The contrast, then, between projective and non-projective verse is well marked. Projective verse strives to be kinetic rather than static, written in a form which projects or carries the kinetics of content rather than molding them to a fixed pattern. Lastly, rather than formally developing and polishing one perception into a poem, the projective poem is a process of perception, always kinetic, always moving.

Describing further the nature of the projective poem,

Olson notes that "that verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear and the pressures of his breath."<sup>23</sup> Having denounced the set line, stanza, form, Olson now posits poetry as an aural/oral process. For Olson, Imagism had existed as the revolution of the ear; what he now posits as the acquisition of the ear is the syllable:

It is the king and pin of versification, what rules and holds together the lines, the larger forms, of a poem. . . It is by their syllables that words juxtapose in beauty, by these particles of sound as clearly as by the sense of the words which they compose. In any given instance, because there is a choice of words, the choice, if a man is in there, will be, spontaneously, the obedience of his ear to the syllables. The fineness, and the practice, lie here, at the minimum and source of speech.<sup>24</sup>

To a certain extent the idea, inherent in Imagism, of composing in the sequence of the musical phrase lies behind Olson's assertion of the syllable as the "king and pin of versification." The syllable, as unit of sound, contains the essential qualities of the music of language. To this Olson adds the sense of phrasing that results from the pressures of the breath:

But the syllable is only the first child of the incest of verse (always, that Egyptian thing, it produces twins!). The other child is the LINE. And together, these two, the syllable and the line, they make a poem, they make that thing, the--what shall we call it, the Boss of all, the "Single Intelligence." And the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and thus is, it is here that, the daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only he, the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line its metric and its ending--where its breathing, shall come to, termination.<sup>25</sup>

For Olson, measure comes from the speaking voice of the individual poet rather than from a set of conventions. Olson is here insisting upon the line as a complete unit of speech, the length of a breath during which words are spoken. The

written poem, then, is a transcription or notation of how the poem would be spoken aloud. According to Olson's stated principles, the projective poem has an aesthetic base which confirms Eliot's assertion that free verse is not free; Olson adds, however, the principle of measure of this verse form, namely the line. Olson further observes that

It is now only a matter of the recognition of the conventions of composition by field for us to bring into being an open verse as formal as the closed, with all its traditional advantages.<sup>26</sup>

Projective verse, then, is not free form, but has its own set of formal principles.

Having defined his concept of projective verse, Olson goes on to comment upon "rhetorical devices which have now to be brought under a new bead."<sup>27</sup> Simile is to be avoided, description has to be watched because its easiness can often drain the energy from a poem. All slackness must be avoided, in that it disperses energy. Observation, which he likens to argument in prose, Olson considers to be "properly previous to the act of the poem."<sup>28</sup> If it is to be contained in a poem at all it must be "juxtaposed, apposed, set in"<sup>29</sup> so that it does not interfere between the poem's content and its form. Olson also states that "the conventions which logic has forced on syntax must be broken open as quietly as must the too set feet of the old line."<sup>30</sup> All the old poetic devices are considered by Olson to be interferences which disperse the actuality of the poem.

Olson's final point in the first part of "Projective Verse" is that the typewriter is a great writing tool, in that it enables a real specificity in notation. This precision in notation enhances the relationship between poem as written medium and poem as auditory experience:

. . . what I want to emphasize here, by this emphasis on the typewriter as the personal and instantaneous recorder of the poets' work, is the already projective nature of the verse as the sons of Pound and Williams are practicing it. Already they are composing as though verse

was to have the reading its writing involved, as though not the eye but the ear was to be its measurer, as though the intervals of its composition could be so carefully put down as to be precisely the intervals of its registration. For the ear, which once had the burden of memory to quicken it (rime & regular cadence were its aids and have merely lived on in print after the oral necessities were ended) can now again, that the poet has his means, be the threshold of projective verse.<sup>31</sup>

In essence, Olson is attempting, after 500 years of print poetry, to re-align modern poetry with the oral tradition.

In the second part of "Projective Verse" Olson talks of how the projective purpose in verse involves a new stance toward reality as well as towards the poem. He insists that the realization that the beginning and end of the poem is "voice in its largest sense"<sup>32</sup> changes the conceiving and material of verse. What Olson proposes as the prime aesthetic for projective verse is "objectism":

Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interferences of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creatures of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages, the more likely to recognize himself as such the greater his advantages, particularly at that moment that he achieves an humilitas sufficient to make him of use.

It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence. If he sprawl, he shall find little to sing but himself, and shall sing, nature has such paradoxical ways, by way of artificial forms outside himself. But if he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way.<sup>33</sup>

Olson is arguing here for an approach to reality which incorporates man into an object-object relation with the world of nature as opposed to a subject-object relation. What he is after in poetry is not so much a revelation of the emotional intensity that an individual experiences and then expresses in verse, but rather the "secrets objects share" revealed in the medium of poetry. Olson believes that the poet should not be present in the poem as an ego, but rather as a creature of nature that has the power to articulate. Commenting upon the Black Mountain poets, Warren Tallman sees the shift of consciousness suggested here by Olson as that from the perceptive to the proprioceptive:

. . . Modernist writing has shifted emphasis from the perceptive view in which attention focuses on the surrounding world to a proprioceptive view in which self, having subjected itself to its surroundings, becomes the subject of a new writing which it is easiest to define as a life sentence. Self in the subject, writing is verb and the object is life, to be as fully alive as one can manage by way of sight, hearing, thinking, feeling, speaking--that is, writing.<sup>34</sup>

This idea of proprioception Tallman equates with Olson's dictum that the poet should stay "inside himself." The revelation of life takes place through his being a "participant in the larger force" as Olson states it, as opposed to being a purely perceiving consciousness.

In representing a shift to a proprioceptive as opposed to a perceptive stance in their poems, the Tish poets represent a development that places them in the Post-Modern stream as compared to the humanism of Dudek, Souster and Layton. Rather than seeing a poem as something shaped by human intelligence imposing its order upon language, the Tish poets follow Olson in seeing poetry as being a participation in a greater force, that force specifically being language which the poet does not relate to as artisan or craftsman but rather as disciple or priest. This attitude was stated by George

Bowering during the Tish years:

The Tish poets have striven for accuracy and clarity, and have turned their attention upon the factual things that make up the world, men included among them. The young romantics (chiefly from Eastern Canada and in the U.S. New York and California) don't seem to have the desire to work for accuracy. Instead of communicating they fall back on some intensity of feeling, hoping to inundate the reader with expressions of their own superhuman soul, interpreted by themselves. They scoop a lot of slush into the space between themselves and natural phenomena. They think they have to put poetry into things; they don't have the sense and determination to find the poetry that is already there.<sup>35</sup>

The insistence upon accuracy, clarity, and the factual traces Tish's line of descent back to Imagism with its precise reckoning of the actual. At the same time the differentiation between craftsman and priest is evident; the craftsman attempts to put poetry into things as opposed to finding the poetry that is already evident and waiting to be tapped.

With hindsight, Frank Davey has also been able to trace the roots of the Tish movement:

The Tish movement has its roots in Matthew Arnold's view of the writer as cultural custodian, in Pound's view that the accuracy of a culture's language and the health of its arts are inextricably tied to the morality of its economic life, in Williams' sense of art as participating in the literal events of the artist's community. Arnold's, Pound's, Williams', and Olson's emphasis on prosody: that on the writer alone rests the continued functioning of syntax and vocabulary as signifiers (rather than as obfuscators--as the commercial users of language would have it) of the community's life. This is the "main line" which Louis Dudek in "Lunchtime Reflections" traces to Tish from Imagism and from Williams' "no ideas but in things", remarking that "this preference for the contemporary 'thing' . . . implies great honesty toward experience (such as we have in Creeley and in the Vancouver poets), also a will to purity in language, and integrity in the use of free organic verse forms." In Canadian poetry before Tish the most indisput-



able representative of this "authentic modern tradition" is Dudek himself. This tradition has been communal (Williams) and cultural (Pound) rather than individualistic; has been concerned with prosody (Joyce, Stein, Olson) rather than theme; has been local (Williams, Bunting, Yeats, Olson) or culturally historical (Pound, Eliot, David Jones) rather than nationalistic; and has viewed writing as a cultural 'office' rather than as a personal linguistic skill.<sup>36</sup>

We should note that these views on the place of Tish in cultural and literary history are put forward by Davey in an article written fifteen years after the beginning of the movement. In other words, Davey's ability to trace a line of descent for Tish comes from a later understanding. It must also be understood that Davey here is making a case, however convincing a case, for the importance and centrality of a literary movement in which he himself played an important part. Yet his main points are sound; in serving as a poetry newsletter devoted to the writing of a group of Vancouver poets (even though it is a rather small group), Tish reflects a communal concern rather than one directed toward individual voice and literary reputation. Taking their cue from the Black Mountain poets, the Tish group shared many basic premises about the writing of poetry and in this way pooled themselves to form an almost communal identity. Like Black Mountain poetics, which are essentially concerned with technique and a relative freedom from the impositions of abstract intelligence, the emphasis in Tish poetry falls naturally on prosody rather than on theme. Also, modeling themselves on Olson's Maximus, the Tish poets developed a commitment to place or "locus" and this led them to emphasize the particularities of the place where they found themselves to be living: Vancouver, British Columbia. If there is one thing essential about west coast poetry of the past twenty years it is that it has been intensely aware, in its most generalized phase, of being a west coast poetry as opposed to Canadian poetry. The primary commitments of the Tish poets were to

language and to place.

In considering the communal role of Tish and its sense of place, we cannot do better than start with Frank Davey's comment:

It is the sense of belonging that is projected by Tish magazine, and by Vancouver poetry since Tish, that has been the most incomprehensible, even unacceptable, to writers and critics in other provinces: the sense of belonging to a specific geography, of belonging to the political and social life of that geography, of belonging to both a local community of writers and an international community of writers, of belonging to (rather than possessing and using) language, of being at home in place, community, and language. . .

No one will ever fully understand Tish magazine or B.C. writing since Tish who does not understand this concept of community. This concept assumes that man must find his place in the cosmos, in the physical geography of his place, in the social fabric of his human settlement, in the rhythmic and syntactic patterns of his language, that these patterns are liberating and sustaining rather than imprisoning. . .The act of writing becomes a "poetics of dwelling."<sup>37</sup>

The central point here is the idea of the Tish poet as someone "at home in place, community, and language." Investigating the phenomenon of Tish, one is immediately impressed by the fact that the magazine embodies the attempt of the young poets who gathered around the magazine to discover and affirm for themselves the crucial relations between themselves and a sense of place, of community, and of language.

As Warren Tallman has pointed out in his article "Wonder Merchants," Tish had its true beginning in February, 1961, when Robert Duncan appeared at the Festival of Contemporary Arts in Vancouver and read his poetry and talked of poetry to a capacity audience. Among those present were George Bowering, David Dawson, Lionel Kearns, Jamie Reid, Frank Davey and Fred Wah. In the late spring of 1961, these six young poets got together to form a study group that had weekly meetings on Sundays to discuss the work that Duncan had intro-

duced to them. The primary text for their readings and discussions was Donald Allen's The New American Poetry. In trying to come to terms with the work in this anthology, the young poets often found themselves facing difficulties. As Tallman recounts it, "With that kind of good sense that goes with direct eyes and open responses, they did a typically absurd but intelligent thing. The group of six expanded their numbers to 20, so there were both poets and interested friends of poets, subscribed \$5 each and offered Duncan the \$100 to appear in Vancouver and lecture at length on Pound, the Imagists, Olson and the Maximus Poems, his own 'Structure of Rime' poems in The Opening of the Field, and, as it turned out, Creeley, Levertov, Ginsberg and early days with Jack Spicer and Robin Blaser during the Romantic 'Berkeley Renaissance' of the mid-1940's."<sup>38</sup> Being situated in the west, the Vancouver poets really had not come into contact with the Modernist Canadian poetry of the east coast. Bowering has mentioned that he and Kearns did have some awareness of the Contact Press books, but they had never heard of poets such as A.J.M. Smith or F.R. Scott at the time that Tish began.<sup>39</sup> So that it was Duncan who really brought Modernism into Vancouver with his lectures and presence:

Duncan, a walking and talking university of verse lore, filled the air with his most influential predecessors (Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D.) and his closest contemporaries (Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Larry Eigner, Denise Levertov). The gain for Davey and the others was not simply in the names but in the keys, clues and comments on the art of articulation. Tone leading, rhyme, sound resemblances and disresemblances, the musical phrase, composition by field and correspondence, as well as linguistic, musical, dramatic, and choreographic analogies to writing--all these began to buzz about like bees.<sup>40</sup>

These young poets were intensely schooled in Black Mountain poetics by Duncan, in fact, he taught them as much as they could absorb. Whereas, in earlier phases of the Modernist movement in Canada poets derived their influences through

the medium of print, the Vancouver poets had first hand instruction from the poets themselves. Eventually, Duncan, Olson, Creeley, Levertov, Ginsberg, Spicer, Blaser, Michael McClure, Jackson MacLow and Philip Whalen were all to appear in Vancouver, between the years 1961 and 1966, to instruct young Vancouver poets in the elements of their poetry. It is simply by making their presence felt so concretely that these poets brought their influence to bear on the poets of Vancouver to a greater extent than anywhere else in Canada.

But returning to the founding of Tish, it grew directly out of Duncan's three nights of lectures on July 23, 24, and 25 in 1961, at the home of Warren Tallman. Although the group of young writers had previously been thinking about publishing a magazine, Frank Davey notes that Duncan played a large part in bringing the magazine into being:

. . . the main push toward a magazine was Duncan's. His accounts of the histories of little mags such as Origin, Black Mountain Review, and The Floating Bear began to promise freedom from received standards and establishment bias should we venture to create a similar publication. By the Saturday following his final lecture the question was shifting from "should we" to "how".<sup>41</sup>

It was finally on a Sunday in August 1961, the last day of Duncan's stay in Vancouver, that the six poets decided to start Tish. Lionel Kearns declined to be an editor of the publication but was constantly involved in the magazine's operations. There were nineteen issues cranked out between September 1961 and April 1963, when Bowering, Davey and Kearns finished their M.A. exams at University of British Columbia. The title of the magazine, suggested by Duncan himself, is a phonemic inversion of the word "shit". It was never the desire of the editors to produce a highly polished literary periodical.

Rather Tish was to be a record of on-going literary activity, a record that preserved every roughness, insight, and stupidity that this activity enclosed. The immediate models

were two U.S. underground magazines, Cid Corman's Origin and LeRoy Jones' and Diane Di Prima's The Floating Bear. A more distant model was Louis Dudek's Delta, although to us even this magazine had a professional veneer which concealed whatever human contexts the writings had occurred in. Had we encountered copies of Contact or Combustion instead of Delta, they would have undoubtedly been more useful.<sup>42</sup>

Besides sharing a common interest in Black Mountain poetry and poetics, Contact and Combustion shared with Tish a large-sized gestetnered format.

As with all group magazines, Tish had its own set of poetic politics to formulate and consider. These were set in motion at the time of the magazine's founding, as Frank Davey explains:

Later that evening the politics of the magazine began with the need to select an editor and devise an editorial structure. None of us five wanted a strong "editor-in-chief" (not one of us, in fact, trusted the literary judgement of all of his colleagues). Having an editor with veto power seemed of little advantage over submitting our work to alien quarterlies. My election that night was, I am told, due to my appearing the least doctrinaire of the older editors (Bowering, Wah, and myself) and being thus least threatening to all. From the beginning, a majority vote among the editors was held necessary to admit material--including material by the editors. In practice, we usually attempted to dissuade fellow editors from publishing work we suspected, and, if failing to move him, accepted his judgement. . . .

Outside poets caused more controversy. Wah and I were originally in favor of excluding all except those of the Vancouver scene. Bowering disagreed, being anxious to publish well-known writers (Eigner, Blackburn, McClure) as a way of increasing both circulation and credibility. Our policy soon became to publish up to two pages of "outsiders" per issue as a means of defining our "tastes". In retrospect, this explanation was clearly a rationalization

In the months following the first issue, we gradually located Tish's appropriate form and manner. By issue #4, the subtitle had become "a poetry-newsletter-Vancouver" instead of the

original "a magazine of Vancouver poetry."  
Tish was obviously a newsletter--a record of  
 work-in-progress--rather than a magazine.<sup>43</sup>

Although Davey views Tish more as a newsletter than a magazine, perhaps Tallman, viewing the activity from a slightly greater distance, is right in asserting that:

. . .in a deeper sense it was neither magazine nor newsletter but a meeting place for their lives. . .Poems written one week went the rounds the next, were argued and selected or rejected the next, and printed, folded, addressed, stamped and mailed the next. Not waiting for subscribers the editors compiled their own mailing list, paid postage from their own almost empty pockets, and distribution was free. Poems and letters received were responded to within the day, the week. Everything that was feeding into their lives was being fed directly into a flood of poems: the city, their day-to-day activities, their love affairs, quarrels over poetics, their difference with Layton, Purdy, Acorn, Gwen MacEwen--one another.<sup>44</sup>

In the constant flood of activity and energy Tish represents the little magazine operating at peak efficiency. A very specific concept of poetics is enhanced by a continual working out and integration of poetic theory into poems, a constant process of probing and discovering. The magazine itself served as a communal organ for its writers, the meetings at which they discussed each other's poems were veritable work sessions, with a poet often rewriting a poem if the rest of the group pushed him in that direction. The editors also did not attempt to generate interest or subscribers, but rather chose their own audience, mailing out the newsletter to the people they wanted to read it. Tish abounded with an almost missionary zeal, and it was the belief in the importance of their work that makes the magazine important. They knew that if they could fulfil their intentions they would make a significant contribution. Tish represents an interesting blend of aesthetic hits and misses, but the vital energy of the magazine and its subsequent influence cannot be questioned.

The first issue of Tish appeared in September 1961.

The magazine masthead notes Frank Davey as editor and James Reid, George Bowering, Fred Wah and David Dawson as contributing editors. An editorial by Davey starts off the magazine, an editorial more playful than militant, noting that "TISH is a moving and vocal mag," that it does not exist just to publish the work of its editors but is "proof of a movement which we, the editors, feel is shared by other people as well as ourselves." Davey goes on to note:

TISH is articulate. Its poets are always obsessed with the possibilities of sound, and anxious to explore it meaningfully in relation to their position in the world: their stance in "circumstance". They also like puns.

TISH will publish any poem, short story, or essay which its editors feel shows a direct relationship to TISH's siring movement.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly Tish's siring movement is the manifestation of Modernism evident in Duncan's Black Mountain poetic.

The contents of this first issue consist of statements of poetics and selections of poems by each of the five Tish editors. The Black Mountain theories are highly in evidence. James Reid, in talking of the poem, declares: "so a poem is a definition a graph a mind a map to define to locate the poet and to define the temporary momentary boundaries of his awareness, each succeeding poem is a realignment of the boundaries."<sup>46</sup> Inherent to these statements is a belief in Olson's theory of composition by field. George Bowering speaks of the poetic process as follows:

The man who writes the things is part of it too, and he limits himself criminally if he, like Browning, gears himself to write out of his interpretive faculty, or like Wordsworth out of his tranquility. The megalomaniac who declares his responsibility for the written poem sits in seminars and tries to explain his "creativity", resting on the seventh day and preparing to read books about his restive days after his parents separated. The poet has a responsibility to the whole poetic experience, and it lies in responding to his assumed capacity to re-enact the experience. For while the

written poem is only one exposure of the PE, it, like a single neuron, is the most reliable clue to the nature of the greater structure. That is why the smaller parts in the written poem are things pertaining to the PE, and not judgements emanating from the interpreting mind of the participant artist. The things themselves participate in the PE. Teachers of freshman English will stride in here and say you're talking about good ole selection. But these are the people who also talk about "giving birth" (to a poem), a process that obviates selectivity. The poet is neither a grader nor a mother. His job is to participate.<sup>47</sup>

Bowering here is echoing Olson's "Projective Verse" essay: it is the source of his ideas about getting rid of the "lyrical interferences" and the notion that the poet should not give his observations about life but rather should record his participation in the process of life. As Creeley has mentioned, the concern is to achieve a more active sense of poetry. From Creeley, too, comes the idea that poetry is something one is given to do rather than something one had to do. Bowering, in emphasizing "The things themselves" and their participation in the poetic experience, is echoing William's and Olson's notion of "objectism". Bowering's statement does not break new ground; it restates these essential propositions of Black Mountain theory in his own individual terms.

Frank Davey, in his statement of poetics, chooses to emphasize the integration of life and sensation that takes place in poetry:

I write poetry because I am alive -- a mass of living sensations -- and human -- intelligently perceptive of sensation. Poetry is sensation. There is no such thing as an isolated image; poetry being sensation, image is omnipresent in a poem. A successful poem is one into which the poet has put the most possible of his body. Not just used his intelligence, not just his sense of rhythm, not just his ocular powers, but used a combination of the maximum of his faculties.

The Poet "Maximus"

The Poet someone who most can



"Stance" in poetry -- the poet being himself, and his poems in turn being evidences of his self. Poetic devices may be learned things. But secondary. They must help to convey the poet and his life-stance into his poem (a life-thing). Tropes I thus leave to the scholar. They are the accidents, the illegitimate children of a poem whose essence is sensation, is life, is living.<sup>48</sup>

Looming behind Davey's statement we can glimpse Olson's emphasis upon the kinetics, principle and process of the poem. Poetic devices Davey relegates to a secondary position, subordinate to the poet and his life-stance.

In Fred Wah's poetic statement we again hear echoes of Olson's view of kinetics, his view of the poet's stance in relation to reality, and his concern with the aural/oral principles of poetry and language:

The origin of the poem is an action (interaction; reaction) between the poet and the actual living forces in our environment) objects, human behaviour, facts and events). There is that percussive and reverberating energy released from a cathexis of the poet on contemporary reality -- a merging of himself with his natural surroundings, aiming at establishing a connection between language and reality. And this alliance, this new equilibrium set up, is the energy of musical release which is the poem, be it good or bad.

Here is the poem as an energy preserving object. It must preserve the instants of the poet's own dance with his environment -- the melodies, rhythms, and structures found in unique contact with environment and response. I make the case for the consonants as beats and the vowels carrying the mellismatic color -- our language is that real that it does have tones -- essentially collisions of sound.

Basically -- but at least take it from here.<sup>49</sup>

Wah's assertion that the poem is "an energy preserving object" originates in Olson's statement that the poem should be "at all points. . . a high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy discharge."<sup>50</sup> We also find in Wah's discussion of the poet's merging of himself with his natural surroundings something very close to Olson's view of the poet as partici-

part in a force greater than himself. It is not that these poetic statements are totally derivative but that they can be traced back to the general source, in the Black Mountain poetics.

The last poetic statement in the first issue of Tish is that of David Dawson:

a poem is an expanding structure of thought; a  
necessity; a freedom.

from the initial thrust (the impetus), the poem takes the INSTANT response, and uses this initial energy expanding into total structure.

my poems depend heavily on free association of idea perception action. . .the freest minds pass lightly/in the patterns of the step. . .

great freedom is allowed the unconscious mind, not only in associations, but equally important, in rhythm and rime. . .feet gaily cross the shadow-lines and/ memorize the beat. . .

a poem is both a measurement of circumstance and a definition of stance.

writing by ear/ by breath/ by freedom, I follow my mind in the poem, and DISCOVER what I have MEASURED.<sup>51</sup>

Here in Dawson we have the complete picture: emphasis upon ear, upon breath, energy expanding into total structure or form emerging as an extension of content, one perception leading to the next and even to an idiosyncratic style, and use of the virgule (/) that echoes Olson's use (derived from Pound's correspondence). The Black Mountain influence has been absorbed by these young poets and, in Tish, they begin to spell it out and utilize it on their own terms.

Having considered these statements of poetic intention, it might further enhance our view of things to look at a few of the poems contained in the first issue of Tish. We shall see how these poetic theories operate in practice, since it is the poetry itself which is the test of success or failure

of a particular poetic. Perhaps the most accomplished poem in this first issue is George Bowering's "Radio Jazz":

Sucked into the horn of the jazz  
 on lonely midnight Salt Lake City radio  
 over to me alone in a big house  
 hundreds of miles in the mountains  
 fantastic piano then  
 key to me right hand left hand on silent radio  
 sound  
 on a million radio America waves in the dark

Folks all gone folks  
 gone to the Coast leaving me and  
 the shelf radio in a hot night kitchen  
 old friends gone home three empty cups on the  
 table here.

Gerry Mulligan meets Stan Getz  
 in the next one in the last one  
 on the radio award bandstand  
 down away on the truck coming road  
 sound radio bound Salt Lake City comes on.<sup>52</sup>

Bowering here succeeds in recreating the music he hears over the air waves and the words create a sense of musical color that is quite "jazzy". This poem brings the beat atmosphere of jazz, and an almost Kerouacian measure, into Canadian poetry.

Frank Davey's "Watch" and "Fred Wah's "A Tale" are Creeley-like in manner and tone:

Watch that horse, Jack  
 he shouted  
 as the mare slipped out of her  
 riding breeches

but too late to stop  
 the runaway<sup>53</sup>

The smoothness  
 of her thighs is  
 one thing.

The memory  
 of a cedar bough's  
 softness is  
 the same thing.

These two things  
 in one I could

be master of.

And am.  
The sheets  
are also  
cool.<sup>54</sup>

Looking at these poems it might be worthwhile to consider for a moment the kind of poems that Alphabet was publishing at the same time. There a formal, set, inherited line was being employed by Jay Macpherson, entirely different from the tightly controlled and shaped variations of phrasing and breath in the Tish poems. Another point of real contrast is the content; whereas the Alphabet poems were loaded with myth, the orientation in these Tish poems is toward reality, even toward what can be considered as the commonplace. The aestheticism of Imagism has been loosened in Tish to contain almost any day-to-day experience as content for poetry. A comparison of the writings in Alphabet and Tish reveal the extremes of poetry that represented the sixties, the former adhering to established, traditional form, while the latter explored a poetry of kinetics, novel in form, content, and effect. The conscious artistry and artificiality of much of the Alphabet poetry stands opposed to this new poetry which aims at nothing more than the expression of the actuality of life and seeks a fluid form that corresponds to that actuality. In its realistic orientation we can say that Tish is a further development of the Imagist line of Modernism, while Alphabet, in some ways, harks back to the Symbolist aesthetic.

Succeeding issue of Tish continue to display a wide range of poems written in what Olson called "open verse". In the early issues the Tish editors took turns writing the editorials; in issue #2 we find Bowering discussing how poetry now "is the what how of the way we sound."<sup>55</sup> Bowering then goes on to discuss how "beauty in poetry today is become synonymous with appropriateness."<sup>56</sup>

All thru English poetry, and this is why it  
died with Hardy, the poet has had to go away  
from life, its speech and rhythm, to create

a beauty for him. All, that is, except a large part of Blake. Blake said everything is holy, and that is why he is read today without a need for the reader to make allowances for background, decorum, and diction. For Blake, the measure inherent in the iamb-less rhythm of life had a built-in connection with life's realities, and had to be breathed into the poem by the man who breathed in sympathy with Nature.<sup>57</sup>

Here again we see the motive force behind the stated aesthetic as one of organic reintegration of life, poetry, and language. Bowering, later in this editorial, draws in the names of LeRoi Jones, Brother Antoninus, Duncan, Ginsberg, Corso, and Williams, showing clearly the American derivation of Tish poetics.

We may perhaps agree with Seymour Mayne (then editor of the rival Montreal little magazine Cataract), when he argued in a letter to Tish that, of the poems in Tish #2, almost "all were take-offs on poets in Don Allen's The New American Poetry 1945-60";<sup>58</sup> yet, as I noted above, "take-offs" may be an inappropriate term, in that these Vancouver poets were really attempting to work out for themselves and in their own environment the further implications of what they consider to be an important poetic. The concreteness in these poems shows an honest attempt on the part of these young poets to find their own articulation and to define their own sense of place.

The one point reiterated in Tish is the view that poetry is a vocal art. "POEMS IN TISH ARE INTENDED FOR READING ALOUD" a banner headline reads in Tish #4,<sup>59</sup> and Jamie Reid advises the reader in the editorial of that issue to "Listen to the sound of it. Pay attention to the automobiles and trains and people and jazzbands and Beethoven. Listen to the strange music of your own voice in the poem."<sup>60</sup> The most fully developed argument for the poem as vocal art, however, is delivered by the group's resident mentor, Warren Tallman, in his essay "When A New Music Is Heard The Walls Of The City Tremble." In this essay in Tish #3, Tallman contrasts the "music of thought" and "a music at the heart of things":

Writing is a rhythmic art, but it is also an intellectual and a vocal one in which words on the page send out at least two sorts of signals, those the mind receives as the articulations of thought and those the ear receives as the articulations of voice. Because the words serve both an intellectual and a vocal master it seems impossible to separate the sense from the sound, and one easy solution is to assume that they are the same. Which they are. But is even truer that emphasis makes for difference, it being a long way from the mind to the mouth, from writing that owes first allegiance to intellect and that which owes it to the voice. In our time the difference has become distinct as poetry has renewed an old affinity with song, fiction with the tale, and between the singing and the telling voice has regained recognition as the instrument that provides the actual path between the writer's reality and the reader's. "Taste my mouth in your ear," says Allen Ginsberg as he tongues a groovey bridge between.<sup>61</sup>

Tallman, here, is separating poetry that owes its "first allegiance" to intellect from that which owes its first allegiance to the ear because he sees the poetic process in each instance as a specific and unique entity:

. . . to say a music of thought is to insist that the music must precede and give rise to the thoughts. That is, the reality which surrounds the writer, determining what Lionel Kearns calls his "stance in circumstance", must precede and give rise to his thoughts. In the beginning there is what Duncan names "a music at the heart of things", and it is just the marvel of the voice instrument that it can transform this otherwise silent music from the breath that breathes it forth into the sounds that give it substance, and that these sounds can then search out a corresponding music in the language. When thought modulates itself to that music it is itself musical; a direct projection of the inner reality. But when the writing is worked the other way around, with intellect in control, the voice instrument is muted as the writing rhythms are extended at an even, patterned pace and the words form into the kind of bridges thought can easily move across. Pope "lisped the numbers" and the iambs came, pentameter to his mind -- thousands of iambs in even-pacing flocks of five.<sup>62</sup>

Tallman is essentially arguing that, through breath and voice, an articulation of the music at the heart of things can be achieved, whereas when intellect is given precedence the voice as instrument is muted and the poem is expressed in even-measured rhythmical units; that is, as variations in a pre-established rhythm. The subordination of voice to intellect Tallman sees as creating a shift to what "intellect in fact does, which is to catch up these things that seem wrong in regions of experience by putting them right in realms of thought"; <sup>63</sup> this divorces poetry from life and sends the poet off "in search for softer music on some farther shore."<sup>64</sup> This intellectual search for Eldorado that Tallman sees as predominating in so much of English poetry he also argues was losing intellectual momentum in the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century.

From Keats' day to our own few such poems are even attempted in England, and this gradual decline of intellectual confidence (and a corresponding decline of confidence in the myths, symbols and ideas intellect has created) gives rise to the new and different confidence in voice. It was Walt Whitman's lean, lewd, hankering barbarian whose songs of self and earth brought voice back in with a yawp. What comes in with Whitman is an attempt to naturalize and humanize all those aspects of experience which earlier poets had attempted to intellectualize. He moves from myth on back to music, and his "I have an intelligence of earth," William Carlos Williams' "No ideas but in things," and Charles Olson's clincher, "Man and external reality are so involved with one another that, for man's purposes, they had better be taken as one," are some ABC's of the naturalizing process. These directives turn attention back to earth herself as the great rhythmic mother of all human activity, breathing out and breathing in.<sup>65</sup>

It is through voice and an emphasis upon the natural music at the heart of things that the poet as man finds his reintegration, so that he revitalizes poetry in the face of its increasing intellectual impoverishment. The emphasis here is upon voice, earth, things, and the unification of man

and his external reality; it is out of these, Tallman maintains, that the vital poem springs.

In addition to the statements of poetics and the poems themselves, there were present in Tish the seeds of literary feuds that spread out into later Canadian literary history. In Tish #4 George Bowering wrote a damaging review of Milton Acorn's Against A League of Liars. In Tish #5 there was a long argumentative letter from Al Purdy in defense of Acorn. This can be seen, perhaps, as the point of origin for a literary feud that has continued through the years, culminating in the events of 1970 when Bowering received the Governor General's Award for Poetry while many poets held that Acorn's I've Tasted My Blood was the best book to appear that year. A much publicized dinner in honor of Acorn was held in Toronto at which Acorn was awarded a cash prize and given the People's Poet Award by a group of peer poets (among them being Margaret Atwood, Irving Layton and Eli Mandel). Other issues of Tish express a growing antagonism between the Tish poets and the young Montreal poets (Mayne, Hertz, Moscovitch) grouped around Layton in the 1960's. Much of this early contention has hardened into fixed and hostile literary positions. Keith Richardson's Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish, a book highly critical of the Tish movement, was published in 1976 through a press owned by Seymour Mayne. Perhaps because the little magazine is a testing ground for challenging poetic theories, it is also the source of much continuing literary controversy.

David Dawson's editorial in Tish #5 signals a sharpening of the magazine's policies:

TISH is now a poetry newsletter, an organ designed to tell its readers WHAT'S GOING ON in Vancouver. That is, we seek to define the scene as completely as possible. We have discarded the format of a magazine of poetry because we find it too narrow (or too broad) a framework for what we have in mind.

After four issues we now know what we want to do. We have reached the stage where we can say NO; we can reject a good poem if it does not interest us. The fact that it may be good



does not alter the fact that it may not work the way we feel a poem should work. We print poems which conform to our taste, poems which move somewhat in the same direction as our own. This is true, not only of poems submitted by the readers, but of the poems submitted by the various co-editors as well. The desired result is a selection of poetry which indicates our poetic stance, which defines our scene.<sup>66</sup>

Although the majority of poems in Tish were pieces written by the editors themselves, the magazine did extend its pages to include other poets. Apart from the editors, the first year of Tish included poems by David Cull, Lionel Kearns, K.V. Hertz, Kelly Lane, Seymour Mayne, Larry Eigner, Padraig O Broin, David McFadden, Samuel Perry, bill bissett, Robert F. Grady, Bob Hogg, Ann O'Loughlin, Red Lane, Avo Erisalu, Brian Finn, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Daphne Buckle, Patricia Smith, Michael McClure, David Bromige, and John Newlove. Although these contributors range over a wide expanse of poetry one notices the presence in particular of poets like Cull, Kearns, Eigner, McFadden, bissett, Hogg, Buckle (Marlatt), McClure, and Bromige, all of whom are firmly rooted in the avant garde, whether American or Canadian.

With the clear definition of the magazine's policies came more hardline polemical editorials penned by Frank Davey. The editorial in Tish #8 is unsigned and so should probably be viewed as a general policy statement on the part of all the editors towards Canadian literature:

Almost every month TISH is pestered by people who assert that "Canadian" poets such as Souster, Klein, Scott, Layton, Dudek, Birney, Cohen (to give one writer's list) are "equal" (usually "superior") to their contemporary American and English poets. We do not question here the merits of these so-called "Canadians"; what we do object to is their classification by their country.

Poetry is not an international competition. Moreover, poets do not write as patriots, but as men. Their country is merely incidental. Canada does not exist except as a political

arrangement for the convenience of individuals accidentally happening to live within its arbitrary area.

Even if this unwieldy block of land does have any political reality (which we doubt) it is not itself noteworthy. What can make it so is what gives anything (place, object etc.) interest -- that is the poet as man, who in his humanity transcends all artificial boundaries. We will not deny categorically the significance of Canada as a place, if there is ever any poet big and sensitive enough to do anything with it. But being in Canada (being Canadian) must never be treated as an end in itself; it must be treated as an advantage which gives us something to exercise our humanity on. Place is no more than a man does with it, applies his universal qualities to it. Loyalty to one's home, then, is not an obligation. On the contrary, the importance of a home lies only in that it is the area with which man has had the most chance to become aware of AS A MAN.

Let's have no more superficial jingoism in poetry. If a man/poet ever comes to represent his homeland or his home town, he will do so inevitably, not intentionally. As for comparisons, the community of poetry is a universal thing, as is man, and political divisions can never apply.<sup>67</sup>

This is a cosmopolitan political/poetic statement, one that backs up Davey's later assessment that the Tish poets have been "culturally historical. . .rather than nationalistic."<sup>68</sup> It also provides fuel for Robin Mathews' fire and allows him to assert that Davey and his fellow poets in Tish place over "against the sense of evolution and organic relation in Canadian history the anarchic individualism of U.S. history."<sup>69</sup> The argument presented in this editorial is definitely anti-nationalistic and pro-individual, though one could debate how much commitment to anarchy such a case contains. In a sense we have here a later manifestation of what Smith, in his Book of Canadian Poetry, called "cosmopolitanism", the view of poetry as part of an international pursuit rather than an international competition. The nation is seen by the Tish poets as an artificial boundary rather than as an integral

unit. Recent work done by both Bowering and Davey in the field of Canadian studies would seem to suggest that time has tempered their views, but in the atmosphere of the 1960's the Tish poets presented a strong internationalist position.

The position that Tish holds to in their eighth issue appears again in Tish #11 when a conflict develops with Milton Acorn, Al Purdy, and Gwendolyn MacEwen. Acorn, Purdy and MacEwen were then editing a little magazine, Moment, in Toronto. In his editorial Davey chastises MacEwen for inventing the "olson-jones school", something which he sees as "a glib bit of would-be jargon designed to make the unwary believe that Charles Olson's and LeRoi Jones' stances and techniques were virtually identical. . .and that they both flirted as capriciously with lower case letters as does E.E. Cummings."<sup>70</sup> Davey also instructs MacEwen in the value of Charles Olson's work, then goes on to savage the latest Moment editorial for holding that "the 'Beat' movement in the U.S. has 'inundated all but the academies'."<sup>71</sup> Davey defines precisely who are and who are not Beat poets, declaring that the statements of the Moment editor (in this case Milton Acorn) reflect "pure literary irresponsibility."<sup>72</sup> Beyond the corrections of fact in this editorial it is evident that there is a literary feud warming up. The Tish poets were in principle antagonistic to the poets in the Alphabet, Moment, and Cataract groups, and these in turn responded with hostility and were mutually critical. We see here the poetic and political rivalries that arise between little magazines, each believing that it alone has the answer to the needs of poetry. Three of these magazines--Alphabet, Moment, and Tish--in the end did contribute some permanent directions for Canadian poetry, while Cataract seems to have had less effect, representing as it did a group of young poets whose work has failed to have lasting significance.

Let us now turn again to Frank Davey's developing aesthetic. In Tish #10 he writes:

Robert Duncan has said that the age of the masterwork is dead -- that ours is the age of testimony. Which, if I read it right, takes the emphasis away from the "work of art" and places it back on the creator and his concerns. Back on the creator as man rather than "artist". The tyranny of a poem or painting as a product of an artist's "craft" independent of his human personality is over; the work is the man testifying to whatever he wishes to testify -- his case HAS come up -- which should explain forever why the dictum 'form is never more than an extension of content' (content=concern) became almost a cliché.

Which should explain also my objections to (1) the formalist, who sees the work of art as an independent entity with absolute crafted form and its content as whatever it causes the pilgrim to experience -- he is simply attending to the wrong process (not the creative one), and (2) the "poetic" writer who devotes himself to the formed "beauty" of the poem or whatever, rather than to any thought or feeling that has demanded its communication. Both these people have failed to remember that art is a means, a go-between, a communicator, a means of testimony. Both speak irrelevantly and in danger of perjury. They will gladly review the dictum -- say content is the extension of form -- and forget that their testimony may be bearing no relation to man's case. Or to their's.<sup>73</sup>

Davey's commitment is to a poetry that is content-oriented and that is expressly designed to communicate. His aesthetics veer away from the poem as art object and therefore reject aestheticism. If the poem is to be a testimony then it must testify to the truth; in this case content is the most important concern of the poem and the form exists only as a medium by which to communicate content. Davey, in this, is also concerned with the importance of the poet to the poem; he is saying that we must be aware of the man behind the poem, or rather of the man in the poem whose testimony we hear. The poet as craftsman is something Davey sees as relatively inappropriate, verging in fact, upon perjury--that is, a betrayal of the duty of honest witnessing.

The first anniversary issue of Tish, number 13, appeared on September 14, 1962. Contained in this issue are assessments

of the importance of the magazine made by two of the leading mentors of the Tish poets: Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan. Creeley's assessment "Why Bother?" appears first; it provides a somewhat cryptic but rather important view of the function of little magazines:

An art begins prior to its conclusion -- which is why there can be, with great use, an occasion offering that sense of means which conclusions per se deny. It can be put more simply. A magazine not interested in being either the last word apropos some function, or taste, or simply a reflection of what is already 'valued' speciously or not. -- such a magazine may define the new possibility by being, quite literally, the place where it can be formulated.

No matter what becomes of it, art is local; local to a place and to a person, or group of persons, or just what's in the air despite how vague that sounds. It happens somewhere, not everywhere. When it does so happen everywhere, it has become a consequence of taste purely, a vogue or fashion, and/or what Pound calls 'style of the period,' and definition has given way to a reflection of a given effect.

No man can work free of the influence of those whom he may respect in his own art, and why 'originality' should imply, in any sense, that he should, is hard to follow. The light moves, so to speak, and those who see it have secured an originality quite beyond that qualified by terms of personality or intent. In poetry, as in other arts, what is learned is first learned by the example, that is, by what exists in the art as a complex definition of possibilities: literally, this or that poem. Taste operates here as well, of course, but again Pound is relevant in that he said, damn your taste, I would like first to sharpen your perceptions, after which your taste can take care of itself.

May I submit that when the poem, or the opinion, or the taste, has come to that security of whatever large magazine -- friendly or not -- one may point to, then all has become primarily taste, an approval of taste, and that the actual work of definition which allowed taste its turn has gone?

A friend once said of his wife, that she said she wanted to be a singer but what she really wanted to be was famous. One can be famous in

many magazines, but not in those given to the definition of what a poem, right now, can be. There are no readers, and there are, even, few writers who will care to be bothered by what may be an attention alien to their own. Can you blame a German, French, English, poet for not caring specifically about what you face, here and now, as problems? But can you care for his, if all your mind is centered on the peculiar structure of that language given you, to effect, by its forms and its sounds, what it is, precisely, that you feel only as a poem? With nothing at all sentimental about it, and "Only the poem/only the made poem, to get said what must/be said. . ." as Williams writes all his life.

It is very possible that what one defines, as means, as possibilities, will prove only a temporary instance, a place soon effaced by other use, as when a whole city block is leveled to make a parking lot, or park. But that is the risk. One cannot avoid it, or do otherwise.

I believe in a magazine which is the specific issue of a few men, facing similar problems, places, things. They may, given ability, find the next step all must take if only because they are forced to take each step with their own feet.<sup>74</sup>

Creeley's definition of what a little magazine can and should be fits in quite specifically with what Tish in its time and place already was. Creeley virtually defines the nature of the little magazine in his series of propositions, revealing the value of a publication like Tish. By attempting to be neither "the last word apropos some function" nor a mere reflection of current literary standards and taste, a little magazine can define a new possibility for poetry by providing "the place where it can be formulated." By and large, then, the little magazine is a forum in which things are worked out, rather than being merely proposed. Certainly we can see Tish, in many ways, as being the accumulated work-sheets of a group of young poets attempting to formulate new poetic possibilities in the place where they are living.

Which leads us to Creeley's assertion that "art is local" and that it takes place "somewhere, not everywhere." What I believe he means is that the particular working out of a

poetic is bound by the realities of space and locale as much as by time. Where it is taking place is as important as when it is taking place. When a poetic proliferates everywhere, Creeley suggests, it has become a matter of taste, it has become the "style of the period."

On the question of originality, Creeley points out that poetry is learned by example. All poetry must derive from some source or influence; this, he says, does not have anything to do with the basic originality of a specific work. One may assume here that Creeley is making a distinction between influence and derivativeness.

Creeley argues that once a literary style is adopted by larger magazines the act of definition has ceased and the reign of taste has begun. The pioneering little magazine which attempts to define a new local art is diametrically opposed to any principle of fame operating at that time. The fact that pioneering work is being done limits the possibility of readership and recognition. What must also be faced by those involved in attempting to define new possibilities for poetry is that their definition may prove to have only momentary import; yet this is the risk that must be undertaken if new ground is to be broken. Creeley places his ultimate belief in magazines of this kind; and they may "find the next step all must take if only because they are forced to take each such step with their own feet." The process of having to work out aesthetic problems for oneself facilitates the likelihood of working out further problems, including some which are more essential or more exploratory.

By creating a place where new possibilities could be formulated, by representing a local nucleus of artistic endeavour, by being influenced yet not entirely derivative, and by attempting to take steps "with their own feet," the young poets gathered around Tish did much to fulfill Creeley's expectations of what an important little magazine should do. In Tish we find a small group of poets "facing similar problems, places, things" and attempting to find their articula-

tion of what they discover in this experience.

There is a recognition of the same kind in Duncan's essay "For the Novices of Vancouver." Duncan sees in the poetry of Tish during the first year of the magazine's existence "a breakthru to a tutelary daimon of an other Vancouver," "a bridge in consciousness," and he notes that the "shores are shores of Vancouver, of an actual place that is also a spiritual beach-head."<sup>75</sup> Duncan, in these three statements, is referring to qualities especially found in David Dawson's "Tentative Coastlines" in Tish #12, but his comments on Dawson reflect on all of the Tish poets. His essay is a summary of what he sees as their achievement to this point, September 1962. Duncan says that these young poets have truly set "a poetry in motion"<sup>76</sup> and that, in the first twelve issues, "a language appears thruout, the issues of their magazine become issues of a work, of something happening."<sup>77</sup> Duncan goes on to say of the Tish poets that "They are truly novices of Great Poetry then, of the magical art. I know it by the resonances I find. Even where they are mistaken."<sup>78</sup> Citing the achievement of specific poems (Dawson's "Tentative Coastlines," Reid's "The Fear," Wah's "Sinner," Kearns' "Things" and "Suspension Bridge," Davey's "Daniel at the Lion's Gate," and poem pairings by Bowering and Davey, "Two Poems for the Critic" and "Two Dialectics for Bridges") the point that a community has been created stands out: "Whatever else 12 issue of the journal are, they show an accumulation of works shared."<sup>79</sup> The beginnings of the charting of the shores of Vancouver, the persistent development of bridge metaphors and imagery, the communal workings through of margins and line, all reflect Creeley's "specific issue" of "a few men, facing similar problems, places, things." One can see Creeley's and Duncan's statements as a certificate of approval for Black Mountain North, but in genuine critical response it is also a recognition of the serious in work and intention that is reflected in the first twelve issues of Tish. The two older poets are giving testimony that here is important work in progress and good work in its beginnings.



In many respects Tish #13 represents the peak of the magazine and completes the period of intense theorizing, criticizing and competing with other literary periodicals. It almost seems that the statements of Creeley and Duncan resulted in a quieter polemical tone, a confidence and a greater concentration upon the work, the poem, itself. The last seven issues of the first editorial period of the magazine contain poems significant in the development of these poets as poets; in these last seven issues we find Red Lane's "Margins" (Tish #13), the continuation of Dawson's "Tentative Coastlines" (Tish #13), Davey's "Bridge Force" poems (Tish #'s 13 and 15) and "Morte D'Arthur" (Tish #14). This last is the beginning of an interest in Arthurian legend which will appear in the later Davey books Arcana and King of Swords. Also in these seven numbers we have Bowering's much anthologized "Grandfather" and "Circus Maximus," as well as "Points On the Grid," and Lionel Kearns' experiments in "stacked verse" (also noteworthy are Bowering's reviews of Jack Spicer's The Heads of the Town Up to the Aether and Al Purdy's Poems for All the Annettes, and Lionel Kearns' essay "Notes on the Stack"). In "Notes on the Stack" Kearns attempts to develop a new method of poetic notation which he defines as follows:

STACKED VERSE is a system of notation designed to accommodate poetry whose rhythmic form depends upon accentual stress measure. Its basic unit is the STACK-FOOT, a group of syllables containing one primary stress and ending in a terminal juncture. In particular cases a stack-foot is preceded, followed, or replaced by an OUTFRIDER, a group of one or more syllables ending in a terminal juncture but containing no primary stress. The terminal juncture which separates the outrider from its accompanying stack-foot is signaled by either a space or a regular juncture-signalling punctuation mark (.,?;: etc.) Stacked feet are arranged into a verticle STACK, the accented syllables coming immediately beneath one another so that a STRESS-AXIS may pass through them. The beats along this stress-axis tend to be regular (isochronous) for the duration

of the stack, a definite break in the rhythm coming at the end. A group of consecutive stacks using a common stress axis is called a STACK-STANZA.<sup>80</sup>

Stacked-verse served as a score for the spoken poem and indicated how the poem was to be read aloud by emphasizing the accented stress. The stress present in the stack-foot was indicated by the vertical stack-axis along which the feet or lines of the poem were arranged. Although Kearns found this useful to the reading and presentation of the poems at first (his first collection, Songs of Circumstance, employed the vertical stress-axis of stacked verse), this system eventually proved to be too puzzling to some readers and too cumbersome in terms of typography, so that Kearns abandoned it.

The first editorial period of Tish ended with the publication of Tish #19 on March 14, 1963. Having graduated from the University of British Columbia, most of the editors were now dispersing. As George Bowering noted in "The Most Remarkable Thing About Tish" in Tish #20:

Frank Davey is moving to Victoria. Fred Wah is moving to New Mexico. James Reid promises to leave the continent. Lionel Kearns is going to lock himself in his writing room for a year. I'm moving to Calgary. That leaves Dave Dawson as the new editor of TISH, of which I approve heartily. He has a cordon of fresh working poets around him.<sup>81</sup> That's what made TISH in the first place.

Along with Bowering's retrospective appeared Frank Davey's, in which he looked back at the role and achievement of the first nineteen issues of Tish:

The intent of many a little magazine is altruism, but this could never be said of TISH. Writer conceived and directed, TISH was from the beginning selfish and pretentious. To the reader it could easily have appeared as a monthly exhibition, but it was never so to the editors.

For them TISH became the nagging and insistent mother of almost all their writing. The more whimsical of them, myself especially,

were glad of the controlled demand it placed on their energies, although the mechanical and editorial burdens were always somewhat discouraging.

The increase in writing output was something the editors had anticipated when founding the magazine, but other dividends were entirely unanticipated. For instance, the improvement in writing skills which came to each of the editors with regular exposure to a critical audience. And, equally important, the friendship and advice of other writers, both beginning and established -- and contact with book publishers and magazine editors.<sup>82</sup>

For the first group of editors, then Tish, had served as a productive home-base; it gave them a forum for their writing and a place to work out their poetic and critical theories. It also provided them with a jumping off point to other magazines and to book publication.

Tish, in fact, did not terminate with the dissolution of the first editorial board but carried on for another six years under various editors. Keith Richardson, in Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish, has detailed the four different editorial periods: the first lasted from September 1961 until March 1963, under the founding editors, producing nineteen issues; the second editorial period ranged from August 1963 to May 1964, with David Dawson, Daphne Buckle, David Cull, Gladys Hindmarch, Peter Auxier and Dan McLeod as editors; the third period produced issues twenty-five to forty from June 1964 until March 1967. Richardson describes this period:

The principal editor during the third period was Dan McLeod; he was designated as the general editor of Tish 25, June 1964, and continued as such until Tish 28, January 1965, at which point everyone was designated as an editor. McLeod was also the most consistent editor throughout the entire editorial period.<sup>83</sup>

The fourth and final period ranged from February 1968 until mid-1969, covering issues # 41 to E (45), under the editorship of Karen Tallman.

Despite the fact that the magazine continued for an additional six years after the first editorial period and

served well various factions of the Vancouver literary community, the real important work is contained in the first nineteen numbers when a new poetics and a new orientation were first being worked out. Also, in looking at the spread of the new poetic and of the Black Mountain influence we see it appearing in projects that the original Tish editors initiated elsewhere, we see it in contacts they made, and in magazines that they began in other locales after the Tish experience. What had begun in Tish would radiate out beyond Vancouver as the Tish editors travelled into other parts of Canada, and as writers in other parts of the country began to discover the possibilities that the poets in the Allen anthology, and the Black Mountain poets in particular, had suggested.

Graduating from the University of British Columbia, George Bowering took up a teaching post at the University of Alberta in Calgary, and it was from that location that he began publishing Imago, a magazine devoted to the long poem and long poem sequence, in 1964. Over the next ten years Bowering produced twenty issues of this magazines as he moved from Calgary to London, Ontario, on to Montreal and back at last to Vancouver. In the magazine's preliminary editorial, Bowering defined the magazine's orientation and explained its title:

To image is to make it all appear. To this reader that is a meaning, image as verb. IMAGO is an old word for imitation. It also is a word for what you have at the end of metamorphosis. Not a wing, not a thorax--the whole thing, changed, developed.

This Imago, the magazine, is interested in the poem. . . more than in poems. It is intended, more than can be seen in this no. 1, for the long poem, the series or set, the sequence, swathes from giant work in progress, long life pains eased into print. . . A 42 page poem will use up the whole mag, be in fact an Imago book, or a book imago. 84

Implied in the "imago" is the creation of a perfect metamorphosed insect or other form of being (in this case the

poem); Bowering (at this time beginning to work in larger forms) seems to be suggesting that the long poem, or poem sequence, holds more potential for poetic perfection than the short lyric. At the same time the long poem or idea of the long poem that Bowering is looking towards is not the narrative of a poet like E.J. Pratt but rather the exploratory-expressive poem like the Cantos of Pound or Williams' Paterson, later developed by the Black Mountain poets and by San Francisco poets Jack Spicer and Robin Blaser, and in Canada by Louis Dudek.

The publishing history of the magazine shows Bowering actively publishing work by leading figures in the American, English and Canadian avant garde. Among the poets who appeared in Imago during its twenty issue run were the American poets Anselm Hollo, Robert Duncan, Margaret Randall, Paul Blackburn, Charles Olson, Theodore Enslin, Carol Berge, John Sinclair, Diane Di Prima, Jerome Rothenberg, Joel Oppenheimer, Anne Waldman, Michael McClure, Larry Eigner, Robin Blaser, Michael Palmer, Fielding Dawson; the British poets Ian Hamilton Finlay, David Bromige, Tow Raworth; and Canadian poets John Newlove, George Bowering, Frank Davey, Lionel Kearns, Al Purdy, Victor Coleman, David McFadden, Daphne Buckle (Marlatt), bp Nichol, Doug Fetherling, Roy Kiyooka, Artie Gold, Dwight Gardiner, Margaret Atwood, Barry McKinnon, Robert Hogg, David Rosenberg, Gladys Hindmarch, Brian Fawcett, Fred Wah, Greg Curnoe, and Gerry Gilbert. Tish alumni are highly visible, as are many Canadian poets associated with New Wave Canada.

An interesting aspect of Imago was that every three issues Bowering publishing a book-length collection by a Canadian poet. Despite the integration with American contemporaries, the Canadians ultimately held precedence. Listen George by Lionel Kearns (Imago #3), The Scarred Hull by Frank Davey (Imago #6), The Saladmaker by David McFadden (Imago #9), Sitting In Mexico by George Bowering (Imago #12), Back East

by Victor Coleman (Imago #15) and Five Books Of A Northman by Brian Fawcett (Imago #18), all appeared as part of the magazine series.

Every issue of Imago except the last maintained an identical unpretentious format: it was gestetnered, it sported colored paper covers, and it was simply stapled. Imago #20 was brought out in a large format, a perfect-bound volume of one hundred pages (the others had been forty or fifty pages) published by Vancouver's Talonbooks. In the "Preface" to this anthology/issue Bowering notes:

Here it is, at last, the long-promised final issue of Imago. When I started the magazine a decade ago, it was with the purpose of providing space for longer poems, something the magazines weren't doing much of in those days. Since then they have done so, & god knows too many long poems are being thrun (sic) about.<sup>85</sup>

When Imago began in 1964 there was as yet no forum for the long poem. By the time Imago #20 appeared in 1974, magazines as well as publishers, small and commercial, had taken to publishing book-length poems as a matter of course. The publishing boom that occurred in the late sixties had, by this time, picked up the slack in the area that Bowering had chosen as the special reserve of Imago.

But undeniably the most interesting magazine produced by Tish alumni is Open Letter, begun in 1965 and continuing to this day. Edited by Frank Davey, with a varying group of contributing editors or associate editors (initially George Bowering, David Dawson and Fred Wah, currently George Bowering, Steve McCaffery, John Bentley Mays, bp Nichol and Fred Wah), Open Letter has striven to be a review "of writing and sources," providing a forum for critical theory and evaluation. It has become the most important avant garde periodical in Canada, in that it has sought to bring together all the different strands of experimentation and to unify them in a single web against the mainstream of Canadian writing.

In its fifteen years of existence Open Letter has been

subject to changes in format and presentation, but it still holds true to a statement of purpose which appeared in the first editorial. Here Frank Davey noted that the magazine would be "an attempt to combine within the pages of a periodical the features of both a symposium and a debate."<sup>86</sup> In this initial editorial Davey went on to detail the organization and aesthetic purpose of Open Letter:

The subject will be poetry and its medium, language. The debaters will be the editors, myself, George Bowering, David Dawson, and Fred Wah--a foursome who once had much experience in arguing among themselves the course of poetry, but who now find themselves geographically apart--and, of course, the readers

Fifteen hundred years finds the total magic of the English language still untapped, and so will fifteen million. The power of the written sign is always open, always unexplored. THE OPEN LETTER begins its explorations with letters from its editors to each other, letters that describe the points they have reached so far in their lives with language. It is from these points that THE OPEN LETTER will start to measure its progress.<sup>87</sup>

Davey also notes at one point that, to anyone unfamiliar with current North American poetry, "THE OPEN LETTER will present an ostensibly private world of baffling values, problems, place-names, and personages."<sup>88</sup> This sense of a "private world" has always been inherent to Open Letter; opening an issue is often analagous to jumping into the deep end of a pool when one doesn't know how to swim. Sometimes the reader is forced to wrestle with literary pretentiousness, while at other times he is presented with a whole new set of critical values phrased in a jargon of its own.

What Davey described in the opening editorial defines the magazine during its first nine issues (each set of nine issues composes a "series"). The first series, in fact, contained actual open letters as well as poems. With the beginning of the second series energy was directed into producing critical articles and into more fully developed theory.

A special interest in the first series is the internal debate that began to develop among the former Tish editors on questions that must have been present during the early Tish years and which involved a more open criticism of one another's aesthetics and work. Whereas Tish had seemed, for the most part, almost monolithic, Open Letter shows these young poets now attempting to assert their individual styles and orientations to poetry. This process makes its appearance in George Bowering's "An Open Letter To The Former Tish Editors & Their Critics," in the first issue of Open Letter:

When I was associated with Tish I was criticized from inside that group for being too eclectic, and from outside that group for being too inbred. The critics of Tish are pretty easy to dismiss: they usually did not know what they were talking about. They usually said the Tish poets were engaged in intellectual navel-viewing, but they did not demonstrate such a thing with any reference to the poetry and ideas being announced in the newsletter. . .

I am more interested in saying something about the sometime differences I have had with the former Tish editors & poets. I would be jumped on with questions such as: why are you paying attention to those Canadian poets who are not writing out of our traditions? Answer: because I am a poet before I am anyone's monkey, and I like good poetry and signs of good poetry. Good poetry is poetry that speaks with an intelligible voice, and of things that matter. Ruben Dario was one of the greatest poets of the last 2000 years.

Question: why do you write those smart-aleck poems that sound like bad Ferlinghetti? Answer: because I am not satisfied that I can write good and better poetry by sticking with one process and trying to improve on it. I will retain and improve certain skills, such as those I have learnt from Olson and Duncan and Creeley, but I want to try other things, too, the ones that don't work and must be thrown away included. . .

Question: why do you waste your time with baseball, comic books, pop novels, university, academic poets, etc? Answer: I am large; I contain multitudes. How do you know they don't play baseball in Heaven?



I liked the idea of Tish, and I still do. I like the idea of The Open Letter, and would urge the former Tish people to keep their noses in this new mag. For one thing, I want to know what you are all doing, even if it isn't what I'm doing. And I would like to see you quit arguing so much about things that concern the ego. Let's talk about poetry, and I remember that good poetry, whatever you think that is, crops up anywhere.<sup>89</sup>

Bowering, here, is really delivering an emancipation proclamation, in revolt against some of the tenets of Tish. He seems intent upon emphasizing his own individuality as a writer and his right to that individuality, as opposed to conformity in accepting in toto the Black Mountain poetics. We see a clear example here of the sad truth that groups of poets can only work together with a shared aesthetic for a short space of time since they eventually begin asserting their own specific identity and the group tends to dissolve.

In his letter in the first issue, Frank Davey talks of his current activity, of what he calls a search "for all the facts,"<sup>90</sup> then he goes on to say:

Of late, as you may have guessed, I have been turning back to Pound. Warren Tallman first indicated back in 1962 that we should know Pound and his methods well before hoping to write well ourselves, and, after finally taking his advice, I can't see how any of us can ever write anything major without at least a year on Ezra. For his methods, with or without the ego (but preferably without), are still the only ones today with epic potentiality. And from where I see all our writing from TISH 1 and onward, the epic--certainly like no epic seen before this century--and at least epic size, epic vision, has been always our final goal. And thus the need for the spade work, the bibliographies, the facts; for if we ever are to bring Pound's ideal of the facts as their own spokesmen into any real and significant existence, we must be collectors of these facts as well as writers who can render them with truth.<sup>91</sup>

Interestingly, Bowering's Imago and his pushing on into the long poem seem to substantiate Davey's claim that the work

begun in Tish points in the direction of the "epic", or at least the work that is large in scope. It can even be argued that the most successful work produced by the Tish poets (Bowering's Rocky Mountain Foot, Curious, and Autobiology, Davey's Weeds and The Clallam) proceed in this direction.

Many of the assertions made in the letters in the early issues of Open Letter point in the direction of a poetic rumble: a great deal of in-fighting among a group of writers who share fundamental assumptions. In issue #2 Daphne Buckle objects to Davey's view that "the epic. . .has been always our final goal."<sup>92</sup> In contrast, Buckle holds that the "single point is the place."<sup>93</sup> She also has a concern with technique that she believes Davey is shucking off in the first issue. In response, Davey tells us that his sense of epic is in "scope of vision. . .not in the monumental man or event, the 'heroic'."<sup>94</sup> And he adds further: "Yes, the single point is the place. But surely the points must correlate. For if they don't, we have what Warren once called 'incidental poems'-- poems of such diverse kinds that they suggest no single being behind them."<sup>95</sup>

Also, in issue #2 we find Bowering levelling criticism at David Dawson:

I got no quarrel with anything anyone said in OLL, tho I have to admit that I am getting pissed off with David Dawson's poetry still dancing and sighing around old-precious neo-Duncanisms, arrived at so easily by putting "the" in front of something, notable "the word" and "the dance" and "the poem" and "the mystery" . . .Daphne Buckle does a similar thing. That's Duncan's--he arrived at it, and I think naturally. Quit echoing.<sup>96</sup>

So here we see a member of the Tish group dressing down another member for the derivativeness of his work, a standard criticism of the entire group by Tish critics.

The arguments raised in the second issue of Open Letter are rounded out by Frank Davey's assault upon concrete poetry. Noting that both bp Nichol and David McFadden had offered some

visual poems to Open Letter, he writes:

McFadden and Nichol send visual poems--which mode I still find irrelevant to what I know as poetry. For me poetry is of language, and language is still of sound with rhythm in stress & pitch, and is not just visual shape. . . .<sup>97</sup>

Davey's is a specific poetic orientation which accepts given elements as being poetic and refuses others.

In subsequent issues the internal debates continue. In issue #3 Davey writes an open letter to Bowering and talks about the two different kinds of poems that he sees in Bowering's recent book The Man In The Yellow Boots: ego-centered poetry with Bowering as subject, and poems that tap into the central issue of poetry and language, the kind of poetry that Davey approves of.<sup>98</sup> In issue #4 there is an exchange of letters between bp Nichol and Davey on the subject of visual poetry. Nichol faults Davey for disallowing a visual relationship between words as a form of poetry; he points out that if a visual rhythm can be recognized in painting, it can exist in the medium of language. To accept visual poetry as valid is a step in expanding what is knowable as poetry. Davey counters by separating the oral and visual components of language. He maintains that writing "is a resource of drawing, not a resource of language."<sup>99</sup> Davey is willing to concede that visual poetry might constitute an art form, but he argues that it is not "a language art form, & seems to have no direct connection to poetry."<sup>100</sup> In issue #5 Victor Coleman counters by reacting to too much criticism and demands space for poetry: "Everybody's shucking. There's no room in THE OPEN LETTER for poems."<sup>101</sup>

Coleman's point was well taken since it is true that what Davey essentially wanted was a journal of theory and research. Issue #7 is the most radically different of all the Open Letters, in that it consists entirely of a collection of poems by David Dawson, Where The Orders Are. As the first series was completed the emphasis on criticisms began to de-

cline; we can imagine that the poets associated with Open Letter gradually began to realize that they had little to gain by leveling criticisms at one another. With the beginning of the second series the letters and poems disappear, the magazine goes into a printed perfect-bound format, each issue is given a title or slant, and the work included consists of essays, statements and book reviews. The issues in the second series turn around such titles as "Politics and Poetry," "Olson and others," "Reductive Aesthetics," "Re-finding the Language," and "Kinetic Mythology." Despite Davey's initial antipathy to visual poetry, with issue number four, second series, bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery become contributing editors, and their TRG (Toronto Research Group) reports begin to appear in the magazine. In the TRG reports Nichol and McCaffery together investigate translation and narrative in some detail.

The range and depth of writing in Open Letter has been considerable. Up to its fourth series, the magazine continues to be a pioneer critical journal. In format and also in content it has ceased to be a little magazine and gives the appearance of a quality journal or quarterly. In its pioneering criticism, however, it continues the work begun as a little magazine. The second, third, and fourth series have included provocative essays like "Political Poetry" by George Stanley, "Heidegger and Poetry" by Leslie Mundwiler, "A Predictive Essay on the Future of Publishing" by Fielding Dawson, "A Neurology of Inductive Verse" by Christopher Dewdney, "Politics of the Referent" collected by Steve McCaffery, as well as in-depth critical articles on the work of Charles Olson, Gertrude Stein, Gwendolyn MacEwen, John Newlove, Phyllis Webb, Louis Zukofsky, Leonard Cohen, Daphne Marlatt, Audrey Thomas, Les Levine, Christopher Dewdney, David McFadden, Clark Blaise, Alice Munro, T.S. Eliot, Louis Dudek, John Bentley Mays, Victor Coleman, Robert Kroetsch, and bill bissett. Complete issues have been devoted to the work of Warren Tallman, Sheila Watson, Louis Dudek and Louis Zukofsky. Open Letter remains

as an interesting extension of avant garde Canadian writing into the field of theory and criticism.

The final magazine worth mentioning which derived from the original Tish editors is Sum, edited by Fred Wah. This magazine shows a strong gravitation to the American orbit, from which the ideas of Tish were largely derived. Sum was edited from Albuquerque, New Mexico and then from Buffalo, New York, from 1964 to 1965 for a total of seven issues. Much of the work in this magazine focused on American writing, and its American orientation was further enhanced by Wah's use of U.S. guest editors. Sum #4 was guest-edited by John Keys and bore the subtitle "Writing out of New York"; this issue featured work by Ron Padgett, Frank O'Hara, Paul Blackburn, Fielding Dawson, Ted Berrigan, Leroi Jones, Gerard Malanga, Diane Wakosi, Gilbert Sorrentino, Jackson MacLow and Ted Enslin. Sum #6 was edited by Ron Loewinsohn and presented writing from San Francisco. Another magazine edited by Wah, The Magazine of Further Studies, was located in Buffalo, from 1966 to 1967, and this also placed primary emphasis on American writing, never really serving as an extension for the work of the Tish editors.

In looking back at the interaction between the Black Mountain poets and the Cerberus group during the 1950's, it seems fairly clear that, of the Canadian group, Souster took the most active interest in the Black Mountain poets and went out of his way to make sure that their work was highly visible in Contact and especially in Combustion. This eastern thread of Black Mountain influence is picked up from Souster by Victor Coleman in Toronto during the early 1960's, and reveals itself in Coleman's little magazine Island, which appeared between September 1964 and May 1967, running for a total of eight issues.

The connection between Souster and Coleman is an interesting one, since here we see the passing of a body of ideas from a poet of an older generation to a poet of the younger. Souster had a very strong influence on Island, in fact Island #6 is also the long awaited fifteenth number of Combustion,

edited by Souster. It was with Coleman's help that Souster was to assemble New Wave Canada, an anthology of Coleman and his contemporaries. It is interesting also that the end of Souster's Contact Press is closely followed by the beginning of Coach House Press, for which Coleman was to do the editing for the first five or six years. In Contact and Coach House we have two leading literary presses in Canada during the modern period, and they are related to each other by this transition.

Unlike Souster's Contact and Combustion, and unlike Tish, Coleman's Island appeared in an attractive printed format from the very first issue. Other improvements are apparent. The list of contributors to the first issue of Island shows a tendency to combine American and Canadian poets in the magazine. Appearing in the first issue were Gilbert Sorrentino, Thomas Clark, Ron Loewinsohn, Gael Turnbull, John Newlove, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Red Lane, Victor Coleman, Frank Davey, and Raymond Souster. There was also a letter to Souster from William Carlos Williams dating from some years back. And on the back cover we find a poem by Souster, in memory of Williams, who had died recently.

The reprinted letter from Williams is of some interest. Dated June, 1952, it acknowledges receipt of Cerberus sent by Dudek. In the letter Williams acknowledges Dudek as a "tremendously competent" poet, expresses reservations about the work of Layton, and tells Souster "You've got it."<sup>102</sup> Although this first issue of Island contains no editorial, a section of Williams' letter can be seen to be an indication of Island's poetic politics.

It is not the way that the man speaks that we wait for. A poet does not talk about what is in him, he talks a double language, it is the presence in him that speaks. For the moment he is lost in that identity. And each age is marked by the presences that possess it as its poets are seized by them also, in the flesh, and strut about us unknown. Poor powerless ghosts, their only life is that which they gain from the poets who lend them a life now and then.<sup>103</sup>

Williams' saying that a poet does not talk about things comes close to Olson's position concerning the poet's stance toward reality. Olson insists that the poet must talk out of himself, and Williams here maintains that "it is the presence in him that speaks." Beyond the surface mysticism of this statement there is the insistence upon letting the deeper levels have their say, as opposed to the conscious mind fashioning rational, logical structures, with the craftsman ever in control. The rejection of the poet as conscious artisan is essential to Black Mountain poetics and, as we see here, it is also essential to Williams.

Throughout the eight issues of Island we have a mixture of American and Canadian voices. Island is more like Contact than it is like Combustion, in that it doesn't follow Souster into internationalism and large quantities of translation. In Island #2, we find Anselm Hollo, Joel Oppenheimer, Theodore Enslin and Robert Kelly, Americans, in addition to George Bowering, Joe Rosenblatt and Al Purdy. In Island #3 we have the poems of Red Lane, Seymour Mayne, Victor Coleman and David Cull, alongside those by three Buffalo poets (Andrew Crozier, Stephen Rodefer and Bob Hogg), three Bard College poets (Richard Clarke, Harvey Bialy and Jonathan Greene), as well as Paul Blackburn and Diane Wakosi. Issue #4 begins a sequence of special issues, that issue being a book-length collection of Fred Wah's poems, Lardeau. Island #5 consists of a book-length collection, The Knife, by Buffalo poet Stephen Rodefer; and Island #6 is Combustion #15, edited by Souster. The magazine's run is completed by issue #7/8, which appeared in May 1967 in an enlarged format and featured the work of Robert Kelly, Paul Blackburn, Theodore Enslin, Victor Coleman, Gerry Gilbert, Phyllis Webb, Raymond Souster, Bob Hogg, bp Nichol, Clayton Eshleman, Ron Loewinsohn, Lionel Kearns and Stephen Rodefer. A short note indicates that this is the last issue of Island, and mentions that "ISLAND PRESS & THE COACH HOUSE PRESS would like to focus any further attentions offered on IS. The second number has already ap-

peared, edited by Victor Coleman. . .<sup>104</sup>

Coleman's energies were now being transferred to Coach House Press and, along with the press, to the magazine Is, which essentially served as a Coach House organ during Coleman's term of editorship.

Is actually began its run while Island was still in operation. As the note in the last issue of Island pointed out, two issues of Is had already appeared before Island was terminated. The first issue was a modest beginning, announcing itself as "dedicated to the Occasional Poem" and being "Published whenever."<sup>105</sup> Although Is began as a small stapled pamphlet, its printing and format improved with the growing improvement of Coach House imprints in general. Is continues the work of Island, publishing vast quantities of the literary avant garde without any apparent manifesto or polemics. The assumption made in Coleman's magazines is that these are primary works of central importance, and no argument in defense of them is necessary.

While it was a veritable Who's Who of Canadian experimental writing, the magazine itself experimented extensively in varying formats. With issue #2 the magazine first appeared in a printed format; issue #4 presented work on individual printed sheets or in little booklets, which were then placed in an envelope; Is #5 was composed of sheets of various sizes tied together with string. Is #8 was a special "Prose Forms Issue" which began a string of theme issues. Is #11 was an issue devoted to unpublished young writers, edited by John Oughton, while Is #12 featured west coast writing, #13 west coast art, #14 writing by women, edited by Penny Chalmers, #16 featured "Collaborations" edited by Coleman, and #19/20 was a special "Erotics" issue. All in all, Is is a magazine more interesting than it is important, notable for its serendipity or charming variety rather than for any attempt to define a poetic direction. In that it presented a widespread variety of work from various writers experimenting in different open forms, it tended to consolidate the Canadian avant



garde and served as an interesting house publication for Coach House, whose catalogue of books represents a much more important contribution to Canadian writing than does the idiosyncratic magazine in itself.

With Coach House Press this survey of the Black Mountain influence comes to an end. Black Mountain poetics have become so widely absorbed into Canadian poetry by this time that it is easier to think of poets who subscribe to, or at least acknowledge the poetic theories of Charles Olson, than to find those who do not. At the same time, however, the original Black Mountain influence has been somewhat diffused, losing much of its inner force as it comes to be adopted by scores of young poets. The initial energies apparent in Tish and in Island have come to converge on Coach House Press, where much of the avant garde writing of the sixties group of writers has been concentrated and continues to be concentrated. We see in this instance a case of little magazines yielding to small presses; the original impetus that propelled the magazines eventually ends by going into book publication, since books, with time, appear to be more important and durable to the people involved than a magazine could be. Coleman, in giving up Island, moved over to Coach House, where he served in an editorial capacity for seven years. When disputes with printer-owner Stan Bevington began to undermine operations, Coleman left Coach House, to be replaced by an editorial group which now includes such poets as bp Nichol, Michael Ondaatje, and Frank Davey. Coach House has come to represent the most significant outpost of the literary avant garde; and of course still central to most members of this avant garde are the poetic theories of Charles Olson and the Black Mountain poets.

## CHAPTER SEVEN FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louis Dudek, "Lunchtime Reflections on Frank Davey's Defence of the Black Mountain Fort," The Writing Life: Historical & Critical Views of the Tish Movement, ed. C.H. Gervais (Goatsworth, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1976), pp. 129-130.

<sup>2</sup>Robin Mathews, "Preface," Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish, by Keith Richardson (Oakville/Ottawa: Mosaic Press/Valley Editions, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Mathews, "Preface," Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Robin Mathews, "Poetics: the Struggle for Voice in Canada," CVII, 2, no. 4 (December 1976), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Dudek, "Lunchtime Reflections on Frank Davey's Defence of the Black Mountain Fort," p. 133.

<sup>9</sup>Martin Duberman, Black Mountain: An Exploration In Community (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972), pp. 386-387.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>11</sup>"Robert Creeley In Conversation With Charles Tomlinson," Contexts of Poetry: Interviews 1961-1971 (Bolinas, California: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), pp. 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>David Ossman, "An Interview With Robert Creeley," Contexts of Poetry, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>George Bowering, "How I Hear Howl," The Writing Life, p. 216.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Creeley in interview; Duberman, Black Mountain, p. 390.

<sup>15</sup>Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," The Poetics of The New American Poetry, ed. by Donald M. Allen and Warren Tallman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1973), p. 147.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

- 18 Ibid., p. 147.
- 19 Ibid., p. 148.
- 20 Ibid., p. 148.
- 21 Ibid., p. 148.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 148-149.
- 23 Ibid., p. 149.
- 24 Ibid., p. 149.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 150-151.
- 26 Ibid., p. 154.
- 27 Ibid., p. 151.
- 28 Ibid., p. 152.
- 29 Ibid., p. 152.
- 30 Ibid., p. 153.
- 31 Ibid., p. 155.
- 32 Ibid., p. 155.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 155-156.
- 34 Warren Tallman, "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry In Vancouver During the 1960's," The Writing Life, p. 52.
- 35 George Bowering, Tish, no. 20 (August 1963), reprinted in Tish 1-19, ed. Frank Davey (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1975), p. 423.
- 36 Frank Davey, "Introduction," The Writing Life, pp. 22-23.
- 37 Ibid., p. 19.
- 38 Warren Tallman, "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960's," p. 30.
- 39 George Bowering in interview; Marianne Stenbaek-Lafon and Ken Norris, "Curiouser and Curiouser," CrossCountry, no. 5, p. 14.
- 40 Warren Tallman, "Poet in Progress: Notes on Frank Davey," Canadian Literature, no. 24 (Spring 1965), pp. 24-25.
- 41 Frank Davey, "Introducing Tish," The Writing Life, p. 152.

- 42 Ibid., p. 150.
- 43 Ibid., pp. 153-154.
- 44 Warren Tallman, "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960's," p. 54.
- 45 Frank Davey, Tish 1-19 (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1975), p. 13.
- 46 Ibid., p. 14.
- 47 Tish, no. 1, in Tish 1-19, p. 17.
- 48 Tish 1-19, p. 19.
- 49 Tish 1-19, p. 23.
- 50 Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," The Poetics of The New American Poetry, p. 148.
- 51 Tish 1-19, p. 26.
- 52 Tish 1-19, p. 19.
- 53 Frank Davey, "Watch," Tish 1-19, p. 23.
- 54 Fred Wah, "A Tale," Tish 1-19, p. 24.
- 55 George Bowering, Tish, no. 2, in Tish 1-19, p. 31.
- 56 Ibid., p. 31.
- 57 Tish 1-19, p. 31.
- 58 Tish, no. 3, in Tish 1-19, p. 31.
- 59 Tish 1-19, p. 83.
- 60 Tish 1-19, p. 71.
- 61 Tish 1-19, p. 67.
- 62 Ibid., p. 67.
- 63 Ibid., p. 68.
- 64 Ibid., p. 68.
- 65 Ibid., p. 68.
- 66 Tish 1-19, p. 91.

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- 68 Frank Davey, "Introduction," The Writing Life, p. 23.
- 69 Robin Mathews, "Poetics: the Struggle for Voice in Canada," CVII, 2, no. 4 (December 1976), p. 6.
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- 72 Tish 1-19, p. 222.
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- 80 Tish, no. 16, in Tish 1-19, p. 338.
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- 82 Tish 1-19, p. 424.
- 83 Keith Richardson, Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish, p. 55.
- 84 George Bowering, "A Note or Justification," Imago, no. 1 (March 1964), p. 2.
- 85 George Bowering, "Preface," Imago 20 (Vancouver: Talon-books, 1974), p. 9.
- 86 Open Letter, no. 1 (1965), p. 1.
- 87 Ibid., p. 3.
- 88 Ibid., p. 3.
- 89 George Bowering, Open Letter, no. 1, p. 10.
- 90 Open Letter, no. 1, p. 17.

- 91 Ibid., p. 18.
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- 93 Open Letter, no. 2 (March 1966), p. 6.
- 94 Open Letter, no. 2 (March 1966), p. 7.
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- 96 Open Letter, no. 2 (March 1966), p. 18.
- 97 Open Letter, no. 2 (March 1966), p. 3.
- 98 Open Letter, no. 3, pp. 14-16.
- 99 Open Letter, no. 4, p. 7.
- 100 Ibid., p. 7.
- 101 Open Letter, no. 5, p. 18.
- 102 Island, no. 1 (September 1964), p. 47.
- 103 William Carlos Williams, Island, no. 1 (September 1964), p. 47.
- 104 Island, no. 7/8 (May 1967), p. 2.
- 105 Is, no. 1 (1966), inside front cover.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

OTHER MODERNIST INNOVATIONS: CANADIAN CONCRETE AND  
SOUND POETRY

So far, in considering Modernist developments in Canadian poetry, we have seen the continuity of a Modernist line that stems out of the early fathers: Yeats, Pound, Williams, and Eliot. In considering the Black Mountain influence we are looking at the poetic sons and grandsons of Pound and Williams; in considering the myth poets who clustered around Alphabet and imbibed Northrop Frye's theories we are looking at the poetic heirs of Eliot. Frye himself is a link in the Eliot chain. But Modernism was an international movement, in many of its most vital phases more European than English or American; there were many other "isms" or radical directions opened to art in the 1910's and 1920's apart from the Imagism of Pound or the Vorticism of Wyndham Lewis: Futurism (both Russian and Italian), German Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism, as well as a strong residual base of Symbolism, were all germinating during this period. Even in English, we find Gertrude Stein's brand of Modernism as quite separate, and it has precious little to do with the work pioneered by the Imagists. For the most part the poets of the succeeding generations in England, the United States, and Canada fought for the innovations of one or another of two particular lines of Modernism. Since Pound often served as the central figure for the English Modernists, we see Williams to his left and Eliot to his right, and subsequent generations of writers polarizing to either side, poets like John Crowe Ransom and Richard Wilbur gravitating toward Eliot, while poets like Zukofsky and Olson accept Williams as their poetic father. The academic poets in general relate to Eliot, while the bohemians turn to Williams, so that Williams and Eliot represent two opposed literary directions that are more or less combined in the work of Pound. This pattern continued into the 1950's, when

scattered poets here and there began to become increasingly aware of other innovations and possibilities, never fully exploited, that had been present all along in Modernism.

In Canada it was really not until the early 1960's that a few poets, almost accidentally, discovered these other international orientations. In the work of bill bissett and bp Nichol we find the beginnings of Canadian sound and concrete poetry; in their magazines Blew Ointment, Ganglia, and GrOnk we see the proliferation of this kind of writing into wider, more fully announced contexts. Whereas, in the early 1960's there was almost no evidence of work in these media, twenty years later there are few poets in Canada who do not have some awareness of the sound and visual components of language, even if they do not choose to exploit them. There are at least a dozen Canadian poets who make use of some element of sound, song, or chant in their public readings; and there are currently in existence two sound poetry ensembles, The Four Horsemen and Owen Sound, who experiment in what could be called collective communication. Awareness of these elements of language has widened the possibilities for poetry so that a writer like bp Nichol can say in summary "I think the formal possibilities for writing or the range of craft is much more enormous in the 1980's than it's ever been in the history of writing."<sup>1</sup> A brief look at the development of sound and concrete poetry is in order to show just what these "formal possibilities," illustrated in the new magazines, have come to be.

If there is one element that is common to all of the branches that have come to compose Modernism it is that, in each "ism," the prime concern of the avant garde is an investigation of the medium.<sup>2</sup> In painting we see the Impressionists asking "What are the possible relations of colours?", while the Cubists investigated (and undermined) representation and perspective; in music, melody, rhythm, harmony, and tonality are called into question, producing a music that destroys the classical aesthetic balance between



these elements and which often comes to emphasize dissonance and atonality. Modern dance becomes an investigation of the elements of movement per se. In literary Modernism we are faced with diverging concerns. For the classically-based Imagists, the image served as the basic unit rather than the word. What Pound and his cohorts seemed to be after as the basic element of poetry was the poetic experience, that is the picture, or more precisely the Image, that "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."<sup>3</sup> This is a totally consistent aesthetic for a poet who would later comment that "only emotion endures." For Pound, it would seem, the essence of poetry is the poetic charge, the experience conveyed in the language that is most adequate.

For other literary schools, however, language and the word became all important. Investigating the word itself, different writers almost simultaneously began to extrapolate the sound and visual components of the language. When the word as signifier is separated from the object or concept that is signified, the word can be seen to exist as picture, and as an element or a combination of the elements of sound. Working within these frameworks, totally different contents can then be released than are usually communicated on the semantic level. Work of this kind proliferated between 1910 and 1920, and often we find the same writers working with both visual and sound elements. In the Italian Futurist F.T. Marinetti's Zang Tumb Tumb (October 1912) we see both verbal and visual invention at work. In his Technical Manifesto of Literature (May 11, 1912) Marinetti had declared that "After Free Verse. . .we have at last Free Words."<sup>4</sup> This, Marinetti believed, should be coupled with a typographic revolution, one which would "help to express different ideas simultaneously. Twenty different types and three or four different colours can be used on one page if need be, to express ideas of differing importance and the impressions of the different senses."<sup>5</sup> As Judy Rawson has noted:

This is the style of Zang Tumb Tumb. . .  
Words in a variety of types are splayed out

over the pages, interspersed with mathematical signs, and sometimes arranged in graphic designs. . . The spelling too bears witness to the liberation advocated in the opening Manifesto. . . The 'ssssssiiii ssiissii ssiisssssiiii' of the first page, describing a train journey to Sicily while correcting the proofs of a book, expresses both the positive hopes he has for Futurism and the whistling of the train.<sup>6</sup>

In the Russian Futurist manifesto The Word As Such (Slovo kak takovoye), put forward by Khlebnikov and Kruchonykh in 1913, we find a parallel to Marinetti's free words.<sup>7</sup> At this time the poems of another Russian Futurist, Mayakovsky, were appearing in volumes "given inventive typography and layout, either by Mayakovskiy himself (who was a considerable graphic artist) or by one of his colleagues."<sup>8</sup>

So, as with Marinetti, words acquire new functions as they disport themselves up and down the page, growing larger and dwindling away to nothing, or forming shapes and patterns that may endorse or alternatively violate their semantic content.<sup>9</sup>

An essential aspect of Dadaism also was the use of elements of visuality and of sound: "The poets (and some of the artists, notably Schwitters and Hausmann) developed simultaneism, sound poetry, and the typographical literature of chance which became 'concrete poetry'."<sup>10</sup> Add to this Apollinaire's Calligrammes (1918), or word-pictures, and there is evident a formidable front of visual and sound experimentation. The fact that Futurism and Dadaism were not purely literary movements, but incorporated the visual arts as well, indicates where an added visual thrust might have come from; nevertheless, whatever set these poets in motion, experimentation in these areas was fully underway and it was an integral part of the aesthetics of these two movements.

Given that sound and visual experimentation are essential to Modernist aesthetics, I would now like to explore in somewhat greater depth the history and general point of view that these two approaches to language represent, before considering

how they began to manifest themselves in Canadian poetry in the 1960's.

Twentieth century experimentation in the area of the sounds that compose language can be seen to be a return to a more primitive understanding of just what language is. Before there was written language there was language as oral phenomena, and before a set of verbal patterns had been established as signifiers there were only sounds accompanied by gestures through which primitive man undoubtedly communicated. Verbal language can most easily be seen as the systematic ordering of sound which, through commonly recognized patterning, comes to mean something. Sound poetry brings language back in touch with its primitive roots. As an element of poetry we can still find sound operative in the literary traditions of native peoples:

The first phase, perhaps better termed, the first area of sound poetry, is the vast, intractable area of archaic and primitive poetries, the many instances of chant structures and incantation, of nonsense syllabic mouthings and deliberate lexical distortions still alive among North American, African, Asian and Oceanic peoples.<sup>11</sup>

In the poetry of the Navaho indians, for instance, we find the use of "vocables," meaningless as words but essential to the chant base of the poetry, providing a droning continuation which facilitates the flow of language taking place on a recognizable semantic level.

Understanding that the use of sound as sound has been a part of poetry for undoubtedly as long as poetry has existed, we can now go on to consider the specific experiments of twentieth century avant garde artists who found themselves returning to this phenomenon in order to fuel their literary art.

In mentioning the experiments of Italian Futurism, we made reference to Marinetti's poetic technique of "parole in liberta," or free words. Of this technique, Canadian sound poet Steve McCaffery has observed:

It was an attempt at syntactic explosion, at the liberation of the word from all linear bondage and the consequent conversion of page, from a neutral surface holding neutral graphic signs, into a dynamic field of typographic and sonographic forces. In performance Marinetti laid heavy stress upon onomatopoeiac structures . . . one may think of Marinetti's work as an attempt to find a more basic connection between an object and its sign, a connection predicated upon the efficacy of the sonic as a direct, unmediated vector. Perhaps the most significant aspect of parole in liberta was its lasting effect upon the poem's visual notation. Marinetti's famous Bombardamento di Adrianapoli, for instance, is a stunning handwritten text of great visual excitement, employing different letter sizes, linear, diagonal and vertical presentations of non-gravitational text, all intended for vocal realization. It marks one of the earliest successful attempts to consciously structure a visual code for free, vocal interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

By attempting to "free" words, or to have words exist in freedom, Marinetti found it necessary to overthrow the normal syntactical conventions. The poem, as notated, provided a varying visual representation of the material now totally dependent upon how the work was intended to be vocalized. Standard linearity was, for all intents and purposes, abandoned.

Khlebnikov and Kruchonykh's manifesto The Word As Such (1913) is an important experimental document and it marks the beginning of important new developments in the field of sound poetry. These Russian Futurists placed their emphasis upon oral and auditory effects; they drew upon folk poetry and on "the Scythian myth," a conception which is defined as "an extreme and mystical nationalism invoking the imminent triumph of primitivistic irrationalism, symbolized by the Scythians, over European rationalism."<sup>13</sup> This emphasis on primitive irrationality also led the Russians to assert the shamanistic aspect of the poet. They maintained that the "language of poetry should be 'transrational'. . . freed from the rigid forms of logic. . . its expressive sonic powers

should make their impact without an intermediate conceptualizing process, which dissipates energy."<sup>14</sup> This emphasis upon "zaum", or the transrational, led Khlebnikov and Kruchonykh to compose a poetry that sacrificed meaning as an important part of the poem in favor of language's phonic possibilities.

It was in the nightly activities of the Zurich Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire that sound poetry as a performance art gained its impetus; in addition, new sound poetry forms were pioneered. A dip into Hugo Ball's diary, written during this time, reveals the activity and the theory of these poets. In an entry dated the thirtieth of March, 1916 Ball records:

All the styles of the last twenty years came together yesterday. Huelsenbeck, Tzara and Janco took the floor with a "poème simultan". That is a contrapuntal recitative in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, etc., at the same time in such a way that the elegiac, humorous, or bizarre content of the piece is brought out by these combinations. In such a simultaneous poem, the willful quality of an organic work is given powerful expression, and so is its limitation by the accompaniment. Noises (an rrrrr drawn out for minutes, or crashes, or sirens, etc.) are superior to the human voice in energy.

The "simultaneous poem" has to do with the value of the voice. The human organ represents the soul, the individuality in its wanderings with its demonic companions. The noises represent the background--the inarticulate, the disastrous, the decisive. The poem tries to elucidate the fact that man is swallowed up in the mechanistic process. In a typically compressed way it shows the conflict of the vox humana with a world that threatens, ensnares, and destroys it, a world whose rhythm and noise are ineluctable.<sup>15</sup>

In commenting upon the simultaneous poem, Ball begins to suggest the role and "value of the voice"; but a much more lengthy and detailed account of the Dadaists' language experimentation is set forward in Ball's diary entry dated "18.VI," 1916:

We have now driven the plasticity of the word to the point where it can scarcely be

equaled. We achieved this at the expense of the rational, logical constructed sentence, and also by abandoning documentary work (which is possible only by means of a time-consuming grouping of sentences in logically ordered syntax). Some things assisted us in our efforts: first of all, the special circumstances of these times, which do not allow real talent either to rest or mature and so put its capabilities to the test. Then there was the emphatic energy of our group; one member was always trying to surpass the other by intensifying demands and stresses. You may laugh; language will one day reward us for our zeal, even if it does not achieve any directly visible results. We have loaded the word with strengths and energies that helped us to rediscover the evangelical concept of the "word" (logos) as a magical complex image.

With the sentence having given way to the word, the circle around Marinetti began resolutely with "parole in liberta." They took the word out of the sentence frame (the world image) that had been thoughtlessly and automatically assigned to it, nourished the emaciated big-city vocables with light and air, and gave them back their warmth, emotion, and their original untroubled freedom. We others went a step further. We tried to give the isolated vocables the fullness of an oath, the glow of a star. And curiously enough, the magically inspired vocables conceived and gave birth to a new sentence that was not limited and confined by any conventional meaning. Touching lightly on a hundred ideas at the same time without naming them, this sentence made it possible to hear the innately playful, but hidden, irrational character of the listener; it wakened and strengthened the lowest strata of memory. Our experiments touched on areas of philosophy and of life that our environment--so rational and so precocious--scarcely let us dream of.<sup>16</sup>

We see in Ball's statements here almost an active synthesis of the theories of Marinetti with those of Khlebnikov and Kruchonykh. The shamanistic emphasis of the Russian Futurists is echoed in Ball's "evangelical concept" of the word as a "magical complex image." Also, the new sentence constructed out of freed words is the Russian's transrational "zaum". Liberated in this transrationalism is all meaning; all things

can be touched on in a totally freed language structure and still nothing is named or denoted. Part of what is being reawakened is primitive sense and sacred time.

The most important entry in Ball's diary regarding sound poetry and the performances at the Cabaret Voltaire is the entry dated "23.VI" 1916:

I have invented a new genre of poems, "Verse ohne Worte" (poem without words) or Lautgedichte (sound poems), in which the balance of the vowels is weighed and distributed solely according to the values of the beginning sequence. I gave a reading of the first one of these poems this evening. I had made myself a special costume for it. My legs were in a cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips so that I looked like an obelisk. Over it I wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard, scarlet inside and gold outside. It was fastened at the neck in such a way that I could give the impression of winglike movement by raising and lowering my elbows. I also wore a high, blue-and-white-striped witch doctor's hat.

On all three sides of the stage I had set up music stands facing the audience, and I put my red-penciled manuscript on them; I officiated at one stand after another. Tzara knew about my preparations, so there was a real little premiere. Everyone was curious. I could not walk inside the cylinder so I was carried onto the stage in the dark and began slowly and solemnly:

gadji beri bimba  
glandridi lauli lonni cadori  
gadjama bim beri glassala  
glandridi glassala tuffm i zimbrabim  
blassa galassasa tuffm i zimbrabim. . .

The stresses became heavier, the emphasis was increased as the sound of the consonants became sharper. Soon I realized that, if I wanted to remain serious (and I wanted to at all costs), my method of expression would not be equal to the pomp of my staging. I saw Brupbacher, Jelmoli, Laban, Mrs. Wigman in the audience. I feared a disgrace and pulled myself together. I had now completed "Labadas Gesang an die Wolken" (Labada's Song to the Clouds) at the music stand on the right and the "Elefantenkarawane" (Elephant Caravan) on the left and turned back to the middle

one, flapping my wings energetically. The heavy vowel sequences and the plodding rhythm of the elephants had given me one last crescendo. But how was I to get to the end? Then I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical chanting that wails in all the Catholic churches of the East and West.

I do not know what gave me the idea of this music, but I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative, and tried not only to look serious but to force myself to be serious. For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten-year-old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiem and high masses in his home parish. Then the lights went out, as I had ordered, and bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop.<sup>17</sup>

With time Ball was to give up all performance of sound poetry, fearing that he was being possessed by demons. In this performance at the Cabaret Voltaire, however, Ball had truly opened the floodgates fully to the new medium of sound poetry.

There were other contributions made to this new area of endeavour by other Dadaists who incorporated phonic and chant elements into their work.

Tristan Tzara is noteworthy for his development of a pseudo ethnopoetry realized most successfully in his 'Poèmes Negres': loose and often pataphysical translations from the African which Tzara then used for sound texts. . . . Raoul Hausmann is perhaps the most significant of the Dada sonosophers and largely because of his instrumental advancements in the techniques of notation. Hausmann in 1918 developed his 'optophonetics' which used typographic variations in pitch and volume. . . . Perhaps the greatest scope is evidenced in the sound poems of Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) whose phonetic experiments took him into large and small structures alike. His 'Ur Sonata' ranks as one of the longest of all sound poems, whilst 'W' (a single letter on a white card, and performed with the full gamut of pitch, tone, volume and emotional intensity must be one of the shortest.<sup>18</sup>



More than any other of the early movements the Dadaists consolidated the different elements of sound experimentation and presented them with accomplishment and in high profile.

In the period between the end of the first world war and the beginning of the second, sound experimentation went through a lull period. In the 1940's the Paris Lettrists picked up the fallen gauntlet of sound poetry:

Founded by Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaitre in Paris, Lettrisme offered a full-scale lexical revolution. Their poetic strategy was to be based . . . upon an alphabetic renaissance, and the use of a totally new lexicon. This Lexique des Lettres Nouvelles drawn up by Isou and Lemaitre comprised over 130 entries to be employed as an alphabet of sound in vocal performance. Other members of the group (still flourishing) were Roland Sabatier, J-B. Arkitu and Jean Paul Curtay. Francois Dufrene, a former member, left the original movement to pursue his own 'ultra-lettrism'. Dufrene's work in many ways culminates the phase of second generation sound poetry; it is characterized by a vocal purity (Dufrene eschewed entirely the attraction and dangers of the tape recorder), an energetic intensity and--in his cri-rhythmes--an intensely somatic vase in sub-phonemic units.<sup>19</sup>

All sound poetry up to and including the Lettrists was voice-oriented, sound as an extension of the human voice. Whether the poets were working with freed words, transrational structures, simultaneous poems, vocables, or even letters of an entirely newly constructed alphabet, the agent of presentation was the human voice. In the 1950's however, French poet Henri Chopin began working with the tape recorder as a medium for sound poetry and began to effect a separation of speech from voice:

Henri Chopin (b. 1922) makes the decisive break from a phonetic basis to sound poetry and develops his self-styled 'audiopoems'. The audiopoem utilizes microphones of high amplification to capture vocal sounds on the threshold of audition. In this respect Chopin's work can be regarded in the tradition of lexical decomposition. . . Chopin's early work (ca. 1955) comprised the decomposition and recomposi-

tion of vowels and consonants. Still connected to the word, these pieces can best be described as technological assaults upon the word. The word is slowed down, speeded up and superimposed up to fifty times, whilst additional vocalic texture is provided by a variety of respiratory and buccal effects. Later, Chopin discovered and used the 'micro-particle' as the compositional unit of his work, abandoning the word entirely. This marks the birth of 'poesie sonore', which Chopin distinguishes from 'poesie phonetique'.

Chopin's art is an art entirely dependent on the tape recorder. Chopin's 'vocal micro-particulars' are only realizable through the agency of modern tape technology. It is an irrevocable marriage. His material comprises the full gamut of orally produced phenomena beyond and beneath the atomic limit of the phoneme.<sup>20</sup>

Chopin's work is, in the truest meaning of the word, "sound" poetry. Utilizing the technology of the tape recorder, Chopin can, in effect, totally transmute human vocables into something that sounds nothing like the productions of the human voice.

The avenue of "poesie sonore" that Chopin opened up in the 1950's is the one that has been mainly followed by European sound poets since that time. Bernard Heidsieck (France), Lars-Gunner Bodin, Sten Hanson, Bengt Emil Johnson, Ilmar Laaban, Ake Hodell and Christer Hennix Lille (all of Sweden), Arrigo-Lora Totino (Italy), Herman Damen (Netherlands), Gust Gils (Holland), Tera de Marez Oyens (Holland) and Greta Monach (Holland) subject their texts to electronic modification. Although there are also poets such as Bob Cobbing (England) and Ernst Jandl (Austria) who work in phonetic modes, "poesie sonore" has tended to be in vogue in Europe during the past twenty-five years.

We have seen thus far that sound poetry has been primarily a European art form in the twentieth century. In North America it is "poesie phonetique" that has tended to dominate, with primary emphasis on the capacities of the human voice rather than on the manipulations of technology. Jackson MacLow has worked with chance composition and multiple voice

overlays, often using the tape recorder in the service of voice. Jerome Rothenberg has done much exploration in the area of ethnopoetics, doing some particularly effective translations of Navaho horse songs. John Giorno has tended to use repetitious syntactical structures which he then subjects to verbal overlays. In Michael McClure's beast language and in the work of most of the Canadian sound poets voice also tends to be primary.

At this point in time, sound poetry exists as a very exciting sub-branch or sub-division of poetry. Enormous possibilities have been opened up by it. Its international community generates festivals, publications and recordings which embody and document the current pioneering work. Like concrete poetry it is international in scope: a true world-wide movement in poetry. As we will see in looking at Canadian magazines presenting work in this field, it forms a larger community than one designated by national boundaries. This will also be seen as true in Canadian magazines that have placed emphasis upon concrete or visual poetry.

While sound poetry emphasizes the verbal components of language, concrete or visual poetry emphasizes the poem as picture, and works with what can be done with the potential locked into written language. John Sharkey has provided a sound evaluation of the parameters of concrete poetry:

Concrete poetry 'begins by being aware of graphic space as a structural agent', so that words or letters can be juxtaposed, not only in relation to each other but also to the page area as a whole. . . The visual and semantic elements constituting the form as well as the content of a poem define its structure so that the poem can be a 'reality in itself and not a poem about something or other'. . . In concrete poetry words can be presented in their totality. In practical terms this meant that the material was a valid source of inspiration and communication, a situation long accepted in other art forms.<sup>21</sup>

Concrete poetry works very much with the idea of "text" and utilizes the page as the ultimate organizing unit. The visual,

graphic possibilities of language are emphasized, repetition often being organized around a principle of visual onomatopoeia. It is a poetry of direct presentation, which uses the semantic, visual and phonetic elements of language in the service of the word.

From the moment that the Futurists and Dadaists became involved in trying to notate their sound poems they began to also do primitive work in the area of visual poetry. Marinetti's interest in typography, the scripting of transrational texts, Hausmann's 'optophonetic' technique of notating sound poems, all began to bring out the visual elements of language. Writing down the sounds, they could not help but represent them by their written equivalents, which, as text, existed as sound's pictorial counterpart. Interest in the visuality of the poem did not extend, however, much beyond the liberating typography employed by Marinetti and the Dadaists: they did not develop the form in which they had begun to work.

The actual history of concrete poetry as an art form begins in the 1950's. It is an interesting history of simultaneous international development:

Eugen Gomringer, a Bolivian-born Swiss, was the acknowledged father of Concrete poetry. He called his first poems in the new style. written in 1951, "constellations." . . . When Gomringer and the Noigrandes poets of São Paulo, Brazil, agreed upon the name "Concrete" to describe the new poetry in 1956, they were mutually unaware that Oyvind Fahlström. . . had published the first manifesto of Concrete poetry--manifest for konkret poesi--three years earlier in Stockholm. While Diter Rot, German-born and Swiss-bred, was publishing his "ideograms" in geographically remote Iceland, and Carlfriedrich Claus was experimenting with Klang-bilden and Phasan in politically remote East Germany, in Vienna Concrete poetry was developing out of the collaborative efforts of a composer, Gerhard Ruhm, an architect, Friedrich Achleitner, a jazz musician, Oswald Wiener, and the poets H.C. Artmann and Konrad Bayer. In 1957, the year Haroldo de Campos of Brazil introduced Concrete poetry to Kitasano Katue of Japan, a Romanian-born artist,

Daniel Spoerri, leader of the "Darmstadt Circle" of Concrete poets (which included a German dramaturgist, Claus Bremer, and an American expatriate, Emmett Williams), published the first international anthology of Concrete poetry.<sup>22</sup>

Emmett Williams here reveals concrete poetry as a simultaneous development in different parts of the world, but he also suggests the countless possibilities that concrete contains. Practically each poet brings to visual poetry an approach that differs from the others, and there are countless possibilities in the visual presentation. Method and materials allow for wide variations. Concrete poems are hand-drawn, type-written, typeset, leterset, computer coded, done with cut-up techniques, straight visual presentation, found collage, found visual, can work with the typographic, the semiotic, or even the comic strip frame. Again, in visual poetry we see the creation of a sub-branch of poetic activity. Like sound poetry concrete belongs to a European rather than to an English tradition, although in the last twenty years it has begun to be practiced as an art form by North American and English writers.

Interestingly enough, when Bill Bissett began writing in Vancouver in the early 1960's he was hardly aware of the established modes of visual and sound poetry. Bissett's initial push came from painting, which represented his basic artistic training. From his early paintings he moved on to doing drawings that began to resemble character writing (circa 1960-1961), and as the images he was employing became more and more like letters he began writing visual poems. Bissett, at this time, was not totally alone, for he had formed a bond with two other young artists, Martina Clinton and Lance Farrell. As Bissett himself describes those times--in his own phonetic language--they were.

sitting up all nite laboring for brekthrus  
in what was handid down to us loving th  
words loving th space loving the sound  
finding th poem as sound /picture/breking  
up th words<sup>23</sup>

Working communally, they were each making their own breakthroughs and beginning to discover their own specific areas of interest. For Clinton the poem became an exploration of space, both visually and as breath-pause between utterances. Farrell tended to work more in pictographical terms, using words as method of illustration, the word or sentence instead of the drawn line as element of visual. Bissett at this time employed minimal structures and a supporting use of silence when reading his poems aloud. He was already using the dimension of the page as the primary organizing principle.

At this time, according to Bissett, nothing could be further from their sense of aesthetics than the works of the radical European Modernists:

th surrealists wer nevr an influens on us or  
th dadaists gertrude stein we wer all reading  
discovering her in libraries as being th closest  
we cud find anywahr to wher we wer cumming from  
/ going to<sup>24</sup>

It was only in the late 1960's, Bissett maintains, that he realized a bond between his own work and that of the Dadaists and Surrealists. During those early sixties years Bissett found his source of inspiration in those he was working with, and it was only afterwards that the work that had preceded them began to represent an affirmation of the work they had actually pioneered for themselves:

but dadaist texts for/with that i think what  
we wer all uv us finding was/is a confirmashun  
looking for that rathr than models say or  
thats how it was/is but th dadaists/surrealists  
cubists in breking up th tradishyunal elements  
veree important to anywhun looking at th lineage/  
linear but we werent in fact dadaists or sur-  
realist or cubists it isnt reallee a linear/  
lineage or why get up in th morning but theyr  
all veree important work what they ar dewing  
but from wher i was it was me martina n lance  
n judith n maxine n opning up to writing back n  
forth with barrie n d.a. levy nd d.r. wagner  
all our work was/is veree different from each  
othr nd we reechd out to all our selvs found  
support. . .so konkreet/sound/vizual thos wer  
names othrs gave to what we wer all dewing nd

th thousands uv poets we didnt get to know  
but the whuns we did get to know th combust-  
yun as being spontaneous was/is intrnashunal<sup>25</sup>

What is most important for bissett and the others during the early stages was a sense of community and of mutal support. It was really upon this basis that the magazine Blew Ointment was started in 1963 by bissett and Clinton. By that time the group had swelled to include two other young writers, Judith Copithorne and Maxine Gadd. Contact had not yet been established with bp Nichol or with the Cleveland poets Levy and Wagner. Blew Ointment was started for much the same reason that other literary avant garde periodicals were, that is because there was a group of young writers doing new and different work and they could not find an outlet for their work:

we startid it. . . bcoz our writing nd that uv a lot uv th peopul we had most in common with aestheticallee. . we cudint get printid any wher els bcoz our writing-vizual sound konkreet was lookd on as not realee th pome we wer into xpanding th pome. . . we wer into a new notashun new as to what was around availabul to us at that time that wud include sound picture th whol sheet uv papr on wch th pome temporarilee apeers as space<sup>26</sup>

In Canadian poetry, what bissett is citing certainly expresses a new aesthetic orientation. Up to that time Canadian poetry had been and was continuing to be concerned merely with the generation of linear text. For example, what the Tish poets were presenting in the sixties was a new sense of notation, taken from Olson, but this still fell within the range of recognizable printed text. The sense of page as area for a notated oral text that Olson was advocating is taken even farther with concrete poetry into the realm of the poet as shaman or visionary. What appears on the page is not the poem as artifact but rather the poem as it "temporarilee apeers as space." The idea of the poem and the role of the poet are totally undergoing a revolution in sensibility here. Speaking of the role of the poet, bissett says:

we ar all instruments all being vessuls for  
 what can flow thru/happn th desire for th  
 language to b a precisyun/organik that is as  
 close to what th pome is/seems to b as possibul  
 that serch/xplorashun/hopeful discoveree<sup>27</sup>

The poet here is seen as servant of life rather than as master of language, and the poem is seen as organic process rather than as perfected text. What's more, bissett seems to be suggesting that language must attempt to embody or come close to what the poem is, seeming to suggest that the poem is not really the words or even the language but rather experience or force, whatever it is that flows through and happens. In this light, poetry cannot be seen as an immortalizing art but only as something that partakes in and celebrates life. Responding to a question about the lasting value of his work, bissett answered:

. . .so lasting anyway is not to hope for i'  
 think if sum work breaks thru sum restrick-  
 shuns at its time so that biologiee is mor  
 possibul for ones self maybe othrs nd at  
 leest th art itself at that time its fr sure  
 helpful but lasting i dont know abt that  
 art is a living fluid attachment catch n let  
 go catch n let go i think its necessaree  
 to living othrwise we onlee receev what con-  
 trol say mite want to tell us but what breks  
 thru sum restrickshun for sum othr or futur  
 time i think we can hope for-work for valu  
 in th present or rathr than actuallee "valu"-  
 sharing being<sup>28</sup>

For bissett poetry and life are indivisible; poetry may enhance life but it is an intrinsic part of it and has little or no existence outside of or beyond that context.

From its very beginning in 1963 Blew Ointment reflected bissett's experimental and organic poetics. Coming out in a gestetnered, stapled format it presented at the beginning primarily work of the Vancouver group that had gathered around it. Early issues are a mixture of visual poems, drawings, and more traditional language structures. One has the impression of sloppiness and messiness. Bissett's own concrete work was soon classed as "dirty" concrete, as opposed to "clean", and



this tendency carried over into the magazine's format and presentation. Interestingly, as bissett became more involved with visual poetry the contents of the magazine tended to be more eclectic. Whereas the September 1964 issue (vol. 2, no. 4) serves primarily as a showplace for work by bissett and Copithorne, the November 1965 issue (vol. 3, no. 1) is virtually an anthology issue and points towards the magazine's future direction. This issue features work by Acorn, Avison, bissett, Copithorne, David Cull, Maxine Gadd, Patrick Lane, Red Lane, Dorothy Livesay, Pat Lowther, John Newlove, Nichol and many others.

The July 1966 issue (vol. 4, no. 1) is a rather wild one, filled with inserts, photo reproductions, many mixed materials hashed together. One could say that the contents of the magazine are predominantly visual at this point and what the reader is really faced with is an assault to his visual sense. Within the pages we find restaurant mats, a picture of wine bottles and grapes, a picture of the Appian way, ripped newspaper color sections, drawings, small broadsheets printed on off-cuts of paper, typewriter concrete, stamp art, poems on unattached sheets, anonymous works and photographs. The magazine as a whole is marked by a wild chaotic shapelessness that characterizes the printing and even the issue numbering. Often there are pages that are quite unreadable; bissett also had a habit of slapping any old number on the front cover so that the magazine follows no numbering system that respects sequence. This is one more Dada element in the magazine. Looking through and reading these issues one feels some sympathy with the harried librarian whose letter appeared on the inside back cover of an unnumbered issue in 1970. The librarian from the University of New Brunswick writes:

Dear Sir:

We have a Press/Order release notice from you which quotes subscription rates as being \$7.00 for five issues.

What are these five issues of? Is this a numbered series, a periodical or something else with an identifying title?

Any other information you could give us would be appreciated.

May we add that we hope your priced publications are more legible than is this poorly prepared release.<sup>29</sup>

In publishing this letter bissett is simply thumbing his nose at rational order, declaring again his free and anarchic poetic principles. The aim of Blew Ointment was spontaneity, chaos, and freedom. It defied any attempt at coherent commentary. In many ways it simply served as an anthology of on-going avant garde work. In fact, bissett did not restrict it to the concrete/sound/visual context, although concrete/visual work is always highly in evidence.

Looking at the 1970 issue mentioned above we quickly discover that author credits are not presented on the pages with the poems, so that all the work has a tendency to flow together when it is not demarcated by separate author identities. In the back of the issue there is an index, under the heading "FASCIST COURT", listing the contributors and the pages on which their work appears. Even the assigning of the names of authors to their works seems to have been viewed by bissett at this time as a kind of tyranny. He was to employ the same technique of semi-anonymity in future issues.

Although from 1965 on Blew Ointment tended to be anthological and eclectic, it is only the later issues that actually begin to be called anthologies; we are presented with volumes such as the blewointmentpress what isint tantrik speshul, the blewointmentpress occupashun issew, the blewointmentpress poverty issew, th fascist court, blewointmentpress Lady And Th Lion Issew, blewointmentpress oil slick speshul 71, and end of the WORLD speshul. These anthology issues, appearing about once a year despite their chaotic appearance, contain broad cross-sections of work from many different Canadian

poets writing in a very wide variety of styles; among them are F.R. Scott, P.K. Page, Tom Marshall, Margaret Atwood, Bertrand Lachance, Milton Acorn, Michael Ondaatje, Eli Mandel, Nelson Ball, Barry McKinnon, D.A. Levy, David UU, Dennis Lee, Earle Birney, Colleen Thibaudeau, Steve McCaffery, Al Purdy, Gerry Gilbert, George Bowering, John Robert Colombo, Raymond Souster, and Andrew Suknaski. The most traditional and the most experimental poets meet in the pages of Blew Ointment.

Ultimately, Blew Ointment is a paradoxical magazine. Put out by one of Canada's leading experimental poets, it remains one of our more interesting eclectic magazines. In its printing and format it shows the touch of a messy concrete poet, and it is this aspect of it that seems the most liberated. At the same time it does contain the first stirrings of visual and sound poetry in Canada and continues to print this side by side with more traditionally-based works. In this way it tends to validate work that, in the early 1960's, had a hard time being acknowledged as poetry. In recent years the energies that went into the magazine have gone to produce the books of Blew Ointment Press.

In summary, Blew Ointment stands as witness of bill bissett's poetic engagement and represents an active manifestation of his poetics. Bissett's contribution to Canadian poetry is original and without precedent; therefore, as we move toward bp Nichol's magazines Ganglia and GrOnk, we find bissett's work a connective link to these later experimental magazines.

In 1966 bp Nichol published one of bissett's early books, We Sleep Inside Each Other All, in the form of a single issue of his magazine Ganglia. Providing as it does an extensive introduction to bissett's early work, the book also includes an important article as afterword: "The Typogeography of Bill Bissett" written by bp Nichol. In this article Nichol presents a valuable discussion of the visual aspect of bissett's poetry. Nichol holds that the primary concern of bissett's writing is language. A further important point that

Nichol makes is that "Bissett is one of those who has tried to begin again, to take the language back to its pictorial roots & proceed from there."<sup>30</sup> It is absolutely essential to recognize in bissett's poetry the striving for a fresh articulation. If there are two things bissett turns his back on in his poetry it is tradition and convention. These he sees as not only language traps but traps which can imprison the individual as well. By trying to work his way back to the pictorial roots of the language bissett is attempting to start fresh, or, in essence, to remake the language. One aspect of returning to the pictorial roots is an attempt to strip language of all acquired association.

Aware of the visual possibilities of written language, Nichol sees bissett using "the page as a space on which to organize his poems into shapes."<sup>31</sup> As I noted earlier, the page seems to be bissett's unit of composition; whether accepting or rejecting the dictates of the page, bissett uses the page as the poem field.

Beyond visual organization, Nichol sees one of bissett's primary concerns as the atomization of words. Nichol states that "Breaking up words &/or combining them is a way we gain new words & enrich our language."<sup>32</sup> Atomization is, again, part of the process of reclamation. Breaking words up or combining them release, according to Nichol, a new range of content and a new range of meaning. Bissett employs run-on sentences, and sentence combinations which serve to undermine the conventions of language as they have been long established. We note, for example, bissett's highly individual spelling, as in passages quoted earlier. Nichol claims that by using an individualized spelling "What Bissett has done is to make the word distinctively his own."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, all these variations in technique are attempts made by bissett to establish a personal articulation. Bissett's phonetical spelling also seeks to challenge concepts of illiteracy. What we find in bissett is a poet in revolution, determined to express himself totally on his own terms. He is a poet preoccupied with

overcoming the calcifications, the tyranny, and the rules of language. His own poetical work is an attempt at restoring and renovating language. Nichol's statement regarding this is interesting:

Bissett is reactionary in his attempt to bring the language back to its pictographic base. But Bissett's reactionary behaviour is the kind that brings renewal and gives rise to new possibilities. . .<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult at first to see bissett's seemingly left-wing aesthetics as in fact "reactionary". But in attempting to strip language of all unnecessary associations, and to bring it into a more organic integration with life, bissett's aesthetics are striving to bring back something that did once exist and which the current use of language has made an aberration of civilization. The pictographic roots of many languages, the shamanic power associated with chant and incantation in many still existing primitive societies, would seem to suggest that what bissett is striving for did in fact exist in the early development of Western languages.

What we must not forget about bissett is that he is a visionary poet. Although he is possibly best known for some of his satiric work, much of bissett's poetry is deeply mystical and religious in its worship and reverence for the organic principles of life. Central to bissett's work is a base of ecstatic imagery; many of his poems celebrate the joys of basic human existence as well as telling of the powers of such essential human activities as sex and dream. The West Coast Indian based chants that he has been working with during the past decade can be seen to be extended praise poems. The fact that bissett sings and chants so much of his work indicates its link with joy and primal power. The aesthetic revolution evident in bissett's poetry is consonant with the attempt of "living with th vishyun" which his poems express on the level of content and imagery.

For bp Nichol, another young writer beginning his career in the early 1960's, an awareness of the possibilities of

visual and sound poetry came a few years later than it did to bissett. Born and raised in Vancouver, Nichol moved to Toronto in the early 1960's, and for a time he worked in the library at the University of Toronto. His discovery of the visual medium happened in a more specific way than it did for bissett. Nichol's discovery of visual poetry came through the work of Kenneth Patchen, an American visionary who had often used drawings in his poetry. As an early first step, Nichol began to write poems in the shapes of objects. However, in 1965 he underwent a radical shift in his sense of the visual aesthetic. Talking of his writing during this period, Nichol has said:

Then in '65. . .I just became aware that it didn't matter what I set down, what mood I was in, I was essentially churning out the same poem, and that I could become very proficient at that poem cause that's what it was, it was a poem and had this minor variation and that variation but had a complete lack of any technical facility. There was a type of arrogance, I thought; that is to say I was coming to the occasion of the poem to force myself upon it. I was being arrogant rather than learning. So I sort of made a conscious choice to play. . .Here I was, I was typing poems but I wasn't paying attention to the page. So I began to do it and I started with these things I called "ideopomes". They were very much that, very much based on typewriter things. . .It's pretty early stuff, fairly el primitivo, but it sort of showed me the way in.<sup>52</sup>

Working in a relative state of isolation, not having any strong connections with other writers in the same experimental medium, Nichol for a time found himself questioning the work he was doing and looking for support from writers outside Canada:

. . .when I started doing this stuff like there was nobody, and I mean but nobody who was doing it. I really felt sort of crazy; why was I doing it? Was it just because I was a failed writer or something, I really got churned up about it. There was really nobody at that time I could connect with about what

I was doing. From 1965-1967 it was really vital that I have that European-South American connection because it was really the only place from which I got feedback/input that propelled me on.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike bissett, however, Nichol had come upon the Dadaists earlier in his readings and in his writing career. His account of this reveals some of the reasons why their work had never played a great part in English writing. Partly it was a matter of poor documentation, and partly, as Nichol puts it, that avant garde literature in this century is a "repressed tradition". In an interview, explaining when he first became aware of the Dadaists, Nichol said:

I became aware of them through a friend of mine, Jim Alexander, probably around '63. I was into Patchen around '61 & 2 and the Dadaists around '63. I'll tell you what struck me about them; there were a number of things, really. There were hardly any examples; I had nothing that I could actually look at. The whole problem with what is known as "avant-garde" literature in the 20th century . . . is that it's like we're dealing with amnesia; we've got this repressed tradition so that you end up, when you start writing this way, you end up regurgitating a lot of what's already been done because you can't get your hands on the stuff. So you literally have to make your own way. In a way I made my own way, so that when I look at some stuff I can say, as some reviewers have said, "Hey that was done in Berlin in 1921"; I look at it and say "Yeah, well I guess it was done in Berlin in 1921, but this was done in Canada in 1965 without knowing what was done in Berlin in 1921". About Gertrude Stein, they would all talk about her biographically but wouldn't know how to deal with the literature, so as a result included very, very, very few examples, just the merest hint. But I was intrigued by the report of Schwitters' "W" poem, just that that was it and he read it, that blew my mind. . . The Dadaists for me were more of a spiritual influence, that is to say, I knew somebody had done something, I wasn't quite sure what exactly they'd done, but the sense was that if some guys could get up there and kick out the jams why shouldn't I do it? That

gave me encouragement. So it's one of those things, you start doing something and then you start to track down all the other writers you've heard rumours about who are doing it. So, in a sense, it gave me support. I didn't really have examples cause you couldn't lay your hands on examples. . . I had the Dadaists to impell me and support me but not as an actual example, though, God knows, if I might have laid my hands on an actual text, they might have been.<sup>37</sup>

For Nichol, then, the Dadaists were an idea rather than an actual example; he found some encouragement in the stories of what they had done but he had no access to their work. This is a far cry from the Tish poets who had both Donald Allen's landmark anthology and the actual poets like Creeley and Duncan to instruct them. Nichol's attempts in the experimental media were in fact a kind of groping in the dark, with rumours of earlier work in mind, and some small sustaining support from poets who were working in similar directions in Europe and South America.

Nichol's sense of isolation in Canada was, in fact, not total and complete; there were writers like bissett, Birney in his more experimental moments, and Pierre Coupey working in similar or related areas at this time. Out of this sense of some potential community Nichol's magazine Ganglia was born in early 1965. Originating in Toronto and edited by Nichol and David Aylward, the magazine appeared in a humble mimeographed format with embellishing drawings by Aylward, bissett, Copithorne and Nichol. Nichol has said that the original impetus for Ganglia was a desire to publish in Toronto west coast writers who were not receiving any or little attention there. The magazine to a great degree reflects this purpose. The first issue featured work by Margaret Avison, bill bissett (in standard typography except for the calligraphic/visual poem "everlasting"), George Bowering, Judith Copithorne, "eight ideopoems" by Nichol (typewriter concrete) and work by several lesser known Vancouver poets. Only bissett and Nichol's



work can be called concrete, bissett's poem being visual illustration drawn by hand and Nichol's utilizing the graphic potential of the typewriter. Ganglia, in its early eclecticism, shares much with Blew Ointment. In fact, it might be pointed out that, for experimental writers, bissett and Nichol are extremely tolerant and eclectic editors. Nichol, in his own work, has in fact attempted to synthesize practically every kind of writing that has arisen in the twentieth century. In Ganglia eclecticism prevails in the magazine's contents. It was only in starting up GrOnk that Nichol decided to restrict his magazine entirely to concrete and visual work.

Ganglia did not have a particularly long or energetic run, although it did present some interesting material. The magazine lasted for only seven issues, ending in March of 1967. Two of the issues were, in fact, book-length collections of poems; Ganglia #2 (November 1965) contained The 1962 Poems by Red Lane, and issue #4 (June 1966) featured the 100 page We Sleep Inside Each Other All by bill bissett. The regular issues contained a mixture of poets of different aesthetic orientations; these included Victor Coleman, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Pat Lane, D.A. Levy, Pat Lowther, Nelson Ball, Douglas Barbour, Wayne Clifford, John Furnival, John Riddell, and David Cull. Such writers tended to make up the left wing of Canadian writing, if they did not actually write concrete poetry, although the repeated publication of work by Margaret Avison shows an interest in more traditional (though somewhat idiosyncratic) work.

Ganglia lost impetus when, by late 1966, Nichol became more familiar with the experimental scene in Europe. Ganglia #6 was to be a concrete issue, but it never came out, since the material for this issue served as the point of origin for GrOnk. Issue #7 was published while the sixth was still being compiled; a page at the back of the seventh issue announces that the eighth issue of Ganglia, the final issue, would be another book-length collection, Earth Noises by David McPadden. This issue, however, did not appear. Material

from that manuscript later came out as part of McFadden's book Letters From The Earth To The Earth, published by Coach House Press.

In addition to his increasing interest in concrete and visual poetry, Nichol was also getting frustrated with the demands of the little magazine, finding the amount of energy involved in keeping accounts hardly equal to the money that came in. He decided to bring out a monthly handout. This would be a new magazine sent free to subscribers and friends called GrOnk.

GrOnk was launched in lieu of the missing sixth issue of Ganglia, in January of 1967, and it has continued to this day (July, 1980). The first number was edited by Nichol with the assistance of David W. Harris and Rob Smith. With the fourth issue David Aylward was added to the editorial staff. Throughout its history the magazines has added or dropped various editors, but Nichol himself has always been the guiding force, and GrOnk has in fact been his magazine. Nichol projected the magazine for sixty-four issues in all, to be issued in eight series of eight numbers. The first series came out as a monthly; at that time David W. Harris moved to Vancouver and the magazine became rather occasional, the issues then being compiled and sent out by Nichol in batches of five or six at a time. GrOnk, like Blew Ointment, has had its wayward numbering system and erratic sequence of appearance, but Nichol has coordinated the issues so that ultimately in the first run of GrOnk, there is a sequence of sixty-four issues as predicted. An index to the first sixty-four issues constituted the sixty-third issue of GrOnk. Perhaps Nichol's experience in library work led him to subvert somewhat the exact numbering system and order that institutions and periodicals make a point of, but in the end his training also led him to organize his materials into some kind of recognizable coherence. Throughout the time of the magazine's existence Nichol has maintained an active mailing list varying between 180 to 250 readers. These recipients are not re-

stricted to Canada but include an international community of avant garde artists. After the first run of sixty-four issues Nichol began to issue an Intermediate series of twenty-four issues which are works by individual authors; and when this series is completed he intends to continue the magazine for as long as his interest and means hold up.

As noted above, the intention of GrOnk was to publish concrete poetry, simply because no one else in Canada was providing an outlet for this poetry. Nichol saw the magazine as a way of getting the work out as news, not only to other writers in Canada but also in Europe and in South America. GrOnk was and is very much part of an international exchange.

The first issue of the magazine makes its poetic stance perfectly clear; an editorial notice on the front cover reads:

manuscripts concerned with concrete sound  
kinetic and related borderblur poetry  
welcome distributed by mailing list limited  
number for public sale published monthly<sup>38</sup>

The contents of the magazine immediately reflect the kind of work asked for in the editorial. In the first issue we find typewriter concrete by David W. Harris and Rob Smith (concerned with verbal atomization), a mixed text by D.A. Levy using typewriter, handwritten sections, illustrative iconography and smudge techniques, concrete by Nichol which focuses on individual letters, random words and phrases and non-language visual signs, a dense computer structured piece by Pierre Garnier, minimalist verbal puns by Victor Coleman, a piece by D.R. Wagner called "Small Flag for Barb" which is a rectangle of type that works with the four words "hear" "tear" "barb" and "love," and a calligraphic poem by bill bissett.

The format of the first issue was quite simple: the issue was only eight pages, offset; poems were placed two on a page in instances where they did not require the full space of a page. This was the early format, but the format varied widely during the magazine's sixty-four issue run. We find ditto covers, printed covers, printed inserts, changing issue

sizes, single sheet issues, issues devoted to the work of an individual, books as part of a series, issues as envelopes filled with various materials, mergings or co-publishing with other periodicals, small stapled pamphlets, and collections of printed cards. GrOnk a changing, free-form magazine, constantly in flux, constantly in the process of pioneering new territory.

In the second issue of the first series (February 1967) we have the ninth sequence of bp Nichol's Scraptures; the eighth issue of the first series contains the eleventh sequence of Scraptures. These sequences are part of a long extended early work by Nichol that represents a real jumping off point for his future work. In the ninth sequence we find Nichol utilizing cartoon, visual signs, letters and words as visual signs, and language referents presented within thought balloons. During an interview with the author Nichol discussed Scraptures, a work that lays the foundation for the later works Journeying & the Returns and the martyrology:

Scraptures was my first attempt to bust out of simply being in one mold, that is simply being a poet who did visual things or being a poet who did sound things, or a poet who did traditional poems. . . Scraptures was the first one in which I cross-pollinated, in essence, where I started working between forms. . . The title came from the notion of scriptures, scraps of things, of pictures, of everything together, which became Scraptures. The very first one arose out of the opening of the Bible: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God", redesigned on the page visually. So it's a fairly classic and literal approach to visuality and then I began to bust out of that with the second and the third; I began to get into prose sections and I got into comic strip oriented sections, two of the sections are sound poems, though there are visual versions of those two as well, so it lends itself to a print text.<sup>39</sup>

When questioned as to his motive for bringing together disparate and differing forms, Nichol replied:

. . .no one system is complete; it doesn't matter what system you create, it's simply one pair of glasses through which you view the world, you view reality. And because I believed that formal solutions released some contents and suppressed other contents, I was interested in greater hybrids, I was interested in creating alternative possibilities for myself. . .I believed. . .that if I could find a new form other contents would be released that I did not have a conscious awareness of at the time, that it was an issue of finding doorways. Form was a doorway through which you let certain contents emerge. Traditional form had its powers but alternative forms had different powers and released different contents and released new realities.<sup>40</sup>

There is evident in Nichol's later work an attempt to synthesize the different language breakthroughs and developments; formally, Nichol at this stage, was attempting a major reintegration of language elements. The beginnings of this reintegration can be seen in Scriptures.

Although GrOnk had a strong Canadian base it also left room for international work. Issue #3 (March 1967) featured the work of D.A. Levy (U.S.) while GrOnk #6/7 (June/July 1967) presented work by Hansjorg Mayer (Germany), Brown Miller (U.S.) and Jiri Valoch (Czechoslovakia). Later issues featured the work of D.R. Wagner (Series 3, #7), Jiri Valoch (Series 5, #7) and French writer Julian Blaine (Series 5, #8). The combined sixth and seventh issue of the sixth series was The Pipe, an anthology of Czech concrete.

After the appearance of the second issue of Series 2, the numbers did not appear in proper time sequence although there is a sequential numbering of the issues in the end. We find in the second series, as issue #5, The Captain Poetry Poems by Nichol, which is part of a series that begins in 1967, now finally printed in 1970. A notice in the first issue of the third series stated that:

series 3 of grOnk will be mimeographed what have you type material and will be published simultaneously with series 4 a series of off-set books & special productions<sup>41</sup>

Series 6 and 7 appeared simultaneously, the sixth series, in addition to the Czech concrete poetry anthology, being especially devoted to the work of Steve McCaffery, and the seventh was edited by David UU (Harris). On two occasions (Series 2, no. 7/8 and Series 3, no. 5) GrOnk merged with the publication Comic World to offer collections of comic strips.

An important aspect of GrOnk, as we have seen, was that it published book-length collections of work by young Canadian experimental writers. Books by Nichol himself and John Riddell appeared as part of the second series; books by Gerry Gilbert, Nelson Ball, Nichol, and Riddell as part of the third series; books by David UU, Hart Broudy, Earle Birney's Pnomes Jukollages & Other Stunzas (Birney's first collection of visual work), and books by David Aylward, Judith Copithorne, Andrew Suknaski, and Stephen Scobie as part of the fourth series; by Steve McCaffery, Aylward, Martina Clinton in the fifth series, by McCaffery in the sixth, David UU and Hart Broudy in the seventh, and by Nichol and bissett in the eighth. This provided first publication or close to it for many of these young writers and served as the only organized available front for much experimental work of this kind.

By and large the sixth series is devoted to the work of Steve McCaffery, an experimental poet whose work has become increasingly interwoven with Nichol's own. McCaffery and Nichol began writing collaborative work, and collaborative performances eventually led to the formation of the Four Horsemen, a sound poetry ensemble. McCaffery and Nichol also work together to bring out the TRG reports that are a featured part of Open Letter. It is an interesting pairing, in that McCaffery's interests seem to be highly theoretical, at times almost intellectually mechanistic, since Nichol tends to be more humanistically oriented. In McCaffery's afterword to his transitions to the beast (Series 6, no. 2/3), subtitled "post semiotic poems," we are presented with some of his theorizing:

to the beast are for me transitional pieces moving towards a hand drawn set of visual conventions that have their roots both in semiotic poetry & in the comic strip. the semiotics or code poem (invented round about 1964 by the brazilians pignatori & pinto) uses a language of visual signs designed & constructed to suit the individual desires of the poet & the needs that he as linguistic designer assures for the poem on that particular occasion of construction.

the striking impulse behind this type of poem is both a linear & nonlexical--the desire to expand language beyond the simple limited form of verbal expression.<sup>42</sup>

The concrete poetry of the Brazilians that McCaffery is referring to here is a visual poetry that creates for itself its own lexical key; equations are made between recognized concepts and words and created shapes and symbols. These shapes and symbols come to represent an entirely newly created language, so that, in essence, poems can be written in a code language and translated into that language or out of it. This is what McCaffery is working with in transitions to the beast in which he works with a poetry of visual design utilizing and departing from the geometric shape of letters. In Collaborations (Series 6, no. 5), McCaffery and Nichol work together in this field, incorporating Nichol's love of cartoon and the existent semiotic system found there with McCaffery's geometric shape designs.

After completing GrOnk's initial run with a bill bissett book, Rush: what fucken theory, a study uv language, Nichol undertook the GrOnk Intermediate Series. This consists of pamphlets or books by various experimental visual poets, among them McCaffery, Riddell, Gerry Gilbert, Shant Basmanjian, Paul Dutton, Jackson MacLow, P.C. Fencott, Bob Cobbing, R. Murray Schafer and Opal L. Nations. At the time of this writing eighteen issues of the intended twenty-four issues of this series have been published. When that series is complete Nichol intends to begin the final series, so far undefined and open-ended. He would seem to recognize that truly experi-

mental work always has a hard time finding places of publication and so is keeping a place for that work going.

Bissett and Nichol have not been the only poets working in the areas of visual and sound poetry but they have certainly been the most active, the most prolific and, up to now, the most important. Their work presents a radical new aesthetic that just did not exist in Canada before the early 1960's.. The hard and fast lines drawn between art and life tend to be erased in Bissett and Nichol's work; both seem to be committed to a revitalization of language by exploring experimental avenues, and also to a revitalization of life itself by the use of language in organic processes of expression and psychic healing. If Nichol is correct in his assumption that working in new forms releases new contents for poetry, then a whole new set of contents has been made possible to the writer through Bissett's and Nichol's branch of Modernism.



## CHAPTER EIGHT FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>bp Nichol, An unpublished interview conducted by the author, in his possession, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>This is the key idea in Louis Dudek's essay "The Meaning of Modernism," Technology & Culture: Six Lectures. (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1979), pp. 78-96.

<sup>3</sup>Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste," Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 130.

<sup>4</sup>Judy Rawson, "Italian Futurism," Modernism, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 246.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>7</sup>G.M. Hyde, "Russian Futurism," Modernism, ed. by Bradbury and McFarlane, pp. 264-265.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>10</sup>Lucy R. Lippard, Dadas On Art (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>Steve McCaffery, "Sound Poetry: A Survey," Sound Poetry: A Catalogue, ed. Steve McCaffery and bp Nichol (Toronto: Underwhich Editions, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>13</sup>G.M. Hyde, "Russian Futurism," Modernism, ed. Bradbury and McFarlane, p. 265.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>15</sup>Hugo Ball, Flight Out Of Time (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 57.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>18</sup>McCaffery, "Sound Poetry: A Survey," Sound Poetry: A Catalogue, pp. 8-9.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 11.
- <sup>21</sup>John Sharkey, "Introduction," Mindplay: An Anthology of British Concrete Poetry (London: Lorimer Publishing, 1971), pp. 9-10.
- <sup>22</sup>Emmett Williams, "Introduction," Anthology of Concrete Poetry (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), pp. vi-vii.
- <sup>23</sup>bill bissett, A letter to the author, dated November 27, 1979 at Vancouver.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup>Blew Ointment, unnumbered issue (1970), inside back cover.
- <sup>30</sup>Ganglia, no. 4 (June 1966), p. 97.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 98.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 98.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 99.
- <sup>35</sup>bp Nichol in interview; Ken Norris, "An Interview With bp Nichol," Essays On Canadian Writing, no. 12, p. 247.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 250
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-250.
- <sup>38</sup>GrOnk, 1, no. 1 (January 1967), front cover.
- <sup>39</sup>bp Nichol in interview; an unpublished interview conducted by the author, in his possession, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 1.
- <sup>41</sup>GrOnk, 3, no. 1 (April 1969), no page number.
- <sup>42</sup>GrOnk, 6, no. 2/3, back cover.

## CHAPTER NINE

THE POEM AS VEHICULE: MONTREAL POETRY IN THE SIXTIES  
AND SEVENTIES

--From the point of view of a late participant--

In the development of Modernism in Canadian poetry, Montreal has been an important cultural centre. Beginning with the founding of the McGill Fortnightly Review in November of 1925 by F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith, the Montreal literary community has continued to be an important shaping and directing force in Canadian poetic activity. One has only to remember the literary feud between Preview and First Statement in the 1940's, which sparked the fires of social realism, and the Montreal-based activities of Layton and Dudek in the 1950's, which combined to produce CIV/n magazine and Contact Press, to realize that, up until the late 1950's, much of Canadian poetry was dominated by the Montreal poets. By the late fifties there was a substantial poetic tradition established in Montreal, and it was essentially a tradition of social realism.

During the fifties, and even more so in the 1960's, the predominance of Montreal declined, the movement spread, and Canadian Modernism in poetry became a truly national phenomenon. In the three preceding chapters I have detailed the histories of several little magazines that represented radical departures from the social realist tradition and which had their origin beyond Montreal as their location. The short list of magazines of the 1960's and early 1970's, presented in chapter five, shows the prolific output of poets across the country during that time. The "New Wave Canada" phenomenon made its presence felt across the nation during the 1960's, except, it can be argued, in Montreal. There a new generation, aware of the indigenous social realist tradition, resisted the expansive Modernism of their American and European-influenced contemporaries. It has only been

with the succeeding generation, a group of young poets who gathered around the Vehicule Gallery in the early seventies, that the next stage of Modernist development has occurred in Montreal. This chapter, then, will detail the crossroads of evolution that Montreal poetry of the 1960's and 1970's represents.

Emerging from the 1950's there were three important poets in Montreal to be reckoned with: Louis Dudek, Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen. Without dismissing such important older poets as F.R. Scott or an ailing A.M. Klein, I believe that it is fair to say that it was with these three poets that the new generation had to come to terms. Dudek, at this time, was editing Contact Press with Raymond Souster and Peter Miller, running his own prestigious magazine Delta, and publishing young poets in his own McGill Poetry Series. The young Montreal poet seeking publication at this time was sure to encounter Dudek. Also, Dudek was teaching at McGill University, which has always been a leading breeding ground for young writers. Just across town, Irving Layton was teaching at Sir George Williams University, another focus of attraction. Overlooked and under-rated as a poet for over ten years, in 1959 Layton had seen his collection A Red Carpet For The Sun published by the commercial publishing house McClelland and Stewart and had begun the more public phase of his writing career. In the wake of Layton's increased popularity, Dudek, long one of Layton's chief supporters, became one of his sharpest critics, and their long-standing friendship developed into an even longer-standing hostility. Having had his first collection of poems, Let Us Compare Mythologies, published by Dudek in the McGill Poetry Series, Leonard Cohen saw his second collection, The Spice Box of Earth, published by McClelland and Stewart in 1961. As with Layton, this began the public phase of Cohen's career, and with subsequent novels, films, and recordings his reputation was to grow.

It was between the pillars of Dudek's social realism and Layton and Cohen's celebratory poetry of personality that the

Montreal poets of the sixties moved. Continuing in the mode of social realism, they explored the urban realities a bit more extensively than their predecessors; some followed in the footsteps of Layton, Cohen, and the older A.M. Klein, in exploring the poetry of Jewish tradition; or they followed Layton and Cohen in working in the mode of the poetry of personality. When the Layton-Dudek verbal duels heated up in the early sixties, the editors of Cataract (Seymour Mayne, K.V. Hertz, and Leonard Angel) seemingly sided with Layton by publishing some of his attacks upon Dudek. The Yes editors, Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse, gravitated towards Dudek and shared his poetic orientation, finding themselves ever closer in alliance with Dudek, until finally the three joined together in founding Delta Canada Press.

Before beginning an investigation of the Montreal little magazines of the 1960's it should be noted that the magazines of this period were sporadic, as were the general activities in Montreal at that time. Al Purdy and Milton Acorn published four issues of Moment in Montreal in 1960 and 1961, then moved the magazine to Toronto. Cataract was published from 1961-62, eventually superseded for two issues by Catapult in 1964. David Rosenfield edited one issue of The Bloody Horse in 1963; Stuart Gilman edited The Page, a series of broadsheets, in 1964; K.V. Hertz was later to edit Ingluvin for two issues in the early seventies. Although Yes came out of Montreal for most of its fourteen years of existence (1956-1970), it was never a magazine initiating a movement; rather it continued to reinforce the positions of the forties and fifties, never taking a truly fighting stand until its last few issue, when it came out in opposition to Tish and the new poetic innovations of the sixties, attempting too late to stem the tide of New Wave Canada. Not surprisingly, it posited the poetry of social realism as its alternative. Late sixties magazines such as Intercourse and Tide were to experience longer runs than most magazines of the early 1960's; unfortunately they did not produce and publish a body of

really significant work.

It was actually in Dudek's personal magazine Delta (1957-1966) that the full panoply of young Montreal poets of the late 1950's and early 1960's appeared, though not as part of a militant movement. Young Montrealers such as Daryl Hine, Ian Clark, Michael Gnarowski, Milton Acorn and Al Purdy (in Montreal at that time), John Lachs, Lionel Tiger, Sylvia Barnard, George Ellenbogen, Marquita Crevier, David Solway, Avi Boxer, Raymond Fraser, Seymour Mayne, Henry Moscovitch and Steve Smith all appeared within the pages of Delta.

In his essay "The Ego Has It Both Ways: Poets In Montreal", Al Purdy cites Irving Layton as an important influence in his poetic development and also as a central axis of his literary activity in the mid-1950's. With his wife, Purdy moved to Montreal from Vancouver in 1956; in the summer of 1956 Purdy answered his doorbell to be greeted by a man who said "Irving Layton sent me"; that man was Milton Acorn, just arrived in Montreal from his home in Prince Edward Island. Purdy and Acorn quickly became friends and, when Purdy moved back to Montreal in 1959 after a two-year stint in his own handmade A-frame house at Roblin Lake, Ontario, they also became literary collaborators; they began publishing the magazine Moment in the fall of 1959. Discussing the motivation behind the magazine, Purdy has said: "The reasons for Moment were both egotistic (we wanted to publish our own poems, tho I denied this to Milt) and altruistic (we wanted to publish good poems by other people)."<sup>1</sup> They presented their purpose in their initial editorial as follows:

Moment's a way out type magazine which prints (pardon. . . mimeographs) poetry, opinion or fiction. . . especially good stuff that nobody else'll use. If you hate it write and tell us to stop cluttering up your mailbox. If you like it write and tell us so, maybe enclosing a buck or so. There's no charge and (curse it) no payment.<sup>2</sup>

At this time neither Acorn nor Purdy were beginning poets;

Acorn was thirty six and Purdy forty one. Both of them had come to poetry later in life than most poets and they both started out with a rather formal, nineteenth century orientation to poetry, which gradually gave way to more modern technique. In the long, legal-sized pages of Moment, we see that development of modern voice, with a strong Canadian orientation, tapping into the newly established Canadian tradition of Layton, Souster, and Dudek and carrying it on; they were also concerned with promoting that tradition. The first issue of Moment includes poems by Dudek, Purdy, Layton, Lowry, Acorn and Cohen and also features a short essay/debate section called "Raymond Souster. Extempore Debate: Dudek and Acorn versus Purdy"; here Dudek and Acorn argue that Souster utilizes his own natural language while Purdy argues that Souster doesn't work with the true structure of the English language, nor does he present it in its best light. The editors' purpose seems to be neither to reevaluate nor revolutionize Canadian poetry as it exists, but rather to become a part of it. Purdy and Acorn do not present a radically new aesthetic.

Issues two and three continue in a similar fashion, including poems by Phyllis Gottlieb, Alden Nowlan, Malcolm Lowry, Eldon Grier, Glen Siebrasse, Bryan McCarthy, Ralph Gustafson, F.R. Scott, John Robert Colombo and Irving Layton, as well as poems by the editors. Issue #3 includes a favorable review by Purdy of Layton's A Red Carpet For the Sun.

Moment #4 contains poems by Purdy, Nowlan, Larry Eigner, Alan Pearson, and Eldon Grier. It also includes an editorial of sorts, "Open Letter To A Demi-Senior Poet," written by Milton Acorn and addressed to "Dylan," possibly Dylan Thomas. Acorn begins by disputing "Dylan's" assumption that "there is an inviolate something called 'poetry'."<sup>3</sup> To this Acorn opposes his personal view that "'Poetry' is only a convenient label for a kind of creativity with words,"<sup>4</sup> and goes on to maintain that poetry should be judged by whether it presents something as opposed to whether or not it is poetry. Acorn

then goes on to offer an assessment of the Beats, about whose work he and Dylan seem to have differing views (A note at the beginning of the piece states, "In the letter below the whole new movement in The States, from Olson to Corso, is referred to as 'The Beats'"<sup>5</sup>). Finding the Beats lacking in intellectuality, Acorn goes on to praise Olson as "an innovator in the science of poetics";<sup>6</sup> he notes the surety of Creeley poetic touch, the strong dialectic evident in Corso's work, and Ferlinghetti's "marvellous sense of imagery."<sup>7</sup> Acorn then writes:

These Beats have it. They're the true heirs of Sandburg and Fearing, the poets with large American souls. If their work is often ugly blame it on the ugliness of the present-day America.<sup>8</sup>

Having said this, Acorn goes on to agree with some of Dylan's criticism. Acorn says that the Beats attack "man in his logical and materially creative aspect,"<sup>9</sup> they display a "philosophical and scientific ignorance. . . a prol know-nothingism."<sup>10</sup> He finds it just to call much of their writing "brain-washed poetry."<sup>11</sup> Complain<sup>ing</sup> further that they tend to dominate most little magazine activity that is not academically based, Acorn ends with a balanced assessment:

I see bad and good in them, but don't allow anything to blind me to the fact that they are an important movement. . . Perhaps the most important to come on anywhere since the war. Equally I don't allow their importance to blind me to the worth of Canadian poetry, which doesn't divide nearly as neatly into 'schools', which progresses more evenly. . . alert to the new --- even helping create it as Layton, Dudek and Souster actually helped create the Beat school --- but rarely losing sight of tradition. I think Canadians have much to learn from these Beats, and the younger American poets could learn much from us. Not that I'm too hopeful they will. . . after all Canada hasn't got a large enough army for the Yanks to pay much attention to her.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from Acorn's lumping of all the American poets in the Allen anthology as "Beats" (something Frank Davey objected



to in the editorial of Tish #11), we find Acorn, curiously enough, on the side of this new generation of American poets; this is remarkable in the face of Acorn's later anti-American and Canadian nationalist position and in light of his later condemnation of the west coast Tish poets as colonials influenced by American literary imperialism. Acorn, in later days, would emphasize the absolute importance of the Canadian tradition, like Robin Mathews, rather than allowing much credence to what could be learned from foreign, particularly American, models.

Moment #5 announces the movement of the magazine from Montreal to Toronto and names Acorn as the magazine's sole editor. This issue includes poems by Gael Turnbull, G.C. Miller, John Robert Colombo, and Acorn himself.

In Moment #6 things heat up considerably. This issue is marked by a change of editorship, adding Gwendolyn MacEwen (Acorn's newlywed wife) as an editor. In the editorial Acorn notes:

The more Milton Acorn gets to know poetry. The more he realizes that what he's writing is not poetry. . . And the more he becomes opposed to poetry. This then is the sixth issue of Moment. . . A magazine opposed to poetry.<sup>13</sup>

This rather cryptic comment seems to indicate Acorn's disenchantment with poetry as artistic expression and his desire to see it used for more overtly political ends. Despite the issue's stated opposition to poetry, it includes good poems by MacEwen, Padraig O Broin, Joe Rosenblatt, Acorn and Purdy. The appearance of John Robert Colombo in issue #5, and of O Broin and Rosenblatt in issue #6, tends to point up the magazine's new location in Toronto and its commitment to publish the work of new poets the editors are finding there.

Issue #6 also includes MacEwen's "An Open Letter To Tish," a letter in which she levels her own objections against the Tish form of poetry:

It sounds good, all right: natural rhythm, word clusters, breath and syntax control -

but the proof is in the poet's pudding. And I get the impression from this end that you're using Instant Mix. Damnably, it's all too facile in this idiom for poetasters to grab only the essentials of the Olson-Jones school and produce almost convincing carbons. There are 2 limbos - take your pick - 1. poetry that falls off a log and lends itself happily later to the breath-line premise, or -2. poetry employing exclusively that premise and never getting an inch from the ground because such marginal concerns as craft and self-enclosure are thrown down the toilet along with your 'alien iambs.'<sup>14</sup>

MacEwen's complaint is that despite all the theoretical to-do in Tish the poetry contained in it is, at best, a carbon copy of the American poets and, at worst, devoid of original craft or importance. MacEwen goes on to note that in addition to being "adolescent artiness, this is invalid poetry."<sup>15</sup> Beginning to define her own poetic orientation, she says:

The poet begins with the reality of that object; being a poet, his relationship with that object is understood; he doesn't end there. And let's forget about writing poems about a poet writing poems about a poet. . . . art consists of concealing the craft of the artist, not elaborating tediously upon it. Do you believe that just because you write Poetry you are Interesting and Important enough to write solely describing your own Divine Function?<sup>16</sup>

MacEwen insists that it is not enough for the poet to "talk blithely about how you walked into a room and had an incredible urge to touch an object & etc."<sup>17</sup> She maintains that the poem and the poetic experience do not begin and end there, they must probe deeper. In both points here she is arguing against the self-conscious element in Tish poetry, the fact of the poet being too much aware of himself and his art. Art or craft, she insists, should not be the subject of the poem but rather only points of departure or the frame, which contains the subject matter. Her final charge against the Tish poets is that she could actually write "5 poems in 5 minutes"<sup>18</sup> to parallel anything so far published in Tish. In this crit-

icism MacEwen takes part in the east coast antipathy that was generally felt towards the Tish poets at that time by most poets in Toronto and Montreal.

Railing against Tish continues in Moment #7 when Acorn writes in an editorial:

North of the border, in Vancouver, we have the Tishites who --- at this stage of the game --- have taken the Beat philosophy, with its emphasis on creative freedom and imagination, and transformed it into the most rigid and sterile dogma you could imagine. They too remain deaf to Canadian poetry, including what has been done in their own locale, and to mention the Montreal Miracle would no doubt throw them into saliva-spraying fits of doctrinaire rage.<sup>19</sup>

While deploring the work of the Tish poets, Acorn praises the poets of what he terms "the Montreal Miracle" and sees it as something continuing on into the 1960's:

In an English small town buried in a French city, with an undigested mixture of national origins and a truncated class structure, a vital independent poetic tradition has originated and revived itself in each generation. A.J.M. Smith and Frank Scott kicked off the ball forty years and more ago. A.M. Klein carried it on. Layton and Dudek in the fifties. Purdy and Acorn got their essential training there.

It isn't ending today. Henry Moscovitch seems most times like a caricature of a Montreal poet, but has produced work of value. Leonard Cohen . . . And today when new poets spring to life everywhere, Avi Boxer, Gertrude Katz, Stanley Nester, are only three among the names we might mention. The tradition has maintained its identity. The Academic reaction of the forties and early fifties never had an impact in Montreal --- or if it did the nibble was so slight it has been forgotten. The much more vital Beat movement has had little effect. Two characteristics distinguish the Montreal poetry from all that has come and gone: (1) it doesn't think the square world can be abolished by ignoring it; it remains in the midst, socially conscious, socially critical; unlike FISH it doesn't reduce poetry to a contraceptive plaything: (2) The poets learn their trade!<sup>20</sup>

What Acorn finds of value in the Montreal line of poetry is that it is socially engaged and is well-crafted. Instead of engaging in empty aestheticism, it is committed to both art and life.

In this editorial Acorn goes on to discuss the work of Montreal poet K.V. Hertz, whose work is featured in this issue of Moment. Acorn sees Hertz as continuing in the Montreal tradition of writing poetry that is involved in the world and shows a concern for craft. In closing Acorn notes:

One thing is certain. Despite all the dogmatic TISH talk about 'commitment to voice' (What an abysmal degradation of that good old word 'commitment') their examples fade, like a sordid dew, before the work of a poet who is genuinely committed. . . To voice and to far more than voice.<sup>21</sup>

The polemics here run hot and heavy in acclaiming samples of poetry that, twenty years later, have paled into insignificance. Much of the poetry in Tish has faded, and so have the poems of K.V. Hertz that Acorn presented. The aesthetic debate, however, has not passed away, and it has, in fact, come to represent the opposing views of the New Delta and Vehicule groups in Montreal of the 1970's. At the same time, Acorn's and Purdy's poetry, contrasted with that of the Tish descendents, have come to represent two opposite poles of Canadian poetry on the national level. Thus we see how central aesthetic concerns at times transcend the limitations of a poet's or an entire group's early work. Moment, in its demand for engagement, a poetry involved with the world, and a poetry conscious of craft, foreshadows Purdy, Acorn, and MacEwen's mature work, just as the early work in Tish foreshadows the later poetry of Davey, Bowering, and Wah.

Acorn, living in Toronto, could begin to judge the "Montreal Miracle" from a distance. In the meanwhile, the young Montreal poets themselves were setting to work. Along with Seymour Mayne and Leonard Angel, K.V. Hertz started the mimeographed magazine Cataract in the spring of 1962. If

Layton had an effect on Purdy and Acorn his influence was even more apparent on these three young poets. Al Purdy notes:

Shortly after assuming the professorship at Sir George Williams, Irving didn't merely have followers hanging on his words raptly-- he had disciples. Among these were Leonard Angel, K.V. Hertz, Henry Moscovitch and several others. Moscovitch was probably the most ardent in his admiration of the master, aping Layton's own predilection for Nietzsche, imitating Layton's poem with the tone and content of his own, and even slightly resembling Layton physically.<sup>22</sup>

In naming their magazine, Hertz, Mayne, and Angel followed Layton in his admiration for D.H. Lawrence. A key passage from Lawrence is quoted:

Know thyself, and that thou art mortal.  
But know thyself, denying that thou art mortal: . . .  
a rainbow of love and hate  
a wind that blows back and forth  
a creature of conflict like a cataract:  
know thyself, in denial of all these things.<sup>23</sup>

Cataract began as a rather small unpretentious mimeographed pamphlet stapled across the middle. For issues #2 and #3 it went into a larger format stapled at the side. Its general focus was the younger poets of Montreal. Poems by Henry Moscovitch, Milton Acorn, Sidney Aster, K.V. Hertz, Leonard Angel, Charles Sise, Seymour Mayne, Avi Boxer, Stanley Nester, Malcolm Miller, Bryan McCarthy, Alan Pearson, and Irving Layton all appeared within its pages. The Layton manner is abundantly evident in the work of the younger poets; to cite an example, this section from Leonard Angel's "Winter Poem" will do for many others:

Let illness stink in Heine's grave  
Where the poet's ghost now rots:  
--It's winter!  
Brilliant seed is icing miasmatic air,  
And the spit off a god's cursing tongue  
Destroys the suspended dust of decaying bones.<sup>24</sup>

Layton himself is also much in evidence, in his contribution

of poems to the second and third issues and more loudly in his "Open Letter to Louis Dudek in Cataract #2. The feud that had developed between Layton and Dudek here flares up in high rhetorical style. In defense of his own literary reputation, and in defense of a number of younger poets whom Dudek had described as working out of "a state of mind fundamentally disturbed, and bordering on the deeply neurotic, or worse,"<sup>25</sup> Layton launches into an unparalleled attack on Dudek as man and poet. In this "open letter" Layton accuses Dudek of being, among other things, "a dying poet,"<sup>26</sup> "an over-timorous professor of English Literature,"<sup>27</sup> "a flunkey of the bourgeois,"<sup>28</sup> and "the Canadian babbitt."<sup>29</sup> Layton goes on to declare Dudek "a squid cleverly covering up your movements by squirting ink all over the place and damning and praising the same people, since you've no standards really, no criteria, lacking the clarity to invent or the courage to stick by them,"<sup>30</sup> and "an exhausted poet fallen among pedants, with all the fires gone out; a battered empty container whom the mocking gods have thrown on the slag heaps of literature."<sup>31</sup> In standard Laytonian style, Layton harangues Dudek: "Your 'theories' are really the flimsiest rationalizations, poorly disguised anxieties, the pugnacities of impotence."<sup>32</sup> Virile and feisty to the last, Layton accuses Dudek of becoming a valued member of the Establishment, for having sold out to comfort and a high standard of living. In publishing Layton's diatribe, one can only assume that the editors of Cataract endorsed Layton's views; at the very least, they were interested in controversy.

Though the editors may have been anticipating an outraged reply from Dudek, they received none, and what they did receive was a rather even-tempered letter from George Ellenbogen accusing Layton of pettiness and half-jestingly suggesting that perhaps Layton had one foot in the grave, else why all this pettiness and disputing of personalities. Layton's reply begins "You puzzle me: how does one answer a bleat?"<sup>33</sup> and goes on to remind Ellenbogen that Layton was

defending poets like Ellenbogen against Dudek's claim that they had disturbed minds, were deeply neurotic and were perversely exhibitionistic. Both letters are written with an aggressive self-assertiveness that seems strange and curious twenty years after. The ability to slug it out in a fist-fight and hang around pool halls seemed to be the model of both Ellenbogen's and Layton's poetic mannerism at that time.

In addition to endorsing Layton's views and opinions, the editors of Cataract exercised their own voices. The first occasion was in their editorial in the second issue, in which they disputed the Governor General's Award being awarded that year to poet Robert Finch. Their views are cutting and clear:

Reading over Acis In Oxford by Robert Finch, this year's selection for the Governor General's Award, we challenge the selection committee to point out to us a single poem in it. As a matter of fact, we find it impossible to imagine why the book might have been chosen at all, unless, of course, we remember the age of the selection committee. Perhaps professors Frye, Daniells and Bailey, all well over sixty themselves, wanted to bestow a favor on one of their fellow sexagenarians -- a gesture which we find most touching, and one, to be sure, offering so much encouragement to all old maids and frail academics. . . We wouldn't dream of spoiling so sweet a gesture except that unfortunately there happened to be a number of genuine books of poetry published in 1961 and to which the award rightfully belonged: in particular, Leonard Cohen's Spice-Box of Earth. This collection has been widely praised and contains a solid core of exceptionally moving lyrics.<sup>34</sup>

Not only do the Cataract editors know what they don't like, they also know what they do like. Their cry is for poetry that is new and fresh with life, as opposed to conventional awarding of personal favors. They demand recognition of vital poetry while it is still vital; also we note that these editors are promoting a Montreal contemporary, a poet of their own locality.

In its tousling with the poetic antagonisms of the east

coast, Cataract endorsed Layton and Cohen, while condemning, in one instance, Dudek, and, in another, what they saw as the academic literary establishment. Purdy's assessment of the Cataract crowd as disciples of Layton isn't too far off the mark; we can see them placing their faith and belief in the master and in their own mission. But in another editorial statement, Henry Moscovitch's review of Frank Davey's D-Day and After, the editors go after the distant bete noire: Tish and the Black Mountain poetics (Moscovitch, as of this issue, is contributing editor).

Moscovitch's review of Davey's book doesn't mince words:

In reviewing D-Day and After or any such book it is most important to avoid the temptation of using a sledge-hammer to kill an ant. For to point out to Davey et al, that by all standards of excellent poetry whether Greek, Latin, French, English, German, or what not, such work is not poetry at all but dull drivel, lacking in significant experience, in passion, intensity and skillful language, originality of imagination, penetrating and complex self-awareness and above all, any precision or organic sense where each part contributes to the whole--can be quite pointless, if not misleading. Since the impressions must not be mistakenly gained that even backhandedly -- by comparison with any genuine poet -- this book might have some impact or force. Rather it is only as a specimen example of mediocrity, of what kind of product a mediocre mind, imagination, and sensibility, is capable of achieving, that this book is of any interest.<sup>35</sup>

Although Moscovitch wants to avoid using "a sledge-hammer to kill an ant" he uses up three legal-sized pages, single-spaced, to belabor the point that he considers Davey to have written an atrocious book. Repeatedly he deplors "the preponderance of professorial blab,"<sup>36</sup> the tendency to present more theory than poetry, the fact that the theory, once decoded, proves to be either "the most banal and conventional of commonplaces or otherwise is either so picayune, so picky-wicky, or downright absurd to deserve nothing better than a

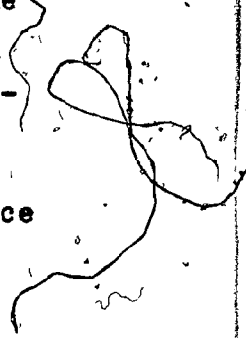


shrug."<sup>37</sup> He claims that the poetry is "stale, conventional, prosy and on the whole, trite, and timid work."<sup>38</sup> By a close analysis of the poems he claims to prove these points; throughout he insists upon the triteness and mediocrity of the work. In Laytonian fashion he sums up his argument as follows:

This poetry is marginal. It is the poetry of the little man, the average man -- unintense, prosy, inarticulate -- dull in every sense of the word -- i.e., not's not poetry. This sort of stuff under a different set of theories: a few myths thrown in, perhaps, mixed with academic reference and slightly better language, finds its real champion among professors, tired old poets, and for that matter, mediocrities of all kinds -- whether Dudek lately, or Northrop Frye with his stupidities on the relation between poet and scholarship, Colombo, C.P. Snow, or for that matter, any of the broken-backed whiners in the small magazines... For these are all types with the same smell underneath, whether it's aestheticism, incidentalism, scholasticism, hysterics, or non-concern -- it's only rationalization for the same stink -- mediocrity and impotence. The incapacity to write passionate and livingly relevant poems, and the lack of anything to say.<sup>39</sup>

Moscovitch sees Davey's work as a kind of anti-poetry, and what is more, potentially part of the new academy. In contrast to this he offers his view of what the poet should do:

The true poet will speak up with all the dignity, power, ferocity, emotion and mind he can muster -- in short combine and embrace all the antinomies. Unlike so many of our present day guilt stricken intellectuals, he will do what poets have always done. Express fearlessly, and with all the power, intensity, and range he can muster the most varied emotions and experiential truths of man, taking tools from every discipline, by profound experience and imagination, and using to advantage every technical or other innovation. -- In a word, to convey with the utmost passion and control the core of his vision: his own celebration of experience and illuminations into it. Everything else is, as Baudelaire put it, merely mortal, and condemned to death.<sup>40</sup>



In contrast to the poet as average man, which is where Moscovitch places Davey, Moscovitch's poet is the exceptional, superior man who is able to triumph over death and mortality by virtue of his vision and his craft. This echoes Layton's self-concern and his image of the poet. We see here the marked contrast of the Black Mountain view of the poet as medium and the Laytonian view of the poet as prophet and craftsman. Judging Davey's work by the latter criteria, it is more than easy for Moscovitch to find the work lacking, in that these two writers do not share the same aesthetic principles. Moscovitch condemns Davey's poems, but he more emphatically condemns the Black Mountain aesthetic which Davey has taken upon himself and for which he is the spokesman.

We can see Cataract then making a strong effort to preserve and promote the principles behind the "Montreal Miracle", that is, a poetry that is perceptive and engaged with the world, and which places strong emphasis upon craft. The sense of craft here means the poet's ability to use language, to produce an individual voicing through the use of poetic resources. The enemies, as seen by the editors of Cataract, are the impotent academic versifiers and the puffing, asthmatic Tish-ites. This aggressive stance is evident throughout the magazine; but unfortunately, the work produced by these poets does not serve to sustain their arguments. Hertz, Angel, and Moscovitch have all passed into obscurity, having made no poetic mark that might last beyond the time of their youthful enthusiasm.

A year and a half later Cataract was superseded by Catapult, a magazine edited by Harvey Mayne and Seymour Mayne. Mimeographed like Cataract, the first cover announced "Catapult Bumps Off Cataract"; inside the magazine the first editorial read:

This is the Cataract Memorial Issue. Kaddish will be said for the deceased Cataract on Sunday, April 26, 1964 (C.E.) at Beaver Lake, Montreal.<sup>41</sup>

Cataract had lasted for three issues and had carried some clout, it had made some waves; Catapult was to last for two rather less controversial but fairly lively issues. Within Catapult's pages appeared poems by Charles Sise, Stanley Nester, Milton Acorn, Malcolm Miller, Leonard Angel, Steve Smith, Avi Boxer, Alden Nowlan, John Glassco, Irving Layton, Ralph Gustafson, Earle Birney, and Leonard Cohen. In the second issue Catapult "literary awards" were given: one to Layton for his book of poetry Balls For A One Armed Juggler, and one to Cohen, the "Rookie prose award," for his novel The Favorite Game. Layton and Cohen were the shining lights of the Catapult editors and the poets who gathered around them. Outside of the granting of awards, no hard-edged editorials or reviews were put forward, and the magazine enjoyed a rather calm and peaceful existence.

The magazines of this period were rounded out by David Rosenfield's rather unremarkable one-shot number The Bloody Horse, and also a series of single sheet broadside poems that Stuart Gilman and Seymour Mayne brought out at McGill University under the periodical heading The Page; these poems were for the most part by McGill students, although there was also a "faculty series" which ran for only two poems, one of these a piece by Louis Dudek. With time the high-energy level of the early sixties waned. Purdy and Acorn both left Montreal in the early 1960's, Seymour Mayne moved to Vancouver in the mid-sixties where he became involved with Patrick Lane and Bill Bissett in starting Very Stone House Press, Moscovitch suffered a nervous breakdown, Steve Smith died an early tragic death, Hertz began to turn his attention to prose, and most of the others (Angel, Nester, Sise, Miller) simply stopped writing. In the middle sixties Montreal went into a brief lull, and it would take a band of new young poets to bring it out of this slump in the seventies.

A new and somewhat reconstituted Montreal writing community did begin to reveal itself in the pages of Raymond Fraser's and LeRoy Johnson's Intercourse, a magazine

which began publication in the early spring of 1966, and was to appear for a total run of sixteen issues up to the summer of 1971. Intercourse, subtitled "Contemporary Canadian Writing" and "Canada's literary eighthly," was produced in a mimeographed format in a small pamphlet size, then from issue #8 on in a quarto size.

Unlike the earlier, more strident publications, Intercourse from the start had an easy-going air of fun and casualness. The initial editorial begins:

The idea of INTERCOURSE was first conceived in 1936, but its implementation was interrupted by the Civil War in Spain. . .<sup>42</sup>

It then goes on to spin out a tale of towering nonsense. In a column "The Second Editor Speaks," LeRoy Johnson notes that ". . . Intercourse will symbolize the struggle between sanity and insanity and who am I to say whose!"<sup>43</sup> In the first issue the editors don't make much of their provocative magazine title, but in the editorial of the second issue, which tells us how the first issue fared in the marketplace, Raymond Fraser has some fun at the expense of libraries and librarians:

We've become suspicious that a lot of libraries have unclean minds. With the exception of the University of Western Ontario they haven't subscribed to INTERCOURSE, despite reports showing they subscribe to all other Canadian literary magazines, and some foreign ones.

Allow me to say a few words about the word "intercourse".

There are many kinds of intercourse: social intercourse, political intercourse, intellectual intercourse, artistic intercourse, religious intercourse, verbal intercourse, sexual intercourse, and so on. It is to be assumed that a sociologist, upon seeing the word, would think of the first meaning; a politician, the second; an intellectual, the third; an artist, the fourth; a religious person, the fifth, someone with verbs on his mind, the sixth; someone with sex on his mind, the seventh. . .

That is why we are worried about Canadian libraries, and the people who staff them.<sup>44</sup>

It is in the prose matter rather than the poetry that we find the indomitable spirit of Intercourse at work. Instead of haranguing the reader about the importance of particular schools of poetic thought, the editorials in Intercourse speak of sexual encounters between women missing limbs, men with incurable cases of acne, or the art of collecting unemployment insurance or stocking a pantry. Though the humour tends sometimes to fall on the sickly side, the general atmosphere is one of happy irreverence and irrelevance. With issue #8 the editors began a pin-up section dedicated to "Miss Intercourse." This was represented by a rather horrid looking drawing of what, one would guess, was supposed to be a being of the female gender. In the first issue we find a satiric treatment of Layton, Purdy, Souster, and Nowlan, parody poems that appear under the names Buck Layton, Charlie Souster, Art Purdy and Jack Nowlan.

In many respects the poetry selection in Intercourse is eclectic, representing poets of various schools, so that in the first issue we find poems by Seymour Mayne, Elizabeth Brewster, LeRoy Johnson, Fred Cogswell, George Bowering, Raymond Fraser and others. Fraser, coming to Montreal from the maritimes, tended to seek out poets from down east in addition to those writing in Montreal. There is no hard core group here, though we note the repeated appearances of Cogswell, Brewster, Nowlan, Purdy and Layton. The magazine also presented Leonard Cohen, Raymond Souster, Eugene McNamara, Al Pittman, Gregory Cook, Bob Flanagan, Len Gasparini, Barry McKinnon, Louis Cormier, C.H. Gervais, Joseph Sherman, Philip Desjardins, Marc Plourde, and Tim Inkster within its pages.

By and large, the ruling editor of the magazine was Raymond Fraser. He edited the first three issues in collaboration with LeRoy Johnson. Issues #4 and #7 were edited by Al Pittman, but Fraser himself edited the fifth and sixth issues. With issue #8 we see the magazine change its format to a larger size; it is now edited jointly by Fraser and

Pittman. The editorial in this issue notes:

Comrades! INTERCOURSE has now brought out a full year of issues -- eight -- although it took two and a half years to do it.<sup>45</sup>

As we have seen, this is the fate of many little magazines; its editors start with the intention of bringing out a regular periodical, but with the rush of time, with financial headaches, and changes of editorship, the magazine slips into an irregular schedule of appearance.

With ~~issue~~ #9, Fraser was back at the helm as sole editor, publishing solo until issue #13; then for the double issue #12/13 Johnson and Pittman are again listed as contributing editors. Issue #14, however, is edited by acting editor Louis Cormier, a young poet, like Fraser, just come from the Maritimes. Cormier's editorship seems to have stuck, however, for he edited the magazine's last issue, #15/16 (Spring/Summer 1971) and he radically changed its direction. In his editorial for this issue, Cormier discusses his association with the Zen Meditation Center of Montreal and announces his intention of entering the sect. In fact, Cormier's future efforts were to be merged with those of the Zen Center's publication Sunyata.

The last issue of Intercourse presented poems by C.H. Gervais, Ritchie Carson, David Pennario, Marc Plourde, Philip Desjardins, Brenda Fleet, Tim Inkster, Louis Cormier and Tyndale Martin (then head of the Zen Center). Much of the poetry contained in this issue is of an inspirational and devotional nature, with much haiku in evidence. The initial poetic (or other) intercourse has now transformed itself into religious intercourse. Eclectic and flippant throughout the thirteen issues of Fraser's influence, the magazine under Cormier's editorship became sober and in fact somewhat evangelical.

The ultimate importance of Intercourse lies in its role as a center of activity during a somewhat dull period. Since it did not offer any new poetic perspectives it remains a

magazine of limited importance. Yet there is something liberating in the tone and spirit in which the magazine was put forward and it does look ahead in some ways to later magazine activity in Montreal.

None of the other magazines of this late sixties or early seventies period quite have Intercourse's vitality, and they tend to be the kind of ephemeral, ineffectual magazines that vanish in a time of literary inactivity, perhaps for lack of clear definition or purpose. Tide was edited by Philip Desjardins and Normand Gagnon for seven issues, from October 1968 until 1971. In the magazine's opening editorial Desjardins and Gagnon argue:

There can never be too great a surplus of "little magazines". They serve one crying need for the new writer -- exposure, the initial opportunity to be read.<sup>46</sup>

For the poets of this period the magazine served as a useful place to publish. Raymond Fraser, Louis Cormier, Al Pittman, Marc Plourde, Jack Hannan, and Desjardins all appeared in Tide's pages.

In June of 1971, the first issue of Leonard Russo's Jaw Breaker appeared, highlighted by a strong opening editorial:

In this first issue of JAW BREAKER, readers may be surprised not to find the so-called "first-issue editorial" -- the heraldic one that damns the old, applauds the possibilities of the new, and tells us what we are about to witness. Needless to say, many were drawn up (and later found their way into the wastepaper basket). Editorials that herald "modern" literature are, at the present time, anachronous. They are neither required nor what we need. "Modern" literature has arrived. Unfortunately, it is no messiah. It is an aggregate, and only the best can save us. Now is the time, therefore, to cull the good from the bad, the inspiring from the insouciant. It is the time to be, in the words of Ezra Pound, "anti-skunk," regardless of whether the animal is "modern" or aged, experimental or established, unknown or celebrated.<sup>47</sup>

Russo contrives a strong editorial in defense of the eclectic approach. By informing the reader that modern literature has arrived, he marks a point that is worth noting; after a fifty-year war on behalf of modern literature, this new literature has at last established itself. In Jaw Breaker, Russo intended to be eclectically "anti-skunk", merely culling the good from the bad in the modern vernacular.

The contents of Jaw Breaker may be described as rather restrictive rather than open and far-reaching. The first issue contains an introduction to and selection from Glen Siebrasse's poetry, a short story by Russo, and reviews of books by Eldon Grier, Stephen Scobie, and Doug Barbour, all books published by the Montreal Delta Canada Press. In the second issue Russo presents the work of Daryl Hine and offers two poems by Marilyn Grace Julian, as well as feedback and correspondence about the magazine's first issue. The third issue (February, 1972) has a long article on black poetry by Russo, and three poems by Montrealer Sharon-Lee Smith. Though showing some signs of discrimination, the magazine didn't have much vital energy, and it ceased publication after three issues.

In K.V. Hertz's and Seymour Mayne's Ingluvin we witness a brief renaissance of the early sixties movement. Ingluvin appeared between 1970 and 1971, producing only two issues. Sporting a printed format, the first issue featured prose by K.V. Hertz and John Glassco and poetry by Raymond Fraser, Harvey Mayne, Seymour Mayne and Peter Huse. Recalling the editorial in Cataract protesting Robert Finch's Governor-General's Award, we find an editorial in this issue of Ingluvin protesting that the award was not given to Milton Acorn for 1969. Lauding Acorn's independence and genuine gifts as a poet, the editors go on to criticize the literary environment in which such an omission is possible:

The fact that Milton Acorn was denied this award may be symptomatic of what is happening generally in poetry in Canada. Inceas-



ing preoccupation with American styles and concerns, and neglect of the Canadian tradition are obfuscating our past. Since the 'thirties' such figures as Scott, Birney, Livesay, Klein, Layton, Souster, Page, Dudek and Purdy have created a Canadian idiom--a source from which younger Canadian poets could forge their own language and locus. Now, we have Americans heading our English departments, editing our literary magazines, anthologizing our young poets, and even passing judgement on the excellence of our own poets for our national awards.<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the anti-Americanism in this editorial, we have here a defense of the Canadian tradition, essentially the tradition of social realism. The difference between the Montreal poets and the Tish poets of the west coast lies in the fact that the young Montreal poets were strongly aware that there does exist a poetic tradition in this country, and that this tradition offers a strong source for poets who would desire to write poetry in Canada. The Tish tendency so far had been to discount the work of their Canadian predecessors and to look toward their American Black Mountain models. The 1969 Governor-General's Award brought this conflict to a head, in that many felt that Acorn deserved to win the prize. It went, instead, to George Bowering and to Acorn's former wife Gwendolyn MacEwen as a joint award. MacEwen's half of the prize was quickly obscured, and the issue became one of a poet influenced by the Canadian tradition being overlooked in favor of a west coast poet who had been colonized by American influence.

The second issue of Ingluvin, in the spring of 1971, presented an interesting cross-section of work. Apart from an article on Canadian universities by Robin Mathews, and a story by Leonard Cohen, the issue included poems by Bryan McCarthy, John Glassco, Seymour Mayne, Sylvia Barnard, Irving Layton, Alan Pearson, Gail Fox, Marquita Grevier, and Tom Marshall. Here we see the early sixties movement of Montreal beginning to show some life again after ten years. Unfortunately the magazine folded with this issue. The sixties

movement in Montreal, for all hopes and high purposes, now faded out of view.

The last two magazines of this period that are worth some mention are Moongoose and The Golden Dog. Moongoose appeared in the early 1970's, edited by Ralph Alfonso and Ron Morrissette. Its format was a brown 9 x 12 inch envelope into which were stuffed individual mimeographed sheets. The editors stated the purpose of the magazine thus:

This magazine is dedicated to proving to all that Canadian literature is good, enjoyable, moving and worthy of the time and effort employed by both writer and reader. MOONGOOSE is dedicated to Montreal and to printing the works of its poets, writers, and artists. MOONGOOSE is dedicated to bringing our readers good reading and writing.<sup>49</sup>

In its dedication to the work of Montreal writers, Moongoose foreshadows the more strictly community-minded magazines that were to come, and which were then just starting to assert themselves. The editorial focus of Moongoose was never very strong, and therefore the magazine failed to produce much excitement or momentum. As with Tide and Jaw Breaker we can see this magazine as having some value in filling the relative void of that time.

Le chien d'or/the golden dog, edited by Carlo Fonda and Michael Gnarowski, and subtitled "writing today," made its first appearance in January of 1972. This first issue featured poetry by Louis Dudek, an interview with Irving Layton, an article on the poetry of Leo Kennedy by Lorraine McMullen, and an essay, "Educating the Critics," by Louis Dudek. After editing Yes magazine for fourteen years, we see Gnarowski's interest pointing to the area of criticism. The magazine is, then, essentially a journal of articles and criticism, never really dedicated to presenting new creative work. Interesting to the study of the little magazine is Louis Dudek's "A Letter to the Editors," in issue #4 (November, 1974), in which he discusses the possibility that

John Sutherland, in his personal orientation towards poetry, was more sympathetic to Preview than he was to First Statement, of which he was the editor. The magazine itself presents some critical exploration but does little to foster new work that contributes to a developing poetry.

What was in store for Montreal now was a generational shift. This change did not proceed neatly with the decline of the sixties activity; rather, it overlapped with it, so that we see, in 1972, the retreat of one generation and the first stirrings of another, almost as a continuous process. These two generations, however, though sharing a common city and a common past, operated upon totally different sets of precepts and, to understand the seventies generation, it is necessary to do a little stock taking.

The beginning of the Montreal poetry renaissance of the seventies can possibly be seen to range back to 1967, as New Wave Canada made its first official entrance when George Bowering and Margaret Atwood took up teaching positions at Sir George Williams University. Up to that time students seeking to write poetry in the forum of the university had the choice of Louis Dudek at McGill or Irving Layton at Sir George Williams as their teachers and mentors. Atwood taught Victorian literature, and did a reading or two in Montreal before shortly moving on; but it was Bowering who began teaching creative writing classes to fledgling poets. Bowering awakened his students to the new possibilities of poetry and also to the possibilities of a literary community. Despite occasional group efforts, the Montreal poets of the 1960's tended to be highly individualistic, perhaps taking their cue from Layton and Cohen, who had managed to make hay and money by exploiting their own individual voices. By the time of the early 1970's, both had left the city and no longer exercised as much influence through their work. It was also while Bowering was present at Sir George Williams (1967-1971) that the English department there held its extensive reading series (originally instituted by Roy Kiyooka,

Wynne Francis, Stan Hoffman, and Howard Fink, all faculty members), readings which brought in many poets from across Canada and the United States and exposed the young and aspiring Montreal poets to a wide diversity of poetic techniques. In many respects Montreal woke up to poetic developments other than those that were rooted in Montreal, and slowly this new poetry came to reflect the recent international trends.

In 1972, two Montreal little magazines significant for the new generation of Montreal poetry made their appearance. One was Booster & Blaster, lasting for two issues; the other was Anthol, lasting through four issues. In many ways this new generation of poets was starting from scratch; the preceding generation had all but faded away, so that there was no real establishment in Montreal at the time for these poets to oppose. The first necessity, then, was to establish survival outlets, since Montreal had long been shuffled out of the poetic limelight. The magazines that now developed tended to be open rather than closed to writers with a different orientation from their own. This did not mean that there were no strong disagreements among Montreal poets as to methods of composition, but that the grass roots formation of new outlets for Montreal poetry took precedence over jockeying for prestige and position.

Booster & Blaster is something of an enigma as a little magazine. Although it published only two issues, and the quality of its poetry was, admittedly, generally not very good, it served as an important juncture in Montreal poetry, and with time, may be seen as an important link to the establishment of a literary community in Montreal of the 1970's. The brain child of poet Bryan McCarthy, the first issue of the magazine was put out by a working committee consisting of McCarthy, Glen Siebrasse, Linda Jewel, Alan Pearson, Carol Leckner, Artie Gold, David Pinson, David Read, and Nancy Stegmayer. This was in January-February, 1972. The people working on the magazine represent an interesting blend of older poets who had weathered the sixties in Montreal and younger poets just beginning to write and take an interest

in their contemporaries' work.

In the first issue McCarthy offered an important editorial which described the conditions under which the magazine was being put out, and he defined its purpose:

During the Forties, Fifties and Sixties, poets in Montreal were in the habit of getting together, reading each other's work, criticizing it frankly, even ruthlessly, and publishing it in local mags. A sense of community survived until the early Sixties. What happened after that cannot be easily summed up. Some poets left town, or stopped writing, vanished up intellectual towers, got immured in jobs, hid under the bed, got scared into ad agencies, contracted white-lung from too much black-board chalk, became immolated in theses, or just went plain bonkers. The sense of community was lost. Poets worked either in total isolation, or incestuously in cliques, not caring much about the world outside.

A number of poets have told me that they are fed up with this situation: that they are willing to trade in the pains of isolation for the hell (as genial Jean-Paul puts it) of other people. I believe that this magazine with its hospitable editorial policy will help bring about this joyous state of affairs, to the great benefit of Montreal poets and poetry, not to mention the suffering poetic Public. How will this work? How will this magazine attempt to knit our fragmented community together?

To begin with, poets of all tendencies will be made VISIBLE to each other and to the general public. Our magazine is uniquely (some would say insanely) open. Cooperatively run by the participants, it has no editor in the sense of someone who rejects material on grounds of quality. It's FREE in every sense except the financial one. A poet publishes his work, or opinions on any subject he likes, because he thinks they should be published--and is prepared to pay his share of the costs (\$2.00 per page) and do his share of the work involved. Of course, he will get his share of the earnings and may even end up with ten cents profit.

Does this mean that the BOOSTER & BLASTER is a cooperative Vanity Press? If it is, the genre is new. A participant has the right to criticize the work of any other contributor, in the SAME issue of the magazine, in any way he please. He may simply label a poem a CROCK OF SHIT and let it go at that, or write a mandarin thesis, if

he pleases. . .

The BOOSTER & BLASTER resembles a gallery where poets may show their work and comment freely on work exhibited. This policy demands poets who are prepared to risk scathing criticism; who have the nerve to confront poets they may have roasted the day before; and who are prepared to rub shoulders with the poetic hoi polloi. . .

A stylistically mandarin contributor may be as mandarin as he wishes, but if he wants a protected chamber, this mag is not for him. The same remark applies in reverse. Wild boys<sup>a</sup> scared of mandarins need not apply.<sup>50</sup>

We see here a magazine totally democratic in the service of a literary community. The enterprise is to bring poets out of states of relative isolation and to make them available to each other. Free of an editor, it was to function much in the way that a printed cooperative workshop does. Each poet had to pay for the gestetnered sheets of his or her pages of work. At the back of the magazine there was a section in which the contributing poets "boosted or blasted" each other's work, trying to provide some perspective and view on what was being written and published. Booster & Blaster, then, was an important magazine, not because of the writing it contained but because it attempted to draw together a fragmented and splintered poetic community. We note McCarthy's comparison of the magazine to an art gallery. Within a year's time that is exactly where the Montreal community would find itself, beginning to air its poetry in the context of readings in the precincts of the Vehicule Gallery.

The first issue of Booster & Blaster provides an interesting convergence of older and younger untried poets. In the magazine we find the poems of Avi Boxer, Phil Desjardins, Louis Dudek, Ron Everson, Raymond Fraser, Michael Gnarowski, Seymour Mayne, David Rosenfield, Renald Shoofler and Glen Siebrasse, all poets familiar on the scene, beside the new poetry of Artie Gold, Carol Leckner, Marc Plourde and Peter Van Toorn. Clearly this magazine was one where the old met the young and passed on the torch.

Although the magazine was slated to appear six times a year, the second issue did not come out until December of 1972 with a somewhat reconstituted editorial board. For the second issue Raymond Gordy was managing editor, Glen Siebrasse handled production, Alan Pearson and Carol Leckner took care of publicity, and Artie Gold worked on circulation. A note at the beginning of the second issue says that the magazine "is an attempt to make the poetry writing community in Montreal conscious of itself" and also that Booster & Blaster is not a literary magazine but "a forum and workbook for Montreal Poets."<sup>51</sup> Speaking at greater length about the role of the magazine, Raymond Gordy notes:

THE MONTREAL FREE POET, BOOSTER & BLASTER publishes Montreal poets only. There is reason in this. We are an English-speaking community, physically circumscribed within a larger French-speaking community, but paradoxically, a minority which shares a majority English-speaking consciousness. This is difficult politics and should create a poetry of meaningful content and commitment. Too much poetry in English Canada is a poetry of experiences, a recording without reflection. Here great English-speaking poetry will be written, not only confessional but historical, dealing with Quebec's distinctive and local reality -- survival.<sup>52</sup>

We see here a recognition of community, and we see that recognition in the larger context of sociological and political realities.

In the second issue of Booster & Blaster we can already feel the new generation of poets flexing their muscles. The older poets of the 1960's have all but vanished. Contributors to this issue include Ian Burgess, Andre Farkas, Raymond Gordy, Artie Gold, Carol Leckner, Marc Plourde, Paddy Webb, and Richard Sommer, all members of the seventies renaissance. As the editorial acknowledges, the quality of the poetry is uneven: "some good poetry, much indifferent, some very bad."<sup>53</sup> But again, Booster & Blaster is important, not for what it achieved, or for the quality of the work itself, but for the new orientation that it represented, a desire for democratic

community.

The magazine disappeared after the second issue, though there were originally plans for a third to be edited by Glen Siebrasse. A mimeographed note pasted to the inside front cover of the second issue notes:

A change of policy will occur in the third issue. Manuscripts are invited, but poems will be selected by the editor. Please do not send money with submission. You need it more than me.<sup>54</sup>

We see here a desire on the part of Siebrasse for a magazine of more discrimination and selection. The democratic spirit did not last long at Booster & Blaster, and it is perhaps just as well that an edited third issue never appeared. The two issues of the magazine testify to a brief period of literary democracy in action.

The other little magazine that began in 1972 was Anthol, published for the first time in the spring of 1972. The magazine was to appear for four issues until the winter of 1975. Edited for the first three issues by Robert Morrison and Diane Keating, and adding Gilbert Plaw to the masthead for issue #4, Anthol published only Montreal poets. Though editorial selections were made in Anthol, the magazine maintained a fairly open policy, accepting poetry of different orientations. Like Booster & Blaster the magazine was dedicated to the idea of literary community, as we see in a short editorial note:

Anthol has been conceived as a bi-annual publication providing an outlet for young Montreal artists. The editors wish, as well, to help foster a poetic community in Montreal, and urge anyone with similar interests to contact them at the address below. We have in mind the engendering of poetry readings, critical sessions, etc.<sup>55</sup>

In its own fairly quiet way Anthol presented selections of new work by Montreal poets, offering little or no editorial commentary; during its short run it published many of the



younger Montreal poets on the scene. After issue #4 the editors were intending the magazine to take a more national perspective but, as with Booster & Blaster, the change in the magazine's first intention somehow resulted in its sudden demise. At any rate, over four years it had served a useful community function.

The desire expressed by the editors of Anthol for poetry readings and other community activities was echoed by the slowly gathering Montreal poetry fraternity. At this time the rather extensive reading series that had been going on at Sir George Williams University was beginning to decline from its period of intense activity, though it would continue for another year or two. The young poets just beginning to write in Montreal found, however, that the university was not really interested in their early efforts. They found themselves in the situation of having no access to organizations sponsoring readings, and so were forced to fall back upon their own resources. At this time the parallel art gallery movement was just beginning to establish itself in Canada and, in Montreal, the Vehicule Gallery was opened at 61 Ste. Catherine Street West. Located in a part of town occupied by prostitutes, pornographic movies, alcoholics and ethnic markets, the gallery was meant to provide an alternative exhibition space for experimental artists. Through association with several of the artists there, the poets established the gallery as their practical location. Sunday afternoons were devoted to the poets, and these began to hold their locally-based readings there.

It is really in the context of the reading series at Vehicule that the new community came into being. Claudia Lapp and Michael Harris organized the first reading series at Vehicule in the late fall of 1973. This provided local poets with a place to be seen and heard. In 1974, Artie Gold and Andre Farkas brought Vehicule to the attention of all young poets by organizing a mammoth series of thirty-seven readings. Virtually every local poet with anything worth hearing was

given a reading. This was an important step in creating a center of activity that reached out beyond the small circles of poets who were already known to each other. From the fall of 1976 to the spring of 1976 Ian Burgess organized another series of almost equal scope and volume, with thirty-four readings. Subsequent reading series were organized by Robert Galvin, John McAuley and Stephen Morrissey, from 1976 to 1977, and by Tom Konyves since that time.

The years 1974-1977 were the real peak years at Vehicule Gallery, the real years of group activity. Poets came to readings each week to hear what their peers were up to, to be stimulated, and to offer criticism. This was the period in which many young Montreal poets published their first books and so the excitement level ran high, the feeling was in the air that new poets were testing their fledgling wings. The early energy evident in Booster & Blaster and Anthol now found its realization in poetry readings and an ongoing activity. For all intents and purposes the new sense of community for poets had, at long last, arrived.

In the larger context of a city in which poets are actively interested in each other's work, this sense of shared experience lasted for only a few short years. As individual poets achieved their first book publication and began enjoying the first ripples of recognition, the groups began quickly to separate. With the publication of the Vehicule Press anthology Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies, edited by Andre Farkas and Ken Norris, an era of controversy and minor factionalism began. The launching party for that book took place on September 30, 1977, and it can be seen as the last event in the celebration of a true community. Shortly thereafter, most Montreal poets became involved in their individual ambitions as opposed to communal sharing.

In the minds of seven poets, however, who had met at Vehicule and had done much of the organizational work there, a sense of new found brotherhood was just beginning to establish itself. What they had discovered within the context of

the larger community was the smaller grouping in which they could share. Since these poets found most of the writing in Montreal too reactionary or conservative for their taste, they shared a common aesthetic concern. This was reinforced by their mutual interest in Modernist and Post-Modernist art movements and an experimental bent evident in each of their books. Gradually, these poets--Andre Farkas, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, Stephen Morrissey, and Ken Norris--found themselves drawn into a tighter association with each other, until there evolved a sense of peculiar solidarity; this consciousness was heightened by the tendency of other poets within the community, and critics beyond, to refer to them as the Vehicule poets. Eventually they were to publish a group anthology as The Vehicule Poets, published by McAuley's Maker Press in 1979.

Much of the literary activity in Montreal during the 1970's has centered around the Vehicule poets. Their activities have included running the reading series at the Vehicule Gallery, editing poetry books for Vehicule Press, putting poetry on Montreal buses, putting poetry and other art forms on cable television, doing extensive mixed media performances and collaborations with each other and with artists in other disciplines, as well as running a handful of little magazines. A sense of group cohesion has been evident throughout these projects. In the 1970's the groups has published thirty-three volumes of poetry, so that taking these publications along with their other activities, we can see a formidable movement underway.

What is perhaps the most interesting fact about the Vehicule poets is that they seem to embody a consolidation of Modernism; instead of holding to a single orientation, their work embodies a number of different aspects of twentieth century Modernism. Their work runs the gamut from traditional poetry to concrete, or sound, or the use of collage techniques, as well as mixed media performance; there are even attempts to pioneer new media for poetry (as in Konyves' creation of

videopoems). Imagism, Surrealism, Futurism, Dadaism, Absurdism, and the international concrete movement all are evident influences, as are also the Black Mountain and the New York school. It can be argued that these poets began writing at a time when all aspects of Modernism were available to those curious in the phenomenon, and they have selectively chosen from the bounteous storehouse of possibilities to make their varied poetry.

In talking about these seven poets it is easy to generalize and to see them as a homogeneous group; actually each poet has his or her own individuality and characteristic orientation, in fact the diversity of these poets is unusual. Perhaps the most conservative, though not the most traditional of the group, is Artie Gold. He writes a very modern poem using an imagistic collage technique; his work is the most textually-oriented as regards the print medium. Ken Norris' poems show an even more traditional orientation when working in the print medium, but he also has taken part in poetry performances, sound poetry, videopoems, and visual poetry. Stephen Morrissey can, on the one hand, writes poems in a very pristine imagistic style and, on the other, create wild sound poems and poetry happenings with Cold Mountain Review (Morrissey and his wife Pat Walsh). In Claudia Lapp's poetry we find an almost ballad-like orientation to the poem, but again, she does much work with dream journals and sound texts. Andre Farkas' work encompasses traditional, concrete, and sound poetry as well as performances of poetry and dance and the occasional foray into video. John McAuley, fairly bound to the print medium, alternates between the publication of books of visual poetry with more recognizable poetry texts. Tom Konyves' work is clearly the most experimental of the group. His poetry has a strong surrealist/dadaist/pataphysical coloration, and his recent energies have been devoted to mixed media, poetry performances, and the creation of videopoems. In Montreal, with its long-standing tradition of social realism and the poetry of personality, this represents a

radical poetic shift. The coupling of community and a Post-Modernist orientation goes against the grain of the individualistic, modern poetry that has prevailed in Montreal since the early days of Layton. So perhaps the work of these poets represents a new stage in Modernist evolution: an attempt at reintegration.

While tending to dominate the sphere of poetry as public activity, the Vehicule poets have also produced a number of little magazines in Montreal during the 1970's. The aesthetic orientations of this group can be glimpsed within the context of the magazines they have edited and published.

The earliest of the magazines edited by one of the Vehicule poets is Stephen Morrissey's concrete newsletter what is (1973-1975). Over a period of two years Morrissey cranked out fourteen issues in a xeroxed format and distributed it to a select mailing list of about sixty interested readers. In running the magazine Morrissey had several motivations. First, at the time there was no outlet in Montreal for really experimental work, so Morrissey felt the need for a magazine of this kind. Montrealers Artie Gold, Richard Sommer, John McAuley, and Andre Farkas all appeared in the pages of what is. For Morrissey, as for Souster earlier, it was also important to establish contacts with other writers who were interested in experimentation, who lived in other parts of Canada and in the United States. This communication was accomplished through the mailing list and also through publishing experimental work from other places in North America. The magazine had a visual bias, but more textually experimental work sometimes appeared. Writers such as bp Nichol, Gerry, Gilbert, Richard Kostelanatz and Edwin Varney were all contributors. In several years time there would be a few more places for this type of work in Montreal, but in 1973 what is served as a solitary outpost for the more avant garde writing being done in Montreal.

When Ken Norris moved back to Montreal from New York in January of 1975 he brought with him the magazine Cross-Country which had just started publication. Subtitled "a

magazine of Canadian-U.S. poetry," CrossCountry took a decidedly anti-nationalist stand, as we see in the magazine's initial editorial:

In recent years poetry has evolved along national lines - this has led to a renaissance in North American poetry and the recognition of an individual poetic heritage in Canada. For the most part, this new Canadian-U.S. poetry has attracted only native readers. We feel it is time for a crossing of the borders. For too long schools of poetry have emphasized national differences and played down the similarities of our North American experience. With CROSS COUNTRY we hope to provide a forum for the cross-germination needed to stimulate this continent's poetic explorations and to bring them a common audience.<sup>56</sup>

We see then in the editors of CrossCountry (Robert Galvin, Jim Mele, and Ken Norris) the desire for a magazine somewhat similar to what Souster had been striving for with Contact and Combustion and Morrissey had just demonstrated in what is: a magazine devoted to all the interesting developments in poetry in North America. The magazine would also try to overcome the kind of reader prejudice which confined Canadian poetry to a purely Canadian audience.

In that it has tended to take a continental stance, CrossCountry has been of limited importance to the new generation of Montreal poets, even to the Vehicule poets. Although the editors devoted a special double issue (#3/4) to Montreal poetry in both English and French, it has given fairly limited space to local work. When it has given exposure to the Montreal poets it has placed them within a larger continental context. Special issues of the magazine devoted to the detective genre, or to postcard poetry, have tended to emphasize the pop elements present in much experimental writing. Although it started off rather conservatively, CrossCountry has in the last few years become a more avant garde periodical, reflecting the changed and changing poetic politics of its editors. On the whole, however, in the scope of work in the fourteen issues

over the last five years, the magazine can be described as experimental and eclectic.

A magazine that has served as the unofficial house organ of the Vehicule poets is the little mimeographed magazine Mouse Eggs. Published in a first run of thirteen issues from September 1975 to June 1977, and beginning a second series in the Fall of 1979, Mouse Eggs has been a center of in-group activity. Acknowledging a lack of readership, it is usually printed in lots of fifty copies which are circulated among the poets' friends. The magazine has no regular editor; it restricts itself to a list of contributors which hardly ranges beyond the Vehicule poets. In spirit it is a kind of kissing cousin to Intercourse, in that it doesn't take itself too seriously and violates most of the worthwhile functions of a little magazine, never taking the time to present polemical editorials or to take up serious positions. A close look at Mouse Eggs, while not providing much grist for critical discussion, reveals, however, a friendly group of poets trying out their work on one another. The magazine abounds in satire, parody, poetic asides, the granting of false awards, criticism of poetic white elephants and the latest poetic experiments. Because of its frequency of appearance during its first run it provided its contributors with a place to air new writing that was scarcely days old. The material in these issues ranges from the terrific to the terrible, experiments that explode and experiments that fizzle. As in Fraser's Intercourse, the emphasis seems to be on fun, with the added benefit of entire issues devoted to such holidays as Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter. Although it is exclusive and almost private, Mouse Eggs, in its fourth issue, was thrown open to all poets who had participated in the second annual Spring Poetry Marathon at the Vehicule Gallery, and so it took on a larger function for that one number. Throughout the magazine's existence, Andre Farkas has usually taken care of the production work, with some assistance from other Vehicule poets.

John McAuley's Maker, like Morrissey's what is, was a magazine dedicated to concrete and experimental work. It was published from 1976-1978, and only three issues appeared. Although the first issue features Montrealers exclusively (Artie Gold, Ken Norris, Stephen Morrissey, Andre Parkas, Richard Sommer, and McAuley himself), McAuley quickly adapted to include a wider diversity of work. Subtitled "a poetics newsletter (linear & concrete)," Maker, in its short run, presented work by Gerry Gilbert, Opal L. Nations, John Furnival, Richard Kostelanatz, Steven Smith, Penny Kemp and Richard Truhlar. Printed in a quarto format it was sent out to a select mailing list of 400 working artists and writers in twenty-two countries. The immediacy of the magazine and the casualness of its format were intended to present work included as "news" rather than as aesthetically perfected works of art (Cf. Pound's definition of poetry: "News that stays news"). The emphasis in Maker was upon process rather than product. With the termination of the magazine, McAuley has undertaken Maker Press, a small book press, showing once again that the little magazine is often the stepping stone to the small press.

Hh, edited by Tom Konyves, has been "published minimally", as the cover to the second issue allows. Two issues of the magazine have appeared, one in 1976, the other in 1977. Unlike Maker and CrossCountry, Hh has not attempted to exercise an international or continental voice but has concentrated on the surrealist and dadaistic side of recent Montreal poetry. We can see this orientation expressed by the editor's note in the second issue:

This is a Montreal (ltd.) magazine. We prefer the minimal. Two popular misconceptions: Hh is a formula. Poetry is of the spirit. The poem should have the function and appearance of a bicycle. We publish only what we see. The muse visits us on occasion, throws a couple of muse eggs, chats.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to pieces by Montreal poets Artie Gold, Andre Parkas and Steven Sky, Hh has featured works of collage (done



by Konyves) and has encouraged collaboration. Among the pieces included in the second issue was "Drummer Boy Raga: Red Light, Green Light," an absurdist text written by Stephen Morrissey, Andre Farkas, Ken Norris, Opal L. Nations, John McAuley, and Tom Konyves, which took its cue from the tradition of simultaneous poems begun by Tristan Tzara and his cohorts at the Cabaret Voltaire. What is evident in Hh is Konyves' total rejection of the conservative, genteel Canadian poetic tradition.

If Mouse Eggs has contained the Vehicule poets' ongoing experiments in poetic form, it is the more recent Montreal Journal Of Poetics that contains their poetic theorizing. Edited by Stephen Morrissey, the journal has been appearing since the winter of 1978, twice a year. Its title is somewhat deceptive, in that the magazine, much less impressive than a journal, consists of a number of xerox sheets stapled together in the upper left hand corner. This is distributed to a mailing list of about one hundred readers. Considering the magazine's policy in the first issue, Morrissey editorializes:

It has become fairly easy to get poems published in little magazines, but good criticism of younger poets is still not available. It is now essential that we, as poets, observe seriously what other poets are doing and evaluate it in the light of our own understanding of the creative process. We need intelligent non-academic criticism, the free discussion of poetics and reviews of books and readings. This magazine offers a forum where this discussion may occur.<sup>58</sup>

In effect, the magazine is an outlet of the Vehicule poets. It serves as a newsletter for their theorizing, literary feuds, and occasional reviewing.

The contents of the Montreal Journal Of Poetics point out more clearly than any of the other publications the concerns of these writers and the areas in which they are interested in working. In the first issue we find an article on visual poetry by McAuley, "The Purpose Of Experimental Poetry" by Morrissey, reviews of books by Richard Sommer and Tom Konyves by Ken Norris, Farkas' "Confessions of a Collaborator,"

and the essay "Videopoetry" by Konyves. These concerns are diverse but they are all experimentally oriented. Morrissey's essay is of particular interest because it reflects a somewhat tempered orientation towards experimentation in poetry, seeing its inherent values but also its limitations:

For anyone exposed to a lot of experimental poetry the question of its purpose and value is raised. It seems to me that the central reason for experimenting in poetry is that the forms one inherits have become obsolete: poets must discover and write in a form that corresponds to their time, times changes and the vehicle for communicating that change is something alive, organic, and writers must be aware of this in their work. The second major reason is that experimental poetry is a form of lateral thinking, a way of getting "un-blockt", a way of approaching poetry so that the poem needn't conform to preconceived ideas of how it should look and sound, but of allowing the poem to find its own form, its own way of being expressed.

What has happened is that the experiment has become an end in itself, so that we have a whole group of poets who can be categorized as "experimental". Perhaps their idea is that by "experimenting" they think they're being "experimental", unfortunately a new form doesn't necessarily provide a new content; in effect, the "experimental poet" often has nothing to say but is merely playing with form, and that "playing with form" soon becomes redundant.<sup>59</sup>

Morrissey, then, is not interested in experimentation as a formal way of proceeding, or a sub-genre of poetry, but as a method of finding adequate forms of expression to suit the times that release new contents.

In Konyves' "Videopoetry" we see the active search for a new form for poetry; for Konyves this has become the form of the videopoem, about which he observes "I have come to gradually surrender my poetic powers to a medium which devours words like fire devour paper."<sup>60</sup> For Konyves, the desire to explore a new form came out of a feeling that the printed word is becoming, if not obsolete, then not true to the potential of language:

The printed word was looking more and more like a secret message sent from room to room, from the poet's den to the reader's bedchamber. In other words, a certain immediacy was lacking. Readings attempt to restore a missing link - the voice - which audio and video recordings wish to create a new immediacy, albeit an artificial one.<sup>61</sup>

Konyves contends that "the state of the art is in crisis,"<sup>62</sup> partially because he believes that the print media, outside of the small presses and little magazines, have rejected poetry; therefore it is necessary for the poet to begin to work with new technologies that are available to him; for Konyves the choice has been to make poems out of videotape:

Writing for video should be easy enough, It is more malleable than print or audio-tape. A good poem on tape will use all technology has to offer, repetition, dubbing, music mix, unexpected periods of silence, untranslatable sounds. "Special effects" will be the vocabulary of this new poem.<sup>63</sup>

Konyves believes that the medium of videotape allows for the creation of a "poetry theatre"<sup>64</sup> which has at its disposal numerous technical theatrics:

Whereas I consider a line the unit of poem-making, like bricklaying, in video we substitute visual lines for printed lines and proceed to "layer" a poem: spoken words (the poet-performer); words heard (taped, dubbed); and seen (signs, subtitles, printed, painted). Naturally, a poem written with these three forms of word-smithing is never 'itself' until it is meshed with visual imagery (close-ups, cuts, dissolves, pans). If the end-product demonstrates a "judicious" mix of the two (even an interesting interplay) the poem will have a texture we will all admire. . . A poetry theatre attempts to take a stance somewhere between the documentation of a poem and creating a poem of dialogue, music and visual effects. The poetry, the words, should be the real motion of the piece. The other media will support and collaborate to this end. When language is "raised to poetry" other media ultimately give way to this language.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly enough, in Konyves' five completed videopoems to date, we alternately find the theatrical elements or the poetic elements dominating, but on the whole he has succeeded in judiciously mixing elements of performance, video art and poetry into a form that can only be recognized as "videopoetry".

If there is any specific feature that defines the Vehicule poets as a cohesive group it has been their ability to produce collaborative works; Norris and Konyves have worked together on a book of aphorisms (Proverbs) and a videopoem (See/Saw); various groupings of the Vehicule poets have taken part in poetry performances and sound recordings, or they have assisted in the presentation of one another's work; Farkas has directed a videotape presentation of some of Norris' poems, and has assisted Konyves with off-camera as well as on-camera work in his videopoems. Farkas' "Confessions of a Collaborator" is an ongoing chronicle (a new segment appears in each issue of the Journal) which testifies to the collaborative, communal spirit of much of the Vehicule poets' work.

In the second issue of the Journal (Spring-Summer 1979) we see a widening of considerations. Konyves continues his commentary on the videopoem, Louis Dudek contributes "A Brief Note On Writing Poetry," Morrissey considers the role of "cosmic consciousness" in poetry as well as some of Richard Sommer's work, and Artie Gold reviews a book by Fraser Sutherland. In two separate pieces Norris successively defends a "native" as opposed to "cosmopolitan" orientation in Canadian poetry ("The New World") and defends certain experimental writers against Morrissey's attack in the first issue ("A Short Defense Of Research Writing").

The third issue of the Journal is dedicated exclusively to the Vehicule poets, each of them contributing at least one piece indicative of their present poetic concerns. Claudia Lapp's "Some Aspects of Dream & Poetry" traces her own involvement with the keeping of dream journals and her use of dreams as material for poems. Artie Gold's contribution

graybeards of Canadian literature but rather writers actively engaged in developing their own stances and voices in writing. The work in Versus, eclectically selected, has reflected a somewhat solemn concern for craft.

The last magazine we might mention here is the Montreal Writers' Forum, appearing monthly since October of 1978. Edited by Ross Leckie, it attempts to present current work by members of the Montreal community as well as occasional reviews of Montreal books. It is varied in its policies, publishing poetry and fiction written in various forms.

An important point to make about Montreal literary life in the late 1970's is that a large amount of energy has gone into the running of the literary presses. In the late seventies, magazines in Montreal and in the rest of Canada, though fairly prolific, have tended to lack the fire of their predecessors. In Montreal we can see the reason for this in the sense that a minimal need must be filled by starting regionally-based small presses. Vehicule Press, New Delta, Villeneuve Publishing, Maker Press, Asylum Publishing, CrossCountry Press, and Torchy Wharf have all attempted to provide poets with the minimal requirement--an indigenous publishing scene. The fact that an average of ten books per year have been published by these presses since 1976 testifies to their ongoing devotion to local writing as a principle. The literary community that enters the 1980's is very different from the one that appeared in the 1960's; it is highly diversified, and in many respects more poetically mature.

is a series of mini-reviews of avant garde poetry books. In "Norris & Cohen: The Limits of Self-Consciousness," Morrissey reviews Norris' The Book Of Fall and Leonard Cohen's Death Of A Lady's Man and uses them as a jumping off point for a discussion of the role of poet as subject in contemporary poetry and the limitations that self-consciousness in poetry imposes. "Poetry and the Fine Art of Deception" is a dialogue between John McAuley and Ken Norris in which they discuss the use of deception and so-called lying in poetry. Konyves' "Poetika" is an obscure discussion of poetic craft and craftiness. In his critical piece "Some Notes Towards A Definition of Phoney Formalism," Norris discusses what he sees as the false formalism dominant in Canadian writing; he sees this poetry as having "no process of poetic condensation at work, but rather only an academic inclination towards appearances."<sup>66</sup>

We see, then, in the Vehicule poets, a desire to explore new forms in order to release new contents. Although accused by many of their Montreal contemporaries of writing a poetry of pure content, they actually represent a new aesthetically-oriented theory of form. Also, their work seems to indicate a desire for a more complete and organic sense of poetry's possibilities and potentiality as voice. In coming to understand the compass of their work it may be worth considering Konyves' observation that "there is a little bit of poetry in everything but by no means is there a little bit of everything in poetry."<sup>67</sup>

During the middle and late 1970's there have been other little magazines active in Montreal, ranging from the highly conceptual to the highly eclectic. Davinci was started in 1973 by Allan Bealy, put out one issue a year, and completed a run of six issues in 1979. Because Bealy is a conceptual artist rather than a poet, each issue of Davinci has tended to work as an artistic piece rather than as a run of the mill literary magazine. Published by Vehicule Press, the magazine has had some relation to the Vehicule poets, publishing their work, and having Farkas and Gold guest edit the poetry selection in issue #4. The magazine has drawn its

contributors from throughout the United States and Canada.

Much more community-oriented has been Keitha MacIntosh's Montreal Poems. This magazine is essentially eclectic and publishes a broad spectrum of Montreal writing. The magazine's fourth issue was a special women's edition which included work by Mona Adilman, Ruth Chad, Frances Davis, Patricia Ewing, Gertrude Katz, Claudia Dapp, Carol Leckner, Gail McKay, Mary Melfi, Rena Okada, Carole Ten Brink and Paddy Webb, together with other women currently writing in Montreal.

More peripheral have been The Alchemist, Process, Los, and Atropos. Edited by Marco Fraticelli, The Alchemist has appeared irregularly and tended to publish poetry dealing with the possibilities of myth. Process, Los, and Atropos have come out of the Montreal English universities, Sir George Williams, Loyola, and McGill. The first two have featured student writers, although occasionally they have published local work from outside the university. In contrast, Atropos has aspired to a certain prestigiousness; casting a wide net it has published poetry by Robert Creeley, George Woodcock, Anne Waldman, Terry Stokes, Jack Hannan, Denise Levertov, Robert Kelly, Andrei Codrescu, Michael Carlson, Mary Melfi, Clayton Eshleman, Robert Allen, Tom Veitch, Diane Wakoski, James Broughton, Michael Davidson, and Al Moritz. Its orientation is neither Canadian nor local. It is edited by James D. Campbell and Zsolt S. Alapi.

A magazine more committed to Montreal writing has been Versus, edited by Fred Louder and Robyn Sarah from the summer of 1976 to the winter of 1978 for a total of four issues. Despite its seemingly aggressive title, Versus did not oppose the policies of other magazines or any aspects of the current literary scene. It drew upon young writers primarily from Montreal and Toronto. Poets such as Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Albert Frank Moritz, August Kleinzahler, David Solway, Ted Plantos, Greg Gatenby, Peter Van Toorn, Artie Gold, Laurence Hutchman, Raymond Filip, Mary Melfi, David Solway, and Fraser Sutherland all appeared in its pages. These poets are not

## CHAPTER NINE FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Al Purdy, "The Ego Has It Both Ways: Poets In Montreal," Northern Journey, nos. 7 & 8 (1976), p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>Moment, no. 1 (1960), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Moment, no. 4, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Moment, no. 4, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Moment, no. 6, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Moment, no. 6, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>19</sup>Moment, no. 7, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Al Purdy, "The Ego Has It Both Ways: Poets In Montreal," p. 140.

<sup>23</sup>Cataract, no. 2, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Cataract, no. 2, p. 16.



25 Louis Dudek, "Patterns of Recent Canadian Poetry," Selected Essays and Criticism (Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1978) p. 109. This essay originally appeared in Culture, no. 19 (1958).

26 "An Open Letter To Louis Dudek," Cataract, no. 2, p. 23.

27 Ibid., p. 25.

28 Ibid., p. 25.

29 Ibid., p. 25.

30 Ibid., p. 26.

31 Ibid., p. 26.

32 Ibid., p. 26.

33 Cataract, no. 3, p. 41.

34 Cataract, no. 2, p. 1.

35 Cataract, no. 3, p. 42.

36 Ibid., p. 42.

37 Ibid., p. 42.

38 Ibid., p. 42.

39 Cataract, no. 3, p. 44.

40 Ibid., p. 44.

41 Catapult, 1, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1964), p. 1.

42 Intercourse, no. 1 (Spring 1966), p. 1.

43 Intercourse, no. 1 (Spring 1966), p. 2.

44 Intercourse, no. 2 (Early Spring 1966), pp. 1-2.

45 Intercourse, no. 8 (August 1968), p. 1.

46 Tide, 1, no. 1 (October 1968), p. 1.

47 Jaw Breaker, no. 1 (June 1971), p. 1.

48 Ingluvin, no. 1 (1970), p. 1.

49 Moongoose, no. 4 (November 1972), unnumbered editorial page.

- 50 Booster & Blaster, 1, no. 1 (January-February 1972), p. 1.
- 51 Booster & Blaster, 1, no. 2 (December 1972), p. 1.
- 52 Booster & Blaster, 1, no. 2 (December 1972), pp. 1-2.
- 53 Booster & Blaster, 1, no. 2 (December 1972), p. 1.
- 54 Booster & Blaster, 1, no. 2 (December 1972), inside front cover.
- 55 Anthol, no. 2 (Winter 1972-1973), p. 1.
- 56 CrossCountry, no. 1 (Winter 1975), p. 2.
- 57 Hh, no. 2 (1977), inside front cover.
- 58 Montreal Journal of Poetics, no. 1 (Winter 1978-1979), p. 1.
- 59 Stephen Morrissey, "The Purpose of Experimental Poetry," Montreal Journal of Poetics, no. 1 (Winter 1978-1979), p. 5.
- 60 Tom Konyves, "Videopoetry," Montreal Journal of Poetics, no. 1 (Winter 1978-1979), p. 12.
- 61 Ibid., p. 13.
- 62 Ibid., p. 14.
- 63 Ibid., p. 14.
- 64 Ibid., p. 15.
- 65 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
- 66 Ken Norris, "Some Notes Towards A Definition of Phoney Formalism," Montreal Journal of Poetics, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 1980), p. 5.
- 67 Tom Konyves, "Videopoetry," Montreal Journal of Poetics, no. 1, p. 14.

## CHAPTER TEN

## THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CANADIAN LITTLE MAGAZINE

The literary atmosphere of the 1970's and early 1980's has been vastly different from the one that existed from 1925 to 1965 in Canada. Looking out over the country from the office windows of any leading Toronto publisher we might conclude that at long last we have a modern Canadian Literature: writers are writing it, the public is buying it, the Canada Council is funding it, Canadian periodicals are reviewing it: things have never been better. In the sense that none of this existed twenty years before, things have never been better. Yet there are many who would argue that the complacency that has set in among the established Canadian publishers and editors is as pernicious as the views of literature embraced by the Canadian Authors' Association in the early 1920's, which Scott and Smith made the target for their ire in their early magazine efforts. With the presence of a new Canadian Literary Establishment we find the spirit of the little magazine still at work as agitator and as an alternative. Yet it can be argued that this spirit has been somewhat transformed over the last fifteen years.

Quite simply put, from the 1920's until the 1960's the battleground for Modernism in Canada was the periodical. An indigenous Canadian publishing industry just did not exist, so that the magazine was where poetry happened. For the poets of the McGill group, book publication came much later in life than for most poets. Only Leo Kennedy published an individual volume of poetry in the 1930's: The Shrouding (1933). Scott, Smith, and Klein all saw their first appearance in book form in the anthology New Provinces (1936) in which they appeared with Kennedy, E.J. Pratt, and Robert Finch. Klein's first individual book appeared in 1940 (Hath Not A Jew), Smith's News of the Phoenix in 1943, Scott's Overture in 1945. Klein was thirty-one when his first book was published, Smith was

forty-one, and Scott was forty-six. Klein had been published by Behrman House, Inc., in New York, which specialized in books by Jewish authors, the others had been published by Ryerson Press. New Provinces was published by MacMillan and the contributors themselves put up two hundred dollars toward the publication of the book.

In subsequent generations we find the poets more willing to take the publishing of their books into their own hands, and so we see First Statement Press emanating out of First Statement, the magazine, Contact Press from Contact magazine, Delta Canada from Delta, the short-lived Tishbooks from Tish, Talonbooks from Talon, and Blew Ointment Press from Blew Ointment. These later generations realized that they could publish their own books as well as periodicals.

What we have seen since the mid-1960's is the rise of the literary press. There can be no denying that the little magazine has greatly proliferated during this period as well, yet often it seems that the more dynamic energy during this time has gone into book rather than periodical publishing. What the McGill group took part in was the standard method of arriving as authors. Given that there were no magazines sympathetic to the work they were writing, they began their own periodicals and began giving their work an airing within those pages. They then waited for an established publisher to recognize their growing literary reputations; in the case of F.R. Scott the wait was almost twenty years. It is really with Contact Press and its editors Layton, Souster, and Dudek that we see a group of poets beginning to short-circuit that method of arriving as a poet. Rather than wait for their work to be recognized, first by more established literary magazines and then by literary presses, they undertook the job of getting their own work and that of others before the public. It is this spirit that fuels the current crop of literary presses. A separate study of these presses and their interface with the little magazine is both necessary and desirable. It is my intention here only to point out how the energy that went

into the little magazine has, in part, been siphoned off as it were, into the phenomenon of the literary press.

Given the strong central pull of the Toronto publishing industry and the awakening of local pockets of literary activity in need of a forum, what we have witnessed during the 1970's has been the rise of a number of grass-roots regional presses. These include houses such as Breakwater Books, Turnstone Press, Blackfish Press, Vehicule Press, Oolichan Books, Repository Press, Sesame Press, Hanaco Press, Caledonia Writing Series, Harbour Publishing, New Delta, Thistledown Press, Pulp Press, Intermedia Press, Black Moss Press, Aya Press, Maker Press and others. These small presses attempt to support local communities of literary activity and continuing literary experimentation, the former--local effort--being something the commercial presses have no cognizance of, and the latter--experimentation--something the commercial house tends to steer clear of because of its questionable marketability. One can argue that, in an earlier time, the publishers of these presses would, rather, have been editing magazines dedicated to the presentation of the work of new authors, then waited for book publication elsewhere.

Despite the rise of the literary presses the little magazine goes on. There are a number of magazines currently being produced in Canada that are rooted in specific regions. Often they object to being considered "regional", and are quick to make the point that they cast a wide net, take in work from other parts of the country, etc.; in other words, they contend that they are, in fact, national. This defense seems to be prompted by the notion that to be regional is to be parochial. The fact remains that if these magazines did not exist and did not express a regional concern there would be no possible outlet for the local writer, and he would then have to begin the long arduous process of sending his work to publications in other parts of the country who might not be sensitive to his particular concerns. The regional publication enables a writer to be himself, whoever he is, wherever he is, without having to worry about fitting the mold of someone else's

standards.

Northern Light is edited by George Amabile and is published twice-yearly by the University of Manitoba. Although the magazine is strongly rooted in Manitoba it is open to submissions from anywhere in Canada; it is, however, not a totally eclectic magazine. In an early editorial, Amabile dismissed two schools of writing which he designated as the Black Mountaineers and the neo-Surrealists. In a long editorial in the third issue he responded further to the issue in regard to these two approaches:

My impatience was inspired not by a distaste for experiment, but, on the contrary, by a severe case of boredom with the way these established and old-fashioned theories of verse have been compulsively paraded as "avant garde" when they are, in fact, the result of sheer poetic fragmentation and inertia. They are not new. They are old. And they are trivial points of departure because they are based on theories of poetry which specialize in one aspect of the verbal arts to the exclusion of all others. They are therefore inadequate, technological cul de sacs, and it is annoying to see how the genuine discoveries and contributions which Charles Olson and Andre Breton made so long ago to the art of poetry have hardened into something like political and religious doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

After refuting these two approaches to writing poetry, Amabile puts forward his own view of what should be going on in poetry now:

The answer is quite simple. There are dozens of young (and not so young) poets in this country who have managed to stay clear of the stultifying and narrow-minded doctrines of the various poetic "schools", and the work they are doing is genuinely new because it is the expression of an individual aesthetic created out of the many poetic techniques available to us now in response to the wide spectrum of contemporary experience. . . . What's new in Canadian poetry, and in poetry in English generally, is this new confluence of older experimental gains into the work of individual poets.<sup>2</sup>

Amabile sees the synthesis of "experimental gains" as the avenue of approach to writing contemporary poetry; the poet should have an awareness of the innovations that have been made in the craft and blend his awareness of language's possibilities with his own individual experience. This is not a new insight but it does hold down a middle ground between the Canadian avant garde and the traditionalists.

A noteworthy magazine from Saskatchewan is Salt, in many ways the epitome of the regional magazine that strives to get things done. Over the course of eight years, Robert Currie edited and gestetnered sixteen issue of Salt, subtitled "A little magazine of Contemporary Writing." In its ninth year Salt began to be edited by Barbara Sapergia and Geoffrey Ursell and finally broke into a printed format. All of the issues contain a significant block of work by a featured writer who either currently lives or was brought up on the Prairies. Along with a selection of poems, each featured poet contributes a piece called "beginnings" in which he searches out the origins of his creative impulse and writes a bit of autobiography showing what it meant to grow up on the prairies. This is an engaging and interesting approach to writing and goes a long way to validating the persistent aesthetic concern with roots and rootedness. Salt also attempts to present reviews of significant books published in and around Saskatchewan. All in all, this is an admirable little magazine which could serve as a model for what can be done by a regional publication.

We note that even in these regional publications there is a strong spirit of eclecticism. Indeed, most of the little magazines currently appearing in Canada are eclectic in nature; this is, in part, indicative of the state of poetry in the 1970's. The vast experimentation that was pioneered in the 1960's by the poets who came to be viewed as part of "New Wave Canada" is now the established norm; what was vital and new then has become simply a new set of literary conventions. Many of the poets who have emerged in the seventies are more articulate than their predecessors, but they seem, on the

whole, to have little new to present.

Many of today's eclectic magazines are housed in Canadian universities; as a result they tend to be caught up in the trappings of academia. The university provides the magazines with credibility, an office, and funds. What tends to result is a magazine that does not pioneer new territories in writing but echoes and embodies the accepted norms of the day. For the most part magazines coming out of the universities provide limited interest; they primarily serve as a place of publication for their editorial boards as well as for a few well-known Canadian authors. They are not involved with the true revolutionary spirit of the fighting little magazine. There are a few of these magazines, however, that by virtue of strong editing are noteworthy in one way or another.

Waves is a tri-annual literary magazine that is issued from York University in Toronto. It follows a general policy of eclecticism, intending to publish "good" writing of whatever kind; the writing that appears, in fact, is occasionally uneven, but it does reflect a strong concern with craft. This results in writing that is usually "overcooked", adhering to the view of the writer as "maker" rather than as "medium", as manipulator of the language rather than as its custodian. What is interesting about Waves is the panorama of young writers that it presents; many of the pieces that appear within its pages are first publications or early strivings of poets who publish a first or second book a short time later.

Matrix is published twice yearly by the English department of Champlain College in Lennoxville, Quebec. Currently run by an editorial board of three people (of these Phil Lanthier is the only one to be with the magazine since its inception in the spring of 1975), it too strives to publish "good" writing while presenting no defined or preferred aesthetic. But Matrix has recently begun to evolve into a more engaged literary review, leaving behind the old formula of publishing miscellaneous stories and poems of a conventional sort. Many of Matrix's pages are now filled with book reviews, often



written by the editors, giving voice to the editors' personal sense of aesthetics. In short, Matrix is on the way to becoming a magazine that has something to say, rather than being just one more university periodical.

Perhaps the finest, at any rate certainly the most elegant periodical coming out of a college community is The Capilano Review. It is published twice a year by Capilano College in North Vancouver. This publication is in no real sense a "little" magazine; it is expensively printed, impeccably designed, and has a surface slickness which outshines practically every other university publication. Clearly, it is no impoverished little magazine struggling to get by; and yet what impresses one about The Capilano Review, beyond the quality of their production, is the magazine's very real engagement with the arts as they exist in and around Vancouver. Although it prints work by writers from other parts of Canada and from the United States, this work is usually presented in relation to the west coast sensibility that the magazine exemplifies. The Capilano Review also does not limit itself to the written arts but incorporates the visual arts as well.

The most ambitious undertaking in the form of an eclectic magazine in the 1970's has been CVII ("Contemporary Verse II") published out of Winnipeg. In the opening editorial Dorothy Livesay presented the raison d'etre of CVII:

We have our poetry, pushing up from every crack and cranny. What we now lack is sufficient outlets for serious criticism of it. You can only criticize such wide, large, and various production, we think, by taking samples; and CV/II proposes to do this.

CVII is an abbreviation for Contemporary Verse II. As we remember, Contemporary Verse was a magazine that Livesay was closely associated with. Just as Contemporary Verse in its time provided an eclectic forum for poetry, so now CVII attempts to provide an eclectic forum for poetry criticism. The fact that CVII is a national review of poetry makes its position all the more important. To date the magazine has

printed general samplings of the poetry from every part of the country, particularly poetry by younger poets, and in addition a large body of criticism in the form of reviews. It has been somewhat slow, however, in fulfilling the terms of its first editorial. Part of the job of applying serious criticism to contemporary poetry is to begin the process of separating the wheat from the chaff. In CVII this kind of work has not been helped by the magazine's policy of publishing far too much poetry that is seriously flawed or simply not good enough; when one comes to look at the reviews it can also be said that they fall short of evaluating contemporary poetry with a carefully discerning eye. About four fifths of the reviews are highly favorable, indicating a somewhat too-zealous boosterism underlying much of the criticism. If serious criticism is going to be applied to Canadian poetry, we must expect to find more books receiving a bad press. The problem here, of course, is that there is an immense variety in the poetry written today; there are no clear standards that everyone can agree upon by which new work can be judged. This often leads to a wide range of different kinds of writing, all of it receiving favorable criticism, but for different reasons. We cannot say that CVII has been very successful in making some discrimination and defining a new order. The magazine's value remains in the promise of what it originally set out to do, not in what it has succeeded in doing so far:

As opposed to the vast proliferation of eclectic magazines, those publications representative of a specific group of poets and a strong purpose are few and far between. Again, this might be accounted for by the rise in literary press activity, with many local pockets of poets involving themselves in book production. It is difficult to locate magazines that reflect a shared aesthetic. One magazine that does is Kontakte, edited by Richard Truhlar and John Riddell; it gives expression to the continuity of experimentation in concrete and sound poetry in and around Toronto. Particular attention is paid to work by Owen Sound, a sound poetry collective,

of which the editors are members. Kontakte has also published a special Hugo Ball issue which includes an intelligent introduction by Riddell, giving the historical background of Ball and his milieu, quoting some of Ball's important statements in his published diary Flight Out Of Time, and explaining Ball's continued relevance to poets working with sound today. The issue also includes three of Ball's original sound poems, three translations of his more surrealist work, as well as tributes by poets such as Steve McCaffery, bp Nichol, and Owen Sound. In printing Ball's original work, Kontakte brings to light some examples of writing that belong to what bp Nichol has referred to as the "suppressed tradition." These are documents of the work of the twentieth century's first self-proclaimed sound poet. Ball's work serves as an essential focus and influence for the work of Owen Sound and also of Nichol.

Following somewhat in the Tish tradition, we have the west coast poetry newsletter NMFG. It is edited by Gordon Lockhead (alias Brian Fawcett) in Vancouver. NMFG is a newsletter which reflects the poetic politics of an individual editor rather than a group. In its first issue Fawcett announced NMFG as "a newsletter of poetry published without much pretence for the information of writers, painters, musicians & kindred. It has the political and cosmical purpose of making the west coast & specifically Vancouver a better place to work & live."<sup>4</sup> After eighteen issues, produced on a fairly regular monthly basis, NMFG's intention was slightly emended: "Its energies derive from the idealism that poetic thought should be as clear about its origins & purpose as that of the nearest logician, & from an interest in sorting out the difficulty writers have making clear why they're doing what they're doing."<sup>5</sup> Like Tish, NMFG is sent out to a select mailing list and supports itself through contributions from its readers (NMFG stands for "No Money From the Government"). NMFG is, however, very much its own kind of thing. It draws upon the writing of the B.C. community in a much more exten-

sive way than Tish, with its tight circle of editors, ever did. The most notable difference between the two, however, is concern with the relationship between poetry and politics. NMFG is a good deal less aesthetically-minded than Tish ever was, and it continually addresses itself to the role of poetry in relation to society. Interesting items in recent issues have been such things as Fawcett's review of Robin Mathew's latest book, an exchange of letters between Mathews and Fawcett, and an issue devoted to a discussion of Tom Wayman's concept of "New Realism," including a reprint of Wayman's article "The Limits of Realism" which originally appeared in This Magazine. We see in NMFG an attempt at working out a new, fully realized aesthetic that takes into account the political realities of everyday life. Although it started off rather unenergetically, the magazine has developed considerably, trying to find the answer to the riddle "What happens when you cross Tish's Black Mountain influenced poetry of locale with Robin Mathews' politics of nationalism?" Though difficult to label, the attendant results have been highly stimulating.

The final magazine for consideration is The Front, edited by Jim Smith in Kingston, Ontario. Produced in an unpretentious gestetnered and stapled format, this magazine provides the reader with what Smith views as some of the more significant work being produced by the literary avant garde. It reflects its editor's particular preferences, but at the same time, it keeps alive the creative aura of the understaffed highly principled little magazine. In a recent editorial Smith has announced his intention to begin reviewing books in future issues, but they are to be only books published by four of Canada's most avant garde literary presses. He explains this decision as follows:

. . . these four poles encompass almost the entirety of the adventurous, exciting, & worthwhile small press publishing being done in Canada today. I attempt to read most literary magazines that come out these days & I have been continually disappointed by the lack of

attention shown to the above-mentioned presses, while observing a virtual fixation on the staid, the ploddingly quotidian, and the banal. I have often wondered if EVERYBODY reviewing books in this country aspires to the same moribund level of myopic snobbishness. Or perhaps book reviews SHOULD only be another tool in the establishment of the reviewer in the chummy pecking-order of recognized Canadian letters. In my own experience, most recognized literati are more moved by the name (either of the writer or the publishing house) than by the work itself. . .

So beginning with the next issue, THE FRONT will in its humble way try to fill a certain gap, providing reviews of work that is important for the boundaries it approaches.<sup>6</sup>

The sense of dissatisfaction with the established norms, the fighting tone of the criticism, and the attempt to "fill a certain gap" take us back to the original intentions and motivations of the little magazine. The ultimate aim of the little magazine is literary revolution and a call to a new order. If it succeeds, the staid establishment is overthrown and a new beginning is made; if nothing else, a small number of voices are heard saying something that was not heard before. In its editorial intentions, The Front shares much with magazines that preceded it: the hope of forming "a front" against the accepted literary norms of their day.

The fact that the little magazine is engaged in a literary ferment and literary transformation is a point that I have continually tried to stress. Beginning with Pound and his circle in England, we see the little magazine as a vital and necessary tool in the furthering of Modernist poetry. Indeed, because the inclinations of Modernism are anti-bourgeois and non-commercial, this writing must, literally, create a home for itself. That home, first and foremost, is the little magazine. The little magazine is the testing ground and proving ground for subsequent generations of literary experimenters and innovators.

In Canada literary Modernism has experienced a slow but steady growth and evolution in the pages of the little magazine. Those who have begun as each generation's renegades or troublemakers have often come to be recognized as the more vital poets of that period. In plotting the course of Modernist development in Canada it would be a falsification of the facts to suggest that, at all times, this development has progressed in a steady linear fashion; as we have seen in the work of Alphabet, GrOnk, and Blew Ointment in the 1960's, there is always the possibility that poets will backtrack and develop elements of literary Modernism that the earlier, more purely Imagist-oriented poets ignored. At all times, however, in detailing this non-sequential evolution, we find in the work of the poets a momentum that is dedicated to providing a poetry that is true to the language and true to the age. Of the hundreds of little magazines that have appeared in Canada, only perhaps a little more than a dozen can be considered to have been landmark publications; and yet, as I have insisted throughout, each magazine, simply by virtue of its existence, has contributed something to the creation of a vital literary climate. The cumulative result of all these publications is that there now does exist a healthy environment for poetry in Canada, one that allows for work that is widely diverse to exist and to develop at the same time, and so to constitute the contemporary body of Canadian writing. If bp Nichol is correct in his assumption that different forms release different contents, then it only stands to reason that the Canadian poet today is in possession of, or at least in the proximity of, a body of Modernist aesthetics fraught with infinite possibilities. Out of this ferment new poetries will continue to emerge, with new little magazines serving as their initial gathering place and continuing forum.

## CHAPTER TEN FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Northern Light, no. 3 (1976), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>CVII, 1, no. 1, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>NMFG, no. 1, inside front cover.

<sup>5</sup>NMFG, no. 18, inside front cover.

<sup>6</sup>The Front, no. 6 (May 1979), p. 1.

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