A. J. M. Smith: The Poetry of Eclectic Detachment

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ABSTRACT

The poetry of A. J. M. Smith is shown to be remarkable for its diversity. Various schools of poetry are demonstrated to have influenced his writing. Although criticism treats him as a modernist, a heavily traditional slant in his choice of form is shown. His true modernist aspect is proven to have similarities with the early poetics of T. S. Eliot. Sex, nuclear war and individual dignity are explored as modern concerns. The influence of the Metaphysical poets is stated; contrary to critical consensus, an examination of Smith's poetry reveals that only a fraction may be called metaphysical. The various poetic voices in the oeuvre are attributed to his theory of impersonality, and to his occasional willingness to abandon that theory. Tensions between tradition and revolution, personality and impersonality, Christianity and paganism are demonstrated throughout, and resolved in the final chapter, which uses his essay "Eclectic Detachment" as a basis for understanding his diversity and supposed contradictions.

RESUMÉ

La poésie de A. J. M. Smith est remarquable pour sa diversité. Plusieurs courants de pensée ont influencé son oeuvre. Quoique la critique le traite de partisan de l'école moderne, il existe chez lui une tendance marquée pour le traditionalisme dans le choix de la forme. Son véritable aspect moderne se trouve avoir certaines similarités avec les premières poésies de T. S. Eliot. L'influence des poètes métaphysiques est énoncée; mais, contrairement à l'avis des critiques littéraires, un examen de la poésie de Smith révèle qu'une partie seulement peut être appelée métaphysique. Les diverses tendances poétiques dans son oeuvre sont attribuées à sa théorie de l'impersonnalité, ainsi qu'à sa disposition à abandonner cette théorie à l'occasion. Les tensions entre la tradition et le modernisme, la personnalité et l'impersonnalité, le christianisme et le paganisme sont soulignées, et se trouvent résolues dans le dernier chapitre qui se base sur l'essai de Smith, "Eclectic Detachment", pour comprendre la diversité et les prétendues contradictions de l'auteur.

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Having watched Smith refuse to be contained by his own formulas, I can hardly expect him to be contained by mine.

--Milton Wilson, "Second and Third Thoughts About Smith"

Introduction

> His reputation has suffered a little both from the injudicious zeal of his admirers among the older critics, who have tried to present him as an important philosophical poet, which he was not, and from the disparagement of younger men, who have charged him with living in an ivory-tower on the banks of the Ottawa, unmindful of the pulsing industrialization of Canadian life.[1]

The death of A. J. M. Smith on November 21st, 1980 has drawn to a close one of the most complex and remarkable careers in all of Canadian letters. The controversies sparked by his response to the many new waves of this century, and by his demanding ideas of poetry in general, become with his death completed exchanges: not necessarily resolved, but silenced for good at a point where the opposing views become oddly less distinct. If we are not convinced now that the Confederation poets of our last century are worth an intelligent read, we probably never shall be; the poet who murdered them, and the critic who dragged them bodily into the honest light, has written his last article of praise. Poets, on the other hand, who rise in the 80's and 90's of this century will do so on their own luck, with no high aesthetic master looking down from East Lansing, Michigan, and shaking his head. Not that Smith was much involved with critical assessment of the intensely innovative sixties and seventies; but his mere poetic existence provided an uncomfortable example of austerity by which young writers who knew their predecessors in this country could not help but be troubled. This was a good thing.

Smith's critical career spanned more than half a century and incorporated more points of view than we might care to grant to half a dozen men. Much of his working out of various principles of art appears within the lines of his essays as a kind of shadow world, teeming with theories and schools never quite seized upon, but held pro tem the way most of us might hold a flower, to understand its temporary beauty. This propensity for fair-mindedness is equally evident in the poetry. The most indifferent glance through his collected poems will reveal traditional lyric, bawdy and serious satire, intense evocations of the mysteries of death, free verse, parodies, imitations, translations, a whole Polonius' list of voices and schools explored with detail and care.

Somewhere in the midst of all this is A. J. M. Smith himself, a man we desire to understand and place in history. There is a certain insecurity inherent in all literary criticism, a suspicion that we are in some way open to attack if we have not assessed, qualified, and ultimately mitigated the force of a man's work. The difficulties presented by Smith's diverse qualities in this regard render such assessment an enervating task, apparently requiring a depth of comprehension and aesthetic sensitivity equal to his own. Two results are the surprising lack of critical analysis of Smith's work and, within that small bibliography, a seeming scholarly unwillingness to press too insistently for over-all or even partial understanding. Line-by-line analysis is a field virtually unknown here. The disturbing complexity of Smith's volume, early seized upon as "difficult, lonely music"[2], discourages the glib or

reviewish critic from the task.

Rather it has encouraged an oddly personal reaction, occasionally of the most extreme kind. Desiring first of all to know this or that about the man, and perhaps partly eager to discover an intrinsic shortcoming that demonstrates his humanity and reassuring fallibility, a small pocketful of critics has lashed out at Smith with an unusually invalidating and even venomous tone. It is not difficult to discern within these articles the chip on the shoulder, the essentially egocentric reaction to anything that is aloof and self-removed from our own ~~milieu~~. Dorothy Livesay, for instance, in a review of Smith's News of the Phoenix for the leftist gunners of First Statement magazine, had decided that

> In the present mood of the world, such poetry will not give substance nor direction. It is the poetry of an exile, and an exile in a retreat. Canadians, emergent now from that sequestered life, are not likely to pause here.[3]

The crux of the quotation can be discovered in a search for redundancy. After wondering what sort of exile is not "in a retreat", we may recognize a faint emotionalism tingeing Livesay's response. Her desire to be rid of Smith on the grounds of his American residence, rather than on the basis of some failure in his achievement or a continually dissatisfying reading, demonstrates her unwillingness to deal with his poetry as it demands: without Canadian eye or taste, but as cosmopolitan creation on a higher, non-geographical plane. That unwillingness might stem from an inability, from a lack of space in the limited format of First Statement, or from a more general uneasiness about Smith's imagined

aristocratic indifference to her commentary. But she was not alone in her bad reaction to Smith's chosen "distance" from the Canadian literary epicentres. Padraig o'Broin's "After Strange Gods" in Canadian Author and Bookman would seem to be after similar blood.

> ...as prolific critic and anthologist of Canadian verse, he is regarded here as a Canadian writer. Is he so in fact? Has prolonged residence abroad had no influence on his work? How does he reconcile in heart and mind a foreign world and that Canada which for him should be earth's centre?[4]

Then later in the same article: "Smith, lacking absorption into, identification with, place, is not in full truth a Canadian poet."[5] The irrelevance of Livesay's and o'Broin's minor conspiracy to the quality of Smith's work need not, I think, be noted here. In their sense, we may breathe easier that he was by no means a "Canadian" poet. Their, might one say desperate, desire to declassify Smith succeeded as well as it deserved to; as did other forms of personalized criticism, such as John Sutherland's vitriolic attack in the Introduction to his anthology of Other Canadians, 1947.

> The traditional bias of Mr Smith's criticism means that his allegiance to the good--i.e. the cosmopolitan--is fixed and irrevocable, but it also means that a Bad must be invented over which the good can duly triumph.[6]

Smith is said to have demonstrated

> ...that pure aestheticism which, properly understood, is nothing less than the history and tradition of the human spirit wrapped in a papal bunnyhug.[7]

He is then attacked as an essentially Christian anthologist, and this groundless revelation is assumed to be the source of his failure to notice such promising young poets as Layton, Anderson, Souster and Dudek, whose socio-political emphasis rendered them

distasteful, Sutherland mutters, to the metaphysical master.

> Arsonist emotion and fire-chief intellect are asked to beget a child, which will combine the better qualities of both, and possess something else entirely new. This "something else" is comprehended by the term "metaphysical", the use of which has always given Eliot and his followers special advantages over other critics. Able to use the word in either the literary or the religio-philosophical sense, or able to use it in both ways at once, they have the happy choice of meaning sometimes less and sometimes more than they say.[8]

Having thus denigrated at one turn aestheticism and metaphysical modernist criticism, and deeming Smith to have fallen with each wave, Sutherland seems content to conclude by referring in a dogged fashion to the poetry of his protectorate. The inspired and passionate voice with which he assaulted Smith's anthology is, ironically, subdued for his introduction of his own poets, although he cannot keep himself from a parting shot at Smith in the conclusion.

> Mr Smith's oxygen tent with its tap to the spirit will keep a few remnants breathing for a while; but can hardly impede the growth of socialism in Canada, or prevent the radical consequences which must follow for the Canadian writer.[9]

The possible causes of such personalized criticism may come clear in the discussions offered in the body of this thesis; but two of them are obvious enough to be suggested here without much proof or trepidation: firstly, that Smith held himself with a certain aloofness from much that followed his small revolution, and that naturally offended a number of people; and secondly, that in Canadian letters too many critics have met too many poets (or too many poets are critics), and some personal slant becomes inevitable in criticism. One last example of this trend should serve to

demonstrate how far the critic may be misled, in this way, out of coherence and taste into the undergraduate pout.

> The collection of essays is a history of the progression of the intellectual sell-out; the inability of the bourgeois academic to translate youthful idealism into a popular feeling and a theory of poetry which would clarify the dialectic between art and life.[10]

This cannot be presented as intelligent criticism, and nothing need be said of it beyond noting the purposively disrespectful tone. Advancing age and long-standing significance should never be enough to earn our open-mouthed respect, but at the very least the man of letters with these qualities deserves a dash of politeness.

This latter suggestion, whether well or ill-founded, moves us into a second school of Smith criticism, that of the panegyrists. What the above essays lose in rudeness, these following lose in ignorance of text. The generalized statement and the sweeping hand of praise, always dangerous tools, are particularly so for Smith, from whom one can usually draw material to argue against the most solid classification. We are told Smith's poetry is "difficult" (in a nice sense) or "pure" or "innovative" or "modern" or "social", and having read this, we settle back for a handful of readings of the most cursory kind. In a way this is even less satisfactory than the vitriolics of Sutherland, because here we feel ourselves on the edge of understanding, beginning to fall, but yanked back yet again into complacent armchairs.

Leon Edel, for instance, in his tribute to Smith[11], although claiming no particular talent as literary critic, attempts an analysis of Smith's "The Creek" which simply must be influenced by Edel's

personal acquaintance with the poet. He carefully and tactfully breaks the poem down into a series of questionably sexual symbols, and concludes that the whole is a representation of sexual union and climax. While eager to admit the depth and potential richness of any of Smith's poems, I find myself unable to treat this reading with much seriousness; even to the point of suspecting a rather tongue-in-cheek eulogy to an old friend's inclinations. The balance of the essay is complimentary, and concludes with the suggestion that Smith is "austere" and "frugal". Similarly, F. R. Scott, in his discussion of Smith for W. P. Percival's Leading Canadian Poets[12], points to one or two poems over-all, mentions Smith's "metaphysical" bent without reference, and concludes in rather unproven praise. Again, a general unwillingness to examine the poetry closely is covered over by a series of useful adjectives, of which the reader is to assume the validity: "modernist", "metaphysical", "aesthetic" or "imagist".

The simple fact of the matter is that Smith is all of these things at any given point in his development as a poet, and the reader who fails to recognize this is instinctively cutting himself off from the true complexity of Smith's work. There can be no whole approval of his oeuvre; if one enjoys a part of it, there are another two or three parts against which to revolt. Disliking all of it, similarly, is about equivalent to disliking all of poetry.

In an attempt to appreciate the heterogeneity of his poetry, and to circumvent the generalizations of the past, I propose to break open the binding of Smith's Poems New and Collected, 1967, in

order to present a few of its component pieces in an objective light. By "pieces" is meant either styles or influences or even subject matter, depending upon the inclination of the given poem. I have tried as far as possible to let the categories implied in the separate chapters rise from the poems presented to the reader, rather than from any pre-conceived ideas nudged up against the page. Once this is performed, a little needle-and-thread work will be drawn from Smith's remarkable essay, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry"[13], to piece the whole back together as fairly as possible, without prejudice.

Before proceeding, it's worth remarking that not all of Smith's critics fall into one of the two unfortunate categories noted above. Of particular inspiration was the work of W. E. Collin, whose early discovery of the young Smith, coupled with a careful eye for textual analysis, makes his White Savannahs[14] as useful a text today as it was a pioneering assessment in its own time. I have tried wherever possible to be as thorough and open-minded as Professor Collin with regard to Smith's work, and can only hope to do the model justice. Milton Wilson's "Second and Third Thoughts About Smith"[15] embodies exactly that renunciation of generalization already proposed, and is as useful in its content as in the implications of its title. The insights of other critics will have guided my procedure, if not always my thinking.

Smith is the Canadian manifestation of English modern poetry, with links back to the Metaphysical poets of the 17th century, through French Symbolism and English Aestheticism into the world of Eliot, Joyce and the later Yeats, his contemporaries. His

apparently intimate acquaintance with so many of the schools of literature important to his time permitted him to develop a craft of poetry which he felt to be peculiar to Canada, and to explore for over fifty years the possibilities for the world poet in the 20th century. To his participation in that profession we owe as much as a nation can owe to any one artist; what follows, then, is an attempt to understand just what happened, and what we have lost.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, speaking of Archibald Lampman in the Introduction to The Book of Canadian Poetry (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1957), p. 17.
2. W. E. Collin, The White Savannahs (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1936). This is the title of Collin's chapter on Smith, taken from Smith's early poem, "Like an Old Proud King in a Parable".
3. Dorothy Livesay, "A Review of News of the Phoenix", First Statement II, April '44, p. 19.
4. Padraig o'Broin, "After Strange Gods", Canadian Author and Bookman v. 39, summer '64, p. 7.
5. Ibid., p. 8.
6. John Sutherland, "Mr Smith and the Tradition", in the Introduction to his Other Canadians (Montreal: First Statement Press, 1947), p. 8.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. Ibid., p. 20.
10. Joyce Wayne, "Eclectic Detachment: On the Right...", It Needs to Be Said 5, 1975, p. 5.
11. Leon Edel, "Worldly Muse of A. J. M. Smith", University of Toronto Quarterly 47, spring '78, pp. 200-213.
12. F. R. Scott, "A. J. M. Smith", in Leading Canadian Poets, edited by W. P. Percival (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), pp. 234-244.
13. A. J. M. Smith, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", Canadian Literature 9, summer '61, pp. 6-14.
14. Complemented by Collin's essay, "Arthur Smith", Gants du Ciel 11, spring '46, pp. 47-60.

Chapter One

TRADITION AND CONVENTION

> Mr Layton set himself up as a demolisher of the genteel tradition--in itself a worthy enough undertaking, heaven knows--but it is not so easy to succeed in as the enthusiast hopes.[1]

There will not be much disputing that a large portion of A. J. M. Smith's reputation rests on his past function as head revolutionary in the Montreal (or "McGill") movement, that overthrew the Canadian hold-over romanticism of 1900-1920 and practically established poetry in modern English as the leading medium of letters in Canada. Variously claimed to be "almost singlehandedly"[2] responsible for the movement, or simply the inspiration for other equally responsible innovators, Smith without doubt held sway over the vehicle of change, The McGill Fortnightly Review, for the two years of its existence (November 1925 to April 1927). His three major essays for the Fortnightly[3] read as an irrepressible manifesto of modernism, and are matchless in the tabloid for dedication and idealism. F. R. Scott's articles were already reflecting his wider interest in cultural, technological and social change, as opposed to the purely literary, while Smith held himself fervidly to the point.

The Fortnightly offers an unique opportunity to study in small an entire cultural turnabout. Theory and practice are bound together in the pages so that the reader may consider at leisure to what extent the poetry "succeeds", insofar as it may be assumed to reflect the attitudes of the critical prose. Smith published a

total of forty-four poems in the journal under various pseudonyms--"AJMS", "S", "Michel Gard" and "Vincent Starr". Some of the poems would be revised and appear as finished pieces in his collections of 1943 and 1954[4]; others appear to have been abandoned as too youthful or uninteresting to be worked out. But the germs of change are clear to see. His classic "The Lonely Land" appears in embryo in Volume One, number four, with the subtitle "Group of Seven"; and the imitative tribute to Edith Sitwell, "A Hyacinth For Edith", was born in Volume Two, number five, as "Homage to E. S.".

Despite this vanguard of fine later poems, the parade of the revolution is not so precisely formed as it might appear. Although the main thrust of the essays is unquestionably modernist, there are chance comments which suggest a certain tension in Smith's mind between the ramifications of total overthrow--put simply, stylistic anarchy--and the desire to find and maintain order, new, but order nevertheless.

The evidence of his poems at this time was neither clear-cut nor agreeable. The most noteworthy fact about those appearing in the Fortnightly is their general conventionality of form. A remarkable 78% are written in regular rhyme and metre, many of those divided into neat quatrains or couplets; and only a handful are "saved" by allusions to the paraphernalia of an apparently modern world. There is, moreover, an unusual falling-off in this percentage from the first to the second year of publication; in the ten numbers of Volume One, the ratio is 90%, whereas in the second volume it drops sharply, to 70%.

Smith had by his own admission already encountered the work

of Eliot, Pound, HD, Stevens and Yeats by the summer of 1924[5]; the swing from Volume One to Volume Two, then, was probably not induced by any new ravishment with the heroes of modernism outside Canada. He undertook his Master of Arts thesis on the poetry of Yeats in the fall of 1925, when he was admitted into the department of English at McGill towards that degree[6]; in November the first issue of the Fortnightly appeared. It is therefore equally unlikely that the first steps away from rhyme are attributable to any dissatisfaction with Yeats's similarly structured work; even though, by the second year of publication, when the greater break with form began, he had also left Yeats behind academically.[7] All that ought to be reasoned, therefore, from the simple rhyme-count above is that the break with conventional form was no immediate and automatic occurrence after the encounter with Eliot and the others.

The traditions in and against which Smith was working were various. There was the Canadian habit or non-tradition, unfortunately exemplified by Wilfred Campbell's Oxford Book of Canadian Verse[8], and against which Smith revolted most violently in his abandoned preface to New Provinces, 1936.

> The bulk of Canadian verse is romantic in conception and conventional in form...its characteristic type is the lyric. Its rhythms are definite, mechanically correct, and obvious; its rhymes are commonplace. The exigencies of rhyme and rhythm are allowed to determine the choice of a word so often that a sensible reader is compelled to conclude that the plain sense of the matter is of only minor importance.[9]

What Smith did not fully appreciate at the time was that behind those thirty years of poetic drought were the acceptably powerful figures of Lampman, Scott, Carman and Roberts; behind them, Sangster,

Mair and Heavysege; and ultimately at the root, Keats, Wordsworth, a little of Byron and the entire Romantic program.[10] His encounter with Campbell's anthology in the early twenties had not encouraged him to dig deeper into his country's literary legacy[11], and so the dregs of the Canadian inheritance, published in the years of his childhood and adolescence, were rejected with a sweep of the hand, and the large word "romanticism" took on an opprobrium which never disappeared from its connotations in his essays.

The tradition which replaced, for Smith, the cloying maple-leaf school in Canada was at the time no tradition at all. No more than the first shudder of an international overhaul, the publication by T. S. Eliot of The Waste Land in 1922 took the young science student by storm in his undergraduate, even pre-literary attitudes, and focussed his indifference to the past against the positive alternatives of the present. Of the resulting twentieth-century drive in Smith more will be said in Chapter Two.

Also set aside, until Chapter Three, is the Metaphysical tradition, as it is altered and explored in the development of Smith's poetry. His doctoral dissertation, Studies in the Metaphysical Poets of the Anglican Church in the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh, 1931), under the supervision of H. J. C. Grierson, demonstrates his wide-ranging interest in the metaphysical manner, which gave rise to such frequent reference and allusion in his work that no brief discussion here could do the influence justice.

Nevertheless, the conventions of verse employed by the older traditions are of particular present interest. We have already noted

that Smith's formalistic participation in the Fortnightly was less than revolutionary, but no satisfactory accounting can be based on that alone. If we lend the statistical eye to all that he published in the ensuing forty years[12], we are somewhat reassured to find the percentage a little altered in favour of his fame. In the 120 poems collected, a total of 77 are in exact rhyme and metre, or 64%; an additional 19 poems are all-but-conventional in form--perhaps a rhyme or two missed, and some toying with metrical variations--to lift the proportion to 80%. Eleven of the poems, or just under 10%, are sonnets, following the formalistic rules of their English and Italian ancestors. Even excluding the sonnets, which demand their own standard versification, 52 poems, or 43%, are assembled in clear stanzas of unalterable length.

These statistical (and only mildly conclusive) suggestions by no means imply that Smith was blind to his own conventional leanings in style. He intuitively recognized that modernism was more a spirit than an abandonment of form, and perhaps sensed that attitudes deeper than the merely formalistic were at the source of the revolution.

> What is the new poetry and wherein does it differ from the old? The difference is not solely one of form, for though some contemporary poetry is written in vers libre, by far the greater amount infused with the new spirit is written in the traditional metres and with the traditional rhyme schemes. It is not solely one of diction, though this, indeed, is an extremely important question: 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...[13]

> The new poetry is rich and various; and contrary to a good deal of popular misconception, it is neither untraditional nor formless.[14]

References throughout the three essays speak similarly to the need for sensitivity in any attack on poetic conventions; for example, in an assessment of the poetry of Verlaine, he notes that "the importance of rhyme, greatly over-estimated by the Romantics and Parnassians alike, is to be reduced to its more appropriate level".[15] There is an undercurrent, deeper still, of eagerness to end the abstract argument altogether: Smith perhaps suspected that the intellectually forced schism between "form" and "content" would ultimately be inimical to the very survival of poetry.

> ...as a matter of fact the discussion of the relative value of Form and Subject Matter is one that should never have arisen; because, in poetry at least, these two things should be merged into one--a single and complete artistic whole--Form, the Body and Content, the Soul: the one but the visible manifestation of the other.[16]

Nevertheless, the comments of Smith some forty years later constitute a succinct and poetic contradiction to this early fusion.

> Whether the poem will develop as something new and unique or, what is much more likely, grow into a traditional and well-established pattern, is an early and crucial decision in which both the unconscious and the conscious mind play a part. Such a decision is the result of a crystallization in the mind, a sort of irradiation of light and warmth that surrounds the "subject" of the poem and begins to delimit it. This is the ultimate source of the poem's form. Where this light or warmth is, there is the poem. The place where dark and cold begin marks the edge or formal frontier of the poem. This is the shape of the content, and this determines what might be called "the amount of the subject matter"--for only enough to fill out the form can be admitted.[17]

Particularly valuable in this juxtaposition is the realization that both attitudes, however contradictory, are quintessentially aesthetic. R. V. Johnson has described the twin strains of fin-de-siècle aestheticism in almost identical terms, beginning (as it were) with Smith's later view and concluding with the earlier.

> ...the aesthetic view of the question wavers between two possible alternatives. One is the view that form is something that can be neatly separated from matter--from, say, the subject of a poem and the attitudes it expresses--and that form, so regarded, is all that is important, as far as artistic quality is concerned...The other--more plausible--view is that, in our immediate experience of a work of art, form and matter are not clearly separable. It may be convenient, when talking about a work, to pick out different elements, including some under the heading of "form", others under the heading of "matter". But in our immediate response, form and matter merge in the total impression it makes upon us...our total experience of a poem is indivisible...[18]

These aesthetic aspects to Smith's thinking are perhaps our clue to his seeming reluctance to try his hand at much dispersal and dissipation of pre-modernist conventions. His concern with form is made obvious, whatever the leaps and turns in his thinking; perhaps the concern itself is more <u>apropos</u> (to modernism as well as to aestheticism[19]) than the act of revolt. He has already noted for us the general traditionalist tendencies of modern form, without taking the least exception; therefore it should not surprise us that Smith's personal revolution was based almost entirely on the shift in attitude, rather than a shift in ink on <u>the</u> page.[20]

> I find the search for the rhyme pattern is a great help, in stimulating the development of the idea throughout the poem. Rhyme is not a difficulty or a hindrance but, if anything, a great help...[21]

Despite Smith's nose-thumbing in "A Rejected Preface" against the sway of rhyme over sense[22], several examples may be distinguished in his own poetry of the rhyme-forced choice of words, where the conventional elements of form seem to force the speaker into inversions, repetitions and archaisms that would otherwise not have occurred.

> Spread your long arms
> To the salt stinging wave:
> Let its breathless enveloping
> Cleanliness lave...
>
> ("For Healing")

> ...a wintry mist
> Of amethyst and drifting snow,
> Of drifting snow and amethyst
> That dances solemnly and slow.
>
> ("The Circle")

> They see him innocency's Jaeger pelt
> Hide in the wolf's coat of angry youth,
> Striding over the very veldtlike veldt...
>
> ("Son-And-Heir")

> How all men wrongly death to dignify
> Conspire, I tell...[23]
>
> ("The Wisdom of Old Jelly Roll")

These last lines, which open a formally exact sonnet on death, serve a particular purpose here. Smith has elsewhere cast light on their initially apprehended syntactic clumsiness.

> "How all men wrongly death to dignify / Conspire, I tell" sounds differently from "I tell how all men conspire to dignify death wrongly", and expresses (or is) a different person.[24]

An inarticulate person, we might like to add. If we accept at face value Smith's defence of these lines, and his assumption of their validity, we should also have to accept the others, all others, as expressions of still more "different persons", and

eventually stand silent in the face of whatever twist of English the poet might wish to present. Obviously we cannot be so accepting. There will arrive, ultimately, a point where "lave" is not the natural diction of some medieval "persone", but a necessary archaism forced on a cornered rhyming poet.

The rhyme scheme of the sonnets is rarely tampered with. Those in the Petrarchan style vary their sestet somewhat, from abcabc to abaaba or abcbac; those in the Shakespearean are all in the standard ababcdcdefefgg form made famous by their patronym. What distinguishes these sonnets from the purely traditional sonnet of a hundred, or even fifty, years before, is the diction, which tends to be modern, and will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Furthermore, rhyme might serve to emphasize the modern note, or merely to structure the poetry in the usual way. For instance, we would probably consider a sonnet which rhymed, say, "newspaper" with "skyscraper" more modern than one which rhymed, say, "flower" with "bower" or "die" with "sky". The end-placed rhyme serves partly to force the particularly rhymed word more firmly into the ear than those preceding it in the line, and is therefore a likely tool for the modern poet to use to establish his atmosphere.

Smith employs rhyme to this end most successfully in his more surrealistic or social poetry. We hear with a startled ear the conjunction of "handkerchief" and "rosbif" in "Noctambule", of "receipts" and the slang noun "eats" in "Resurrection of Arp"; the half-rhyme in "My Lost Youth" of "Benson and Hedges" with "sententious" establishes a salon atmosphere, perhaps with a

suggestion of languour; then "acquits" and "tits", "gut" and "smut", "bung" and "undone" in "What the Emanation of Casey Jones Said to the Medium", and so on.

The poems concerned with more traditional themes, however, (death, love, poetry itself) rarely demonstrate this twist. Their rhymes are, to use Smith's own term, fairly commonplace; or at least not purposely shocking to the ear. Most are effortless and gentle. He often shows an impeccable ability to catch the rhymes in a net of rhythm, in a way that forces the entire poem progressively deeper into the reader's consciousness.

I shall remember forever
A lonely swallow swerving
Over a dusky river,
Sweeping and solemnly curving
In long arcs that never
Stirred the still stream...

("I Shall Remember")

I begged of her the grace
That I might kiss her face,
And be the one alone
Of her gentleness, in her embrace.

("A Pastoral")

With metrical structures Smith is rather more open-handed and inventive. Although the general drive is towards iambs and lines of ten beats, his natural rhythms often exceed or adapt the metrical code to suit the increasing tension or force of argument in the poem. The closing of "Prothalamium", for instance, develops a power of vision and clarity, partly in spite of the syntax, which is suggested by the increasing force of the rhythm; closing in a line succinct and all but flat, with a failing beat implying the desirability and inevitability of death.

u / u / u / u / u /
No matter: each must read the truth himself,
/ / u u / / u u u /
Or, reading it, reads nothing to the point.
u / u / u / u / u /
Now these are me, whose thought is mine, and hers,
u u u / / u u / u /
Who are alone here in this narrow room--
/ / u / / / u
Tree fumbling pane, bell tolling,
/ u / u u u / u / u
Ceiling dripping and the plaster falling,
u / u u / u u / u
And Death, the voluptuous, calling.

("Prothalamium")

The first and third of these seven lines are safe iambic pentameter. In lines 2, 4, 6 and 7 a build-up of unaccented syllables is permitted, which serves to highlight the strong syllables and counterpoint the falling away of the present participles in the last three lines. Line 5 consists of five accented and two unaccented syllables, which set up the turning about of the speaker's thought and strike strongly against the ear; also moving the reader, incidentally, from a thinking response to the first four lines, into a probably feeling response to the last three.

Again, the sonnets are generally left to their own devices. Although a few lines are jumbled about into trochees, anapest and dactyl as necessary (see, particularly, "Bird and Flower"), the ten-beat line is rarely lengthened or truncated.

We have already noted that the rhythm of the poems often serves to enhance the rhyme scheme and make the whole more forceful. "The Crows" is another example in which the relentless rhythm is a major cause of the poem's dramatic power; in its

entirety it exemplifies exactly that metrical and super-metrical control to be enjoyed in the greater part of Smith's work.

> Over the pines the crows
> Are crying and calling out
> With a hollow brazen throat
> In a tongue that no man knows;
> Yet it may be that they cry
> Their bitter unspeakable tones
> To the cold air where they fly
> As a man might mock the bones
> Of a joy that has come to death,
> Railing with ragged shout
> And pitiful eager breath
> Against the crapulous sky
> And all that is beneath.
>
> ("The Crows")

The essential metrical structure here is the line of three strong beats, whose positions freely alternate as the sense demands; supported of course by the alliteration, particularly on /k/, and a near total lack of punctuation, which permits the reader only one pause, and otherwise rushes the whole poem out as if with a single breath. It invites comparison with the middle poetry of Yeats, particularly the volume Responsibilities, in its use of rhythms to support the discovery of theme. "That the Night Come", for example, is a short poem from the 1914 volume in an almost identical form.

> She lived in storm and strife,
> Her soul had such desire
> For what proud death may bring
> That it could not endure
> The common good of life,
> But lived as 'twere a king
> That packed his marriage day
> With banneret and pennon,
> Trumpet and kettledrum,
> And the outrageous cannon
> To bundle time away
> That the night come.[25]

It may be that Smith's attraction to Yeats was a factor in his attachment to conventions which were being quietly blown away in the literary world around him. His Master's thesis is fulsome in its praise of the Irish poet; in one of the Fortnightly essays on Symbolism, he concludes that "to quote from Mr Yeats on this subject is inevitable".[26] Upon the poet's death he was to write "A Poet Young and Old: W. B. Yeats"[27], a eulogy complemented by his own "Ode: On the Death of William Butler Yeats", first collected into News of the Phoenix in 1943. When asked if Yeats had been a "big influence" on his early poetry, Smith replied with some asperity, "I think that's quite obvious—too much so..."[28]

If we oppose to these notes his admiration of Eliot, which is made clear throughout his career, beginning with his "Hamlet in Modern Dress", and note that Eliot's great masterpiece The Waste Land is the landmark of formalistic breakdown and dissolution, a distinct dichotomy within Smith's philosophy begins to come clear. Traceable even to its roots in the poets he admired is a habit of modern speech, modern perception, clothed in poetics that are purposefully conventional. It may be incorrect, then, to think of Smith as "single-handedly" effecting the modernist revolution in Canada, or even to think him a modernist in any structural sense at all. What emerges from the remarks above is a conception of Smith as a kind of literary herald, pealing forth a call to arms with one hand and signing a declaration for peace with the other.

But it may be stretching several points to draw any conclusion from comments grounded solely in the formal structures of his poetry.

If the traditional drive had no basis beyond "the exigencies of rhyme and metre", the point could gladly be surrendered and another chapter begun. But this holding onto tradition on the structural level is also a foreshadowing of a larger poetic concern: a positive decision made about traditional subject matter, that pulls us back, again, into the seventeenth and other centuries, and produces (in conjunction with conventions noted) a number of perfectly traditional poems.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Fortnightly poems demonstrate a definite tendency to develop the "cruel fair" elements of the Petrarchan tradition. Smith expresses exactly those pangs and sorrows that young men had made their particular dominion since the dawn of literature. Donne's "Twicknam Garden" and Keats's "I cry your mercy—pity, love, ay, love!" are two emotional forerunners of the sentiments Smith expresses in, for instance, his "Poem"[29], cited here in its final form, "For Healing".

> Spread your long arms
> To the salt stinging wave:
> Let its breathless enveloping
> Cleanliness lave
> Arms, breast and shoulders,
> Sinews and thighs,
> From the yellow of love,
> Her immoderate eyes,
> The ache of her fingers,
> The whips of her hair,
> And the bruise where her mouth
> Moved here and there.
>
> ("For Healing")

Note again the rhythm of Yeats's Responsibilities volume, which here enforces the emotional impact. The young lady behind or before the poem has clearly caused the speaker some pain,

presumably emotional but translated here into physical damage, which is to be washed away by the stinging cleanliness of the sea. The suggestions of physical encounter in no way obliterate the Petrarchan echoes of the poem, since wounds are standard metaphors in the genre for the psychological pains of love--see, for example, Petrarch's "Fera stella (se'l cielo à forza in noi", or Sidney's "Fly, fly, my friends, I have my death wound--fly!", or Spenser's Amoretti 50, "Long languishing in double malady".

Similar in intention--the poetic dissolution of unpoetic feminine control--is the later published "To Anthea"--particularly interesting in its repetition of the "whips" of love.

When I no more shall feel the sun,
  Nor taste the salt brine on my lips;
  When one to me are stinging whips
And rose leaves falling one by one;

I shall forget your little ears
  And your crisp hair and violet eyes;
  And all your kisses and your lies
Will be as futile as your tears.

("To Anthea")

The threat of the poet's death as the ultimate punishment for the deceiving mistress strikes another familiar Petrarchan note. Even her tears will not revive him (should she continue to show her present lack of taste). Donne's "The Apparition", Keats's "This living hand, now warm and capable" and a host of similarly sincere death wishes provide the prototypes for Smith's poem. But the Petrarchan drive in his work dissipates quickly enough, and there is no need to dwell on early tendencies Smith was perhaps eager to forget.

Similar thoughts, however, may be pursued with his death poems.

"Prothalamium", for instance, arises partly from the tradition of the consummation in the grave, mildly denigrated by Marvell in "To His Coy Mistress", but achieved by Donne in "The Reliques". Indeed, Smith's poem celebrates this latter debt with a startlingly apt image, referring to Donne as "that preacher from a cloud in Paul's".

> My sister, whom my dust shall marry, sleeps
> Alone, yet knows what bitter root it is
> That stirs within her; see, it splits the heart--
> Warm hands grown cold, grown nerveless as a fin,
> And lips enamelled to a hardness--
> Consummation ushered in
> By wind in sundry corners.
>
> ("Prothalamium")

The three poems of the Christian death echo the tenor of Donne's Holy Sonnets; particularly the abashed conclusion to "Good Friday":

> What answering meed of love
> Can this frail flesh return
> That is not all unworthy of
> The god I mourn?
>
> ("Good Friday")

The point is that the deepest of Smith's concerns are the old concerns: love and death, and between them pain or happiness: subjects that shall outlast, perhaps, the threat of nuclear extinction or the intellectual fascination with Communism. Although he may write, on the one hand,

> It follows that there are no "poetic" subjects.
> Any subject, no matter how unpromising, can be
> made the source of poetry when shaped by the
> poetic imagination.[30]

he cannot help but admit his own attraction to the very "poetic" subjects he implicitly spurns:

> The general idea of death or nothingness as a vague but yet disturbing and, if concentrated on, frightening concept has been hanging over my sensibility for longer than I can remember.[31]

But with these comments we perhaps leave the realm of tradition and convention and enter the archetypes of the unconscious, for the consideration of which we could hardly blame the most revolutionary of the modernists. Since the attempt has not necessarily been to prove Smith a traditional poet, the discussion might be contentedly left off here, with a few thoughts admittedly dangling. However, if the above has demonstrated that Smith, whose reputation as the founder of Canadian modernism is well established, spent a good deal of time writing of the standard themes that occupied poets of centuries past, often in the very conventions those poets employed, then the original proposition has been satisfied.

It would not be fair to leave this study, however, without giving equal time to the gentleman under the microscope. If Smith's aesthetic or conventional habits annoy the modern reader, the following might provide a touch of relief and remind all, if only in a glimpse, that Smith was well aware of what he was doing. Rhyme is as much a source of silliness as seriousness.

> A little bit tight all right all right
> She carols a cracked old song,
> Of a dreamland bright she can reach at night
> By a trail that is winding and long.
> And Mrs Beleek belike as well
> Joins in the song for of it the hell.
>
> ("Stanzas Written on First Looking Into Johnston's <u>Auk</u>")

One of the last poems, incidentally, is entitled "Angels Exist (And Sonnets Are Not Dead)"--an Italian sonnet with few

irregularities. These quips, coupled with essay comments considered, surely imply that Smith was a few miles ahead of this assessment, and knew full well that his poetry was a house divided, between the past and the present, between Yeats and Eliot perhaps, and, in some sense, between Form and Content. But he also knew, despite his persistent inability to betray much the conventions he had learned, that the revolution lived, and that whatever the quality, the point in Canada had been well taken.

> We sometimes thought we had produced a good poem when all we had done in reality was not produce a conventional one. In Canada, this is a deed of some merit.[32]

That the deed was successful will not be disputed--the first assumption of this chapter--although with Smith, the results have been despite an attraction to the poetics of the past. But the modernist slant of his reputation is not wholly misconceived, and may now, a bit of ground having been cleared, be turned to.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, "Recent Poetry of Irving Layton", Queen's Quarterly 62, winter '56, p. 587.
2. Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1958), p. 194.
3. A. J. M. Smith, "Symbolism in Poetry", McGill Fortnightly Review vol. 1, #ii; "Hamlet in Modern Dress", McGill Fortnightly Review vol. 2, #i; "Contemporary Poetry", McGill Fortnightly Review vol. 2, #iv.
4. A. J. M. Smith, News of the Phoenix (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943), and A Sort of Ecstasy (Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1954).
5. A. J. M. Smith, "Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist", Journal of Canadian Studies 11, May 1976, p. 5.
6. McGill University, Programme of the Annual Convocation for Conferring Degrees, October 6th, 1925, facsimile.
7. His Master of Arts degree having been conferred already, in May of 1926. McGill University, Programme of the Annual Convocation for Conferring Degrees, May 28th, 1926, facsimile. Smith spent this second year of editorship teaching at the Montreal High School.

8. Wilfred Campbell, editor, Oxford Book of Canadian Verse (Great Britain, University of Oxford Press, 1913).
9. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", Canadian Literature 24, spring '65, p. 6.
10. I have borrowed this term with gratitude from Morse Peckham's "Aestheticism to Modernism: Fulfillment or Revolution?", Mundus Artium 1, 1967, pp. 36-55.
11. A. J. M. Smith, "Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist", op. cit., p. 5.
12. Collected for the most part in his Poems New and Collected (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1967).
13. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 31. Emphasis mine.
14. A. J. M. Smith, Introduction to The Book of Canadian Poetry (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1943), p. 30.
15. A. J. M. Smith, "Symbolism in Poetry", op. cit., p. 12. Emphasis mine.
16. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 32.
17. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poetic Process: On the Making of Poems", in Towards a View of Canadian Letters: Selected Critical Essays 1928-1971 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 222. Emphasis mine.
18. R. V. Johnson, Aestheticism (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 14-15.
19. For a comprehensive discussion of these relationships, see Peckham, "Aestheticism to Modernism: Fulfillment or Revolution?", op. cit.
20. In "The Poetic Process: On the Making of Poems", op. cit., p. 220, Smith has written, "I suppose I am what is called an academic poet; but I accept the epithet only if it is cleansed of its opprobrious implications, its suggestions of pedantry, mere bookishness, pure formalism, and timid conventionality. I prefer to think the term an honourable one." I should like to point out that I am not concerned with proving that Smith was timidly conventional. If the above comments and those to follow succeed in proving his conventionality in some aspects, the purpose of the chapter is satisfied. My personal impression is that Smith was rarely timid about things literary. I am therefore glad to establish the adjective, but will leave the adverb for critics better qualified.
21. Michael Darling, "An Interview with A. J. M. Smith", Essays on Canadian Writing 9, winter '77/'78, p. 59.
22. Quoted on p. 12.
23. Most poems quoted in this thesis appear in Poems New and Collected, op. cit., and will be referred to by title only. Further information will be provided for poems not appearing in the 1967 book.
24. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", Canadian Literature 15, winter '63, p. 20.
25. W. B. Yeats, Collected Poems, (New York: MacMillan, 1956), p. 140.
26. A. J. M. Smith, "Symbolism in Poetry", op. cit., p. 16.
27. A. J. M. Smith, "A Poet Young and Old: W. B. Yeats", University of Toronto Quarterly 8, April '39, pp. 255-263.
28. Michael Darling, "An Interview with A. J. M. Smith", op. cit., p. 57.
29. In McGill Fortnightly Review, vol. 1, #x, April 1926.

30. A. J. M. Smith, "Refining Fire: The Meaning and Use of Poetry", Queen's Quarterly 61, autumn '54, p. 354.
31. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poetic Process: On the Making of Poems", op. cit., p. 223.
32. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", op. cit., p. 8.

Chapter Two

THE MODERN EMPHASES

> Poetry today must be the result of the impingement of modern conditions upon the personality and temperament of the poet. Some have been awakened to a burning enthusiasm by the spectacle of a new era; others are deeply disturbed by the civilization of a machine-made age. Some have heard music in the factory whistle; others have turned aside into solitude that they might the better hearken to the still small voice.[1]

What actually takes us into the modern voice is Smith's increasing belief that the poet in our time has a social as well as an aesthetic responsibility. He cannot create ivory towers in which to hide himself from the ugliness and fears of his civilization; in fact he alone has the perception and the bravery and the vehicle necessary to demand--perhaps to execute--the salvation of man. Like Tiresias in The Waste Land, he sees truths and cries them out to implicitly deaf ears, a drowning voice in a mechanical tide. But he "has to care", like it or not[2]; he has to turn his attention away from himself and his problems, and address himself to the woes of his time.

> Detachment, indeed, or self-absorption is (for a time only, I hope) becoming impossible...the artist who is concerned with the most intense of experiences must be concerned with the world situation in which, whether he likes it or not, he finds himself. For the moment at least he has something more important to do than to record his private emotions. He must try to perfect a technique that will combine power with simplicity and sympathy with intelligence so that he may play his part in developing mental and emotional attitudes that will facilitate the creation of a more practical social system.[3]

In 1936 this concern with social problems was a spreading factor in poetry in English; the figures of Auden and Spender, with their poetics of the New Left, are clearly analogues, as is that of F. R.

Scott, Smith's original compatriot. Whether the concern is ultimately useful or not is of course another question. There is no intrinsic pleasure in a catalogue of modern horrors or insensitivities. Recognizing and crying out problems, without answers, is a fundamentally pessimistic task; but the notion of positive answers is not crucial to Smith's conception of the poetic function. The posing of questions is most of what matters. As a social or satiric (or modern) poet, then, he is not by nature constructive, but destructive, bemoaning his vision but only rarely able to rise above it.[4]

On the simplest and most immediate level, the semantic, Smith is (at his best) ruthlessly modern, wielding with intensity an up-to-the-minute diction to peel away the reader's politenesses and reveal the facts they obscure.

> ...this tinsel paradise
> Of trams and cinemas and manufactured ice...
>
> ("A Hyacinth For Edith")

> Under the flag of this pneumatic moon,
> Blown up to bursting, white-washed white,
> And painted like the moon...
>
> ("Noctambule")

> ...the make-up of the mind
>
> Embellishes and protects,
> Draws beards between fabulous tits,
> Endorses the stranger's checks,
> Judges and always acquits.
>
> ("What the Emanation of Casey Jones Said to the Medium")

The choice of words is proof that technology has imposed an artificiality everywhere. Ice has to be "manufactured"; the moon itself, symbol of all inspiration, must be blown up like a balloon and painted before it can appear in the night sky. Even "minds",

which have the ability to "judge", always "acquit" and distort, rather than struggle for conviction and clarity.

In Smith's poetry this 20th century diction cannot be emphasised too strongly, because (often alone) it gives these poems their modern quality. "Noctambule" continues with a surrealistic juxtaposition of an unusual vocabulary to create most of its disturbing effect. "The crank hulk of witless night", "the nice clean pockethandkerchief of 6 a. m." and "rancid margarine" are semantic examples of his "reality at two removes". The effect of this vocabulary is primarily visual, and the visuals are like a Dali original, in a countryside of impossibilities, some humourous, others terrifying.

The usual terror to be evoked by the modern poet rises from an imagistic focus on urban life, with all its blind mindlessness. Eliot, for example, pictures London Bridge with an emphatic lack of colour.

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.[5]

He then forces his grey faces through the sad clarity of this setting, all the while lamenting loss and destitution.

> O City City, I can sometimes hear
> Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
> The pleasant whining of a mandoline...
> ...the walls
> Of Magnus Martyr hold
> Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.[6]

Smith's modern images rarely give us this clear photographic

view of the modern world. The closest he comes to any such visual precision is in "The Common Man", where we see a "sweating statue in Parliament Square" and other vaguely urban images. But their focus does not hold. They flash in and out without cumulative effect.

We must assume that sustained images of modern life were not important to Smith. Rather he dealt with and tried to evoke the sentiments of that life, perhaps his own sentiments, through rapid sequential semantic responses, in order to make his readers feel exactly the appropriate uneasiness.

> A poem is not the description of an experience; it is itself an experience, and it awakens in the mind of the alert and receptive reader a new experience analogous to the one in the mind of the poet.[7]

Thus, in "Far West", we do not build up an increasingly sensitive visualization of the young girl watching the movie; we are not supposed to. Instead we are made to feel rather like her, or at least like the poet watching her, because of the mixture of her perception, emotion and memory which clouds the exactness of the situation.

> The tremendous cowboys in goatskin pants
> Shot up the town of her ignorant wish...
>
> Anyway, who would have heard...
>
> With the marvellous touch of fingers
> Gentler than the fuzzy goats
> Moving up and down up and down as if in ecstasy
> As the cowboys rode their skintight stallions
> Over the barbarous hills of California.
>
> ("Far West")

The assault of sexuality on plausibly virgin thoughts is thus

emotionally transferred to the reader, and an empathy is theoretically formed which obviates the need for a precise visualization of event. Compare, again, Eliot's thematically similar passage.

> The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
> Exploring hands encounter no defence...
> Bestows one final patronising kiss,
> And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit.[8]

The lack of conceptual event in Smith's poem becomes obvious. Empathy is to take the place of sequential action; and it is the choice of words, again, the semantic consciousness, which forces onto the reader the "analogous experience" and completes the poem's function.

Thus he offers, on both the semantic and imagistic levels, an "atmosphere of modernity" rather than any message of modernism. "Noctambule", "Resurrection of Arp", "Stanzas Written on First Looking Into Johnston's Auk"--indeed, the clear majority of the poems in the fourth section of Poems New and Collected--function in just the same way. They evoke through words alone a string of disparate feelings rather than a clear reaction to narrative force. He writes,

> On the face of it, this looks as if such a writer were deliberately flouting the accepted standards of good writing, which enjoin clarity and coherence as classic virtues. Accustomed to expect a purely logical sequence, even in a poem, we are prone to approach such work as this from the wrong angle--to view it from the intellectual rather than from the emotional standpoint... [The Waste Land] is strung together not upon a logical or intellectual thread at all; it is merely a stream of associations, many of them flowing from the subconscious.[9]

What may ultimately save The Waste Land and damage Smith's

poetry is that Eliot's work was long enough to permit each "association' in the "stream' to be a poem of several lines in itself--witness the seduction scene above--whereas Smith's poems, to offer the same "stream' in a generally much shorter format, must fill themselves with disparate "associations" of only a line or a phrase in length. The effect may be too much for a reader seeking more than a stimulus-response mechanism.

Where very often the words are allowed to accumulate power and do often create sharp images is in those poems directly influenced by Eliot's concept of the "waste land", the arid desert of modern spiritual life. This sustained vision, with all its morose implications, turns up in the earliest and the latest poems, and several in between; Smith appears to have seized it with something approaching religious fervour.

> And through the noise of laughter
> And the hard speech of men
> The braying of a horn
> Grew silvery and thinned,
> And a monstrous bitter cry was borne
> Unsteadily across the wind...
>
> ("The Trance")

> ...the empty years, the hand to mouth,
> The moving cog, and unattended loom,
> The breastless street, and lolling summer's drouth...
>
> ("Son-And-Heir")

> The sea wind in the oak trees
> Shrieks like a prophet of death...
>
> ("Eden's Isle")

> Bones
> Distilled in the frontier sand
> Fumble
> The natty chevron...
>
> ("A Soldier's Ghost")

> We have come a long way riding. Is it this
> Granite overgrown on no sweetsmelling vale
> Only to gain?
>
> ("The Cry")

> If only we had a song
> We could get through this shadowy valley
> And over the sandy plain...
> The vultures are wheeling overhead
> And they too are singing a kind of song...
> We had better get on.
>
> ("The Cavalcade"[10])

With this recurring nightmare we move beyond the semantic and imagistic to the level of ideology or philosophy, of meaning in Smith's work. Note that there is no great disillusionment or surprise in these lines, save, perhaps, in "The Cry". His perception of modern life as a drought-stricken dustbowl had been too freely encouraged for much surprise; the shock is accounted for by various advances having occurred too rapidly for the more slowly developing spiritual strengths of man.

> In less than three decades came the motor car, the steam turbine, the airplane, the telegraph and wireless, and the electric light...Things moved faster, and we had to move with them.[11]

Even as man was adapting to this whirlpool, a whole new branch of speculative science was developing its vocabulary, and influencing for all time the range and jargon of the poetic understanding.

> An advantage which the very latest poets of this [modern] school have had over their predecessors is that they have been able to make use of the various psychological theories of the subconscious, and to forge from them what is almost a new form of expression--a form which has found so far its culmination in the prose of James Joyce and the poetry of T. S. Eliot.[12]

Perhaps this conjunction of knowledges--one, of technology, and one, of the deepest motives of man--is at the root of the "waste land" archetype (or at least of Smith's attraction to it). The result is naturally a search for a few unchangeable human attributes in the face of all-absorbing science. The atmosphere surrounding the

search is one of dry pointlessness and futility; in fact this atmosphere or perception of atmosphere is as large a problem as the not knowing where to look.

> The accent of helplessness, of futility, of despair bordering on hysteria has never been so perfectly expressed as in certain passages of Mr Eliot's poetry, passages that are the complete expression of a decadence that is fascinated by the analysis of its own falling off.[13]

The world in which the analysis is carried out has also lost much of the glory and vitality and animation which comes with belief in a God. The spread of atheism down through the human ranks had almost incidentally ripped away the chief support of mankind in times of trouble; and these new technological acquisitions had to be absorbed and understood without divine guidance.

> The tragic thing is that this fatal technological skill, which demands that man exert an almost superhuman moral self-control, has been acquired at the very moment when there has been, if not a breakdown, certainly a weakening of religious and ethical sanctions.[14]

The modern dilemma is therefore only to be solved if the penultimate source of such "sanctions", the poet, is turned to with renewed faith.

> The peculiar responsibility of the poet in this age of anxiety and fear is to awaken the imagination and touch the conscience of humanity.[15]

Now no one expects the conscience of humanity to be touched in one fell swoop. The poet of Smith's appeal will naturally have to eke out a particular niche for himself, concerning his work with one topic or aspect of the modern problem at a time. Ultimately, of course, we should like a Dante or a Shakespeare, to rise and write his way through the entire world over a lifetime. But Smith, perhaps

less ambitious, chose to develop a number of themes in a quiet and careful way, breaking down the problem as he saw it into an assailable cluster of emphases.

Perhaps the least important of these, but probably the most enjoyable and relaxed in a holiday sense, are those poems in which he celebrates the minute and massive pleasures of sex--as opposed to love or watery platonics. Smith makes no serious attempt to propose intercourse as a realistic means of surmounting one's modern responsibilities; it provides no more than a refreshing of perception, a breathing space between the hydrogen bomb and the grave. With an almost carpe diem delight, he sings of the wanton messiness of surrender.

> God I will rise and take a train
> And get me to April once again
> For April is the cruellest nymph
> Scattering garters and spent stays
> On an unmade bed in a one-room head.
>
> ("Souvenirs du Temps Perdu")

This moment, with all its attendant pleasures, can temporarily overrule other concerns, becoming its own kind of twisted religion with its own particular sacraments.

> Stripped of the love of creatures
> (Save ours for us),
> We love like sectarian preachers,
> With an intense, exclusive fuss.
>
> Your body and my blood
> Consanguine, make the feast...
>
> ("Song Made in Lieu of Many Ornaments")[16]

Generally the coital poet suffers no interruptions, neither from the lady nor from his own conscience nor from worldly demands. These poems tend to open in joy and close in pleasure.

I love to see my Amaryllis toss her shirt
Away, and kick her panties off, and loll...

When she sinks softly to the sun-warmed ground,
We need no silken walls, no blinds, no feather-bed.
("An Iliad for His Summer Sweetheart")

My honey, my cunny, my cosy, my dear,
Hold me and hug me and call me your bear...

I'll settle, establish, be king o'the isle,
And find my reward in my sweet Annie's smile.
("Thomas Moore and Sweet Annie")

But Smith would not be Smith if he left the subject completely without ironic comment. The opening and concluding verses of "Souvenirs du Temps Bien Perdu"--with its title echoing Smith's other poem of "things past"--are together a celebration of sex and a hollow satiric mocking of that celebration: from "coitus omnia vincit" to "post coitum triste" in nine brief lines.

Blouse and bloomers, blouse and bloomers, dewy warm against
your skin,
Pretty breasts and little buttocks, oh! the Joycean sweets
of sin,
As I fumble at the buttons and elastics yours are in!...

Blouse and bloomers, blouse and bloomers, and a garter
on the floor,
Pimply breasts and chilly buttocks, beautiful no more:
Did we wake the bloody landlord? Will he hammer at the door?
("Souvenirs du Temps Bien Perdu")

The protestation of sex as a genuine consummation of powerful emotion is rare in Smith's poetry: but the metaphysical argument that concludes an essentially Yeatsian love poem may imply desire of a strength beyond the merely physical.

And yet one darling's ignorant she-discernment
I have found
Turn love's wise parliament
Around and round,
That in an unlearned frenzy and contentment
At her white side I lie
With sweetest heresy.
("With Sweetest Heresy")

Both of the Leda poems hold similar implications:

The Mother of Helen shrieked
When the egg dropped from her side,
And the flailing winged fiery beaked
Jupiter shivered and sighed.
("The Swan and the Dove")

See, she lies panting in the mossy gloom
Of tunnelled boughs—but no, the willows screen
All that portends, now and hereafter.
("The Adolescence of Leda")

The strong sexual/emotional potential of other classical figures is even allowed to invigorate the lovers of the Waste Land.

That Venus and Adonis clip
On each suburban sod...
That Hero and Leander meet
By leafy Hellespont
At corner of each clanging street...
And feel the bawdy music rise
Beyond the power of breath
And stiffen as they close their eyes
In the heavenly sexual death.
("They Say")

It is impossible not to enjoy the happy and fortunate shamelessness of the majority of these tunes. There is an intrinsic pleasure in finding a poet, generally thought to be austere, severe, aesthetic and solemn, so wonderfully easy with his less intellectual urges.[17] Indeed, if anyone is to feel shame here, it is the outside world, perhaps the reader himself, for looking in; even the goddess of Love is a little disturbed by such perfect activities.

A solemn stillness fills the grove
Where Layton and his sweet Aviva love:
Rabbits, rank goats and ruffled sparrows stare
In envious admiration—and despair;
While Venus, wandering by to bless the place
Feels a pure blush suffuse her conscious face.
("The Country Lovers")

But finally neither love nor sex is able to deter the poet from concerns which are more humanistic than human. The poems

above are probably best enjoyed if flipped to intermittently, while encountering the more serious, frightening or prophetic work; as a kind of holiday, indeed, from the constant burden of thought and responsibility. It may be that Smith intended them, or experienced them himself, in just this way; there, at least, lies their real value.

Smith's second emphasis as a modern poet is the threat of war or, more particularly, nuclear war. The idea that mankind had developed sufficient power to topple not only nations and civilizations, but the earth and life itself, held a horror and fascination for him which, though rarely referred to explicitly, fills the late poems of his life with foreboding.

> To contemplate and prepare for (in the name of defence) the instantaneous destruction of millions of human beings suggests a failure in the realm of morals and religion that is certainly a much more complete breakdown than anything testified to by teen-age delinquency or isolated individual violence or crime...A moral shudder ought to be sweeping the world; but there has been a failure of the imagination: we seem powerless to fear enough what may be done to us or to abhor enough what we contemplate doing to others.[18]

The uncaring of man, particularly North American man, was as ugly to Smith as the potential for destruction. He had foreseen the dangers of North American isolationism as early as 1946, before the Cold War had been baptized and the arms race begun, in "Business As Usual 1946", the first of a trilogy of twelve-line poems on the subject.

> Across the craggy indigo
> Come rumours of the flashing spears...
>
> How tender! How insidious!
> Here we are safe, we say, and slyly smile...

In this delightful forest, fluted so,
We burghers of the sunny central plain
Fable a still refuge from the spears
That clank--but gently clank--but clank again!
("Business as Usual 1946")

The alliteration on [s], particularly in the fourth line quoted, suggests the serpent-like and implicitly evil nature of a civilization that seeks to remove itself from the spears of others and shirk responsibility under the trees. The second poem in the trilogy echoes and mocks the closing lines of the first.

But gently clank? The clank has grown
A flashing crack--the crack of doom.
It mushrooms high above our salty plain
And plants the sea with rabid fish.

How skilful! How efficient!
The active cloud is our clenched fist.
Hysteria, dropping like the gentle dew,
Over the bent world broods with ah! bright wings.[19]

We guess it dazzles our black foe;
But that it penetrates and chars
Our own Christ-laden lead-encased hearts
Our terrified fierce dreamings know.
("Fear As Normal 1954")

Like the mushroom cloud of nuclear catastrophe, hysteria (and implicitly, guilt) drifts over the world and drops down onto the "burghers" of the first poem. Fallout here is made into an ironic conceit for human responsibilities, which also return home in the end; piercing even the lead casing of the Christ-righteous western heart. The poem would seem to take its situation from a nuclear testing, since "we guess it dazzles" (not destroys) "our black foe". We ourselves have often enough experienced the threat of a fallout cloud drifting back our way since 1954 to understand Smith's helpless rage at the uselessly impressive explosion.

"Universal Peace 19-" (written in 1962[20]) was excluded from the 1967 collection, presumably because it failed to raise the same genuine emotion of its two predecessors. The images, understandably, are mad and hellish, but too prophetic, reaching with the satiric voice into a time when change is effectively impossible, and satire, logically, no longer needed. Thus it defeats itself with too much of truth.

> Murder and suicide alas
> The double crime...
>
> ...how neat!—how dead!—
> A pock-marked scorched colossal Moon.
>
> Hatred and fear: twins locked in a dead womb...
> Pax mundi singed and signed and sealed.
> ("Universal Peace 19-")[21]

This is the result of non-involvement: the earth made into a grinning skull floating gently through space. It is caused not only by the isolation of nations, but by a refusal to act on all levels: as a species, as a religion, at last as an individual, to turn the other cheek into darkness and unwillingness, and finally careless death. "Father", in "The Dead", suffers nightmares and troubled bowels in Smith's morality, simply because he did not fight beside the soldiers who gave up their lives for him: "His doom / Is this, there is not any spark / Of fellowship in those eyes." He can never be as human, quite, as the ghosts who wander round his bed at night, "whose loves / Were just as kind as his, whose lives / Were precious, being irreplaceable."

This same point is echoed in "Ode: The Eumenides", but the choice of detachment is denied us. We are all involved, instantly,

in a kind of "no man is an island" framework that demands either action or death.

> ...There is none
> However innocent
> In heart or head,
> That shall escape
> The stench of the dead
> Emptied and butchered hope
> In lives and deaths made
> Meaningless froth.
>
> ("Ode: The Eumenides")

Incidentally, "Ode: The Eumenides" was originally published in the Canadian Forum with the title, "On Seeing Pictures of the War Dead". Actual death in battle, though, despite being the epitome of involvement, brings the Smith soldier questionable glory. The ghosts in "The Dead" seem noble enough, but rather restless, as though even their dying has not released them from responsibility. They provide no genuine example, no successful call-to-arms to "Fathers" everywhere; ultimately their action was as futile as his reading the newspaper and trembling quietly.

> A voice from the heroic dead
> Unfaltering and clear
> Rings from the overhead
> And zips into the ear;
>
> But what it was it said
> Or what it meant to say,
> This clarion of the sacred dead,
> I cannot tell today...
>
> A sigh of the inconsequential dead,
> A murmur in a drain,
> Lapping a severed head,
> Unlaurelled, unlamented, vain.
>
> ("What is That Music High In The Air?")[22]

The "clarion" from the "heroic" and "sacred dead" goes misunderstood, and as a result they lie "inconsequential" in "vain",

without even a decent burial or a marker to make the call more clear.

This sense of futility behind the supreme sacrifice is only relieved once by Smith; the last six lines of "A Soldier's Ghost" lend a certain dignity, and perhaps redemption, and a sense of gratitude to the "severed head".

> These lost
> Are so many brother bones.
>
> The hieroglyph
> Of ash
> Concedes an anagram
> Of love.
>
> ("A Soldier's Ghost")

A. J. M. Smith would no more seriously deride the soldier's death in battle than anyone else who had lived through the terrors of the First and Second World Wars. Of course what makes these sacrifices "vain" is the refusal of the surviving public to take them as serious reminders of the human potential both for evil and for glory. Thus, as suggested, the "answer" is not applied; only the problem, the uncaring, pictured, and the reader's shame evoked.

It may also be that Smith's questioning of the usefulness of death in battle was in fact caused by his nuclear alarm. The soldier with his individual gun is, after all, an utterly outmoded commodity when the right buttons are pushed; what the poet needs to stir is not a desire to recruit, but the development of a mighty human conscience that will stop the destruction at source.

That development must begin at home. There are other problems lurking within society that demand the poet's attention; particularly for Smith the survival of individual conscience and dignity in an

atmosphere of technology, despair and political insensitivity. The increase of war technology could not have occurred in a world that was already on the correct footing; which brings us to Smith's third emphasis, the role of the hapless individual in the trap of our 20th century.

The most complete portrayal of this theme is without doubt Smith's "The Common Man". The imagery and sentiment are apocalyptic, disjointed and ugly; through them wanders the protagonist, who is at once the artistic soul, the philosopher, the scientist perhaps, and mostly John Doe, the faceless, voiceless by-product of a toneless time.

> Somewhere his number must have been betrayed,
> Caught in the dazzle that the goldfish made[23]
> Or lost in the gas of the first mock raid.
>
> A jittery clerk with a slippery pen
> Condemned him to limbo, a headless hen
> Gyrating about in a bloodstained pen.
>
> ("The Common Man")

Our introduction to the figure, his birth, is a betrayal, almost a bureaucratic error in judgment. He lives "by luck and a sense of touch", forced to grovel about for a looted "food card" which he finds "beside a corpse the death ray only charred". The bitterness is severe. The common man's existence clearly follows some kind of apocalypse or holocaust, but it is nonetheless a metaphor for our own society, since a holocaust of values has already taken place.

> And when this possibility [nuclear war] is accepted with equanimity by a society that believes (or professes to believe) that God is love, holds that the Sermon on the Mount is the noblest expression of practical morality,

> and venerates Socrates and Jesus as our highest
> teachers, we are in the presence of an irony that
> might be tragic if it weren't so pitiful...[24]

In this pathetic world, the common man is something, after all, a little unique. The second section of the poem sets him up in a kind of freedom: he is "not registered"; "his function was to stand outside", presumably outside a registered majority. He is also something of an informant on that majority; he must "tell who told the truth, who plainly lied".[25] He is an "unseen watcher", "one who could not care and had to care".

The third section, more confused and less forceful, indicates that the common man is also a liaison between the authorities and reality: "His job was... / To decode the official releases, and fuse / The cheers on parade with the jeers in the mews." There is a material emphasis: "The dead, being of spirit, were not wanted"; but it is a rather perverted materialism: "sands / Were much sought after for building castles on" because "the castles might crumble but not burn down", thereby frustrating "incendiaries".

> At last his 'amour-propre' became the public weal:
> He was the common man, Platonic and ideal,
> Mercurial and elusive, yet alive and real.
>
> He was the public good...
> ....whatever was done was done
>
> To him. He was the ear communiques
> Addressed, the simple mind for which the maze
> Of policy was clarified. His praise
>
> Was what the leaders said was their reward.
> ("The Common Man")

The fourth section thus develops the idea of a "liaison" into a prototypical man, a representative of the general populace: he

becomes a symbol, therefore, of human suffering under evil authority, of misunderstanding and, in the fifth section, of the inevitability of failure.

> He fell, of course. An abstract man
> Who ended much as he began—
> An exile in a universal plan.
>
> ("The Common Man")

He identifies increasingly with his role as interpreter of "policy", but as he "fuses" the recorded "cheers" with the genuine "jeers", his ability to perceive truth behind superficiality is weakened. Nevertheless, it becomes all the more important to him. "Not to let the leaders down became his mission. / To ascertain their will was his obsession." But he is pathetically confused. This devotion to the "leaders", he hopes, will allow him "to speak and be himself and have a name / And play, not overlook, the murderous game." Instead it leaves him just where he began, boiling a "soiled shard of his purloined card" and bending "where the lamplight ends over the hard / Significant puzzle." A new and threatening figure closes the poem, "the ignorant policeman" who "walks the yard". Of course he too is ignorant, perhaps of the common man, perhaps of the "releases", which makes his authority as an enforcer of the law all the more alarming.

The disturbing and unenthusiastic message of "The Common Man" is typical of the pessimism of most of Smith's social poetry. "The Bridegroom", for instance, takes an innocent young man from his nuptial bed, down into a kind of mechanical inferno or Pandemonium in the 20th century mind, where human misery is the only touchstone.

There was a counterpoint of human sound,
As frustrate lungs or deep involuntary sighs,
Or sinews shrieking, sounds
Squeezed out in spite
Of bitten lip or eyeballs magnified...
And fell some
Into the fire, of sheer fatigue, and fried.
("The Bridegroom")

In the face of these hallucinations the Bridegroom is helpless, and changed utterly.

How shall he ever return now
Up the steep hillside
To his innocent bride?
He shall take on his creased brow
The sweat of these.
The only peace
That he shall know
Is love of these: but it will stop
Far short of hope.
("The Bridegroom")

The reference in "To Henry Vaughan" to Christ as the "Bridegroom" may suggest a modern "harrowing of hell" conceit at work here; at least it confirms the atmosphere of loss of innocence, both social and worldly, that pervades Smith's modern concerns. "The Common Man" reveals various attitudes to this loss: one may stand outside, or join the race of man, or seek to play "the murderous game"—but none of these positions can return us to true dignity or freedom. Finally the diappeared values cannot be recovered by any means whatsoever--the essential pessimistic note in Smith—and can only be lamented, with tears, or questions. "Far short of hope", the best we can do is realize that dignity is no longer possible, but was a good thing.

Betrayed by the cold front
And the bright line
How shall we return
To the significant dark

Of piety and fear
Where holiness smoothed our hair
And honour kissed us goodbye...

How shall we ask for
What we need whose need
Is less, not more?

("Ode: The Eumenides")

Note that the parents in "Son-And-Heir" desire heroics from their son, but the speaker derides their desire and asserts, with some force, the ascendancy of the ordinary.

Who will turn the lights up on this show?
You will find that something has gone wrong with the switch,
Or their eyes, used to horse opera, cannot grow
Used to an ordinary sonofabitch

Like you or me for a son...

("Son-And-Heir")

Of course, an "ordinary sonofabitch" isn't going to produce much positive change in the picture of society Smith offers. As a matter of fact, nobody is. This would seem to cast into doubt a facet of Smith's critical reputation. Pacey writes,

> This attitude is found in Smith's poetry, this combination of intense passion and deliberate restraint, this ideal of hard, aloof, aristocratic poise amidst contemporary chaos.[26]

> Over and over again he affirms the triumph of beauty or love or strength or of spiritual values generally over all those forces, natural and social, which seek to overwhelm them.[27]

If this affirmation is present in Smith it is certainly not in "Noctambule", "Son-And-Heir", "The Common Man", "The Bridegroom", "Political Intelligence", "Ode: The Eumenides", or any of the poems this chapter has considered. Pacey's comments may originate from an over-awareness of the "happy" or aesthetically pleasant poems

having been bound in the same book with the very pessimistic material of these poems, thereby alleviating the whole morbidity of Smith's oeuvre; but this does not do away with the fact that when Smith decides to be socially concerned, he can find for himself no such affirmation. Besides, as noted originally, the existence of the erotic celebration poems (for instance) is not a genuine response to the burdens of society, not an answer, but only a holiday from the office.

Nevertheless, Smith himself seems desirous of such affirmation.

> ...we ask for something positive. Poet and philosopher-historian alike suggest our salvation will be found (if at all) where Jesus and Socrates said it would...This is indeed a difficult forebearance that is asked of us--almost as difficult, indeed, as to be a Christian, a Platonist, a humanist...[28]

Many have responded to such references in Smith's essays with the judgment that he is an essentially Christian poet.[29] Too much this judgment is based on the questionably sincere Christ-poems ("Calvary", "Beside One Dead", "Good Friday") and fails to notice such satires as "The Resurrection of Arp", in which modern religion is demonstrated to be a perversion of "true" religion. If anything, Smith proposes an anti-church religion, on the basis of purely individual faith, as the response to the modern dilemma, but we must roam far and away through Poems New and Collected in any attempt to find religious affirmation.

In so doing we enter other regions of Smith's craft, and should perhaps be certain that one man is speaking all the poems before we slap religious optimisms onto the poet's assessment of modern life. A full examination of Smith's religious response follows, in Chapter

Three. Suffice to say here that there is no correct social response to social agonies: no political ideology, no creation of law, no attachment to or rejection of state, no individualism or conformism, that can provide mankind with genuine peace and security (of mind as well as border). As a social poet Smith is a complainer, a revealer, an informant, but not a saviour; it is mainly in bed and in poetry that his true potential for happiness, other than aesthetic, shines through.

> He draws back into austere symbols and encloses the poet, creator of immortal shapes, in a concept of Being after the manner of the great treatise, in a concept of reality, beyond change or dissolution, and turns the key on illusions.[30]

Out of the modern emphases, then, he must draw back or be crushed; out of sex, war, and individual politics, his primary modern interests, into the only realm where the individual may triumph: into tense religiosity and subtle death wishes, into give-and-take analyses of faith, and logic pushed to its entertaining limits--into Donne, of course, and his problems.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 31.
2. One theme in Smith's "Common Man", discussed later.
3. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", op. cit., p. 9.
4. Smith applies the following quotation (Goethe on Hamlet) to Eliot: "A beautiful, pure and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, (sinking) beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off." ("Hamlet in Modern Dress", op. cit., p. 3.) The same might apply to Smith, were it not for the Christian or other-religious echoes occasionally heard in the poems. These will be discussed in Chapter Three.
5. T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1963), p. 55.
6. Ibid., p. 63.
7. A. J. M. Smith, "Refining Fire: The Meaning and Use of Poetry", op. cit., p. 353.

8. T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962, op. cit., p. 62.
9. A. J. M. Smith, "Hamlet in Modern Dress", op. cit., p. 2.
10. A. J. M. Smith, The Classic Shade: Selected Poems (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 76.
11. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 31.
12. Ibid., p. 32.
13. A. J. M. Smith, "Hamlet in Modern Dress", op. cit., p. 3.
14. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", English Poetry in Quebec (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1965), pp. 13-28; reprinted in On Poetry and Poets (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 88.
15. Ibid., p. 89.
16. See Spenser's Epithalamion, line 427.
17. Further along these lines: in 1925, just before the birth of the Fortnightly, Smith's favourite expression was "Isn't she darling?"--another useful reminder of the possibility of diversity. (Old McGill 1925, Montreal.)
18. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., p. 92.
19. In "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., pp. 97-98, Smith writes, "The sentence 'Hysteria dropping like the gentle dew / Over the bent world broods with ah! bright wings" quotes ironically two famous passages, one by Shakespeare and the other by Gerard Manley Hopkins. In Portia's speech, of course, it is "the quality of mercy" which "droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven"; and in Hopkins' sonnet "God's Grandeur" it is the Holy Ghost which "over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings." Today, it is neither man's mercy nor the grandeur of the Holy Ghost, but the mushroom cloud that broods over the bent (that is, the twisted, perverted) world."
20. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., p. 96.
21. Reprinted in "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., p. 97.
22. See Eliot's Waste Land, line 367.
23. Compare this image with "The Sorcerer", in which the lovers are made into "goldfish" and "the syrupy sunshine" dances on their "tails and fins".
24. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., p. 92.
25. Which makes clear the metaphor with the poet. Smith writes in "Refining Fire", op. cit., p. 362, "The Poet is one who tells on us. He is our secret conscience. He reveals hidden and uncomfortable truths. He lets light and air into dark, closed places. He pricks the wounds of the unconscious and prevents them from festering. He exposes suppressed evil, and can make us whole again."
26. Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets, op. cit., p. 198.
27. Ibid., p. 215.
28. A. J. M. Smith, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis", op. cit., pp. 98, 99.
29. See, for example, the Introduction, and John Sutherland's comments.
30. W. E. Collin, The White Savannahs, op. cit., p. 240.

Chapter Three

METAPHYSICS

> But besides this there has been a turning back to the seventeenth century, a renewed interest in the poems of John Donne, an attempt to recapture and exploit in a new way the poetics of the Metaphysical poets. Rupert Brooke was one of the pioneers in this movement. Such a poem as "Dining Room Tea" describes a trance-like state of super-consciousness that is akin to the Platonic ecstasy described by Donne in his poem, "The Ecstasy". From Donne to Brooke, and from Brooke to Eliot: it is a long stretch, but the curve is continuous.[1]

"Metaphysical", Dryden's swollen adjective, has been applied to the poetry of A. J. M. Smith with more general critical abandon than any other. Although avoiding the precise definition of the term which would make this labelling useful, critics make free with comparisons between Smith and various of the Metaphysical poets, on the assumption that they are saying something about Smith whether they discuss with any care Donne or Crashaw or Marvell or not.

> ...like Donne he is much obsessed with death, like Vaughan and Traherne he yearns for the lost innocence of childhood, like all the metaphysicals he is racked with anxiety and a sense of guilt.[2]

The phrase "all the metaphysicals" should put us on guard. T. S. Eliot, whose essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921) stands today as a monument if not an initiator to these poets' revival, very quickly issued his own disclaimer as to a comprehensive definition.

> It is difficult to find any precise use of metaphor, simile, or other conceit, which is common to all the poets and at the same time important enough as an element of style to isolate these poets as a group.[3]

By extension the application of the adjective in any constant sense is a dangerous practice. We have already noted John Sutherland's

attack on the freedom with which it is employed[4]; but he would seem desirous of invalidating the meaning altogether, which is no wiser than an injudicious semantic free-for-all. For there can be no question that something of the Metaphysical manner or habit or attempt has passed into Smith's oeuvre. His close study of this poetry, in work towards his doctoral degree in Edinburgh[5], certainly guarantees a familiarity that would permit such derivativeness. On this point there is agreement. But rarely is there an attempt to go whole hog and call him a metaphysical poet of the 20th century; there is a general desire to avoid the most serious ramifications of the classification by pointing out that Smith made their habits "peculiarly his own".

> Smith obviously lacks the sheer argumentativeness, the sequential pressure of intellectual give and take, the involvement in conceptual definition and differentiation which gives Donne so much of his flavour. What he possesses are such things as the intellectual high spirits of the superb "What Casey Jones Said to the Medium", or the forceful syntactic logic of poems like "The Archer", "To A Young Poet", "This Flesh Repudiates the Bone", and a good many others.[6] (Milton Wilson)

> As a result of his cultivated intimacy with these poets, various images and symbols, epithets and tricks of phrasing passed into his own poetry; they help us appreciably to understand the work, which is stamped, not less patently, with the power and austerity of his own mind.[7] (W. E. Collin)

> ...there is no doubt that Smith, who under Professor Grierson had made a close study of the religious poets of the seventeenth century, has adapted the metaphysical manner and made it peculiarly his own...Smith, too, has found that he who preached "from a cloud in Paul's" preached doctrine suitable to both his own ethics and aesthetics.[8] (A. M. Klein)

This is critically prudent commentary which avoids the generalizing hand, thus offering useful foundations for the reader's own thinking. But it is also somewhat vague and indefinite, because

(as, indeed, Sutherland pointed out) each of these critics seems to have something particular in mind when using the adjective, and not always the same thing. As readers we should naturally like to be let in on the game. Germaine Warkentin writes,

> Andrew Marvell is of course the poet to whom Smith always returns as a standard of excellence, seeking everywhere the signs of a fusion of thought and sense like his...[9]

Even if we ignore the alarming "of course" Warkentin's article offers no substantiation of this claim. Neither, incidentally, do Smith's essays, which contain in toto perhaps one or two of the most oblique and inessential references to Marvell; neither does his poetry, through which one must dig industriously to turn up any such particularly Marvellian influence.

But whatever the misdirection or indirection of this critical attempt, Smith himself would probably be pleased with the emphasis. He believed himself, early on, that he had partly resurrected the lost poetics of those days.

> ...an attempt has been made to fuse thought and feeling. Such a fusion is characteristic of the kind of poetry usually called metaphysical.[10]

This belief never wavered, if comments delivered thirty years later in the revised Oxford Book of Canadian Verse are any indication.

> The metaphysical revolution effected by Eliot was reflected as early as the mid-twenties by the English speaking poets of a new Montreal school, Scott, Klein, Kennedy and Smith.[11]

The problem is that we don't know just what Smith is talking about, any more than we knew what Klein or Collin or Wilson were talking about. So we begin here, not in an attempt to define "metaphysical poetry" as a thing-in-itself, certainly beyond the range of the present work

and workers, but seeking to learn what Smith thought "metaphysical poetry" was, and to what extent he allowed that definition to permeate his own creativity.

The discussions to follow will deliberately suppress the "dissociation of sensibility" and the criticism of the Metaphysicals that arose from Eliot's creation of that phrase. Although possibly useful as an academic means of describing personal response to ostensibly metaphysical material, the enforced unification of mind and heart does not provide a realistic structure for the understanding of poems. It may be useful at the end of these analyses to consider whether the reader's thoughts or emotions have been stimulated, or both, or neither; but to begin with such abstractions is to invite disaster. Instead we will take a more pedestrian route which, it is hoped, will lead us into deeper countryside.

It would seem that one of the interests of Smith in this regard is the employment of the image by the poets of the 17th century. Taking his cue from Johnson's denigration of Donne, Cowley and Cleveland, Smith attempts to stand the theory on its head, and snatch out of the jaws of insult the laurels of praise.

> To collect and assemble dissimilar images, to discover hidden likenesses, to seek to understand by a minute examination the inner similarity of things: that, according to Dr. Johnson, is the object of the metaphysical poet. Analysis is his characteristic method. He will break his images into fragments. He is essentially an anatomist, no more able to present a true picture of things as a whole "than he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon"... But is this all? Has he not now the problem of re-arranging his shattered world, building it again, nearer, not to the heart's but to the mind's desire? There seems to be an essentially synthetic act involved in this re-shuffling of the universe. Such a writer must break down, select, re-arrange, and then build up again.[12]

Far from arguing with Johnson's assessment, Smith agrees wholeheartedly, but suggests that the process is a virtue rather than a fault. By so fragmenting his images, the metaphysical poet presents a more scientific, rational and intellectually unassailable vision of reality. This, in turn, is more in keeping with our own scientific era than the defenceless considerations of the stymied heart.

> To the metaphysical poet, indeed, nature possesses a philosophic unity. But it is a unity which, like that of the scientist and that of the mystic, is not one with the unity of common sense. There are hidden correspondences and occult similarities which must be apprehended by the intellect before they can touch the emotions.[13]

Thus, the correspondence in Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" between the two lovers and a pair of "stiff twin compasses", although not intrinsically "true" or immediately recognizable, is imposed by the poet onto the reader's thinking, and the latter is made to see the reality from a new, more "intelligent" perspective. Although the conceit lacks the immediacy of "My love is like a red, red rose", Smith believes that the process of thought demanded from the reader is ultimately more valuable than his passive reception of a metaphoric truism. In a discussion of similar complexities in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Smith comments,

> I am only saying that the prejudice against the complexity and the imaginative or impressionistic richness of much mature poetry is very widespread (and quite understandable) but that if the causes of that prejudice are understood it can be cleared up--at least for readers who are willing to learn to read with their senses alert and their imagination awake. This is not an easy task, but it is an important one...a great poem demands a great reader.[14]

Thus, the imagistic range of metaphysical poetry may also serve to enlighten the awareness of the reader, and has an ostensible social function. Beyond "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry", Smith's emphasis

on this aspect of the seventeenth century poetics fades. But that it is not abandoned is attested to by chance reference. In a tribute to the poetry of E. J. Pratt, written just under thirty years later, Smith comments that "there is the combination of unexpected and remotely-gathered perceptions that we associate with the metaphysical conceit".[15] And in 1947, in a discussion of the recent developments in Canadian poetry, he gives us a further clue to his understanding when he describes the poems of Patrick Anderson: "...the language is modern and the phrasing metaphysical ('chords of waves on the piano sea', 'vowels of water', 'the grammar of stones')..."[16] What seems to make an image "metaphysical", then, is an (at times extreme) unlikelihood of the image's having occurred to anyone else. If this is true, logically what makes the metaphysical image succeed is whether the poet can pull it off without evoking a permanent incredulity in his reader.

The fact of his observation has obvious grounds. The comparison of a "flea" with a "marriage temple" in Donne's "The Flea" is no more intuitively acceptable than the "vowels of water" above; if it sounds more acceptable, probably it is because of the weight of Donne's reputation and timelessness. It should also be noted that Donne generally provides the most extreme examples of such correspondence: one looks far before finding a comparison as entertainingly blasphemous as, say, the lady with "Mary Magdalene" and the lover with "a something else" in "The Relique"; or, say, the fearful Christian with a ravishable girl in "Holy Sonnet XIV". Certainly Marvell has it--consider, for example, the closing of "To His Coy Mistress"--as do others, but

Donne is the supreme artificer here.

In the interpretation of the observation, however, lies the possible difficulty. Smith's essay assumes a great seriousness in the Metaphysical poets that made them seek this intellectual rather than emotional unity; but he arrived at the thought through Johnson, and we might return there in search of trouble. For Samuel Johnson assumed that these poets were interested primarily in impressing the reader with wit and dash and cleverness, and to do so presented the most unlikely comparisons and attempted to render them convincing, thus demonstrating their innovativeness and brilliance.[17] When in literary criticism two antithetical viewpoints are fervently held, the answer is often somewhere near centre, and perhaps the suggestion might be taken here; but that Smith thought the Metaphysicals dead serious about what they were doing seems clear.

And it may well be along these lines that the puzzling unlikelihood of much of Smith's own imagery can be understood. Although a great wealth of his material is founded upon images which have an exquisite and natural rightness, it is not difficult to find images of the other extreme, unnatural, unlikely, which must be thought through with definite care before the effect is apprehended. In "Son-And-Heir", "Angels sing / Like press agents the praises of their lamb / In minds as polite as a mezzanine floor." Later there is the apocalyptic phrase, "zero's shears at paper window pane"; "zero" has no antecedent in the poem that might give it a clear meaning. The mind is left with the image, not unlike a riddle, to be solved rather than merely appreciated.

> The great black innocent Othello of a thing
> Is undone by the nice clean pockethandkerchief
> Of 6 a.m., and though the moon is only an old
> Wetwash snotrag...
>
> ("Noctambule")

> Soon will the glitter of green and neon glow
> In the showcase of bulbs and birds' eggs list
> In electric letters buds and bubs kissed
> Into stardom all a green week or so.
>
> ("The Tin Woodman's Annual Sonnet To Ozma of Oz at the Approach of Spring")

> A spiritual pigeon catapults the
> Air around you; a loaded violet
> Is dangerous in your fur. Tenderness, set
> Like a mousetrap or poised like a bee,
> Falls from you...
>
> ("Bird and Flower")

None of these images strikes the ear as true at first hearing. They are all to be weighed and considered; the reader is expected to turn his thoughts to the troublesome diction in a way that will lead him to the same deductions as the poet.

> The reader or hearer thus becomes a partner in the poet's task. He must bring with him some gift of interpretation, sometimes of divination, and is allowed by the poet 'the delicious joy of believing he creates'.[18]

Naturally such a poetic theory will not much appeal to those readers who prefer to receive truths personal or universal without too many semantic acrobatics. Certainly the reader should not have a thoroughly easy time of it; but we have to wonder whether Smith doesn't place too great a burden onto his "great reader". Surely even the most intelligent and analysis-ready reader of poetry has a right to an immediate effect of either sound or sense; beyond which, gladly, he may analyse and twist to his heart's content to garner all the shades of meaning. But the immediate apprehension of some force in the poem

makes dutiful analysis a pleasure rather than a task; Smith perhaps gives too little, in his least successful images, to engage the reader's intellect as he so desires.

> Now that the ashen rain of gummy April
> Clacks like a weedy and stain'd mill,
>
> So that all the tall purple trees
> Are pied porpoises in swishing seas,
>
> And the yellow horses and milch cows
> Come out of their long frosty house
>
> To gape at the straining flags
> The brown pompous hill wags...
>
> ("A Hyacinth For Edith")

The first comment here must be that "A Hyacinth For Edith" is one of Smith's "in the manner of" poems, and cannot be held too rigidly to blame for its particular oddities; although it would be equally wrong to excuse it from all the usual demands of his taste. Again we have the unlikely images, what Smith might have called the "metaphysical images", troubling us. But they are not supported through the poem by any means, intellectual or emotional or phonic. The conjunction "so" implies that the images of the first stanza in some way presuppose the images that follow in the second, but this is not so. In fact, the advent of "trees" like "pied porpoises in swishing seas" cannot by any twist of the reader's faculties be brought into line as a natural consequence of "ashen rain" clacking "like a weedy and stain'd mill". The poem continues with less severe but similar problems.

> The bird of ecstasy shall sing again,
> The bearded sun shall spring again,
>
> A new ripe fruit upon the sky's high tree,
> A flowery island in the sky's wide sea--

And childish cold ballades, long dead, long mute,
Shall mingle with the gayety of bird and fruit,

And fall like cool and soothing rain...
("A Hyacinth For Edith")

Despite the difficult visualizations--which, again, are in imitation of Sitwell's verse and must be taken with a grain of salt--the poem closes with a rather conventional image which, by virtue of its appearance with these others, strikes as a breath of fresh and simple air.

Till I am grown again my own lost ghost
Of joy, long lost, long given up for lost,

And walk again the wild and sweet wildwood
Of our lost innocence, our ghostly childhood.
("A Hyacinth For Edith")

We might excuse the first twenty-two lines as having set up and counterpointed the force of the last four; or we might think of the poem as an exercise in the aesthetic perception of reality and leave it alone. But what Smith has said about the proper "metaphysical" image gives us every right to criticize its operation here. We remember that Smith's metaphysical poet must disassemble and shatter his universe, but that he also has a responsibility to rebuild from the bottom up until he has offered a genuine replacement for all that he destroyed. "A Hyacinth For Edith" attempts no such regeneration. The reader is floundering in a sea of images that are not pulled together except by mutually contradicting the clarity of the conclusion. Thus the "essentially synthetic act"[19] is not pulled off.

It is difficult not to offer in comparison the most standardly discussed metaphysical image of them all, Donne's "stiff twin compasses"

mentioned above. He not only shatters the world with his unconventional image, but with steady logic proves the validity of his alternative.

> Our two souls, therefore, which are one,
> Though I must go, endure not yet
> A breach, but an expansion,
> Like gold to aery thinness beat.
>
> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiff twin compasses are two,
> Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth, if th'other do.
>
> And though it in the centre sit,
> Yet when the other far doth roam,
> It leans, and hearkens after it,
> And grows erect, as that comes home.
>
> Such wilt thou be to me, who must
> Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
> Thy firmness makes my circle just,
> And makes me end, where I begun.[20]

Had Smith provided for any one of his images the argumentative equivalent of Donne's last three stanzas, then and only then (by his own definition) could his imagery be called metaphysical. Donne, by proving point by point the justness of his metaphor, has established a conceit, taking the reader with him into the unique workings of his mind. This is not to say (lest Smith decry it) that the reader has done nothing; for he must follow and weigh Donne's premises as well. But because these are presented on the surface of the poem, he is also given an immediate effect of logic, which he can then verify or disprove as he likes.

We thus arrive at a sharp distinction between Smith's metaphysical image and the true metaphysical conceit. The latter would seem to be the essence of the manner; the former is only the superficies. Smith,

although instinctively recognizing the truth in his essay, cannot or will not always perform it in his poetry.

This is true not only of "A Hyacinth For Edith" but also of "Bird and Flower"; by the end of the sonnet we are left wondering how a "violet" may be "loaded", how a "spiritual pigeon" may "catapult the air", and how to appreciate the poem.[21] "Noctambule" throws out its whirling images of confusion and pointlessness and utterly surrenders to them.

> So mewed the lion,
> Until mouse roared once and after lashed
> His tail: Shellshock came on again, his skin
> Twitched in the rancid margarine, his eye
> Like a lake isle in a florist's window:
> Reality at two removes, and mouse and moon
> Successful.
>
> ("Noctambule")

This is not, it would seem, Smith attempting the full conceit and failing, if we may judge by the "metaphysical" ease of "I Shall Remember". The poet who could write the following lines, an image equally unlikely but generously complete and beautiful, could not have been unaware of the difference in imagistic achievement with the poems glanced at above.

> I shall remember forever
> A lonely swallow swerving
> Over a dusky river,
> Sweeping and solemnly curving
> In long arcs that never
> Stirred the still stream,
> For so your smile
> Curves in quiet dream
> For a slow sleepy while
> Over your tranquil mind
> That is not stirred
> Even by thought's faintest wind,
> Or fancy's loneliest bird.
>
> ("I Shall Remember")

The reader may analyze the correspondences painstakingly and never touch the impression of power and truth in the extended image.[22] Insofar as we accept Smith's definitions--the first premise of these discussions--we shall adjudge the swallow of "I Shall Remember" his most successful image in the metaphysical style. And we must admit that poems in which he does not similarly provide the logic of his odd comparisons, by the same token, are in part disappointing. As for the reader's duty to "earn" the meaning, the clarity of this poem does not render him a passive spectator. He must think here as well, for instance, in order to realize the faint cynicism informing the last three lines; thus proving a subtlety beyond the merely abstruse or unusual.[23]

Professor Collin, when he mentioned "various...epithets and tricks of phrasing" which had "passed" into Smith's poetry[24], touched another matter which is at the heart of the Metaphysical habit. For the means by which the image is to be extended into the conceit are obviously crucial to the success of the poem. These are enervating to name. Such terms as "wit", "cleverness" and "logic", while partly right all of the time and all right part of the time, generally fall short as expressions of the "tools" of the metaphysical school.

Smith certainly has his wit and cleverness, but rarely have they any serious application. His humour tends to be facetious rather than constructive, his cleverness derisive rather than admirable. We have already noted the sharp satiric denuding of the 20th century in many of his poems. He has an equally sharp tongue for the worst poetry of his own time, as in "One Sort of Poet", "On Reading an Anthology of Popular Poetry", and "The Taste of Space". But wit in itself does not

a Metaphysical make; wit in the service of a conceit, or logic in the service of seduction, might better suit the 17th century taste. And subtle wit would seem equally requisite, because it pulls the reader in with gentle tugs rather than open guffaws.

So, in the second of "Three Phases of Punch", the concluding lines offer an immediate smile which is pushed ever deeper as the more subtle shades of meaning are retrieved.

> All over the flowery mead he chased a maid,/
> And caught her, changed to no laurel, but a Mary
> To whom he played the part the Angel played.
> ("Three Phrases of Punch")

The speaker first abandons the traditional Apollo-and-Daphne mythological pursuit, and seems at a glance to substitute the Christian pantheon; but a moment's reflection reveals a more sexual intention. Given Punchinello's satyr-like attributes ("his feet / were cloven", "his limbs were hairy"), his pursuit of the damsel intends only one end; and the reader is thus brought to a perception that Gabriel literally penetrated and inseminated Mary, rather than merely informing her of a coming parthenogenetic birth. The whole is attributable without too much quibbling to Smith's "wit", and demonstrates his subtle turn.

> I have seemed to find particularly congenial...ironic understatement or anti-climax, the intentional and rather insulting drop into bathos. This can be dangerous when turned upon oneself; ironic self-depreciation can be too easily taken by others as sober literal truth. But when turned against the knaves and fools who are the traditional targets of classical satire it can be very effective.[25]

This understatement need not exist only in a word here and there, but can in Smith's best inform a whole poem and provide it with a delightful wryness. "The Sorcerer", for instance, is an understated

desire on the part of the poet for the extinction of a priest, which is made gently laughable to the reader by the faint ironic tone.

> There is a sorcerer in Lachine
> Who for a small fee will put a spell
> On my beloved, who has sea green
> Eyes, and on my doting self as well.
>
> He will transform us, if we like, to goldfish:
> We shall swim in a crystal bowl,
> And the bright water will go swish
> Over our naked bodies; we shall have no soul.
>
> In the morning the syrupy sunshine
> Will dance on our tails and fins,
> I shall have her then all for mine,
> And Father Lebeau will hear no more of her sins.
>
> Come along, good sir, change us into goldfish.
> I would put away intellect and lust,
> Be but a red gleam in a crystal dish,
> But kin of the trembling ocean, not of the dust.
>
> ("The Sorcerer")

There are parallels that may be drawn (but not pushed) with Donne's "The Canonization", since the speaker here wishes similarly for a removal from the clucking tongues of the lovers' "mentors"; Father Lebeau comes in for a good deal of hostility because he is concerned with the lady's soul, which is tainted by sin or sex. The speaker would rather "have no soul". Donne wishes to be all soul, that is to say, sainted for love, but the effect of removal from mundane senses of honour ("For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love") is the same. In becoming "kin of the trembling ocean" Smith apotheosizes his affair in much the same way as have Donne and his lady, who will be invoked by future lovers for "a pattern of [their] love". Despite these mild parallels, Smith wishes to "put away intellect and lust", synonyms for the two sensibilities said by Eliot to have been "dissociated" since Donne's time.

Clearly Smith's gentle wit has some depth and range. In "With Sweetest Heresy" the speaker initially convinces himself that no one woman can fill the emotional and sexual needs of a lifetime.

> No woman, though she's made
> In the same mould as some tall Irish queen
> That poet-historians swear has been
> And wears her beauty like a diadem,
> With wit as sharp and polished as a gem,
> May be the all-sufficing book and grove,
> Lamp, bell, academy, and school of love...
> ("With Sweetest Heresy")

But, with "self-depreciation" that is almost touching, he turns the idea about and admits with genuine honesty the force of "arguments" standing against him.

> And yet one darling's ignorant she-discernment
> I have found
> Turn love's wise parliament
> Around and round,
> That in an unlearned frenzy and contentment
> At her white side I lie
> With sweetest heresy.
> ("With Sweetest Heresy")

The implicit mocking of "love's parliament", indeed of hope for wisdom in love at all, echoes the rejection of "Father Lebeau" in "The Sorcerer". The need to be rid of imposition and love freely and well, apparently evident in Smith, is perhaps epitomized in Donne, whose refusal to bed to "honour" in a limiting sense is everywhere in his Songs and Sonnets; but it never undercuts his ability to laugh at his own weaknesses.

> I am two fools, I know,
> For loving and for saying so
> In whining poetry...
> And I, which was two fools, do so grow three;
> Who are a little wise, the best fools be.[26]

Smith's "wit" turns, like Donne's, in two directions then: outward, as a tool against all the rules of honour or morality that lie

in the way of true love; and inward, in gentle self-mockery that is a lovely reminder of the essential humanity of the metaphysical pose.[27] But this is wit in its mainly comedic sense; as a function of the conceit or premise of the logic, wit is something far more intellectually demanding; it is exactly that ability discussed above to take the unlikely perception of the universe and work it through in all its implications. We have already noted that Smith's images rarely extend thus into conceits; but that is not to say that he is entirely free of successful speculative logic. One of the most metaphysical poems in all of Smith's oeuvre, in this sense, is "A Little Night Piece".

The speaker begins the intellectual process by demanding that the faint colours of "evening" be replaced by night that "thickens" and "flows like ink". The mood is autumnal; there are "brittle shavings, hard and dry" in the air, and "silence" and "stirrings in the trees around / Whose papery leaves are gray." When "the solitary bird becomes a rook"--that is, becomes a blackened silhouette, the poet begins an elaborate consideration of the reversal of light patterns in the darkness. "The garden Hermes glimmers white"; presumably a statue which now stands out fully against the blacker background, forming "as much of dark, as much of light / As the night-struck eye can hold."

This balance is then "reversed" from day. "A marble streak is all that's left / Of day engulfed in Stygian dark. / The pulsing glow-worm's greenish spark / Is day of all but light bereft." Having brought us to his yin/yang relationship between day and night, the poet leaves us alone with the thought and moves to a more emotional speculation.

The eye's the navel of the mind:
Such little lights when light is sped
Are points upon a graph assigned
To trace the locus in the head
  Of lines that bound the world of things
  And clip the monster Chaos' wings
That fills the night with dread.

("A Little Night Piece")

The complex optic process of the first three stanzas is thus internalized in the concluding stanza and translated into emotional effect. The idea that the smallest dots of light are sufficient for the human mind to orient itself in darkness, and to kill primitive fears of blind monsters, is proven by a discussion of the process through which those dots are left behind by the "wide effulgence of a summer noon". Therefore the wit succeeds.

But when these structures of thought take on questions that are less scientific and more personally crucial to man, the denotations and connotations of "wit" and "logic" fail to hold up the burden of definition. It is not "wit" that informs Donne's cry, "Batter my heart, three-person'd God"; it is something at once deeper and far less playful. Neither is it "cleverness" or "logic" in our original sense; it is an attitude to possibilities of meaning that reaches so entirely past usual human complacency as to defeat all attempts at labelling. It powers his considerations of death and God in a way that leaves his secular poetry trailing in the distance.

We discover a similar boundary in Smith's poetry. Once the delight of the love lyrics and sex celebrations is past, once the satiric voice has shocked or aroused or frightened, once wit, in fact, has run its course, the poet turns back to devotional considerations of his own death and faith, and takes on a sudden solemnity that fades the most

intelligent of smiles. "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry" offers a key text for the understanding of Smith's own religious position.

> The men of [the seventeenth] century were scholars in devotion, the students of a living World re-born of the Renaissance. They drew their inspiration alike from scholastic Christianity and classical Paganism, and while they accepted, both in letter and spirit, Bible and Creed, they did not fail to recognize that the universe contained enough that had been left dark and mysterious to warrant the most daring speculation and the most exacting use of the mind.[28]

Smith himself is no fully Christian poet. Neither is he an atheistic poet writing out of a vacuous paganism. He is somewhere in the middle, or at both ends at once, full of indecision which he may resolve here or there but never once and for all. This indecision manifests itself in two major ways: firstly, the existence side-by-side of entirely Christian poems and entirely pagan or atheistic poems; and secondly, the juxtaposition within the same poem of the two possibilities. For instance, "Good Friday", "Beside One Dead" and "Calvary" form a trio of poems that is typically (and not too powerfully) devotional.

> This day upon the bitter tree
> Died one who had he willed
> Could have dried up the wide sea
> And the wind stilled...
>
> What answering meed of love
> Can this frail flesh return
> That is not all unworthy of
> The god I mourn?
>
> ("Good Friday")

The question echoes Donne's doubt and guilt in the Holy Sonnets; ostensibly the speaker recognizes his debt to Christ but fears himself unable to repay in kind. The first and fourth stanzas of the poem are nearly identical, certainly in their purpose; the themes of the third and fifth (God made man) are also repetitious, and therefore do not

develop the theological idea at all. This leaves the final stanza, echoing Donne, and the weak second.

> And when at the ninth hour
> He surrendered the ghost
> His face was a faded flower
> Drooping and lost.
>
> ("Good Friday")

There is simply not much genuine concern in this poem. It reads more as a devotional exercise than an expression of fear and doubt; the speaker sounds, after all, too calm to permit the final question any real force. "Calvary" and "Beside One Dead", while technically felicitous, suffer the same lack.

> This is the sheath,
> the sword drawn...
> This is Calvary
> toward dawn...
> The opened tomb
> and the Lord gone:
> Something whole
> that was broken.
>
> ("Beside One Dead")

> A gentle haggard countenance
> Under black thorns putty-pale
> Has hushed the planets' morris dance
> And rent the temple veil
> And flung the moving lance
> Of a world-destroying gale.
>
> ("Calvary")

These three, however bland, are the only poems in which Smith directly addresses the figure of Christ in his poetry. In all its other manifestations the consideration is not of Christ but of Christianity, of an organized religion and its chief proponents. We have already seen the character assassination of "Father Lebeau" in "The Sorcerer"; this good priest is not alone in his faults.

Send not the innocent heart to find
In civil tears denials of the blood
Or in humility feign kinglihood.
'Twould filch his character away and bind
Him spiritless, whom Holiness designed
To swell the vein with a secular flood...
("To The Christian Doctors")

Some holy men so love their cells they make
Their four gray walls the whole damned stinking world
And God comes in and fills it easily.
("Bird and Flower")

"Holiness", that has "designed" the "innocent heart", is obviously a truer holiness than that of priests and Christian Doctors. It is associated with the "secular" and the blood, and seeks to burst free of ideological restrictions.

> The paradox here is the statement that God should find anything easy or (by implication therefore) hard. What we actually have is an inverted hyperbole calculated to emphasize how small and mean is the monastic world of the "holy" men who blaspheme the world of natural love. Only for them, not for the poet and the particular woman he is writing about, is the world a damned and stinking world.[29]

Sometimes this mockery of false religion or church power is so extreme that Smith throws out the baby with the bath. We have already noted the Christian sexual farce that closes the second of "Three Phases of Punch"; "Ballade Un Peu Banale" ends with similar disrespect.

I like to think sweet Jesus Christ
For His dear Mother's sake,
By some miraculous device,
Her to Himself did take;

That her preserv'd Virginity
Flutes holy flats and sharps
In that divine vicinity
Where Eliot's hippo harps.
("Ballade Un Peu Banale")

"Resurrection of Arp" provides a sacrilegious parody of the resurrection of Christ, complete with perverted symbols.

When they turned down the gas
everybody could see there was
a halo of tongues of pale fire
licking the grease off his hair,

and a white bird
fluttered away in the rafters;
people heard
the breaking of a mysterious wind (laughter).
("Resurrection of Arp")

The resurrection concludes with an interview, in which Arp destroys the Christian idea of heaven and remarks that "death, after all, was only 'another room'." This general humiliation of holy doctrine and holy men is only rarely spared. Probably the most authentically Christian poem is Smith's tribute "To Henry Vaughan", in the manner of Vaughan; but it is moving not because of its Christian approbations, but because of the speaker's delicate appreciation of Vaughan's love of Christ.

Homesick? And yet your country walks
Were heaven'd for you...
And stirring forth before the break
Of day, thou wouldst enquire...
If, in the sun's first quick'ning ray
Thou might'st observe the flaming hair
Of thy wish'd Lord, thy Bridegroom dear...
And anxious to exchange in death
Thy foul, for thy Lord's precious, breath,
Thou art content to beg a pall,
Glad to be nothing, to be All.
("To Henry Vaughan").

The poem is one of Smith's most lyrical and successful; its admiration of Vaughan, coupled with the refined expression of his doctrines, plus an eloquent and evocative expression, leave us desiring nothing, unless it be that Smith himself could be so sure of his own beliefs, and give them such convincing force.

"Bird and Flower" offers a symbolic truce between Christian and

pagan drives, and closes with two adjectives that are perhaps synonymic with Eliot's two "sensibilities".

> Your Christian bird and Grecian flower twirled
> In gamblers' spirals sets a trickier stake,
> Grounded, o Love, in holiness and joy.[30] ("Bird and Flower")

But this truce between the two is rare. Usually there is a marked distinction in Smith between the Christian and pagan concepts of religion, in those poems that present both. Ferns notes the general triumph in Smith of the pagan side, in that it manifests a more potent, trembling divine passion than the guilt-ridden fear of Christ or of hell.[31]

> The Mother of Helen shrieked
> When the Egg dropped from her side,
> And the flailing-winged fiery-beaked
> Jupiter shivered and sighed.
>
> The Mother of Jesus smiled
> On the innocent One at rest,
> And the tender sucking Dove beguiled
> Her virginal womb and chaste breast.
>
> ("The Swan and the Dove")

"Beguiled" is certainly not a positive word, and it gives to "sucking" an unpleasantness that might otherwise not be felt. What is "beguiled" is "virginal" and "chaste", which throws added weight against the Christian version of the Immaculate Conception. The pagan version, on the other hand, is packed with power and regeneration, with suggestions of ejaculation, pain and intense completion.

From this point on the pagan seems to hold sway. There are no other poems from which we may seek redemption of the Christian ideal. The three most obvious poems to help us in this line we have noted to be less than convincing; they do not pose much against the over-

whelming burden of sneers and anger with which Smith invests his other comments on the church. The religion is dominated by false evangelists ("Resurrection of Arp") and holy men of limited vision ("Bird and Flower"), whose interference with free thought and natural love is insulting and harmful ("To The Christian Doctors", "The Sorcerer"). The supposed virgin birth of Christ is held up for general ridicule ("Three Phases of Punch", "Ballade un Peu Banale", "The Swan and the Dove").

On the other hand, the pagan world rarely comes in for much poetic flak. Indeed, its passing would seem to be a great loss to mankind, something for which we must seek the return.

> My true-religious heart upbraided my unfaith--
> She will not feel the frost, she'll not acknowledge death.
> She says, poor fond enthusiast, the goatfoot god is slain,
> But like a god, whom we shall see rise from the tomb again.
> ("The Faithful Heart")

The speaker is an "enthusiast", the etymology of which reveals his attraction to the Dionysian mode. There is marked irony in the prophecy of a "resurrection" for Pan, and, in the poem's fifth line, his having been betrayed by "Judas Time". Even the epithets and symbols of Christianity thus begin to shift into the Pagan world, because their own centre cannot hold. In "To a Young Poet" it is a goddess of the pagan world, Artemis, who inspires the "stern", "hard" power of the poet, and provides in her very nature the poetics he seeks.

> ...I would have you find
> In the stern autumnal face
> Of Artemis...
> ...the worth of a hard thing done
> Perfectly, as though without care.
> ("To a Young Poet")

This is echoed in the brief "Pagan", where the poet exclaims, "Were I the great God Pan / I'd pipe so wild a note..." Christianity can provide no such inspiration.

The tension between the two is somewhat analogous to Donne's wracked doubting in his devotional works. Without discussing relative quality, since few could bear that comparison, suffice to say that Smith undergoes Donne's doubts and fears but is able to abandon his religion more easily because he provides himself with an intellectually and artistically viable alternative. It may be that what makes Donne's considerations of faith so much more crucial and involving is that his alternative is complete nothingness, spiritual oblivion, and so he clings with all the more terrible need to the concepts of the religion he has espoused.

Further evidence that Smith as a poet never wholly accepted the tenets of personal salvation in Christianity is provided by the sixth section of Poems New and Collected, which George Woodcock has labelled "metaphysical contemplations of death".[32] These range from paralytic fear-sermons, generally unaffecting because they fail to do much with the fear, to fairly sincere death wishes, and all areas in between. An example of the former is "Watching the Old Man Die".

> I savored my own death
> And wept for myself not him.
> I was forced to admit the truth
> It was not his death I found grim
> But knowing that I must die.
>
> ("Watching the Old Man Die")

There's not much genuine power in this fear. The poems expressing the essential desirability of death find a much stronger voice.[33]

Weep not on this quiet stone,
I, embedded here
Where sturdy roots divide the bone
And tendrils split a hair,
Bespeak you comfort of the grass
That is embodied me,
Which as I am, not as I was,
Would choose to be.

("Epitaph")

It enlivens my darkness,
Progressively illuminating
What I know for the first time, yes,
Is what I've been always wanting.

("My Death")

"The Shrouding" asks that death be greeted not with fear and loathing but with pride and readiness, and quietude.

Fold your thin hands like this,
Over your breast, so;
Protract no farewell kiss,
No ceremonial woe,

But stand up in your shroud
Above the crumbling bone,
Drawn up like one more cloud
Into the radiant sun.

("The Shrouding")

Others speak literally to the readiness of the flesh to spring from the bone, and set the life away.

This flesh repudiates the bone
With such dissolving force,
In such a tumult to be gone...

("Metamorphosis")

Free then of the flesh hood
And the cage of bone,
Singing at last a good
Song, I shall be gone

Into that far and wild
Where once I sang
Before the flesh beguiled,
And the trap was sprung.

("The Bird")

Note the suggestions of reincarnation in "The Bird"; it points

to an even more significant lack in these death poems, that is, the absence of reference to Christian resurrection. There is an implication of something after death, but there is no attempt to circumscribe or define this something. The poet believes, clearly, in the immortality of the soul; but he has the good grace not to pretend to secret knowledge: hardly a Christian habit.

> How do I know the horror
> That breaks the dream,
> Hateful yet clung to
> As the image hugs the mirror...
>
> ("On Knowing Nothing")

The culmination of all of these possible attitudes to death, and particularly to this latter admission that we can know nothing of what follows life, is unquestionably Smith's "Prothalamium", which marks in its devoted seriousness exactly that supremacy that we noted in "A Little Night Piece". It is the most metaphysical of Smith's poems by almost any stretch of definition, and deserves quotation in full.

> Here in this narrow room there is no light;
> The dead tree sings against the window pane;
> Sand shifts a little, easily; the wall
> Responds a little, inchmeal, slowly, down.
>
> My sister, whom my dust shall marry, sleeps
> Alone, yet knows what bitter root it is
> That stirs within her; see, it splits the heart--
> Warm hands grown cold, grown nerveless as a fin,
> And lips enamelled to a hardness--
> Consummation ushered in
> By wind in sundry corners.
>
> This holy sacrament was solemnized
> In harsh poetics a good while ago--
> At Malfy and the Danish battlements,
> And by that preacher from a cloud in Paul's.

No matter: each must read the truth himself,
Or, reading it, reads nothing to the point.
Now these are me, whose thought is mine, and hers,
Who are alone here in this narrow room--
Tree fumbling pane, bell tolling,
Ceiling dripping and the plaster falling,
And Death, the voluptuous, calling.
("Prothalamium")

The poet is visiting a deceased sister, although still living himself, perhaps in a family vault. At the beginning "the dead tree sings", but by the end it has a more pointless function, "fumbling pane" and silent. The poet, who is removed from the death of the crypt for the first three stanzas ("my sister...sleeps / alone") is perfectly involved with it by the conclusion: "Now these are me, whose thought is mine, and hers, / Who are alone here in this narrow room"; that is, the contemplation of death has led the poet to be entirely involved, as much as the dead sister.

Death clearly has sexual connotations. The poet's dust shall "marry" his sister's dust, which "consummation" shall be "ushered in / By wind in sundry corners". Death is a "holy sacrament", as is marriage, and it is "solemnized", a word usually reserved for the more pleasant of the two. Finally, Death is "voluptuous", seductive, calling with feminine wiles the very heart of the poet. Thus we have a further development of the death wish noted in the other poems of this sixth section.

The third stanza and the first quatrain of the fourth reinforce the earlier suggestion that the poet can know nothing of what is to come; the search through recorded human experience for some foreknowledge is pointless. Not Webster in The Duchess of Malfi, nor Shakespeare in Hamlet, nor any of the great English sermons of John Donne,

can begin to touch the smallest corner of the fabric of death. Those seeking such foreknowledge are doomed to read "nothing to the point". The earlier writers become a part of the present writer--"now these are me, whose thought is mine"--but that is all. There is no preparation to be made.

Nor is the poem entirely free of the fear that informs "Watching The Old Man Die" or "On Knowing Nothing". There is an almost Poe-like horror to the mood: the "fumbling" of the tree and the dismal "tolling" of the bell, the "dripping" and "falling" of ceiling and plaster send a subtle chill through the nerves and give "Prothalamium" yet another complexity.[34]

Of "The Archer" mention ought to be made in this context, for it is a near equal to "Prothalamium" in quality and power. The picture is of a man, the speaker, poised with bow and arrow, the string near his ear and the arrow held firm.

> So for a moment, motionless, serene,
> Fixed between time and time, I aim and wait;
> Nothing remains for breath now but to waive
> His prior claim and let the barb fly clean
> Into the heart of what I know and hate--
> That central black, the ringed and targeted grave.
> ("The Archer")

"Know and hate" is a curious and direct contradiction of at once the sexual desirability of death and the impossibility of foreknowledge; but perhaps the image of the grave should be taken more literally. It is certainly possible for each of us to know the six-by-six-by-three foot hole that we shall find sooner or later, and not difficult despite any death wish to "hate" it.

As Smith might say, "we have come a long way riding". We have noted a few metaphysical poems, a few metaphysical images or conceits, and a number of unsuccessful metaphysical images. It is in the latter only that Smith may be said to have rendered the Metaphysical manner "peculiarly his own", and we must therefore acknowledge that by so rendering it he left it notably un-Metaphysical. It is not sufficient that an image seem unlikely or intellectual or non-intuitive; the poet must also firmly demonstrate its deeper correctness. An unlikely or impossible comparison, therefore, within the body of an otherwise usual poem, does not make it "metaphysical"; nor does "wit" on its own make a poem "metaphysical"; because if a poem is not from top to toe consistently "metaphysical", the classification becomes a pointless one. The term is not useless to our time, but it has an integrity which argues against its glib overuse in Smith criticism.

Therefore although we may say that Smith's knowledge of the devotional poets of the 17th century influenced his poetic images, occasionally his syntax, and usually his expression of thoughts, we may not say that he made their habits peculiarly his own. Insofar as he differentiated himself from their habits, he was breaking different ground, and we must cease to obscure both our understanding of Smith and our descriptions of the Metaphysicals by forcing them into a commonality which is natural to neither.

W. E. Collin writes, in Gants du Ciel,

> Mais ce n'est que pour des fins d'analyse que nous séparons le style du sentiment auquel il est substantiellement uni dans la poésie de Smith. Le style et le sentiment sont une seule et même chose, une pensée est un sentiment, et leur identité est le signe de cette "sensibilité unifiée" que Eliot découvrait chez les poètes métaphysiques. Nous retrouvons chez Smith "cette appréhension sensible directe de la pensée,

> ou cette récreation de la pensée dans le sentiment" que Eliot découvrait chez Chapman et chez Donne.[35]

And Milton Wilson:

> If one must use the terminology of the sacred wood, then what Smith gives us is less like Eliot's required fusion of thought and emotion than like his "emotional equivalent of thought".[36]

It may well be the inadequacy of the present reader that makes these phrases sound, after the power of "Prothalamium" and the elegance of "I Shall Remember", a little tired. Milton Wilson's faint sarcasm might suggest his agreement. But to Smith when he encountered them they were fresh and youthful, and he seized on them with a hunger that left them as a permanent formula in his work. The glorification of mind runs literally throughout his essays, to such an extent that the reader may very nearly choose any two and find some passing reference. It is perhaps the omnipresence of such statements that led critics to an over-easy acceptance of his poetry as metaphysical. But we must note in the statements, deeper than their general applause, something of an imbalance. Eliot's phrases are "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought" and "a recreation of thought into feeling".[37] Far from a removal from emotion and feeling, Eliot suggests that the final effect of the poem is still emotional rather than intellectual. At first Smith demonstrates complete agreement; "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry" echoes Eliot's emphasis.

> The metaphysical poet deals not with the world of things, but with the world of ideas; and the emotion which inspires his poetry does not come to him directly through sensation, but is the product of cerebral activity...It is feeling, however, which is his aim, as surely as it is that of the romantic poet, but metaphysical poetry is the expression of emotion which arises in mental activity and results from the intellectual re-arrangement of facts and concepts.[38]

But the feeling falls away in later commentary, and an extreme concern with the establishment of the intellect is manifested. This is partly because the burden of Canadian poetry--Smith himself said it first--had been so completely emotional and so completely mindless that it could only be cured by an obsession with intellect.

> The fundamental criticism that must be brought against Canadian poetry as a whole is that it ignores the intelligence. And as a result it is dead.[39]

> We want to know whether the poem is alive or dead. Can it speak to us in a language we recognize as that of a man, not of a bird or a book? Can we accept it without putting half of our personality--the mind--to sleep?[40]

> I would like to suggest that poetry is a human activity and that if it is to be fully relevant, it must speak for the whole man, the whole human being. And I would like to say a word for that despised element of humanity--the intellect, and to emphasize the fact that for me at least intellect has an essential part to play in the creation of every poem, no matter from what depth of anarchic darkness in the mind it originally arises.[41]

But the necessary return to emotion (hand in hand with or rising from intellect) does not appear in his commentaries with any strength. This is partly why Eliot's "dissociation of sensibilities" has been suppressed. We would have arrived too easily through this phrase at a point where anything in Smith would have demanded the "metaphysical" stamp simply because it demands the reader's intelligence and learning be brought into play. We would thus reduce the complexity of Smith's collected poems to an epithet, and might just as well have not bothered.

Is it unscholarly to leap back several pages now, and suggest that if Smith indeed lost track of the emotional half of Eliot's theory, it is at least distantly related to his failure to extend

various of his images into true metaphysical conceits? Images of this nature (those of "Noctambule", for instance, were discussed in this context) fail not as intellectual but as emotional achievement. The reader is not left desirous of further intellectual stimulation by any means; rather he is eager for some emotion of some power that will unite the surrealistic imagery and convince him that he ought to be reading the poem as intelligently as possible. This would seem to be the true essence of Eliot's theory.

Whether Smith consciously or unconsciously altered that theory is not terribly relevant. His intellectual emphasis, however, permits us as readers to approach his poems without too much concern for their "mind", and with our own hearts open, seeking a true fusion of the sensibilities, not just a reinstatement of the intellect that ignores the natural human desire to feel great things.

We are satisfied in this search by "I Shall Remember", "Prothalamium", "A Little Night Piece" and "The Archer", and perhaps one or two others which this chapter has not considered. These are Smith's metaphysical poems. The poems which do not satisfy this search are not metaphysical because they forget the poet's duty to his emotions. That they do so for a conscious reason is the contention of the next chapter.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 32.
2. Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets, op. cit., p. 200.
3. T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", in Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1960), p. 242.
4. See the Introduction, p. 5.

5. A. J. M. Smith, Studies in the Metaphysical Poets of the Anglican Church in the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh, 1931).
6. Milton Wilson, "Second and Third Thoughts About Smith", Canadian Literature 15, winter '63, pp. 16-17.
7. W. E. Collin, The White Savannahs, op. cit., p. 236.
8. A. M. Klein, "The Poetry of A. J. M. Smith", Canadian Forum 23, February '44, p. 258.
9. Germaine Warkentin, "Criticism and the Whole Man", Canadian Literature 64, spring '75, p. 86.
10. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", op. cit., p. 40.
11. A. J. M. Smith, Introduction to Oxford Book of Canadian Verse (Toronto: University of Oxford Press, 1965), p. xlvi.
12. A. J. M. Smith, "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry", Canadian Mercury 1, February '29, p. 61.
13. Ibid.
14. A. J. M. Smith, Introduction to 100 Poems (Michigan: Scribner & Sons, 1965), p. xi.
15. A. J. M. Smith, "Poet: E. J. Pratt", Tamarack Review 6, winter '58, p. 70.
16. A. J. M. Smith, "New Canadian Poetry", Canadian Forum 26, February '47, p. 251.
17. John Wain, editor, Johnson as Critic (Great Britain: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 256.
18. A. J. M. Smith, "Symbolism in Poetry", op. cit., p. 11.
19. See p. 57.
20. John Donne, The Complete English Poems, edited by A. J. Smith, Penguin Books Ltd., Great Britain, 1971, pp. 84-85.
21. It should be apparent now that one of the first assumptions abandoned by this thesis is Macleish's idea that "a poem should not mean but be".
22. The justness of the image is further suggested by Smith's direct repetition of it in "Hellenica": "White-throated swallows / Are swerving over the waters / Of Mitylene, / But we shall see no more / The faint curve / Of Iope's sweet mouth." In "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 24, Smith writes, "I do remember—not any one specific moment, but as in a dream many times, always at evening or in the early morning, the swallows skimming over the rapids by the old mill at Laval-sur-le-Lac near Saint Eustache where we used to go for the summer when I was a child. I remember August 4th, 1914, and I remember helping to search for the body of a young man drowned in the rapids. And so the swallows, associated with loneliness and death by water, swerve into one or two of the more intimate of the poems and become a source of simile and metaphor."
23. If in fact the essential difference between the metaphysical image and the "standard" image is in its low-mimetic rather than high-mimetic nature (e.g. "stiff twin compasses"), the swallow of "I Shall Remember" provides an approximate mid-mimesis which may render it un-Metaphysical. But not in Smith's sense; which perhaps demonstrates the dangers of his understanding. How unlikely will an image have to be before we can all agree that it is metaphysical?
24. See p. 55.
25. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 24.
26. John Donne, The Complete English Poems, op. cit., p. 81.
27. For further consideration of this inward turn, see discussions of "Poor Innocent" and "My Lost Youth" in Chapter Four.

28. A. J. M. Smith, "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry", op. cit., p. 61.
29. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 25.
30. John Ferns, in A. J. M. Smith (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 35, has noted the constant dualism in many of Smith's poems, and these remarks cover only a small part of his discussion.
31. John Ferns, A. J. M. Smith, op. cit., p. 35.
32. George Woodcock, "Review of A. J. M. Smith's Collected Poems", in The McGill Movement, edited by Peter Stevens (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 124.
33. We might like to conclude that this is so because the attitude was closest to Smith's own.
34. "Bell tolling" may echo "Therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls" from Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions XVII; perhaps "Now these are me, whose thought is mine" similarly echoes "Any man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind."
35. W. E. Collin, "Arthur Smith" Gants du Ciel 11, spring '46, p. 48.
36. Milton Wilson, "Second and Third Thoughts About Smith", op. cit., p. 17.
37. T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", op. cit., p. 246.
38. A. J. M. Smith, "A Note on Metaphysical Poetry", op. cit., p. 62.
39. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", op. cit., p. 7.
40. A. J. M. Smith, "Canadian Poetry: A Minority Report", University of Toronto Quarterly 8, Jan. '39, p. 128.
41. A. J. M. Smith, "Impromptu Remarks Spoken at the International Poetry Conference, Man and His world, 1967", in Towards a View of Canadian Letters--Selected Critical Essays 1928-1971, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 206.

Chapter Four

AS SUBJECT INTO OBJECT FLOWS

> My poems are not, I think, autobiographical, subjective, or personal in the obvious and perhaps superficial sense. None of them is revery, confession, or direct self-expression. They are fiction, drama, art; sometimes pastiche, sometimes burlesque, and sometimes respectful parody; pictures of possible attitudes explored in turn...[1]

The problem of personality in poetry of the 20th century is an enormous one which cannot be avoided in any comprehensive discussion of the poetry of A. J. M. Smith. His Poems New and Collected offers a virtual laboratory for the student of poetic voice, for the poems included range easily from the purely personal and subjective note to the purely impersonal and objective note, touching nearly every possible combination and permutation in between. It is sometimes frustrating, sometimes enraging, sometimes rewarding to try to distinguish patterns, developments, or clear groups of voices within the book. During such research we must remind ourselves constantly that despite the slimness of the volume it represents some forty years of poetic practice; any feeling that it came quickly or glibly together must be quelled, or the researcher will (to put it plainly) lose his mind. The consistency of their inconsistency is appalling.

The first removal from personality is the purposive abandonment of those subjects traditionally considered to be "poetic". "It follows that there are no poetic subjects. Any subject, no matter how unpromising, can be made the source of poetry when shaped by the poetic imagination."[2] We may as a result expect to encounter anything from odes to clothes-hangers to songs of vegetables, because it is the talent of the poet, his ability to craft his poem, that creates the

art of the matter. But even the most "unpromising" subject, we should have to agree, could be given some force if the personality of the poet contained enough of its own to fill the lines. This, however, is not to be the way out. The personal voice itself, beyond the merely personal topic, is also to be done away with, presumably because it too is a limitation on the full possibilities of poetry. "The function of personality in the poet," Smith writes, "is to create a thing, a persona, a poem..."[3] The word "thing" used as a synonym for poetry suggests the cold hard nature of the verses to be produced. So, too, "persona" indicates that we are never to hear the poet speak as his own man, but only through the lips of others. Therefore we must never think of A. J. M. Smith as having spoken this or that poem, but only as having crafted it; Smith and the speaker have nothing to do with one another. "As Rimbaud said, je est un autre, I is another."[4]

Primarily because Smith spent little time discussing his own poetry until the publication of "A Self Review" in 1963, this is the first of his poetic theories we have encountered that cannot be traced right to the root in his first half-dozen essays published before 1930. The apparent source of such thinking is Eliot's theory of impersonality, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", 1919; but we have no evidence from Smith himself that there lies the key. Nor can we know whether he held this belief from the start and consciously created a body of poetry that proved it to be accurate, or whether he looked back from the vantage point of the early sixties and decided that such impersonality had been his attempt. The most that can be offered as the history

of this philosophy in Smith is an early failure to attach it to Eliot; "Contemporary Poetry" refers to a more personal voice in the latter.

> Poets such as Eliot...turned aside from the world, concerned themselves with abstruse questions of technique, probing with the best instruments they can forge the wounds in their own subconsciousness.[5]

The slightly earlier "Hamlet in Modern Dress" offers similar perceptions.

> He is always the explorer of his inner self, and is overcome by an immense and bitter disillusionment, a conviction of the helplessness and futility of all effort, because he can find there nothing that will provide an antidote for the poison of civilization.[6]

We can safely assume from such comments that his own ideas of impersonality had not been developed, then, by the end of the thirties. The next bit of thread comes from his comment in "A Rejected Preface", already quoted in another context in Chapter Two, that "Detachment, indeed, or self-absorption is (for a time only, I hope) becoming impossible."[7] The preface was written in 1936. It is obviously useful because of that revealing parenthesis, that suggests with a real wistfulness some deeper call in Smith to be personal and self-absorbed. Then, in 1942, Smith described the ideal anthologist as an ironic conclusion to his "Canadian Anthologies New and Old".

> He is unprejudiced, impersonal, humble, self-confident, catholic, fastidious, original, traditional, adventurous, sympathetic, and ruthless. He has no special axe to grind. He is afraid of mediocrity and the verses of his friends. He does not exist.[8]

The last sentence includes in its broad sweep the impossibility

of the anthologist's being completely "impersonal". We will not offer this as any evidence that it is equally impossible for the poet; but the comment is an interesting aside. The next piece in the puzzle is the rejection of "poetic" subjects noted above, in 1954, incidentally the same year that A Sort of Ecstasy was published; which was followed by the full statement of the theory, in "A Self Review", in 1963. Only a full-blown study of Smith's letters, lectures and other such materials will render this brief history anything more than an adumbration. This is a work for the future; the present study will attempt on the basis of these sketched poetics to glance at a few poems that stand both for and against the proposition.

There is no doubt that Smith was revealing something that was at the heart of his poetic development when he wrote the frank "Self Review". The very first poem of the last complete collection seems to offer a signpost to the reader that he can expect little from the poet of his own personality or his own feelings; rather he can expect to deal with persona after persona, revealing this or that about the nature of man.

> A bitter king in anger to be gone
> From fawning courtier and doting queen
> Flung hollow sceptre and gilt crown away...
>
> O who is that bitter king? It is not I.
>
> ("Like An Old Proud King in a Parable")

This disclaimer is forceful for various reasons. It is set as a separate stanza on the page, giving it visual power; it is sudden

and unusual within the context of the poem, seeming to have little to do with the original subject matter; and it is proclaimed with a frankness of tone that rather leaves the reader quite ready to swallow the idea. But it is curiously, suddenly and purposely contradicted by the shift into first person that carries through to the conclusion of the poem.

> Let me, I beseech thee, Father, die
> From this fat royal life, and lie
> As naked as a bridegroom by his bride,
> And let that girl be the cold goddess Pride:
>
> And I will sing to the barren rock
> Your difficult, lonely music, heart,
> Like an old proud king in a parable.

("Like an Old Proud King in a Parable")

W. E. Collin's assumption that this is, after all, Smith expressing personal sentiment is demonstrated by his choice of title for the Smith chapter in The White Savannahs, which is called "Difficult, Lonely Music". There is no question that the poetics expressed by the speaker here are closely akin to Smith's own. Why therefore the seeming obfuscation of just who is talking? Certainly the attempt of the single line is to disengage the reader's belief that he is hearing about Smith the man; with that there can be no argument. It is in the last two stanzas, then, that the problem lies.

The "difficult, lonely music" is associated with the "heart", which is the object of the speaker's address in the last stanza. In the second to last stanza that object is "Father"--God the Father? Father Lebeau?--who would seem to have some control over the poet's creative destiny. The poet beseeches this figure to let him "die"

from the lavishness of court life and strike north for a harder ideal, which we may without too much effort associate roughly with the abandonment of the subjective voice in favour of the objective voice. Therefore the switch into first person in the last two stanzas is an insistent attempt on Smith's part to show that objectivity need not mean the total rejection of the first person or the direct address in poetry.

Nor, in fact, does it mean the rejection of the "heart". At this point it simply guarantees that along with the heart shall walk "cold", "barren" Pride, which also has its demands: one of which is objectivity (or control or intelligence or poise). The "parable" of the first stanza offers to Smith the example for his own rejection of the "fat royal life". This rejection, this adoption of objectivity, by no means implies that Smith can never speak, but that he must speak with clarity and caution, so that he too may produce with his breath "a palace of inviolable air".

We are therefore pulled away by this poem from a perception of impersonality and objectivity as places where the poet never shows his face. Rather they seem to involve a manner of showing one's face that avoids lush, self-indulgent "fawning" and "doting" on oneself. Note that the "old proud king" uses his "palace" to "cage a heart that carolled like a swan"; the heart is not killed, silenced, but merely controlled, limited, defined by the bars of its cage. It is still the music of this caged heart that Smith desires, but he, too, would rather have a bird in the hand than two in the bush.

Objectivity, therefore, has connotations of self-restraint which we

should keep in mind when viewing Smith's poetry. It is not necessarily the total oblivion of the personality, but a kind of impersonal intelligence that guarantees appropriate limitations. "Like An Old Proud King in a Parable" is more interesting for its poetics of hardness and barren rock than for its particularly subjective or objective modes; characteristically, Smith downplays the importance of directly considering this question.

> ...the general problem of the role of personality, conscious and unconscious, in artistic creation--the problem, indeed, of personal responsibility. As a poet (no philosopher or moralist) I can only touch upon it lightly and indirectly--as in the poem "Poor Innocent".[9]

"Poor Innocent" does pick up the themes suggested by the interpretation of the poem above, echoing even the questioning of the first person that began our speculations.

> It is a gentle natural (is it I?) who
> Visits timidly the big world of
> The heart, and stares a little while at love
> As at a plaited and ringleted paleblue
> Seascape, whence escapes a new, untrue,
> Refracted light...
>
> ("Poor Innocent")

Not quite willing to admit that he too enjoys the occasional visit to "the big world of the heart", Smith asks, "is it I?" The "I" who does go there, however, sees something essentially but gently false: love is a "seascape" which lets loose a refracted, that is distorted, light, which is also "untrue". This speaker "moves unsurely in an air askew"; he is clearly uncertain, and unready for the laws of the heart's world, for he cannot control himself in that world once set free.

> This pretty simpleton, myself or not,
> Squints at the filagree of wind and wave,
> Scanning the frothing for the Lord knows what--
> The foam-born rising, maybe, nude and swell,
> Or--Back to your kennel, varlet! Fool, you rave!
> Unbind that seaweed, throw away that shell!
>
> ("Poor Innocent")

The faintly medieval voice that closes the poem is a kind of guard that steps into the "big world" when the speaker, who obviously should not be there, begins to lose control; begins, in a sense, to return to the "fat royal life". Smith calls this dialogue a "metaphysical drama" and informs us that the concluding speaker is the intelligence.

> It is this rather bossy intelligence which chooses what is to be expressed, considers how, and judges the final outcome. But what a lot escapes it--or cajoles it, or fools it! It did not choose the images, the metaphors, the sensations...[10]

That is to say, the rising of Botticelli's Venus which the "gentle natural" anticipates is also something beyond the control of the intelligence; all it can do is guarantee that the natural not stare too long at the sexually arousing (and restraint-shattering) goddess. Thus the intelligence provides the control over lusts in which the heart would gladly indulge, because the poet is finally a "simpleton" who would quickly suffocate in his own wild desires.

In fact this metaphysical play-off is quibbling over the true nature of impersonality. The simple admission that the intellect is also part of the personality throws the whole attitude into question, and Smith certainly would not disagree with that premise. Therefore when he mentions "Poor Innocent" as dealing with the "general problem of the role of personality", he is not telling the whole story.

The whole story is told more clearly and less casually by the long and complex poem, "A Dream of Narcissus". An extended speculative process weighs the relative aspects of subjective and objective life, or art or poetry, taking the speaker--let us not say, taking Smith--through a severe temptation towards the subjective mode but retreating at the end from the full and apparently horrible implications of self-indulgence. Narcissus, of course, was the lovely boy of Greek mythology who became so entranced with his own reflection in a forest pool that he remained perpetually frozen in a "narcissistic" gaze into the smooth water.

> I am all things known to me;
> Nothing unknown shall exist;
> Myself creates the form I see;
> My lips are those my lips have kissed.
>
> Beauty and Truth are in my pool,
> And I its image mirrored there,
> The motive, actor, and the rule,
> The eyes and those on which they stare.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

The poem thus opens in perfect objectivity, presenting a series of facts and disavowing the existence of any "unknown". The first stanza consists of four end-stopped lines, each of which is, basically, a maxim out of the books of the objectivists. The effect is factual, simple, controlled. But the mention of "Beauty and Truth" at the beginning of the second stanza is perhaps an ironic foreshadowing of the coming tension with the subjective life: Keats, obvious proponent of "proud Romanticism", made those abstractions famous with his Urn's large line, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty".[11] But this is a foreshadowing only; the "rules" still control the dichotomy presented,

and the speaker is calm and unchallenged:

> I gaze: the new-born image grows
> Full-rounded, radiant, moving, hard,
> As subject into object flows,
> Fit to be numbered and compared.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

This is the first dabbling in the subjective pool, and it is hardly a genuine one. Although "subject" and "object" flow together to an extent, the effect can still be "numbered and compared", or rationally comprehended by the objective mind. We are at a state not unlike that of the "poor innocent" in the octave of that sonnet, before the loss of control. But the dip into the pool creates a certain familiarity, and the power of what swims there begins to make itself felt.

> All energy and change of space,
> All halts and hurryings of time,
> Are in the contours of that face,
> Like sounds that give their laws to rhyme.
>
> I pipe sweet songs of love and joy
> And pore upon his lovely eyes,
> And he responds, that godlike boy,
> And mine are his divine replies.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

This encounter with the subjective begins to move the speaker from the perception of "rules" to something more chaotic, "halts and hurryings", but still the chaos provides "laws" of sound. These laws, nevertheless, are now the laws of "rhyme" rather than mathematics, rather than of the mind; and the speaker's response cannot help but be the creation of "sweet songs of love and joy". The "boy" in the pool becomes "godlike", and a direct communication begins which also confirms the principles of reflection: "And mine are his divine replies." A genuine desire for full knowledge of the reflection is now initiated,

but frustrated.

> But ah! the shimmering film of glass
> Extends an isolating blade,
> That mortal substance may not pass
> To full self-knowledge of the shade.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

"Self-knowledge" would come with the shattering of the "glass", that is, with a dive into the pool, but there is no immediately perceptible way (to the rational mind, at least) of doing so. Then the poem, like the entire image, divides itself sharply with a tercet, following which we descend into the true power of the personal maelstrom.

> I sometimes think that I will dare
> To grasp my love by his long hair
> And pull him from his abstract lair;
>
> Come closer! I have felt strange things
> Move in the shadowy depths far down,
> Dark shapes with glimmering fins or wings,
> Menacing jaws, and looks that frown.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

We might wonder from these lines whether the poet is not speaking merely of the conscious and unconscious minds; but that the emphasis seems to be on subjective and objective, rather, is indicated by the third line of the third stanza quoted above, and the shrieking conclusion of the poem, with its anti-Romantic notes. The subjective world, the reflection in the pool, now takes separate voice, and develops an attractive force that begins to suck the speaker and reader in. But before complete descent the last thought of the controlling intelligence is allowed expression.

> And o'er the lovely crystal face
> That looks at me with eyes of love
> A strange new cruel knowing grace
> Is poisoning the sacred grove.
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

The experience is only a "poisoning" of the "sacred grove" to the objective Narcissus; but even he admits that there is "grace" in the surrender and, after all, a "cruel knowing". Then the true unleashing of the subjective experience occurs, and the surrender would seem guaranteed.

> Drawn with accelerating haste
> Down to the centre of my world,
> I plunge into a crackling waste,
> And Chaos is unfurled.
>
> O horror! Incest of the soul!
> What reeling Furies! foul Abysm!
> O mad, inevitable goal
> Of proud Romanticism!
>
> ("A Dream of Narcissus")

Thus the poem's point is made; the purposeful surrender to the call of the subjective is "Romanticism", is "mad", "reeling", and "foul". The unfortunate fact of this last stanza, although it makes its pedantic point, is that it avoids any real facing up to the world beneath the surface; it is, after all the intelligent thought of the poem, a disappointment. The ironic over-employment of capitalized abstractions, and the over-statement of results, takes away from the conclusion of the poem the serious involvement that the first ten verses force on the reader. We might interpret such irony as an indication that Smith knew the attraction of the subjective, and though he sought to avoid it, could not wholly condemn it on some cool intellectual premise. But the fact remains that a poem that began in poetry closes in lecture notes.

> Too often a poem is thought to achieve morality and usefulness and does achieve popularity through an unconsciously hypocritical failure to pierce uncompromisingly through to the heart of an experience which would have become too bitter and too painful had the poet dared to descend more deeply into it.[12]

We must apply Smith's comment in "Refining Fire" to "A Dream of Narcissus", unfortunately, and regret the fact that Smith only dabbled in the true consideration of the attractive pool of the subjective mode. But whether or not the poem wholly satisfies, it provides a clear boundary within Smith's poetry between the two voices. The attempt, it would seem, is to stay clear of the pool.

We have obviously moved beyond the mere interplay between intellect and emotion into a dichotomy far deeper. Almost it would group intellect and emotion on one side and (safe to say) "objectivity" on the other, which is in fact the true removal from personality that Smith postulates in his "Self Review". The possible dangers of this removal quickly suggest themselves. Thus Northrop Frye:

> Still, Mr Smith's learning perhaps does interfere with his spontaneity. Too many of the poems seem to me to lack drive: the words do not develop rhythm but are fitted into a containing pattern. The poetry is intensely visual and conceptual; it slowly clarifies, but it does not dance. Sometimes, however, this slow clarification contains great emotional power...[13]

Harry Howith, himself a poet, writes,

> Yet there is a certain fire lacking in his poems; the sense of an inexorable rush toward an inevitable vision which marks the great talent is not there.[14]

Although we may object to Howith's definition of "the great talent", we must admit that his point about Smith could very naturally rise from a firmly held theory of impersonality in the poet. Frye's comment that Smith essentially had too much "learning" ties in with other critical comments along similar lines, that suggest by implication the lack of "fire" in many of his poems.

> Whereas almost all the poets he described in 1926 as having "been hurled into poetry under the compulsion of a bitter and poignant disillusionment" have passed

> beyond that stage into the expression of a positive philosophy, Smith himself has remained there. He has continued to concern himself with abstruse questions of technique, and to probe with the best instrument he can forge 'the wounds in his own subconsciousness'. But this in itself is a process of real if limited value...[15]

Essentially this is a condemnation of aestheticism, of too great a concern with form over content--which is, after all, not unrelated to the theory of impersonality, which also seeks to remove personal content from the body of the poem. Smith himself was quite willing to admit that he had replaced, often, the personal content with just such aestheticism. "Everything beneath the surface of technique," he comments, "remains obscure."[16] "It is obvious that there is much here that is consciously contrived."[17]

Leon Edel, Smith's close friend particularly during the Fortnightly days, tries to save him from the problems these attitudes naturally give rise to.

> Smith the poet--clever, witty, bawdy, sincere, insincere, genuine, poseur, so intent on being clever that he can on occasion sacrifice truth to good rhyme, and stilt his verses with his technical virtuosity; and on occasion there is Smith powerful, clear, potent, free of cant and (rare being) unvulgar.[18]

But this does not wholly redeem him for that occasional "lack of fire". To that end, Edel is forced into something of a semantic somersault that is not particularly reassuring.

> Not a poet exists who does not write the book of himself. He is never more personal than when he thinks himself impersonal.[19]

This is hardly redemptive. What may actually save Smith for the reader who desires the truly personal note and personal content,

is his wry admission, in all three of the above poems, that no matter how hard the impersonality struggle to assert itself, some part of our hearts will always want to go swimming with Narcissus. The gentle mocking of the controlling intellect above--"but what a lot escapes it!"--suggests one of the most pleasant and congenial aspects of Smith the poet, which is the consistent ability to struggle for aesthetic ideals, and to laugh with sincere gentleness at himself when they cannot always be held.

So it is that the existence within Poems New and Collected of confessional poetry, reverie, generally personal material, although an obvious contradiction to various precepts scattered over the pages of the essays, should not earn an attack but an awareness of depth and complexity and perhaps, ultimately, of fallibly happy humanity.

> I will arise and go now
> and go to the lavabo
> where men without women
> are standing in a row.
>
> ("Souvenirs du Temps Perdu")

"Souvenirs du Temps Perdu (for Leon Edel)" is a wistful but never maudlin glance back at days they would spend together, ostensibly in the pursuit of higher literature, but obviously not entirely so.

> We sit in the Dome
> to the ditto of le même
> as French as a french fried potato
> in a greasy cornucopia
> of the Montreal Daily Star.
>
> ("Souvenirs du Temps Perdu")

The temporal references, however brief, provide the real nostalgia of the poem despite its obvious lightness. Parodies of Yeats, Eliot and contemporary nightclub songs follow, all establishing an admittedly

tongue-in-cheek atmosphere that nevertheless evokes a noticeably personal past.

> O to be in April now that
> yes sir she's my baby....
> Would you mind not forgetting
> to leave something in the bowl
> as you
> pass out.
>
> ("Souvenirs du Temps Perdu")

The humour of the poem is related to the sense of humour in Smith that allows it to be published at all, given a supposed allegiance to the strong demands of impersonality. Another distinctly personal poem, while not evoking the laughter of "Souvenirs du Temps Perdu", is generated by a similar ease in breaking rules here and there for pleasure's sake. "Astraea Redux", with its self-mocking Latin title, has almost too much of personal sentiment and gentleness to bear; the wistful and loving tone is startling.

> Coming over the water
> paddling an old boat
> with a broken board
> and a bottle in a paper bag...
>
> Nearer, a coughing motor
> then a spate of spaniels
> leaping and frisking
> with Stuart curls
> and long sad faces
>
> Coming to land
> coming home
>
> ("Astraea Redux")

The imagistic focus is intense, and the emotions evoked by the quiet pensive voice are strong and easy to associate with the reader's own nostalgias. The return is to "the good people / known anew"; the extreme personal note is filled in by the ironic list of Canadian

poetic nobility that follows.

> My people lordly ones
> the Duke of Dudek His Grace of Layton
> and with me Scott
> diaconal, archbishopric
> twisted benevolent
> with needle eye
>
> Known anew, loved always
> ....always....now....
> Royalists Yr. most obt. servant
>
> Memo: Not to go on my travels again
>
> ("Astraea Redux")

Ferns considers the voice of "Astraea Redux" to be maudlin and overly personalized, and therefore smacking of false personality rather than genuine emotion.[20] Although Dudek and Layton are given little more than a Rosencrantz-and-Guildenstern glance[21], F. R. Scott, his original compatriot, is spoken of in terms near-glowing with pride in acquaintance. The image of the "needle eye" seems an important one to Smith about his friend; in his later poem, "To Frank Scott, Esq., On the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday", he writes of "the shaping mind that shapes the poem / as it shapes the man, foursquare, and needle-eyed, / and Frank.",[22] also a play on Scott's collection, The Eye of the Needle, 1957. Ferns' criticism is perhaps based on a comparison with the generally aristocratic coldness of the majority of Smith's poems; certainly in that way "Astraea Redux" is overly personalized; but that the emotions are genuine seems obvious. Whether they are too genuine has to be the decision of the individual reader.

The honesty involved in this exposure of personality is another credit to Smith. By no means does he grumble or sneak his way into the personal voice, as though he truly did not wish to be there;

rather he flings wide the door with painful frankness and unremittingly scrutinizes all he finds. "My Lost Youth" epitomizes this searching honesty, providing along with its self-portrayal a wry commentary on the woeful fate of creative academics everywhere. After the quick establishment of a twenties salon atmosphere, the poet focusses his attention on the details of the lady, which reveal his deeper interests.

> I remember it was April that year, and afternoon.
> There was a modish odour of hyacinths, and you
> Beside me in the drawing room, and twilight falling
> A trifle impressively, and a bit out of tune.
>
> You spoke of poetry in a voice of poetry,
> And your voice wavered a little, like the smoke of your
> Benson & Hedges,
> And grew soft as you spoke of love (as you always did!),
> Though the lines of your smile, I observed, were a
> little sententious.
>
> ("My Lost Youth")

The mood is effortlessly established by the smoothly flowing, tranquil recollection of events and details on the part of the speaker. "April that year" takes the reader back to the time; the use of "that" assumes on his part an awareness of year and therefore of the setting, thus establishing a sensation as of old friends reminiscing. "A modish odour of hyacinths, and you", although the latter clause continues in the next line, subtly suggests the sensual development to take place in the later stanzas. The naming of the cigarette brand is a realistic detail that adds to the atmosphere, as does the wavering smoke that rises from its tip.

> I thought of my birthplace in Westmount and what that involved;
> --An ear quick to recoil from the faintest 'false note'.
> I spoke therefore hurriedly of the distressing commonness
> of American letters,
> Not daring to look at your living and beautiful throat.

"She seems to be one who enthuses," I noted, excusing myself,
Who strove that year to be only a minor personage out of James
Or a sensitive indecisive guy from Eliot's elegant shelf.
"What happens," I pondered fleeing, "to one whom Reality
claims...?"

("My Lost Youth")

It is of course the "birthplace in Westmount" that tips the personal hand and allows us to conclude, if not that the speaker is Smith, then that he is at least 99% Smith and 1% persona. Anglo-Saxon self-consciousness of social position has left him with "an ear quick to recoil from the faintest 'false note'". But his behaviour is full of 'false notes': he does not dare to look at the lady's "living and beautiful throat", despite an obvious desire to do so, and speaks only of "letters" and their "distressing commonness", even when analyzing his own sudden departure. Trying to be a character from James or Eliot--perhaps a Canadian Prufrock--provides his excuse for fleeing from the uncontrollable situation, another falsity, since the obvious reason is pure unwillingness to face the sensual challenge. Other false notes are sounded by the continual semantic restraint on expression of genuine memory: "a modish odour", "a trifle impressively", "a bit out of tune", "wavered a little", "a little sententious", "not daring", "excusing myself", "only a minor personage", "indecisive guy". All these adverbs and adjectives combine to produce an over-all effect of extreme self-consciousness, which rises partly from sexual nervousness but also from the over-education involved in the pursuit of learning. This latter theme is confirmed by the concluding tercet, which pulls suddenly back into present tense and is clearly spoken by Professor Smith from his office in East Lansing, Michigan.

> I teach English in the Middle West; my voice is quite good;
> My manners are charming; and the mothers of some of my
> female students
> Are never tired of praising my two slim volumes of verse.
> ("My Lost Youth")

The tension thus developed between the "poetic" life--with its typical salon encounters, its obvious sexual appetites and its desire for volume of output--and the academic life, which pigeon-holes every sentiment into a period or genre and every motive into some author or other, may be with a good degree of safety applied to our understanding of the biographical Smith. There is a clear resentment in the phrase "two slim volumes of verse", perhaps partly the unwillingness to be thought of as a poet on the basis of such slenderness, but also the desire to have created more, or to have had time out of the classroom to have created more.

The Westmount note in the poem is interesting for the theme of self-consciousness as well. Leon Edel suggests that Smith's Anglo-Saxon upbringing, a rather stereotypically straight-laced process, left him with an antipathy towards the externalization of emotion, as though that half of the personality were in rather bad taste.

> ...intensities weren't polite in that world of his childhood. To have temperament, to rage at inequities, to show strong feelings--one didn't do such things. One was supposed to indulge in a cheerful kind of humbuggery, a tea-party gentility...with a poet it can sometimes provide such strong defences that he becomes an endless 'converter' --all is metamorphosis. Smith's strong feelings are channelled and fragmented into the pictorial and the suggestive, into a highly civilized wit, into delicate intellectual symbols... he felt a need to impose order on his personal feelings as well.[23]

Due to the lack of any real biographical information on A. J. M. Smith, the personal voice in any of the poems will always have to be

judged on the basis of the reader's own perceptions. Any attempt to prove that this or that poem reflects this or that event in Smith's life, while useful in a dogmatic way, cannot be as important as the actual apprehension of personal power. That "Astraea Redux", "Souvenirs du Temps Perdu" and "My Lost Youth" reflect primarily personal situations is clear; that "A Dream of Narcissus" demands the avoidance of such reflection is equally clear.

The judicious reader could, with an awareness of these two polarities, lay out a map of Smith's poetry which would plot their "personality" and "impersonality" as on a grid. The resulting diagram would be a useful one, although based on purely personal opinion and quite unjustifiable by the usual rational means. It is therefore more the business of the reviewer than the critic.

There is a tension, not painful, in the poetry of A. J. M. Smith between the subjective mode or personal voice and the objective mode or impersonal voice. His intellect has a clear allegiance to the latter, as his essays demonstrate, but some other part has a strong yearning for the former; at which contradiction he has the good grace to laugh. When his intellect holds out, the effect of the poem tends to be aloof, restrained, or detached; when it gives way, the effect is gently ironic and personable. It is for the individual to decide which of these is preferable.

A marked antipathy for the aloof or restrained voice may be mollified by its extensions in the final chapter.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 23.
2. A. J. M. Smith, "Refining Fire: On the Meaning and Use of Poetry", op. cit., p. 354.
3. A. J. M. Smith, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", Canadian Literature 9, summer '61, p. 8.
4. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 23.
5. A. J. M. Smith, "Contemporary Poetry", op. cit., p. 32.
6. A. J. M. Smith, "Hamlet in Modern Dress", op. cit., p. 3.
7. A. J. M. Smith, "A Rejected Preface", op. cit., p. 9.
8. A. J. M. Smith, "Canadian Anthologies New and Old", University of Toronto Quarterly 11, July '42, p. 474.
9. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 23.
10. Ibid.
11. Robert Gittings, John Keats, (Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 469.
12. A. J. M. Smith, "Refining Fire: On the Meaning and Use of Poetry", op. cit., p. 354.
13. Northrop Frye, "Canada and its Poetry", in The Bush Garden (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1971), p. 37.
14. Harry Howith, "Five Poets", Canadian Author and Bookman 38, spring '63, p. 9.
15. Desmond Pacey, Ten Canadian Poets, op. cit., pp. 221-222.
16. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 20.
17. Ibid., p. 26.
18. Leon Edel, "The Worldly Muse of A. J. M. Smith", University of Toronto Quarterly 47, spring '78, p. 200.
19. Ibid.
20. John Ferns, A. J. M. Smith, op. cit., p. 61.
21. Leon Edel's term, in "The Worldly Muse of A. J. M. Smith", op. cit., p. 208.
22. A. J. M. Smith, The Classic Shade, op. cit., p. 69.
23. Leon Edel, "The Worldly Muse of A. J. M. Smith", op. cit., pp. 202-203.

Chapter Five

ECLECTIC DETACHMENT

> The different voices and different modes called for by the different occasions should not obscure the underlying unity pervading even the most apparently different poems.[1]

Until the publication in 1970 of Bate's The Burden of the Past and the English Poet and in 1973 of Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence, the attempt however delicate to prove the influences of the past on this or that poet had been met with general skepticism in the literary world and had been considered a rather disreputable affair. Bate notes quickly the lack of material dealing with the question, and cites that lack in circular fashion as the cause of current disinterest.[2] But the two works noted have achieved an obvious respectability of scholarship, and have thereby brought to the idea of "influence", apparently, a degree of good taste.

It will be noted that the foregoing chapters have themselves indulged in a modicum of unacknowledged influence-mongering. Necessary mention has been made, for instance, of the powerful figures of Eliot and Donne, never in an attempt to defeat Smith's reputation with derivativeness, but rather to create an appreciation of the diversity of his literary interests. If those figures from the past have at all overshadowed the gentleman under consideration it is a flaw of the present study, not of the poet. Such an attitude, at any rate, is necessary to the honest understanding of Smith. If one wishes to enter his poetry with guns levelled in search of the borrowed thought or image or even theory, one will not look long and only rarely miss.

The point however is that such borrowing ought not to be approached with guns but with gratitude.

Of course, any poet has his idols, and if Smith laboured under the aegis of only two he should not be in any way outstanding. But there was also the earlier influence of W. B. Yeats, for example, very potent in his first years of poetry; and the presence of the "winding stair" image in no less than three of Smith's poems shows how deeply ingrained that influence was, The Winding Stair being Yeats's volume of 1929.

To complete the rest of this picture rapidly, we might turn the pages of Poems New and Collected casually to note the allusions direct or indirect to the poets of other lands or times. We have noted already the Petrarchan echoes of some of the lyrics, and considered as well the general Metaphysical nature of some of Smith's work. We have also noted an appreciation of Edith Sitwell's verse; there is also a Sitwellian interest in Pierrotesque figures, as in "Three Phases of Punch". There are three translations from Théophile Gautier, and two from Stéphane Mallarmé. There is a single translation from a French poet of this century, Jacques Prévert; and an adaptation from the Italian of many centuries past, Guido da Cavalcanti's "In un boschetto trovai pastorella" (Ballata IX). There are as well two translations from the Hungarian, of Ferenc Juhasz and Zoltan Zelk. The characters and atmosphere of the classical Greek landscape and literature are everywhere; A. M. Klein has noted the similarity of mood between these poems and Smith's Canadian landscapes.[3] T. S. Eliot is mentioned by name twice, in "Ballade Un Peu

Banale" and "My Lost Youth" and, of course, his influence is elsewhere. Henry James is named in "My Lost Youth" as well. L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz is mentioned through "The Tin Woodman's Annual Sonnet to Ozma of Oz at the Approach of Spring". There are clear echoes of Chaucer in "In Memoriam: E. J. P." and in "Three Phases of Punch". The latter poem also has direct quotations from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and from John Lyly's poem "Cards and Kisses". There is an echo of William Blake in "Universe Into Stone". "Song Made in Lieu of Many Ornaments" is in its very title a direct borrowing from Spenser's "Epithalamion", and opens with a line from a ditty in Gammer Gurton's Needle, of approximately the same period. Webster, Shakespeare and Donne put in an appearance in "Prothalamium", and there is the open tribute "To Henry Vaughan". "What is That Music High in the Air?" is a title borrowed with a single change from line 367 of Eliot's "Waste Land". Two subtitles show other leanings: "The Lonely Land" appeared originally with the subtitle "Group of Seven", and "Nightfall", an aesthetic speculation, bears "fin de siecle" beneath the title. Besides all of this from other lands there is direct reference to Canadians Frank Scott, Marshall McLuhan, Emile Nelligan, Paul Morin, Jay Macpherson, W. W. E. Ross, Anne Wilkinson, Eloi de Grandmont, Irving Layton, George Johnston, Ralph Gustafson, D. G. Jones, Louis Dudek, and Saint-Denys Garneau, and he has translated "a song of French Canada" into his "Brigadier".

It may bear repeating that all of the above occurs in a collection of one hundred and twenty poems. Quite probably there are many others to be added to such a list, which might be found by a

reader more closely approximating Smith's own staggering familiarity with world literatures. But the present cluster will be sufficient for the rendering of the point that Smith maintained a vast written world in his own library and that much of what he read either inspired or influenced his own poetry in some way, or provided phrasing and chance references when such were needed.

It is just such heterogeneity that has been consistently misinterpreted by Smith's critics as "contradiction". Wayne Grady's obituary for Books in Canada is permitted to mourn his death with the glum comment that "Smith was a poet of profound contradictions".[4] We have heard this attitude expressed about Smith sufficiently by now to know that it is not unique to Grady. It is not the contention here that Mr Grady is wrong in his facts; of course there are contradictions in Smith's thinking, in his poetry, probably in his private life as well. But he has no more contradiction in him than any poet-critic is bound to have, and so often the contradictory passages are written at either end of thirty years of thinking through, that we should all look rather foolish if we did not permit him to change his mind with such decades of care. It is in fact that very ability to recant and adopt new attitudes through careful intellectual evaluation that is at the heart of Smith's greatest achievement.

Louis Dudek's article at Smith's death avoids the petulance that has invested so much Smith criticism and reveals this truth.

> But for all the poetry that followed, no matter how far it has diverged from his artistic standards, and how far it has forgotten to recognize his name, his work as

> editor and poet has stood in the background and it has defined the kind of modern poetry from which others could develop.[5]

Such praise would likely come closer to Smith's own desires than world-wide critical acclaim of this or that poem: for his most useful contribution to all Canadian literature is the 1961 article, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", which proposes just such attitudes. He never intended, at least within the specific terms of the essay, that his own theory should be hauled about and applied to his own work, but it is in the definitions and parameters of "eclectic detachment" that we may come to our fullest possible appreciation of Smith's importance in Canadian literary history, and only in the light of that article that we may leave him. The delineation of the term began in the introduction to Smith's Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, in 1960.

> But the Canadian poet has one advantage--an advantage that derives from his position of separateness and semi-isolation. He can draw upon French, British, and American sources in language and literary convention; at the same time he enjoys a measure of detachment that enables him to select and adapt what is relevant and useful. This gives to contemporary Canadian poetry in either language a distinctive quality--its eclectic detachment. This can be, and has been, a defect of timidity and mediocrity; but it can also be, as it is hoped this book will show, a virtue of intelligence and discrimination.[6]

Professor John Bilsland responded to Smith's anthology with a polite attack on the essay and the selection, suggesting that both suffered from the attempt to cover too much ground in too short a time. He particularly singled out the coining of "eclectic detachment" and dismissed it as a "fine expression".

> The expression eclectic detachment sounds well: it seems to suggest a learned objectivity, the capacity in our poets to draw freely on diverse cultures and traditions. But one wonders if the very attractiveness of the fine expression has not misled Professor Smith. Surely a very marked quality of much of the best Canadian poetry is its intensely personal note. Many of our poets are highly derivative, but writers like A. M. Klein, Anne Wilkinson and Irving Layton have achieved a decidedly personal utterance, not particularly eclectic, and not at all detached...[7]

At this point Smith hitched on his guns and produced the full-fledged definition and counter-attack, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", in 1961. The Canadian poet

> ...is immersed both in the European and the North American cultural tradition--I use 'cultural' in the widest possible sense to include the sociological and political aspects of environment and inheritance as well as the literary and the artistic--but he is not of it. He stands apart and, as all Canadian writers must do, he selects and rejects. He selects those elements from varied and often disparate sources that are useful to him, and rejects those that are not. Useful to him. This brings in the personal. Detachment surely does not imply in this context detachment from the Self or from personality.[8]

Smith would seem to have come upon the essential mistake in Bilsland's commentary; his review is a misreading of Smith's original preface, which clearly states that the detachment is from "French, British, and American sources", and not from personality at all, which was the concern of our last chapter, and is something entirely different.

> The question at issue is: What is the Canadian poet detached from? Eclectic detachment would suggest that he is not detached from everything, but only from what he chooses to be detached from. This implies also that there are some things he chooses to attach himself to. I emphasise himself. It is someone, a person, a poet, who is attached or detached. The term detachment in this context has nothing to do with objectivity or impersonality. It is actually an affirmation of personality.[9]

We ought to note that Smith is not speaking of his own poetry when he thus defends the personal voice; rather he is opposing a notion of "eclectic detachment" as necessarily including a removal from personality. Later in the same article he offers a few examples of Canadian poets who seem to him to demonstrate the validity of his pronouncement.

> The most exciting poets of the present revival have found refreshment and nourishment in the most widely varied and often surprising sources--James Reaney in Chaucer and Spenser; Irving Layton in Neitzsche, Catullus, the Hebrew Prophets and William Carlos Williams; Jay Macpherson in Blake and Northrop Frye; Ralph Gustafson in Job, Hopkins and Melville; Margaret Avison in Tycho Brahe, George Herbert, and Marianne Moore.[10]

If we now glance back at that long list of allusions or influences in the poetry of Smith himself, perhaps some of these ideas will come into clear focus. Smith might well have been writing "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry" about his own poetic habits. The clear diversity of his sources and inspirations makes him the prototype of his own poetic theory. For he has drawn with discrimination upon so many forms and voices and structures of poetry, from so many eras and so many lands, with such learned appreciation and scholarly calm, that he embodied the very principle of eclectic detachment in every line he penned. Thus the "contradictions" of a lifetime are really only manifestations of the catholicity of the true scholar; and the wild diversity of the poems the only possible oeuvre to be accepted by the scholarly creative mind made limitless. He is aesthetic, metaphysical, impersonal, frugal, religious, irreligious, modernist, imagist, and a host of other adjectives; therein lies his conscious achievement as a poet. The reader will remember attempts throughout the preceding chapters to prove Smith's consciousness of

his own contradictions; that consciousness, coupled with the statement of "underlying unity" that forms the epigraph of this chapter, leads us easily to conclusions.

For there is no such unity unless it lie in a kind of purposive disunity, or heterogeneity, or eclecticism. Therefore this thesis, which may be seen to have taken a great deal of trouble to demonstrate Smith's remarkable diversity, must in its last pages ask of the reader a volte-face and an acknowledgement that such diversity is the lasting contribution of the collected poetry of A. J. M. Smith.

Professor Bilsland's mistake, that Smith was preaching a detachment from personality, was misdirected. Had he levelled such a criticism at the poetry of his anthologist, he might have come away with a victory, as Chapter Four has shown. But the true detachment of this article (and Smith himself does not fully acknowledge it) is from form itself. For if the Canadian poet can choose with a cool head exactly those aspects of "language and literary convention" that are "useful to him", and if this process demands a kind of detachment, then he is permanently and personally committed to no one form, but will adopt today the very conventions he may have rejected yesterday, only to reject them again tomorrow.

Thus we are witnessing a kind of super-aestheticism, which is neither "form over content" nor "form and content inseparable".[11] It is at once a detachment from personality within the subject matter of the poem--"as subject into object flows"--and a detachment from the very form the poem is to take. What keeps the oeuvre moving, essentially, is that at any given time the poet may choose to be personal,

or impersonal, or pedantic, or meditative; and he may then choose to be a sonnetteer, a purveyor of villanelles, a free versifier, a blank versifier, or any other kind of poet his heart desires.

Now we have already noted that the theory of impersonality has its ups and downs in Smith's work, and we must offer the same qualification to (what is basically) the generalization contained above. Smith is no more perfectly detached from form than he has to be. He shows a distinct preference, as we first noted, for more traditional structures over more chaotic structures. "That", he might say, "was because they were more useful to me." But his clear attempt as a Canadian poet has been to adapt as many of the traditions of world literature as possible to his own hand; to place them in front of the poetry-reading public of Canada, as well as in the laps of other poets, proposing thereby as rich a diversity in Canadian literature as he had achieved within the covers of his own Poems New and Collected.

So when he writes Christian poems, it is not necessarily out of Christian faith, and when he takes up the modernist banner it is not necessarily out of a genuine desire to destroy what modernism (necessarily) opposed. We might speak here of a "felt need", Smith's occasional awareness of this or that void in Canadian literature; his response to such a need was to try to create what was missing with his own hand. This is neither a guarantee of his own acceptance of the particular belief, nor of his own rejection of it; undeniably some of the poems sound more genuine than others. It is merely a guarantee of his poetic craftsmanship, and of his dedication as a

poet to the literature of his country; which dedication must leave the rest of us, who only stand and wait, a little abashed.

Implicit in the essay, incidentally, is a "contradiction". Smith is clearly attempting to glean something particularly Canadian from his Oxford Book, a nationalistic and too often blinkered pursuit which he decried coldly in "Canadian Poetry: a Minority Report" and the "Rejected Preface". But the disparity between the apparent points of contradiction is not quite so wide as it might appear. What Smith in fact abhors is the idea that the "Canadianism" of a particular poet should be sufficient grounds to establish his reputation.

> The Canadian poet, like every poet, is in competition with every other poet, past and present, or, more precisely, he knows he must be judged by as severe standards as any. And I believe that it is an informed freedom of choice that comes from being Canadian that has made it possible for our best poets to sustain this test--and perhaps more easily than if they had been Englishmen or Americans.[12]

If in fact it is the eclectic detachment of the Canadian poet that gives him an advantage in his road-race with the British and the Americans, it is the eclectic detachment of Arthur James Marshall Smith to which he owes that advantage. For Smith not only named a trend that he had seen, but first exemplified it, from his "earliest apprentice verses"[13] in the 1920's to the 1978 publication of The Classic Shade. The impossible wealth of form, and the open range of content, contained in his fifty years of effort and change, has been and will continue to be an encyclopedia and Bible for all those

who come after, to accept or reject with the vociferous passion one accords only to the most deeply held beliefs. The very possibility of those beliefs lay in his hands; and that is the man we have left behind.

Notes

1. A. J. M. Smith, "A Self Review", op. cit., p. 25.
2. W. Jackson Bate, The Burden of the Past and the English Poet (Cambridge, Mass.: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 7-8.
3. A. M. Klein, "The Poetry of A. J. M. Smith", op. cit., p. 258.
4. Wayne Grady, "A. J. M. Smith, 1902-1980", Books In Canada vol. 10, #1, Jan. '81, p. 10.
5. Louis Dudek, "A Legacy from A. J. M. Smith", The Montreal Gazette, November 29th, 1980.
6. A. J. M. Smith, Introduction to The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, op. cit., p. li.
7. John Bilsland, "Moving Beyond Borders", Canadian Literature 6, autumn '60, pp. 58-59.
8. A. J. M. Smith, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", op. cit., p. 8.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 12.
11. These variations of fin-de-siècle aestheticism were delineated by R. V. Johnson in his Aestheticism, op. cit., and discussed in Chapter One.
12. A. J. M. Smith, "Eclectic Detachment: Aspects of Identity in Canadian Poetry", p. 14.
13. A. J. M. Smith, "Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist", op. cit., p. 5.

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