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# FIRST STATEMENT

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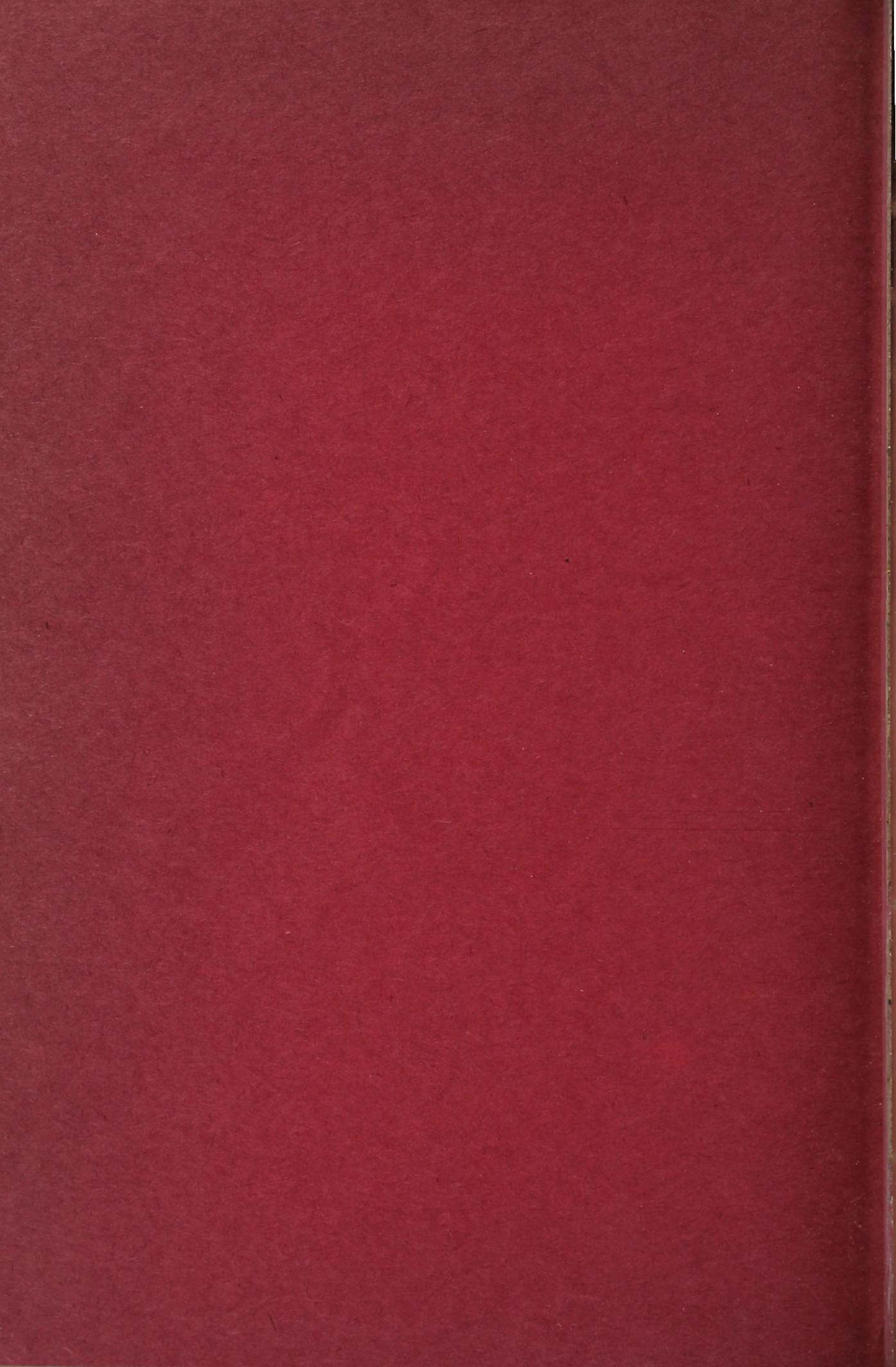
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# FIRST STATEMENT

VOL. 2 NO. 11

FEB—MAR. 1945

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## Editorial

We would have assumed that anyone with the least interest in the subject would have been aware of the important changes taking place in Canadian literature. But two events of recent weeks serve to show how unwarranted our assumption has been.

Unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to hear the speech of Mr. Wilfred Eggleston in Montreal on the rapid growth of Canadian literature. Our knowledge of what he said depends upon two extensive newspaper accounts which presumably contained the most important points in his address. If there is any slight injustice done to Mr. Eggleston by the following remarks, we offer our apologies in advance.

Mr. Eggleston said much about the economic position of the Canadian writer, and chose to regard the wide sale of some recent Canadian books as a sign of significant growth. He has evidently got the cart before the horse. May we suggest that the growth of Canadian literature is the first thing that takes place, and that the improved economic conditions can only occur after this happens? I do not believe, as Mr. Eggleston does, that the prominence of certain recent novels upon the best-seller list is a fact of any significance, nor can I agree that these novels have any place in our literature. The critic will have to make a habit of reading his literary magazines before he knows what is happening in Canadian prose.

When Mr. Eggleston turns to Canadian poetry we are surprised to learn that he is aware of the existence of both Klein and Pratt, and knows of the appearance of new poetry anthologies. Can it be that the wide sale of one of these anthologies, and the success of Klein's *Hitleriad* and of Pratt's *Collected Poems* have done something to his opinion of modern poetry? However, so far as we can judge, he did not discuss any of the poets who have appeared since 1940, nor did he attempt to outline the tendencies of the new movement. We feel that he knows as much about Canadian poetry as he does about Canadian prose, and that the total adds up to a startling ignorance of the facts.

But Mr. Eggleston is not the only one who is still adrift in another time. It is just a few weeks since Morley Callaghan wrote an article in *New World* on a most amazing subject: the decline of Canadian poetry. He chose to announce the decline of our poetry at the very moment when it was entering on a period of important growth! From Mr. Callaghan, the author of some distinguished prose, we would have expected something better: we must learn how to be twice as cautious in the future.

Modern writing has made important advances in Canada, but a stone wall of indifference and ignorance still remains to be battered down.

—J.S.

# Mastick, Harry

—WILLIAM McCONNELL

The outbreak of war in the year of Our Lord, 1939, found Harry Mastick unprepared. At least this was the way he phrased it. (Unprepared for what was a rhetorical question, as rhetorical as the statement of being unprepared).

Harry Mastick (nee Mastickvitchev, changed by virtue of registration in the Provincial Court House, Calgary, Alberta and duly entered, recorded and eventually published in bad print by the King's printer, Alberta, Canada) had been unprepared ever since he had left the graduating class. Almost as unprepared in his nebulous, near-sighted, kindly way as he had been for the Maths teacher, Fosdick, for the History lecturer, Green, for the jibes of Can McDonald, Semple and Company, as unprepared as when, leaving school and entering the wholesale house of Jarman, Jarman, Michleson and Filtch, he had promptly slid out again (one week's wages in lieu of notice, and for God's sake, man, couldn't you read the labels on those barrels; bloody mess we'll have to clear up after you, alum in washing soda, salts in icing sugar) . . . as unprepared as when his bicycle collided with a wood-truck and nervous three weeks in hospital. An unprepared five year span in an unprepared world. Oh the long succession of dimple-cheeked confessions, failure, happy scramble for jobs that would never last, always left with innocent perplexity.

"Mastick . . . Harry . . . what didja say your second name was?"

"Mastick, Sir."

"Don't call me "SIR". I said your second name."

"Haven't one."

"Birth, country of origin, come, speak up! . . . religion . . . nearest dependents" (a gulp at this one) . . . and a slow mumble of question on question and mumbled reply (were the others listening? Tell him his father had changed his name? Wasn't prepared for that one, better to leave it alone.)

"Alright, Mastick. Follow the corporal to the medical."

"Yes Sir." But the other was scratching with government pen on fresh card, intent on same question, similar answer.

"This way, Mastick. Stand at attention when you enter."

There was a covey of naked figures sitting in various assumed postures on the rough wooden benches. Harry stood stiff, hands correctly at seams of trousers, eyes wavering, knees nervously threatening to dislocate. The dozen naked ones forgot their poses at his entrance. When Harry continued at attention they stared more curiously. Smiles crinkled. Now the corporal was standing behind his intent body, shrugging cleverly. The naked twelve grinned, laughed. Mastick's eyes followed their mirth, puzzled at it, traced it and was about to relax when the corporal shoved him lightly. Harry stumbled in, turned, opened his mouth to expostulate.

"Take your clothes off, stupid, and sit in line."

Three quarters of an hour waiting, then his name was called from the inner room. He went in.

Nervous at first, slight twitching of white flesh, a shamed concealment of body. But the medico wasn't interested in flesh. Height, weight, chest-measurement (haven't done any heavy work yet, eh boy?) blood pressure, pulse check, walk bend, now the other (What's wrong with that leg, lad? Know you're showing signs of varicose veins? Never mind explaining, I'm not blind) and a long succession of listenings, pummelings, long-drawn heuphrms and exhale, inhale, faster, faster. Now cough, if you please. (Alright, step up to the orderly there. Call the next, Murphy).

And the first night in barracks (engineer job, oh yes, running toilets, showers, and beds, if you please, Lady), not yet issued with uniform but ill-at-ease or lounging or reading back-issue magazines, hoping to God EVERY night was not going to be like this, but I suppose it improves and will I raise the devil when we're issued our uniforms. Say, is it true that we don't wear Balmorals? Won't my little woman be burned up. She's bin counting on those there Glengarry's. That's a woman for yuh.

Harry was talking with a low-voiced fellow that said he'd come down from the Peace River Country (There ain't much doin' up there; oh, lot's to eat an' all. But it gets kindov lonesome and when you ain't really been anywhere I thought this might be an opportunity, specially with not much fighting takin' place. Not that I don't want it, but . . . well, without, it should be O.K. by me, too.) Then Harry sounded off.

"Sure, sure. That was the way I looked at it. Don't know why I really did take the step. But it doesn't take long, does it. I wasn't doing anything, was really unprepared for this, but did it all at once, just joined up. That is, if I pass my x-ray. They're particular in this war not like the last when everyone could get by."

His listener drifted off, thumbed over a "LOOK". Harry lifted his feet to the drum stove, hummed, tapped his toes till he noticed the smell of leather burning. Someone at the dimly-lit end of the building shouted "Take your feet off the stove, idiot! Want to smell us out?" Harry got up and drifted over to a card game in the corner, watching the hands till he was shushed away.

The day of the old-fashioned sergeant-major had gone. But he had forgotten to tell his associates in Harry's battalion.

"Mastick . . . you, there at the end of the line! What's wrong with your spine? Have you got one? (Oh yes, Sir) Don't call me 'Sir'. Where didja leave your spine, eh? Tell the other boys. Come, do tell them . . . please! Mastick! You double-blanked sodden-bodied sow! If you don't stand straight I'll get a broomstick and ram it straight up your — NO! Don't tell me! I Know where I'll ram it. And kindly keep that flabby mouth of yours closed. I do the talking around here, Mastick. It's the custom, you know. Open that trap of yours once again and I'll gag it with that slack oat-meal carcass of yours. STAND UP STRAIGHT!"

The others would grin. It distracted attention from themselves. (Oh he's a decent enough fellow, alright. Hell, I borrowed his last two-bits the other evening . . . Say, isn't that the stoop who forgot to left-wheel in Squad B yesterday and marched clean into the side of the drill hall? . . . Yeh, that's him, we're going to get him stewed paynight . . . Says he doesn't drink, but he'll learn.)

He would stand at the end of the Viaduct, a hundred yards or so past the Armories, of course, for the Colonel raised the devil if he caught any man thumbing a lift. And he'd pose there

self-consciously with thumb outstretched, hitching lifts into town like the others. Indulgent patriotic motorist and conversation (Oh yes, I like the army alright. Gives me time to think, you know. Surprising how much time you get in the army to think. That's always been the trouble with me, I suppose. Never thought. Never prepared. Always getting into damnfool jams because I never tried to think my way through anything. Gosh, thanks for the cigarette. Yes, I get out at Hastings Street. Was going to go up to the Public Library for awhile. Perhaps read for awhile and dope out what I forgot in school. Lots of openings in the army if you could remember your trigonometry and German . . . and the thought as he climbed out, tripping on safety-zone button, 'Nice young fellow, but a little addled'.)

And long hours being badgered as he sweated over logarithms and dictionaries, 'Gesing, Gesung, Gesungen'; (Well look at old Pythagoras, there, would you? He'll be a blasted one-pip before we leave the dump, giving us orders. Can you imagine that, eh? Giving us ORDERS? Lieutenant Harry standing up there, shouting — here a falsetto squeak — Squad, Shunt, Squad have you your hankies? Ready, boys, Pansy Patrol, prepare for rifle practice!) with Mastick grinning good-humouredly, blushing and slowly closing the books and picking up a magazine, forgetting the banter in pictures of "Life's Flight Across America", "Finland Defends Mannerheim Line", "Pontiac Leads Again", and slowly worrying at the captions, too-skillfully prepared by comfortable editors.

But oh the night they succeeded in getting him drunk. A subtle round of beer. Lively conversation, "Harry, old fellow, look at that wench, would you? Now, you can't tell me that she's a streetwalker. Uhm, class, eh Harry? Oh! Don't shrug, Harry. She's really a pippin (a sly pouring of dollar-and-a-quarter rye in half-filled glass while Harry strained to see). Well, drink her up, Harry. A glass or two of beer won't kill you. Particularly, if you're prepared for it, eh Harry?" And a heavy roll of laughter that caused heads to swivel and eyes to stare. "Drink her down, Boys! Harry's buying the next round."

Head reeling, why didn't that table stay by his knee? Tongue slurring hopes and wishes "Wished I'd payed more attention at high-school, fellows. Could have got a lot further. Been sort of prepared for life, then. And might have turned out slightly different. Instead of landing in this army I might have been an engineer

or even a street-car conductor."

"Sedition, Harry, sedition!" They mocked him. "Have another one. Sure, come on. Hell, Joe's got to pay, hasn't he? Can't let him get away with only forking out for one round!"

The party progressed, louder, with jabberings of raised voices filling the large saloon, causing heads to turn and appraise, shrugs of civilians and laughings of understanding. The white-garbed waiter now hovered constantly over their table, ready to fly at each raised finger. An old wizened peddler came up, tray precariously lifted overhead.

"What've you got there, Uncle?" queried Harry, noticing his plaintive face through mist. Suddenly he became mawkish. "HEY! HEY!" he shouted for the other's attention. They paused in argument and focused their eyes. "Old Uncle, here. Poor old bugger. Old Uncle trying to sell something. You are trying to sell somethin' aren't you, Uncle?"

The plaintive face opened its cracks and smiled doubtfully.

"What're you selling, eh, Uncle?"

"Eggs."

"Eggs?"

"Yes, Sir. Eggs."

"Eggs?" This time incredulously. "Eggs? You mean what chickens lay? Chicken eggs? Common chicken eggs?"

"Oh no, Sir," replied the peddler confidently. "Not ordinary chicken eggs. Eggs, boiled, seasoned carefully and expertly, pickled for your service in my brine solution." And he carefully set down his tray on the sopping table, knocking over a thick-bottomed beer glass, to reveal several preserving jars filled with eggs, swimming dutifully in brine, yellow and unhealthy-looking. He elaborated, "Specially prepared eggs, Sirs, specially prepared. My own process. The ideal thing to settle your drinks, gentlemen. The ideal thing. Five cents apiece, gentlemen, and I'll guarantee they'll please." Then, with his prepared speech offered, he paused, patiently waiting for their inevitable move, cracked face now carefully mended, meaningless, patiently commercial.

Mechanically they dug in their battle-suits for change, flipped him coins, whereupon he opened one of the jars, groped in the liquid with a spoon, and triumphantly deposited slimy eggs in front of the group. They quickly cracked the shells, peeled and surveyed them. Harry swallowed his whole. His face contorted. "Why, you

old son of a bitch, they're only ordinary hard-boiled eggs!"

The peddler stepped back, dismayed. He mumbled, "Specially prepared, gentlemen, specially prepared . . ."

Mastick stood up, face livid with the effort of swallowing, "Call us gentlemen, does he? Calls us gentlemen? We're bloody soldiers and he has the nerve to call us gentlemen. What do you think you are, you bloody fool, selling us poisoned eggs and then insulting us. He swayed, turned to the amused group who were busy biting at the eggs. "Hear him, boys? Hear him call us gentlemen? Selling us inferior goods and then trying to cover it up." Harry stood there, swaying. The Peddler was hurriedly recapping his jar. The others were eager for amusement and to insert their voices. Noticing Mastick undecided, McKenzie shouted over-loudly. "That's right, Harry, Old Boy! Ought to tip his brine down his gut and see if he likes it!" The others grinned assent. (Jesus! Boy, what a man. Easy to get HIM going. Boy! What a chance. Kid him on, lads, kid him on.)

Harry tripped and grabbed at the peddler's tray to balance himself. The tray and Harry slithered to the floor. The peddler started to shriek. People stood up at neighbouring tables craning and crowding. McKenzie tipped the table over, narrowly missing Mastick's head. Glasses crashed. The immobile waiter started to move towards them, Williams tripped him up, then calmly stepped on his face. Webb and Brown each let out a whoop, helped Mastick to his feet, whooped again, then dragged him through the collected crowd towards the entrance. Several waiters pushed through to intercept them. McKenzie grinningly straight-armed one while little Webb let go of Mastick and walloped the other neatly in the midriff. By now the place was bedlam, screams, shouts, a tavern brawl. (Oh God! There's the M.P.'s at the door, boys! Quick! Straighten up! Let me handle them.)

The three M.P.'s pushed their way through the swinging doors, tried to appraise the row. Webb jumped to the corporal. "Bunch of sailors up at the end, there, Corp. Trying to kill the proprietor." The corporal glanced briefly at Webb, shoved by the others, whistled to his men and pushed into the thick melee.

The night ended disastrously for Harry. As to the rest, seasoned in pickling expeditions, they called a halt with their leave expirations and scattered back to the Barracks before One A.M. Harry was still lolling in a bootlegging joint at that hour, arguing passionately with a frayed gentleman on the virtues of Vancouver

weather compared to the Prairies. The frayed one was a veteran commercial traveller, evidently on his weak legs, trying half-heartedly to gather energy to return to his family in Saskatoon. "B . . . the weather," Hary said, terminating the argument. Sleep claimed him. He slumped over the table, concentrated for a few dim moments on the throbbing veins of his forehead, then dozed off. (We'll have to throw that young punk out, that one over by the door. He's out like a light. You go through his pockets when you get him in the alley. No telling what he's got on him. Leave watches or jewelry, though, 'less it's gold. That sort of thing's too easily traced.)

At seven he woke up, the taste of cement, fog, whiskey and bile in his mouth. He crawled up from the gutter, turned his stupefied face up and down the narrow alley, then got to his feet. The effects of the liquor had not left. He felt groggy, ineffectual, yet slightly exhilarated. (Christ! What a night!)

The half hour's walk back to the barracks woke him from his stupor. A drink of ginger ale at an all-night lunch place instantly brought back his drunkenness. He reeled out, forgetting to pay. The tired blowsy girl started to go after him, wavered, shrugged, and let him stagger out of the door.

At seven-thirty a young lieutenant of the Coast Artillery (temporarily stationed, in part, at the same dullstoned and shack-strewn depot) horrifiedly came across the sight of Mastick carefully rerouting traffic down a side street from the wide avenue. He clenched his swagger stick, set his features, and strode out.

"You there, what do you think you're doing?"

The figure kept waving its arms, swinging early-morning bewildered drivers down the narrow gravelled way.

"You there, ATTENTION!"

The imperturbable figure kept its back turned, waved its arms in semaphore.

The young lieutenant, immature, shaken, stepped up closer to the signalling soldier and dug him in the ribs with the malacca cane. "Didn't you hear me?" he screamed.

Harry turned around, slowly, casually, surveyed the crimson face, "Bugger the weather!"

The officer stared open-mouthedly, turned on his heel, walked with a threat to run to the barracks, screamed for the guard. It took four of them. And they had to carry Private Mastick. He relaxed in their arms, grinned amiably, then passed out.

The Colonel was old in service, wise. (Mastick, you've been a

disgrace, both to the regiment, to the uniform, and especially to yourself. I could send you to Military Prison for two years for this list of crimes. Mastick, one month C.B. Dismiss!)

(You were a bloody fool, Mastick! That month certainly quietened you down, anyway . . . Yes, Harry, old boy, a real trooper . . . How the devil did you get your uniform that filthy, eh? Sure we saw it. Exhibit "A", hell, I labelled it . . . What a man, Mastick! Well, you see, boys, I wasn't prepared. Now what I should've done was to drink about a quart of carrot juice, raw carrot juice, before we went out. Then the stuff would've been soaked up by the carrot juice. It lines the stomach. Anyway, there goes my chance of stripes. I wanted to put in a transfer to the Air Force, too. Blooie, she's gone sky high . . . Baloney, olive oil's better, that's what I heard . . . Old Corporal Mastick, boys, sorry but not this week . . .)

A few days before the battalion left for Halifax Harry, while downtown wandering around in the effortless pastime of window-gazing, ran into Charles Erskine, a member of the same graduating class at John Oliver High School. Erskine was in civilian clothes, neat, with the appearance of a semi-prosperous store clerk or office employee. Erskine was delighted. They immediately gravitated towards a restaurant, where they sat in a booth. Erskine's clean-cut features were animated by the chance encounter. He was curious, too, curious about everything which had happened to Harry during the five year interim (As for me, well, it's been nothing much. Book Department at Hudson's Bay. Screwy job in a way. Get a lot of reading done, though, and it pays fairly well. Expect to get married in the Spring if this war doesn't upset things. By the way, what got you into the army Mastick? You're the last person I'd think of for joining up right away.)

So Harry told in detail (not omitting the excerpt on preparedness), noting with curiosity that Erskine's eyes twinkled on occasion. When Harry related the job at Jarman, Jarman, Michelson and Filch, Erskine laughed outright. (Still the same old boy, alright, Mastick. Well, how do you like being in the army?)

And Harry told in detail of the life, his hopes, his escapades (which were embroidered dutifully), when the battalion was leaving, menus, his family and their views, his friends in the outfit, what they say and their peculiarities, supplying the quiet attentive Erskine with enough material to fill a notebook. The voluble Harry noticed the unnatural attention and was so pleased he insisted

on paying the small bill. They parted with mutual promises of writing (It should be interesting to get his impressions of England, or wherever he's going, thought Erskine). Harry drifted back to his aimless window-searching.

The day before entraining Harry spent with his family, Mother, Father and three daughters talking excitedly of his near departure, mentioning warnings, places to visit (If you get a chance, Harry, do visit the Zoological gardens in London, if you go near London. Teacher's always talking about them in Biology and I would like you to see them and write me.) Harry dutifully promised them everything and secretly wished that the hour for leaving had already arrived.

They had twenty-four hours leave. The train was to pull out at nine a. m. That night Harry with the bolder spirits from his hut plunged joyfully into a spree. They caught roll-call at the station platform closely. Harry couldn't find his family in the milling, excited crowd. A band struck up, drowning out the shouts and laughter and admonishments and advice. Harry looked frantically through the crowd hitching up his pack and front-slung gas mask nervously each time he glimpsed an anxious-looking middle-aged woman. Whistles shrilled. The noise became deafening. Already the N. C. O.'s were herding the men into the tourist-class coaches. One shouted at Harry. He nodded, backed towards the steps, anxiously searched the crowd again. The warning bell clanged. The harassed station-master hurried by, pushing relatives and friends from his path. Harry climbed onto the first step. Someone jostled by him with a "Step Mastick, step. Don't block the entrance." Harry paid no attention. The engine puffed, grunted, the air hoses whistled as the engineer shot the test through. The coaches jolted. With the first convulsive movement Harry's young sister, Angeline, burst through the crowd with a shriek, half-pleasure, half-dismay. His mother's familiar face broke through. She waved frantically. A clot of people jammed between the coach and his arriving family. He fancied he could hear their farewells through the din. Suddenly, semi-consciously, he shrieked "GOODBYEE". The station slowly began to slip past. A sergeant next Harry's shoulder whistled between his fingers at a crying group of girls, dismally alone at the end of the wooden platform. Harry climbed up the remaining steps into the fetid coach.

"Why, here's good old Mastick. He'll have a bottle in his pack! What about it Mastick?"

Harry forced a grin onto his tired face. "Sure, sure. Teacher's Highland Cream, boys. Nothing but the best for the troops!"

## O Contemporaries

In a cloud of time, this dust of locusts, in which we move  
Involved with Stalins, Churchills, and chorus girls' legs,  
Who is the Gulliver to shake the earth with a feather,  
Unravel the tongues of the winds and make them talk?

They say any man—a locust—in every crook of his wings  
Can in an empty treble, yet enough to fill a space  
With the sharp, sure, useful whistle of the flywheel,  
Make our intelligence like the intense cricket sing;

But it fails, and frays like wire in dissonant noises,  
Hurts the heart awhile, dies away, and leaves no sound;  
There is no noise of knowledge left, but only the clatter  
Of caricatures, a Hitler circus, jitterbugging kids.

Gather together the broken teeth of light scattered  
From Rockefeller's skyscrapers, and the bones of numb neon.  
Re-assemble them. What records of reptiles' jaws,  
What beasts are these? Take them to the museum, and ask.

Let the white-frosted boys tell you of time's serpent,  
Of man in his naked skin, who is vulture and fish  
And cell in a slide, like a swollen eye trailing  
Out of the womb he came from like a blazing star:

But not what dimensions of space he sleeps in, what times  
He sweeps as he multiplies, what gods he gives joy to;  
Nor what is this storm-blind moment that we dread  
What this unsteady stone in space on which we cross.

—LOUIS DUDEK

## The Fruit of Now

Soon to dissolve into a pulp of slumbers  
 these wampum faces with the movie eyes;  
 and through the peepholes of the night they train  
 their personal sights upon the spawning screen  
 that hangs between the madness and the act.  
 What will they relish from the night's invasion?  
 Will it be arms outstretched and keep his memory  
 green as a phantom suckled in the mind?  
 or play their frenzy over exhausted acres  
 induced by dreamcraft to a focal carnage.  
 It could induce the spurious flesh to creep  
 like a primed bandit into each feminine lair.  
 And she each with her tigerpawed complaint  
 could tie a swoon into a sailor's knot.  
 Bemused by forty cents of hooded fever  
 they stream in prim battalions out of eyeshot,  
 and where beyond they go no bird will mutter.

—A. G. BAILEY

## Noon Sight

Places dance on this chart of seas,  
 Consider this spot an invasion zone  
 Where nature's atolls, forts of man  
 Will beach T. Cook's tourist drone.  
 The bearings, depths and soundings prove  
 The barges will easily make the shore.  
 Ten years from now the graves will grant  
 Them tombs for heroes, who won a war.

But time, whimpering, cries at hand  
 In mechanical and fierce menagerie,  
 When all the guns tear loose in salvos  
 Their excellence of gunnery.

There is no counting in glaze of pain  
 The pilots ambushed in their vanity.  
 We made the beaches of this zone,  
 Left to tourists their humanity.

—HARRY ROSKOLENKO

## The Dragon

Taking it all too easy, for granted, spending it like a drunken sailor,  
 wasting it like a bored millionaire,  
 Living in a dreamer's paradise, laughing too loudly to cover up the  
 screech of the guns, the stutter of death in far-off streets,  
 Playing too fast to miss the large-sized writing on the wall, tight enough  
 to mistake the fangs of the dragon for a friendly handshake,  
 Until one day it was too late, one morning we woke and the blinds  
 would not rise to salute the sun,  
 And the room was dark at noon, at six, at midnight when the clocks  
 struck only once,  
 And we decided it must have been all a dream, a foolish, childish dream,  
 That outside those windows birds had sung,  
 That up through green leaves we had seen the stars,  
 That we had worshipped life, that we had never thought of death.

—RAYMOND SOUSTER

# The Later Mann

—JOHN B. SQUIRE

(This is the last section of an essay on Thomas Mann.)

But what of Mann after the Magic Mountain? We have suggested that very few of his readers are capable of being guided by the symbolical though half-baked victory of Castorp over too-obvious goodness and evil by means of his perilous journey between them--indeed, we have gone so far as to intimate that the 'surprising' sale of Mann's works, anything but 'popular' as they are, has been due to this very inability on their part to be guided by Castorp: that it has been due rather to the confused defeatism and moribund self-doubt of the Western peoples following the first Great War, and to their eagerness to forget the flatland and its tasks for another, relaxing, vicariously evil world. However, if the early stories and novels represent the artist's isolation from the bourgeois world-around--the conflict with politics and their exclusion--the idea that all heightened healthiness must come from experience of disease--and the antithesis of spirit and nature; then it is in the Magic Mountain that these themes reach a dramatic climax, a climax that resulted in lessening their hold on Mann's mind and work. Not all the early ideas have gone: the disease-health interdependence lives on in another form. But, generally, since the time of the stay on the mountain, that other side of his nature--his love of the sea, of the infinite, of the myth, in contrast to the "hot involvement of the ego with the hour and act"--has begun to assert itself. Thomas Mann has emerged from the pit.

We might now consider how it was that Mann came to select the story of Joseph as the one in which to embody the wisdom and creativeness of his riper years. In a speech at the Library of Congress a few years ago he told his audience how it came about. "As a man, and as an artist, I must somehow have been in readiness to be productively attracted by such subject matter, and my Bible reading was not mere chance. The various stages of life have different inclinations, claims, tendencies of taste--as well as abilities and advantages." He was ready

for the mythical Joseph legend, he continues, not only because of his disposition for generally human thinking and feeling, but also because that disposition had, outwardly, in the world at large, been given a new impetus and incentive by the historic convulsions of our time, "by which the question of man, the very problem of humanity was presented to us as an indivisible whole, and imposed upon our conscience as hardly ever to a generation before us." But what is the history of this disposition, and what are its thoughts for the future?

Mann has called the admonition "Resist not Evil" the most ethical message of the Gospels—for morality, without knowledge and experience of sin, is "nothing but sheer flabby virtuousness." In the last analysis, what is Mann's early work but his own acquaintance with 'sin', with the depths of the human problem as it exists today—his own experiencing with himself, inwardly (while man as a whole experienced it outwardly and historically), of the contradictions and perversities bequeathed to us by European civilization? What more precise symbol exists of the condition of western man after the first Great War than the Magic Mountain—with its morbid questionings, its preference for death above life, its frantic suicidal quality, its substitution of abstract desires for real ones, synthetic pleasures for natural ones, and 'wandering' for effort? Into this pit, dug by the conflict of spirit and nature, by the German distinction between society and politics, and by the great struggle everywhere to see a false ideal of individualism and pride perpetuated into the future by whatever modern means came to hand (from the revival of patriotic nationalism, from the resuscitation of the national mythical origin and the parading of violent reaction as revolution, to the perversion of the techniques of psychoanalysis to the task of persuading men that their primitive and irrational instincts were more truly 'human' than their civilized and dignified ones—into this pit dug by such modern means, I say, Mann descended to do battle and to come to know. And though his "friendly alter ego" does not quite find the way to the future, he is left to his fate with these not-hopeless words: "Moments there were, when out of death, and the rebellion of the flesh, there came to thee, as thou tookest stock of thyself, a dream of love. Out of this universal feast of death, out of this extremity of fever, kindling the rain-washed evening to a fiery glow, may it be that love one day shall mount?"

The story of Joseph, then, came as refreshment and answer to the world of the Magic Mountain — and Joseph himself is at once an

extension of and an answer to Hans. We recognize Castorp in Joseph in many places: we can hear the learned discourses on the mountain when old Eliezer introduces Joseph to wisdom and higher thought — when Joseph consoles the dying Mont-kaw we can see Hans trotting off to pay one of his visits to the moribund — when Jehosiph's waning resolve is revived by memories of the father in Hebron we recall Castorp's thoughts of his grandfather — and in Joseph's reserved attitude toward Ikhnaton, the tone of which declares so clearly Hans Castorp's relations with the Italian windbag and Naphta. And Joseph is an answer as well: the idle dreaming and intellectual wandering of "life's delicate child" is replaced by the other's use of the dream in life, by his life as the working out of a dream; the political childishness and apathetic attitude to the events of the day shown by Castorp are here replaced by high statesmanship and an eager awareness of the daily life of Egypt; to Castorp's distrust of work, his thinking of it as an imposed necessity, is contrasted Joseph's idea of the daily task as the means whereby a Life-plan might be fulfilled, and whereby an inward urge might reach its outward or real destiny; and Joseph's faith in himself and in the values and ambitions he served stand opposed to the distrust of self and of the values of life found in Hans. The strictly non-political is replaced by the shrewdly political, ineffectiveness and death-attraction by countless capabilities and zest for life and the living. Whereas in the Magic Mountain the major theme is death and the characters frustrated by disease,—Settembrini's literary ambitions wrecked, Joachim's military career and secret love cut short, Castorp's leaving a mountain of disease only to be sucked in by a "universal feast of death", a war—now, in the Joseph story the theme is love, and the question of whether "Love one day shall mount" has been answered, artistically at least. Yes, here the theme is Love,—Jacob's dearly bought love for God— his deep love, proven by long years of labour, for Rachel— his love for Joseph and Joseph's for him and for Benoni— Mut's love for Joseph, shared throughout Egypt— and Joseph's love for the brothers, transcending even the pit experience and the beating. Deepest, though, of all, is Joseph's love for himself and for his destiny: for here it is that love takes on a creative form, rises out of the pit and the prison renewed and deeply strengthened: here love, piety, shrewdness, faith, and beauty combine to create one of the greatest lives in history. Coming after the Magic Mountain, we repeat, with its spiritual sterility, its hopelessness, listless quality, the integrity and beauty of the Joseph story acclaims the escape from the

pit. But it does more: for Hans Castorp, as the symbol of man, is torn between the forces of Nature and Spirit and yearns toward both, while Joseph is the fruit of that yearning, the meeting place of Spirit and Nature, analysis and poetry, of the artist and politics. Indeed the spiritual mixture of piety and craftiness forms one of the most important themes of the books.

Our first inkling of this mixture comes through Abram, discoverer and formulator of God's mighty qualities, in the creation of the bond between himself and God, a bond compounded of religious feeling and shrewdness. Jacob, in his turn, stands up to God and does not hesitate to cry his censure when the brothers return without the beloved Jehosiph, and to urge those same brothers to take good care of the departing Benoni, even though he has just finished saying that God the Highest, not the brothers, is responsible for the safety of the shiny-helmeted one. And Joseph himself is sure that God will excuse him for certain little concessions he makes to the customs of Egypt—in his dress, by painting his face and by his half-playful participation in the feast days. It is the psychological basis of this bond, Mann states in his essay "Freud and the Future", that he attempts to give in the Joseph books. And this conception in turn leads to that of the soul "as the giver of the given", as creator of those conditions of its life otherwise ascribed to God or Nature. This, of course, is a concept of the East, which has, in Mann's own words, "always shown itself stronger than the West in the conquest of our animal nature"—a concept according to which the gods do not exist completely outside the human orbit, but rather originate with man's soul and not contrariwise.

To digress for just a moment: when we think of this 'eastern' religious quality of the Joseph story, this tendency to bind man and the gods in a single (or rather mutual) creative process, we are reminded of another work of our century, one devoted to an appraisal of the cultural process itself. I refer to John Cowper Powys' "Meaning of Culture", in which the soul is taken as the starting point of all cultural and religious feeling, and which work advises the nourishment and ennoblement of the soul by whatever means are grist to its mill as the only worthy human occupation. Are these, then, tokens of the abandonment by the West of its compulsion-filled attitude to culture, of its rigid priest-and-church ridden religions and their enjoyment of self-abasement and the moraligous decree that man's first sin consists in being born? Is the West at length weary of the psychological compul-

sions it has brought to bear in order to erect its empty, ringing stone and steel world, and ready to abandon its position in favour of a more human, more Eastern concept of its spiritual nature? Mann has suggested that the element necessary for the discovery of God was the claim of central importance for the self, and thus for humanity. Is this element, so long buried under a theology solely concerned with emphasizing man's insignificance before God and his equality with the rest of creation — is this element due for a rebirth among men? Is it one of those "elements of a new and coming sense of our humanity" which Mann suggests lies hidden in the Joseph series? And is this resurgence of the self bound up with just those "answers" we have said Joseph presents to Castorp: the meeting of poetry and analysis—, the recognition of our moral world itself as being not otherwise responsible than to ourselves — the use of the dream for the purpose and guidance of life and of man's dream, the myth, as a constant source of nourishment and wisdom: in a word, all those meaningfully emphasized elements in the Joseph books that really merge in one phrase—"the soul as Creator of its own Conditions". But this is, in every sense, a Romantic idea. Might not the first slender beginnings of this reaction against the stone and steel life be termed a Romantic movement, not merely in the art forms, but in life itself—a Romantic movement which, because of its being stifled in the breadlines of our commercial economy, has shown its nasty side first in the form of fascism, the only modern acknowledgement (ALAS!) of the existence of this new restlessness, the Romantic restlessness of the young?

But to resume. In most of the serious studies of our civilization of the last few decades—from Carrel's "Man the Unknown" to Mumford's "Condition of Man"—it is commonly agreed that a small number of men of great inner discipline, having the destiny of our culture at heart, could guide, and even perhaps control the spiritual fate of our countries. Castorp, entering the moribund world of the diseased, fell under its spell, and seven years did not suffice to awaken him from forgetfulness of the living. But Joseph! What finer instance of inner discipline, of the prevailing of inward strength over the giant powers and seductions of a foreign culture can history display? And its inward triumph is not the discipline that sets out to conquer by force of arms, but rather through force of soul, of love and belief—in God and self, or God-in-self. In this too, then, is Joseph an answer to the perigrinating Castorp, a lesson in discipline, love, and respect for the self, combined with the will to effectiveness needful to such virtues.

Could it also be a suggestion to that real "Magic Mountain" to introduce with all haste, Jawaharlal Nehru and Talleyrand?

So, in retrospect, we see that the desire of death and the preoccupation with disease; the windy humanitarianism and the fierce regimentation; the lure of forgetfulness and the search for light that marked the Magic Mountain, have emerged from the universal feast of death in Joseph—charming, lovable and loving, artist and statesman, pious and playful, naïve and aware, divine and human. Emerged, in a word, in the truly and deeply human. Mann's Joseph stands forever as the symbol of wholeness, of that enchanting combination of the divine and the capable—a combination after which this age might mightily search. And thus has Mann vindicated the years spent in The Pit.

May we be allowed one more speculation? If the West could couple, in this day of trial, its fierce ambition for its soul (which it admits by erecting a single, terrible and unaided god as its Saviour and Lord) — if it could couple this ambition with the East's care and love for its soul — expressed in the fact that even the gods themselves are its own creations, bound to it by ties of love, not of power— then what depths and heights could not be its own? But—is that not precisely the meaning of Joseph? Does he not display at once a great love and care for his soul and its welfare, (a love that counsels him to make every "pit" a rebirth), and a great ambition as well — an ambition, Romantic and self-centered, to be the beloved and favoured of the gods?

## Problems

Problems of loving pierce the autumn night  
 With clear sharpness, a knock upon the door  
 No handsome stranger waiting, only a face  
 That you knew before.

Turning the circle of self let the arrow stop  
 At love and what does it signify?  
 Win or lose, its meaning is still obscured  
 From the inward eye.

Draw the lid of sky over sight and be blind  
 To all movement, be quiet and still—  
 A hand parts the clouds to let world in  
 And becomes your will.

—MIRIAM WADDINGTON

# The Boy

—RIGMORE CHRISTOPHERSON

He was not to blame. It was the one thing that he told himself over and over again as he jogged homeward, I am not to blame, I am not to blame, he said, tasting different ways of saying it and discovering as he tasted that he was being a complete hypocrite about the whole thing. He tried saying it indignantly, righteously, qualifyingly, but none of the ways really satisfied him. Finally he hit upon what seemed just the right amount of dignity and firmness. I am not to blame, he said quietly, aloud, and felt very proud of the nobility and decision in his voice. He began to walk faster, afraid he would lose this right mixture of the firm and the casual before he reached home and anxious to get it over with before he forgot. I wonder what she will say, he thought, I wonder how she will react when I stand before her so noble and blameless. She cannot argue with me. She cannot accuse me without appearing a fish-wife. And when I say, I am not to blame, in just that tone of voice, you know, aware of my own innocence but not smug about it, not in the least smug, ready to let her talk until doomsday but remaining myself so firm, when I say it in just that tone of voice, what can she have to say in reply that will not sound vulgar and cheap?

The streets were very quiet so that the sound of his heels digging into the sidewalks was loud and sharp with every step. The streets sounded hollow, his heels sounded hollow, even his legs sounded hollow, all the way up the stems of him he was hollow, right up his body to his head. He smiled emptily into the darkness at this picture of himself trotting along the street with such purpose and with nothing at all inside, and then he thought of his own smile on top of all that nothing and that made him laugh out loud. He liked the sound of his laughter so much that he tried it again, more loudly and merrily this time. The result tickled him

so that he tried a few shorter, sharper laughs, betokening in swift succession, anger, scorn, contempt, spontaneity, hidden sorrow, and complete disbelief. He smiled in pleased surprise and felt more and more like a huge disembodied mask floating along with a white streak in the middle (that was his smile) and a candle burning inside his head. Like a Pumpkin head, for all the world like a Pumpkin head looming at you from a verandah post or a dark window. He thought of last year at Hallowe'en when he and the boys had pulled so many tricks. He wondered how young Ethan was doing now; he'd always liked young Ethan best of all the fellows he'd chummed around with up north. And Ethan had liked him. They'd gotten along fine. Once he had said to Ethan, If I don't beat you in these exams I'll eat my shirt. He'd been glad that they had moved before he'd been able to find out if he had beat Ethan or not, because if he hadn't he'd have had to eat his shirt, really eat it, not just pretend or anything. He'd read a book once about a fellow, something to do with politics, who had eaten his hat boiled, on a bet, with salt and pepper. It had long been an ambition with him to do something really fine and brave like that, so that everybody would look at him as he walked along and point him out and smile eagerly at him, and say, There goes young Ernst, he ate his shirt on a bet!

He heard the sound of a button falling, bouncing in a tinkly little gallop across the sidewalk and peered downwards, looking for it. Mom would be mad as heck if he lost another button off his windbreaker. He scuffed with his foot around in the darkness looking for it and finally had to stoop over and feel around with his fingers in the dark on the sidewalk. He found it in the gutter and picked it up. At the same time his eyes sighted something shining on the road nearby and he bent eagerly to grab at it, thinking maybe it was money or something. The thought halted him midway down and he stopped, just half stooping with his hands on his knees, and felt a little sick to the stomach. I am not to blame, he said as he straightened slowly up again, aware suddenly that he was standing in the middle of a pool of light from the street-lamp. He looked up at the lamp and saw a group of moths fluttering around and around the light. He stood with his mouth open, staring at them and wondering. Darn fool things, he muttered, what do they want to go and do that for? Think they hadn't any sense at all in their heads. He felt the back of his own head

reflectively, wondering if the bump he had found there had grown any since he had first discovered it. He had not told anyone about it yet; he was not sure that he ought to because he didn't know yet what it meant. His fingers groped and fumbled around the bump while his eyes stared widely at the moths around the lamp. A man walked past him, scuffling, like something scared and furtive, his head turned on his neck to watch a boy watching moths and feeling the back of his head.

Ernst turned slowly away after a while and the movement of his turning reminded him of the magazine he had in his back pocket. He pulled it out and stopped under the next street-lamp to flip through the pages. It was a comic book and he really hadn't time to look at it yet. He tucked it furtively back into his pocket and pulled his windbreaker down over it. He hoped that no-one at home would notice the bulge and ask what it was. It had not cost him anything; he had found it lying at the back of the store and Mr. Smith had said he could have it. But still, he did not like for anyone to know he had it. They would ask questions about it, or say he was too old for that sort of thing.

He turned at his corner and went rapidly down the street. Here the lawns dwindled to mere strips of grass between the houses and the street. The City had just lately put a sidewalk in and it shone a cool icy ribbon ahead of him as he walked. There were only a few lights on the street and when you stepped around the corner you had the feeling that you were hurrying slyly down a tunnel. He stopped at his own front porch and stood for a moment silent looking around in the darkness and not thinking at all, just feeling so that he could not even describe what he was feeling. At that moment the moon came out from behind the clouds and threw his shadow headlong up the front porch steps. He twisted his head to follow it, and turned his body in a pivot on his heels. The effect was pleasing. Down the street he heard a radio strike up suddenly, loud and awful in the stillness, and at the same time lights began to snap on and off in the house at his left. He watched fascinated, listening to the music with half his attention. I wish we had a radio, he murmured, I wish I wish I wish we had a lot of things. The door next-door opened suddenly and a man's head came around it, slowly, about two feet from the floor. Ernst had an awful feeling in the pit of his stomach until he saw an arm come cautiously after the head and heard the

clatter of a milk bottle being put down. The door shut again and he was alone. He walked up his steps and opened the front door and went in. The hall was dark and cool and he almost tripped over Elizabeth's wooden doll-crib that Father had made for her. He remembered suddenly that he was not to blame. But it was too late. His mother stood in the doorway to the kitchen and looked at him anxiously.

"Did they have it?" she asked.

He said nothing, only came dumbly towards her up the hall, his hands hanging empty at his sides, trying to make his mouth form the words, I am not to blame, with just the right mixture of the right meaning. But the words would not form and his mouth felt helpless and stiff.

"If they didn't have it," said his mother and he saw the lines in her face deep and dark in the whiteness of her skin, 'why didn't you go somewhere else and try?'"

"I couldn't", he said slowly.

He saw her eyes widen and she smoothed her apron down nervously.

"I couldn't" he repeated stubbornly, "I lost the money you gave me."

She said nothing only looked at him and the sickness came up through his body suddenly and lodged itself behind his eyes. He stiffened as he saw the tears rolling down his mother's face but he did not cry or say a word. Behind his mother the light from the kitchen shone bright and he could see the calendar hanging on the wall behind her. It was slightly askew on its hook and he moved past her slowly and straightened it.

"You must go back and find it," she said, "You must go now and find the money. And buy the medicine and bring it home. And hurry." Her voice rose.

He didn't stop to say that he did not know where he had lost it or when, or that it was impossible to find it again now. He did not try to explain he had it and that when he reached the store and put his hand into his pocket it was gone. He did not even try to tell her that he had walked the fourteen long blocks twice looking for the money, or that it was dark and the moon kept stubbornly behind the clouds; or that he was frightened and it was late. He went out the door and down the steps again, and as he turned onto the sidewalk he noticed that it had started to rain, a thin fine rain that was cold as it fell. He walked along

staring at the sidewalk from side to side and trying to remember where exactly he had crossed the road the first time, but all the while the sick feeling stayed in behind his eyes. He did not think or feel; he only knew that his father was sick and that he had lost the money to buy medicine that the doctor had said he must have and that he did not know where he had lost the money. He went along numbly. All the rest of his life the terrible feeling of guilt was to come up at him whenever his father was sick. It was to linger even after his father had died so that the times when he remembered his father was dead he would break out into a cold sweat thinking suddenly that it was his own carelessness that had killed him.

When he got to the corner of the street he stopped a little before turning. He heard someone following him and looked around. It was his mother. She came up to him and her face was shamed and somehow young-looking as she looked at him. He thought oddly, why she looks so little and young and helpless, my mother does. His body straightened suddenly and he put out his hand to her.

"What's the matter?" he asked. She had brought him money for the medicine that she had taken out of the housekeeping allowance. She wanted him to forget about looking for the coin he had lost and just hurry to the store and right back again.

"Is Father worse?" he asked, anxious at this sudden need for haste. It was not that his father was worse. But they must have the medicine anyway.

"Don't worry about the money you lost," she said, "you can look for it in the morning when it's light out. You couldn't find it tonight in this dark. And it's raining." He watched her slight figure whirl and dart back up the street like an insubstantial and airy shadow whipping along by the walls; like a person in a dream disappearing as you came awake.

As he went to put the money carefully into his other pocket his arm brushed the comic book to the sidewalk. He stared down at it for a moment with no recognition, and then kicked at it with his foot.

Then he ran as fast as he could for his father's medicine.

# The Poetry of E. J. Pratt

—JOHN SUTHERLAND

(*Collected Poems* by E. J. PRATT. Toronto, The MacMillans in Canada. \$3.99. 314 Pages.)

In a recent review of this book a Canadian critic makes the remark that Dr. Pratt's poetry is admired by the modernists and the traditionalists alike. This comes so close to being a direct contradiction of the facts that we think it deserves an answer. Dr. Pratt occupies the most isolated position in Canadian poetry. His work is certain to offend the conventional writer, as a clean wind would disturb the occupants of a permanently stuffy room. Nor will the modern poet, shivering in the solitude of himself, be any less alarmed by Dr. Pratt's heartiness of manner and his frank display of brawn.

One can partly explain his isolation by going to the source of his poetry. Though it may be wrong to say, as Professor Brown does, that there is a secret in Dr. Pratt's poetry — for it is not half so mysterious as he chooses to believe — still, no doubt, there is a basis for Pratt's work which is not immediately apparent in what he has written. His decision to abandon an early interest in philosophy and psychology — connected, as it may have been, with the desire to escape some personal unhappiness — evidently produced a complete change in his outlook. It led him away from a set of problems which he could not solve in the direction of whatever was most vital and powerful in the external world. Professor Brown believes that the real Pratt, who carries on "behind the front of the most expansive of Canadian poets" is to be found in *the Cachalot*. *The Cachalot* may not contain anything so dark as a secret, but it may very well give symbolic expression to the poet's internal conflict. The destruction of the kraken by the cachalot becomes the triumphant assertion of a newly-found health and energy. The poet has torn to pieces, "shred by shred", an introspection that defeats its own purpose by turning in upon itself.

This resolute decision to deal only with symbols of power in the external world explains his isolation between the opposing schools of poetry. His work stems ultimately from a depth of experience that is beyond the reach of the conventional poet. At the same time, being based upon the divorce of poetry from the intellect, it negates all that is most characteristic of modern

poetry. He severs the last connection with our Canadian nightingales, but he vaults right out of the contemporary scene.

To participate imaginatively in these great conflicts of forces in the external world is sufficient to make the poet's blood tingle and to renew his zest for living. He is in the grip of that mood in which one is ready to take on any odds, and face any number of tragedies, because life seems eminently worth while. If the cachalot overcomes his mortal enemy the kraken it will not matter if the cachalot himself meets his doom, as long as he puts up a glorious battle to the end. This unbounded optimism, that is able to take everything in its stride, makes Dr. Pratt's the *heartiest* poetry that has ever been written. One would say that in many of his poems he sits down at a table laden with food and drink, in the company of friends whose conversation is just as exhilarating as the food. The high tempo of his rhythms is one of his leading characteristics. He writes in that convivial mood in which everything is going so smoothly that there is not even time to stop for breath. The stain of every unpleasant thing is washed away by one glorious release of bottled-up energies.

"Much of the emotion in *the Cachalot*", says Professor Brown, "is, in the best sense of the word, juvenile"; and one could apply this phrase to the larger part of Dr. Pratt's poetry. It is so emphatically youthful because it represents a re-capturing of the standards and values that one knew in earlier years. When he puts away from him an over-intellectual aspect of the university that he found unnatural, he goes back again to Newfoundland, the place in which he was brought up. He does not deal so much with material that one associates with Newfoundland, as re-capture a spirit and mood that he knew in his youth. He writes less about the things he knows best, than out of a new attitude that is simpler and more congenial. For this reason his readers may have to shed a number of skins before they learn how to appreciate him.

To read his poetry comes as close to being a physical experience as the reading of poetry can be. With all due respect, it is very much like the vicarious thrill that one gets out of watching a good football game when one is very determined to have the home team win. This home team finally turns out to be the *genus homo*. His defeats are just as inspiring as his victories, because one has the unshakeable conviction that he cannot be beaten in the long run. After the season is over — and all the better if the season lasts to eternity — the *genus homo* will be sitting on top of the league.

*The Cachalot* and *The Great Feud* are not only the most typical of Dr. Pratt's poems: they are also the most thoroughly poetic. In a world that, in appearance at least, is removed at the greatest distance from the human, the "pictures of strength" are given unbounded scope and are not hampered by any statement of creed. The poet's sympathies and ideas are only implied in the most indirect way in the poetry. But the closer that Dr. Pratt comes to the human, the more he gives the impression of passing judgment, and the more he is actually tempted to do so. His creed will appear too simple because it depends initially upon the abjuration of thought. If it is suggestive to describe his poetry as "inimical to ideas", it would be more accurate to say that he is deliberately hostile to them.

At bottom, then, the same qualities that account for the strength of the *Cachalot* explain the weakness of a poem like *Dunkirk*. In *Dunkirk* the forces of good and the forces of evil are not evenly matched, because Dr. Pratt has lined up all his energies on the side of the forces of good. No matter how vividly he paints his pictures of the German tanks and dive-bombers, we never have the feeling that the forces of good can possibly lose the battle. No matter how many statements he makes about the tragedies that occurred at Dunkirk, we do not get the sense of any real conflict between the opposing forces. His headlong rhythms rush along with overwhelming certainty to a foregone conclusion. They push us off our feet at the very moment when we do not want to be pushed anywhere, but would rather have time to pause and reflect. We feel that there are problems inherent in the material which are being side-stepped altogether.

Professor Brown says of Dr. Pratt that his "pictures of strength make one feel the ally, not the victim, of universal power" Would it not be fair to add that this universal power is much too friendly? Is it not an objection, especially to the poems that deal with tragic material, that they have too reassuring a note, and give an impression almost of complacency? Professor Brown has gone on to say that, in the manner in which Pratt makes one feel "the ally of universal power", he resembles Robinson Jeffers. Such a comparison leaves a false impression, and will not do the Canadian poet any good. Jeffers has that very sense of the tragic in human experience which Pratt does not possess. He has dealt consistently with the problems of the contemporary world, and he possesses the most individual philosophy in modern American poetry. If Professor Brown had deliberately wished to show Pratt's weakness, he could not have chosen a

more apt comparison.

Like all Canadian poets, Pratt's importance seems to decrease the longer one compares him with those who are writing in other countries. Fortunately, it is possible to say of him that he gains in stature against the background of Canadian poetry. He is the first of our poets who has shaken himself completely free of literary influences, and has had the courage to speak in a voice that is entirely his own. It is impossible to locate him at any specific point on the literary map, because he has dealt with almost virgin material and has developed a style whose characteristics are unique. But, if he has burst the leading-strings of Canadian poetry he has also done much to widen its scope. Poems like *The Cachalot* and *The Great Feud* represent a complete break with the tradition. His narrative poems are easily the best of their kind that have been written in Canada. There are also a number of poems in shorter form that contribute an entirely new note. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the most imposing figure in Canadian poetry.

Belonging himself to those "Morgan-mouthed vocabularians", those "lovers of the beef of language" whom he so much admires, he may do more than anyone to clear the cob-webs out of our literature.

## Book Reviews

UNIT OF 5. *Ed. by Ronald Hambleton.* The Ryerson Press, Toronto. 87 pages.

The first thing that may strike the reviewer of this book is that the writers included do *not* make a unit of five. If the poets can be described in a general way as "modern", in most respects they are as distinct from one another as they could possibly be. Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster bear a resemblance to modern American poetry: James Wreford, Ronald Hambleton and P. K. Page are most nearly related to contemporary English poets. That is about as specific a classification as one can find for them.

The virtue of Mr. Dudek is to have achieved original lyrics in a time that is hostile to the simpler forms of writing. He discovers the poetry in the least impressive-looking subjects. He writes about the passers-by in the street, the things and events that usually escape attention, the momentary moods whose significance is known but is not to be analysed. His poems have a delicate, receptive beauty that sets them quite apart from the other work in this book.

Mr. Dudek is a fastidious craftsman whose rhythms are scarcely marred by a flaw: Mr. Souster has, perhaps, tried to look as little like a poet as he could. He chooses subjects that his Canadian predecessors would have found shocking, and he writes in a plain unvarnished manner that avoids all but the simplest technique as literary affectation. Souster is the first poet in

Canada who has tried to give voice to the man in the mass. Like the average citizen he feels a good honest hatred of the present scheme of things, and shares his conviction that retribution will be slow but sure:

*"Even a worm will turn, gentlemen,  
Nobody can slum it better than a worm, but even a worm  
Even such a humble creature will presently grow tired  
Of rot, of decay, no matter how extensive, exclusive, fashionable,  
or powerful".*

James Wreford is a much more sophisticated poet who has attempted to build a faith in a better world upon a basis of scepticism. In his most exciting work he does succeed in achieving the goal of "a romanticism over whose eyes nobody is going to pull any wool". In the inferior poems one may have the feeling that Mr. Wreford, unable to decide what attitude he will take, indulges at one moment in an exaggerated romanticism, and at another in an exaggerated scepticism. His metrical fluency may betray him into occasional imitation, and his gift for metaphor lead him into errors of taste. *Time shall Not Join* is little better than an exercise in the metaphysical manner: *the Heads and Tails of Love, the Warm Front and The Cold*, and other poems contain writing of a higher order.

Mr. Wreford's political belief is the keystone of his poetry: Miss Page appears to be in the throes of an effort to make up her mind. When she allows herself a statement of faith it has the appearance of a tag, affixed with a dutiful blessing, but not much hope, to the end of a poem. She resembles the character in her poem *Cullen*:

*"He knew there was a reason, but couldn't find it,  
and marched to battle half an inch behind it."*

Yet Miss Page has unquestionable talent, and she has written several of the most striking poems in the book. She will produce even better work if she can succeed in joining her creative powers with a more exacting principle of selection.

Miss Page is an intuitive writer, who describes the people of a confused time in vivid, immediate terms: Mr. Hambleton debates the problems indirectly contained in her poetry from an intellectual standpoint. To the series of moral questions, which he sets himself in poems like *Homicide, Letter to Francis, Invocation*, etc., he finds a series of answers which come to rest at a point half-way between the positive and negative poles. He makes it plain enough where his sympathies lie, but he finds no satisfactory basis for them in reason. Mr. Hambleton owes a good deal to the style and method of Eliot, and especially of Auden. *Letter to Francis*, though it contains some striking phrases, hardly escapes the category of imitation. *The Picnic* is a much better poem that attains a more individual note.

Taken as a whole, *Unit of 5* testifies to the wealth of creative talent in Canada today. Mr. Hambleton deserves congratulations for rendering a valuable service to Canadian poetry.

—J.S.

FLIGHT INTO DARKNESS, by *Ralph Gustafson*. The Pantheon Press, New York. \$2.25. 96 Pages.

Mr. Ralph Gustafson is the leading spokesman for Canadian poetry in the United States. He is the editor of three successive collections of Canadian verse: a volume in the Penguin Series; a collection in the magazine *Voices*, and an anthology published by *New Directions*. He has also had the foresight

to edit a collection of modern prose entitled *Canadian Accent*. A large share of the credit for the recent interest in Canadian writing in the United States is due to him.

But Mr. Gustafson has not only done invaluable work as an editor: he is also an interesting poet in his own right. His *Epithalamium in Time of War* and his *Lyrics Unromantic* — both published in 1941 — are important contributions to the modern movement in Canada. His present volume, entitled *Flight Into Darkness*, published by the Pantheon Press, is a comprehensive collection of the poet's work during the past ten years.

Mr. Gustafson belongs to that group of poets who, in reacting against some of the trends of modern poetry, have taken up a more affirmative and more romantic standpoint. These poets have sought to save some of the hard-won gains of modern poetry, while they return to the basic verities which they feel have been forgotten. If, in Mr. Gustafson's poetry, there is no hesitation about showing the least attractive side of contemporary life, there is also a positive statement of belief in the power of man, aided by love, as against the power of death. The creed of the poet differs in no detail from that of romantic poetry as a whole: the more inclusive and sceptical basis for the creed has its origin in modern thought. One is free to question man's ability at every stage of his struggle with death, even though the final outcome may not be in doubt.

The reader may feel, however, that the body of Mr. Gustafson's poetry suffers from the failure to achieve a fusion of the romantic and the sceptical attitudes. There is, as yet, no leading idea which is capable of joining these opposing attitudes and of giving the poetry the direction it requires. This lack of an integrating force is reflected in the style of the writing — in a poem, for example, such as *Final Spring*.

"Of grass, insurgent bud aware,  
We in the loop of sudden spring,  
Trammelled by tangled green and song  
Nostalgic on the ear,  
Thrown by the lariat of sun,  
Are branded with initialled fear."

The first two lines are a satisfactory introduction to the poem, while the two concluding lines are both exciting and original. How can one reconcile them with the well-worn references to "tangled green" and "song nostalgic on the ear"? In the second stanza, which begins:

"Between the brazen daffodil  
Sprawling headlines through the park"

one may feel that this brilliant opening is not maintained by the succeeding lines, with their "question on the wind" and "storage in the hollow tree". Mr. Gustafson has still to find a basis for his poetry which will make possible the blending of these conflicting styles.

But if his poems do not achieve this final integration, they do strike a highly individual note. *Flight Into Darkness* is indicative of the progress the modern movement has made in Canada — and suggests the extent to which our new poets are gaining recognition in the United States.

—J.S.

I, JONES, SOLDIER, by Joseph Schull. The MacMillans in Canada. \$1.75. 62 Pages.

In this dramatic narrative poem, Joseph Schull tells the story of a

young Canadian officer in the present war. The experience of this young soldier in directing a minor attack against the enemy is portrayed against the background of his previous life. While he moves into action at the head of his platoon, his imagination recaptures the various incidents that led to his enlistment and transformed him into a front-line soldier.

Apart from moments when a rhetorical flight seems called for, Schull is content to plod along over well-beaten ground. He looks at Jones from the outside, reporting in factual terms upon his home town, parents, friends, job and clothes. If he goes deeper than the surface of his character's mind he finds only "the ripple of the unknowable".

His book belongs in the same category with Canadian novels like *Little Man* — with work that, in making a cant of the commonplace, succeeds in becoming perfectly commonplace itself.

—B.G.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ALFRED GOLDSWORTHY BAILEY. Born, Quebec, 1905. Educated at the University of New Brunswick, the University of Toronto, and the University of London. Published a Ryerson chapbook in 1930. Has contributed poems to *The Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Canadian Forum*, *Canadian Magazine*, *Voices*, *Preview*, etc, and was included in A. J. M. Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry*. Is author of a monograph on the Indians of Canada, and other historical and anthropological papers. Is at present Professor of History at the University of New Brunswick.

RIGMORE CHRISTOPHERSON. Born in Norway twenty-two years ago, she has lived the past dozen years in Toronto. Graduated from the University of Toronto in 1943. Has written a good deal but has attempted to publish little work so far.

LOUIS DUDEK. Born in Montreal, in 1918 of Polish-Canadian parents. Educated in the schools of that city and at McGill University. Formerly on the editorial board of *First Statement*. Has contributed poems to *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Contemporary Verse*, and other periodicals, and was included in the recent anthology, *Unit of Five*. Now doing post-graduate work at Columbia University.

WILLIAM McCONNELL. Born on the B.C. coast twenty-seven years ago. Is now a corporal in the army stationed in Ottawa. Has contributed stories to *Canadian Forum*, *Queen's Quarterly* and other magazines. Selections from his unpublished novel have appeared in *First Statement*.

HARRY ROSKOLENKO. Well known as a poet in the United States, he is now in the U.S. Merchant Marine. Has contributed to *Poetry* (Chicago), *Harpers*, *Atlantic Monthly*, etc. First appeared in this magazine in August.

JOHN B. SQUIRE. Born twenty-three years ago in Toronto. He works on the staff of one of the city's newspapers. The first section of his essay on Mann appeared in our December issue.

RAYMOND SOUSTER. Born in Toronto 1921, he was educated at the University of Toronto Schools and Humber College. Entered a bank at the age of eighteen and joined the R.C.A.F. in 1940. Has published poems in *Canadian Forum*, *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Contemporary Verse*, *Voices*, *Kaleidograph*, etc., and was included in the recent anthology, *Unit of Five*. Is a frequent contributor to *First Statement*. Is one of the editors of the new magazine, *Direction*.

MIRIAM WADDINGTON. Formerly a social worker in Toronto, she is now studying in Philadelphia. Has appeared in *Canadian Forum*, *Preview*, *Contemporary Verse*, and other magazines. Is a frequent contributor to *First Statement*.

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