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FIRST STATEMENT

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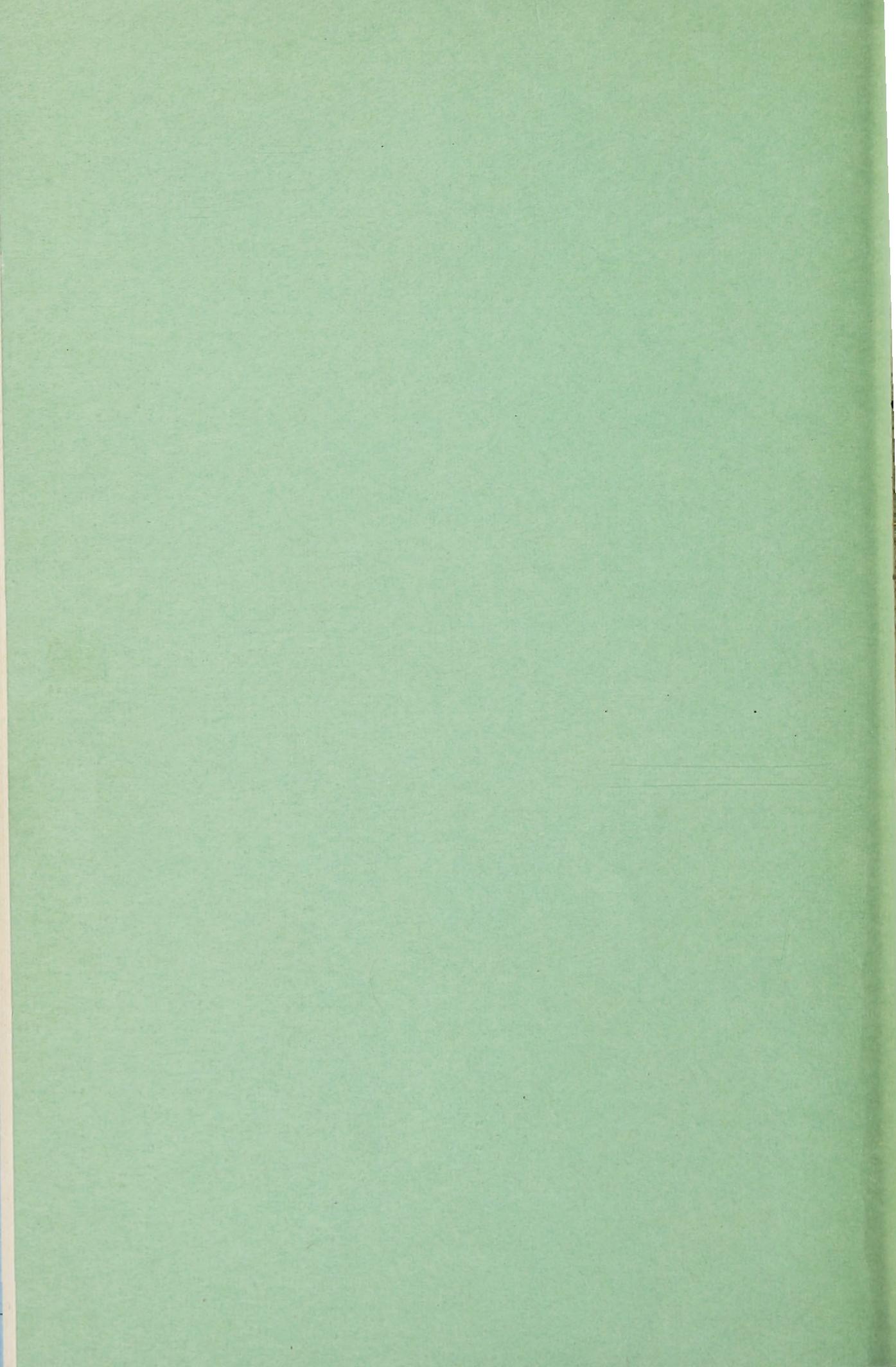
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FIRST STATEMENT Canadian Prose and Poetry

Editorial

Critical letters that we have recently received make two objections to the material that we publish in First Statement. First, they say that we defy the laws of good taste and therefore of good art, and secondly they say that we are trying to establish our standards as the only ones worthy of consideration. This opinion has become sufficiently general to demand an editorial reply.

In our opinion it is of little value to indulge in theorizing about the relation of art and morality. One correspondent, more courageous than we are, states that "there are some subjects which are neither elevating nor interesting outside the laboratories of scientific research". Would he, we wonder, ban D. H. Lawrence for writing "Lady Chatterley's Lover" or Marcel Proust for writing "Cities of the Plain"? We ourselves believe that an author is free to write upon any subject he chooses. His subject-matter seems to us less important than his ability to deal with it.

To those who feel that our contributors have been lacking in this ability, we would like to explain the purpose of the magazine. We have not excluded more mature writers, but we have been chiefly interested in writers whose styles are still in the process of development. We have frequently published work that was neither finished nor mature, believing that the writer showed promise and was capable of good work in the future. We do not think that Canada has produced any major writers of international standing; and we consider it of first importance to encourage talent wherever it is found.

Canadian poets in the past have achieved little good work outside the field of nature poetry. The prose writers have done little or nothing that is significant for the contemporary writer. Poet and novelist have been distinguished by their inability to come to grips with their environment and to express the basic factors in experience. Canadian literature is "romantic", if one can use the word to indicate its lack of connection with life.

Presumably, therefore, the work of editors in Canada will be based on the assumption that a fundamental realism is lacking in Canadian writing. They will endeavor to encourage those writers who show themselves capable of a critical awareness of the individual and society.

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Two Sides to a Story

I

O swing upon the axis
you fall on either side
into a sorrow swallows
your heart up or your pride.
There is no panacea, sweet,
no rule of thumb for this,
whether to stay and staying miss
or stealing spoil the kiss.
I only know, that were I he,
had I as far to go,
the India of my longing would
erect in Everest snow:
had I as far to follow
the alley of your pride,
like him, before I found your love,
I'd lay your love aside.
Therefore, and were I you, sweet,
I would not see him wait,
but let the willing heart supply
what pride would give too late.

II

Her body like the bay tree
would bloom with secret sin
and feel upon its fulcrum
the hula balance win,
the valley of her waiting
suck in the unsurceased,
and she wake up on Sunday
too late to tell the priest.
Free for the millions this, for
the solitary fool
walking inside the labyrinth
shall learn without a rule:
his questionnaires are answered

before he needs to ask,
the welcome mat is out and
he enters with no task.
and easy it is to enter,
and easy are the ways:
but every door is bolted
that leads out of the maze.

—JAMES WREFORD

De Bullion Street

Below this broad street inverted bell-jars
Hanging from wooden crucifixes drop
Tiny moons upon the shaven asphalt;
Rouged whores lean lips to narrow slits: they stop
The young soldier with his bag of salt.

Under the night's carapace, the soft lanes
Are listening ears where sudden footfall
Starts a choir of echoes. A red light winks
Viciously; and the wind's occasional
Sigh lifts from the garbage pails their stinks.

Here private lust is public gain and shame;
Here the Oriental and the skipjack go;
Where those bleak outposts of the virtuous
The corner mission and the walled church grow
Like hemorrhoids on the city's anus.

O reptilian street whose scaly limbs
Are crooked stairways and the grocery store,
Isolate, is a dreaming half-shut eye:
Each virgin at the barricaded door
Feels your tongue-kiss like a butterfly.

—IRVING LAYTON

The Mountains

In streets, among the rocks of time and weather,
With the crisp noises around us, and the surrounding voices,
Hearing the steel of wheels repeatedly, like bayonets,
And the sound of guns from buildings, where the windows
Icily shut suddenly like visors, and men are marching;

Past the trucks stooped in rows like horses
With sacks thrown tenderly over their shoulders,
The hooded and silent heroes in garages —
I walk, though the frost-fire plays in my fingers
And my eyes are crying in this freezing weather;

And amazed, I hear a few anxious voices
Rise extemporizing in the hoar-frost air,
Singing, on this plateau, our latest position
High in the mountains, near the dividing line
Where it is coldest, and the rocks are a parapet.

Yes, soon the hills scaled, we shall look down
Into bright greenery, valleys and rivers
Thinning into wheat-fields; and the cold air like water
Will flow from us, while we gaze and gaze
At the low valleys, and the meandering rivers.

—LOUIS DUDEK

Saturday

MYRON GALLOWAY

They entered the breakfast room together; Cindy in a lemon sweater and grey skirt, Fred wearing wrinkled slacks and a green sport coat.

"Well, here we are," Cindy said.

Alma looked up from her letters and smiled.

"Sleep well?" she asked.

"Wonderful. Didn't we Fred?"

Fred said, "Wonderful" as he peered up under the blinds to catch a glimpse of the sky in the east. Their room was on the west side of the house.

Cindy sat down and Alma reached for the coffee pot.

"Lots of letters?" Cindy said.

"Lots."

Fred came across to the table. Alma smiled again.

"No sugar?"

"No sugar." Fred said.

Cindy was buttering toast when she said, "Isn't it terrible about Fred having to go across?"

Alma said nothing and Fred, taking his coffee cup with him, went back to the windows.

"Don't you think it's terrible, Alma?"

"Terrible?"

"About Fred having to go across. Of course he may not go tomorrow, but he'll be on board and he won't be able to get off so it's really just the same as if he were going."

The girl came through the swinging door at the back of the room with waffles and sausages on a tray. She placed them on the table and disappeared into the kitchen before the door had completely stopped swinging.

"Anyway," Cindy said, "Everyone knows it can't last much longer and will I ever be glad when it's all over."

Alma began serving the sausages.

Cindy said, "Fred, why don't you come sit at the table and eat properly?"

Fred turned and came back to the table.

He said, "Clindy, why don't you stay for the rest of the weekend?"

"But, Fred —"

"It seems too bad that you'll have to miss everything and there isn't much point in coming back to the city. I'll have to go right away, you know."

"But you said tomorrow, Fred —"

"I really should go tonight, darling."

"But —"

"Why don't you stay, Cindy?" Alma said.

"But —"

"It will be a lot of fun. Georgie Peters is coming and Terry Linden and —"

"You'd like Terry, Cindy." Fred said, and to Alma, "Cindy hasn't met Terry."

"Oh, I thought —"

"No," Fred said abruptly.

"He's very fond of Tschaikowsky. You have that in common."

"But, Alma, Fred's going across. I may not see him again for months!!!

"But the whole thing is going to be over soon, darling and then you'll have the rest of your lives."

"Well, perhaps I can come back. Early tomorrow, before anyone is up," Cindy said.

"But we're going to dance tonight and you said last night you were just dying to dance, because ever since you'd married Fred you hadn't danced once."

Cindy said, "I haven't either. That's one thing you'll simply have to change, Fred. Your *ability* not to dance. If you won't change anything else you'll just have to change that." Turning to Alma as she picked up her fork. "You know I thought that I could change a lot of things in Fred when we first got married. I thought I'd be able to bring him to life." To Fred. "You know you are dead, darling. Really dead dead." To Alma. "But in seven months I haven't been able to change one thing. He still reads — like a high school student two nights before an exam

and he just will not go to the movies or — ”

“Will you stay, darling?”

“I don’t know, Fred. I don’t want to you know. I’ll hate to think of you on that dismal train going back to town all by yourself. And then there’ll be no one to see you off and — ”

“But Cindy you can’t go down to the pier and wave your handkerchief.”

“Silly, I know that, but you know what I mean. You know. just see you off.”

Fred poured syrup on the waffles in front of him.

“You can see me off here just the same.”

“And you really should stay for the dance, Cindy. Really you should and you’ll be able to meet someone who really does appreciate Tschaikowsky and you’ll be able to talk all you — ”

“Well, I don’t know. You know sometimes I think Fred knows what he’s talking about when he says that Tchaikowsky is — ”

“You’d never get back if you didn’t stay, because there aren’t any morning trains on Sunday and tomorrow — well, tomorrow would be intolerable in town all by yourself, not knowing anyone and Fred being on board and not being able to get off.”

“Well — ”

There was a small silence.

Alma sipped her coffee and as she moved her arm to put the flowered cup back on its saucer her elbow brushed one of the letters on the table onto the floor. Simultaneously she and Fred reached to pick it up. Their eyes met for the merest splinter of a second; Cindy couldn’t possibly have been aware of anything happening, but something seemed to happen. Fred handed her the letter. They both straightened in their chairs and then Fred stood up.

“Fred, you haven’t eaten a bite. Darling where are you going?” Cindy half turned as he passed her on his way to the door.

“I’ve left my cigarettes upstairs.”

He went out.

“Oh, damn his cigarettes, Damm, damn his cigarettes. Damn everthing,” Cindy said and began to cry.

For a moment Alma didn’t move. Then with a little sigh, quite unnoticeable, she got up and walked around the table.

“What’s the matter, darling?” She said and put her hand on

Cindy's shoulder. "Don't allow yourself to get upset."

"I can't help it. I just can't help it."

Cindy pulled a lacy yellow handkerchief out of the pocket of her skirt and held it tightly against her mouth, choking out her words.

"I sometimes feel — Sometimes I feel — Oh, I don't know. I don't know. You know what it's like. I want to — I want to — Oh, I don't know. I don't know."

Alma stood behind Cindy's chair. She stood very stiffly, her face expressionless. Her hand, on Cindy's shoulder, rested there, limply, heavily.

"I don't understand him, Alma. I've tried. I've tried like hell, but I just can't seem to — well, you know. I didn't think ten years would make such a difference. He's so much older than I am, Alma. He's old inside. He isn't like — well, you know, he isn't like any of the other fellows I ever knew."

Alma winced. With a quick little movement she lifted her hand and walked slowly and deliberately toward the windows.

Cindy went on, "It was all so sudden. I hardly knew him, but I thought I'd get to know him afterwards. I thought perhaps he was a little — well, too intellectual, but I thought — well, after all I like good music and good books and all that kind of stuff and I got such a thrill out of talking to him. He seemed to know so much and — well, you get kind of fed up with crazy fellows who haven't got a thing to talk about and are always making passes, you know what I mean. And I did love him. I do love him, Alma. I've never met anyone like him and I do feel lucky, you know. Because he isn't the type that would marry just anyone and when I realize that he did marry me, well, it gives me a wonderful feeling."

"Cindy, why don't you stay," Alma said. "Fred wants to go. I'm sure that's why he brought you down here. He knew I'd — he knew we'd both — like each other and he doesn't want to think you'll be all alone when he leaves."

Alma came back to the table.

Cindy patted her eyes.

"I would like to, Alma. I would like to meet all these people you're having for the week end. I've never met any of Fred's friends you know. You're really the first. He seemed very anxious for me to meet you, you know and I'm glad. I really am, because —

well, you're a lot like him, you know. And I just love your place here. It's exactly like something out of the movies, but I really think I should go back. I'd just hate to think of Fred all alone in the train with all sorts of people, because he really hates crowds of people."

"Well, if you really want to stay I think I could arrange for Fred not to have to go back alone in the train."

"How?"

"Well, tonight, when the dance gets started, if you'll do something really tremendous — if you'll sort of look after things for a couple of hours, you and Terry, I could drive Fred back to town in no time and be back here again before anyone even missed me."

But — but, Alma — Oh, Alma I couldn't — I — I —"

Cindy looked up just as Fred entered the room.

"Oh, Fred," she said, "Fred, Alma says —"

"Cindy and I have a little scheme worked out, Fred. We fixed it so you won't have to go back in that horrible train tonight."

"But I'll *have* to stay then, Alma and I really —"

"Cindy knows how you hate trains and crowds of people and so we've worked out a beautiful scheme. If you'll wait until the dance starts I'll slip out when no one's looking and run you back in my car."

Fred did not look at Alma. His eyes were on Cindy. And when Alma stopped before Cindy could say what she was trying to say, Fred went up to her chair and, giving her arm a little squeeze said, "That's a wonderful idea, darling. And you will like Terry. He's a very —"

"Fred!" Cindy wailed.

But Fred did not hear. He continued to talk. "He's a very good dancer. You'll see for yourself. We've got the whole day ahead of us yet. Let's get out of Alma's way. How about that game of tennis? I've changed my mind about not playing. I'll get lots of rest later. Do you still want to play?"

"Tennis! Oh, Fred, of course I still want to play. Oh, darling, that's wonderful. Really, really wonderful!" She turned to Alma. "You know Fred hasn't played tennis for seven years. He told me the last time he played it was — why it was with *you*, Alma; seven years ago. Wasn't it with Alma, Fred? Wasn't that who you played your last game with seven years ago? Yes, it was. I remember you telling me."

Prolegomena to Matthew 26:52

Those who want to know will know:
death settles nothing.
You equivocate
ending the argument with agony.
The bayonet thrust
opens a second mouth more eloquent
than one it shuts.
O kill and kill and kill!
Conflict remains:
and crossed opinions generate new strife
even before decay obliterates.
The dead
are merely silent, not convinced.
Their witness is restrained; coerced
to perjure by a forced negation, not
speechless by acquiescence to this side
or that. Or is the case
closer to verdict by these bloodied heaps
of gaping cadavers.

The point-at-issue waits
without decision. It will rise again
prodded by reason to renewed dispute
and when resolved be so
only by affirmation of the mind.

Ten men have killed ten men:
but there is doubt . . .
and five will disagree and strangle five
and three fall out with two
and one with one . . .
and he, alone,
upright upon the nineteen voiceless dead
will doubt
will question . . .

The corpse cannot determine things of state;
nor ultimate a king nor manifest
a protocol to patch morality.
The disenfranchised dead
are rotting residue of sterile means
unable of decision, yes or no.
Conceived by death
this futile prodigality of flesh
dooms unborn thousands to the same deceit
of armed debate.

(The switchboard brain
is only more alert extension of
the lethal function of perverted steel;
Only, the hand,
the lever telling when and where
annihilation circumscribes its arc.
These marionette mechanics death employs,
and pays in kind,

these zombie automatons disciplined
to monstrous movement
they
are unsouled men . . .
no longer men at all.)

The cells
once parted from their heat and pulse
have no articulation thus or so.
Judgment becomes abstracted. Who
will proxy for a myriad carcasses?
Who cares to say:
"I speak for Abel."!

The dead are written off at total loss . . .
discounted to a cypher. Nothing shows.
But you
Intact with moving breath and blood
can make decision for tomorrow's sons
whether they die and leave the argument
shapeless and unresolved, or
speak to form
choate community of man with man.

—DONALD STEWART

Wagner and Zarathustra

JOHN SUTHERLAND

(NOTE: This is the first of two extracts from an essay analysing Nietzsche and his work from a psychological standpoint. The present section discusses the quarrel between Nietzsche and Wagner with reference to their personalities, and does not attempt to define their intellectual convict.)

Nietzsche always had to fortify himself with confidence and steel himself to the task of writing. The *Birth of Tragedy*, his first book, is his only complete one, and the difference between it and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is of special significance. In the *Birth of Tragedy* the author speaks less for himself than for Wagner and his purpose is to establish an historical basis for Wagnerian opera.

It is written because Nietzsche is leaning on a man whom he considers greater than himself, and because he is able to speak for a cause external to his personal desires. Undoubtedly the soul-searching is going on — the formal style has personal overtones — but the soul-searching lacks courage; it tends to deaden writing and thinking rather than to nourish them and it cannot exist without external support. Those accounts in *Zarathustra* of "the friend", in which at times the friend seems indistinguishable from the superman, are indicative of Nietzsche's character: he prefers to lean upon the friend provided he has faith in the friend's powers; he will grant him an equal rank with the superman. But in the final analysis a choice must be made between the two conceptions: the ideal friend, who is so difficult to imagine as actually existing, is only a "taste and forerunner of the superman" and becomes a stepping stone to the final goal. Before *Zarathustra* is written the friend — or society — has to be sacrificed to the ego striving to be superman. Whereas the *Birth of Tragedy* was written with Wagner's support and advice, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was written in solitude after Nietzsche had freed himself of social ties. The early book is written by a university professor with an interest in the pagan origin of language: the style of *Zarathustra* is the headiest poetry, allowing the emotions and the imagination to run riot. One book is a eulogy of the exalted powers of a friend who is a genius: the other is a long paean of the self grown strong in solitude. In the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche still feels the glory of running errands for Wagner: in *Zarathustra* he feels the necessity of directing mankind on to the right road.

Nietzsche, of course, was never a social conformer; in supporting Wagner he was supporting a man who had been fighting a long time against social opinion. But although he adhered to a cause in disrepute, through it he obtained a certain social sanction that he later abandoned. It was comfortable to sit in the ante-chamber of the great personality; it was encouraging to receive emoluments from his hands and to be empowered with the office of the right hand man. But later there came the urge to move from the ante-chamber to the throne-room; to bestow emoluments for oneself; to have right hand men of one's own. And when the tie with Wagner and the Wagnerian cause was broken — when a permanent conflict existed — then the antagonism towards society was heightened by the loss of social connection. The failure to achieve any satis-

factory human relationship, even on the social border-line, becomes the excuse for the attack on society; and the effort to reform mankind with a blood and thunder philosophy, full of mystery and terror, becomes the twin desire to destroy and create again the former relationship: in its origin it bears witness to repulsion and attraction for the friend. The break with Wagner; the illness and the loss of the university position; the long convalescence; *The Dawn of Day* and contemporary writing: these are the birth pangs of the ego. And even in *Zarathustra*, when the ego is at the height of its powers and speaks on its own initiative about human problems, there is still the longing for the shadowy figure of the friend, who is at one time almost identified with the superman, and at another time remote and non-existent.

But how does Nietzsche represent the failures and losses to himself? No doubt, even when the disappointments were due to external causes, he regarded them as a flaw in himself, a personal failure. When he says in *Zarathustra* that he has suffered from mankind, he literally means that he has borne and suffered the faults of mankind as if they were his own: if by "mankind" we understand these friends of early manhood — not one of whom later understood what Zarathustra was driving at — then we know that Nietzsche's illness was the culminative effect of his relationships with people. He looks at the friend's face in repose, and the face seems coarse and avid, an imperfect specimen of mankind: but "thy friend's face in repose was thine own". His self-identification with his friends is so complete that their successes and failures — considered as such by him — are his own successes and failures. He lodges in the person of the friend a personal ambition that he is not yet ready to accept as his own; placing on the friend so high a value, and demanding of him such a great success, that there is bound to be disappointment and enmity with the vanishing of the dream. The inevitable correlative of the idealistic attitude is the moment when the face of the sleeping friend appears avid and arouses a feeling of disgust and repulsion. It is this close identification with people that wounds Nietzsche and finally forces him to abandon human relationships altogether.

In order to see clearly the process by which society finally becomes a gorgon to Nietzsche we should understand that he is so desirous of success in friendship because of his failure in human relationships in general. He desires the complete identification with

the friend because he finds it so difficult to imagine any identification with common people. The rabble and he are always at odds: he feels nothing but their antagonism and criticism; so extreme is the sensation that he accuses them of having poisoned all the wells and seeks the air of the mountain tops as a refuge from them. The friend is the last resort of a social kind; he is the bulwark and defence against the deluded people. When Nietzsche, at Wagner's behest, outlined the future of the opera before the assembled Wagnerian following, he did so with typical results. The anticipated great applause did not come; the audience only misunderstood him. Wagner had to act as consoler, trying to smooth ruffled waters and reconcile Nietzsche to the disappointment by strenuous approval of his address. But there is no doubt that Nietzsche cannot forget the wound, and that this becomes one of the factors that sour his relationship with Wagner. Whatever the basis of their friendship, he will cease to have faith in it when it becomes clear that Wagner is an intermediary between himself and people; he will finally consider Wagner guilty of compromise and feel that he is taking the side of the people against him. The guilt of the composer of *Parsifal* is the guilt of a man who has made terms with vulgar popular ideals; and after the performances of *Parsifal* and the final break with Wagner the gulf between Nietzsche and society grows wide and deep.

It seems correct to conclude that the culminative effect of these early experiences is to impress Nietzsche with a sense of his own inferiority. When he talks of the sickness of the self as the greatest of sicknesses he means the state in which one regards nothing but the faults and weaknesses of the self; the mood in which one does nothing but draw to one's own attention the record of past failures, in order to increase the accumulation of depression and despair. His illness is the pivotal point of the conflict; and, following it, the years of convalescence constitute the long uphill climb against a social opinion that bears witness to one's own unimportance and inferiority, by gathering the strength and courage of the self that has been defiled. The later period remains firmly based on the early one: the ego runs riot because the self-criticism has run riot before it. It is one's sense of inferiority that first of all focuses attention so completely on the self, and the habit of self-criticism cannot be destroyed but can only be given a new character. If originally we are afraid of regarding the self because

it shows us so many failures and disappointments, and we shrink away even while we feel the fascination of it; now we will deliberately centre our interest on the self and attempt to employ all the fears that we have to make this possible. When the hellhounds gape, and there yawns the giddy abyss; when we look at the self in the contemplative night-time and find it so much deeper than the day can know; — all these obstacles only seem to exist in order to whet our courage, and we imagine that we can turn even the worst things — Wagner, for example — to our own advantage. We bring the feeling of superiority into being only because the one of inferiority is so strong; and it continues to exist as long as this basis for it remains. Nietzsche's idea of his own powers is created and kept in existence by the very opposite conception of them.

Book Reviews

AT THE LONG SAULT and other new poems, by *Archibald Lampman*.
Ryerson Press, Toronto. \$2.00.

Not an altogether enviable fate for a poet, Lampman has passed into the realm of Canadiania. Second-hand booksellers now keep his volumes cheek by jowl with Lord Durham's report, leaving it to caprice or the special interest of the touristic bibliophile to decide which of the two shall leave the shelf. Canadians alone hardly seem aware that they have in Lampman a poet of national importance. In the words of Professor E. K. Brown, who con-

tributes a fulsome introduction to the present collection of new poems, he is "the nearest approach to a national classic in verse".

At the Long Sault is based on a dramatic incident in Canadian history; the fierce, successful resistance of Daulac and his comrades against the Iroquois. Lampman's treatment of this theme is skillful: the short lines, charged with action, yielding to longer ones where the purpose is to emphasize the desperate position of the tiny band of defenders; together, they give the authentic feel of men panting in struggle. The other poems in this volume can add nothing to Lampman's secure reputation as a nature poet. We are glad to have them; but in a forest, one tree more or less can scarcely make a difference.

To this reviewer, however, the two poems *Epitaph on a Rich Man* and *Liberty* came like two mortar blasts. For these poems reveal an unexpected social awareness in Lampman. They indicate clearly enough that Lampman, an underpaid civil servant, was not only interested in observing Nature but also the shenanigans on Parliament Hill. Which one of the financial buccaneers of the day who "tilled and seeded and reaped plentifully From the black soil of human misery" Lampman had in mind, one is unable to tell; doubtless, there were several models to hand. *Liberty*, without its somewhat antiquated rhetoric about Kings and Tyrants, might have been written by some aspiring poet in the *New Masses* or the *Canadian Tribune*.

Lo! the master still
And the toiler works his will
From his palace gate commands,
With his worn and bleeding hands.

The Ryerson Press and Professor E. K. Brown, whose patient researches made possible this volume, deserve our sincerest thanks.

DIRECTION, ed. William Goldberg. R.C.A.F. Station, Sydney, N.S.
12 pages. Mimeographed.

The first issue of *Direction*, a magazine devoted chiefly to poetry, contains work by a group of Canadian airmen stationed at Sydney, Nova Scotia. Of the four writers who are presented at some length, only one — Raymond Souster — has been regularly published elsewhere. David Mullen, William Goldberg and Saul Brott are all new to Canadian poetry. Raymond Souster, in a note expressing the editorial viewpoint, is critical of the recent magazines on the ground that they have produced very little “fresh and vital poetry”. What is meant by fresh and vital poetry is conveyed best by the work of the contributors themselves. Like the majority of young Canadian poets, these writers deal with a realistic theme: unlike the majority, they attempt to treat the theme in a realistic manner. Writing in easy, communicable forms, and employing the language of everyday speech, they show the influence of the American tradition of modern poetry rather than the English tradition, to which the other new poets are so heavily indebted.

The aim of producing “fresh and vital poetry” accounts for both the merits and defects of their work. Since they write in a realistic style, and since style and subject inevitably affect one another, they often manage to make a more vital contact with their environment than recent poets have done. They partly succeed in identifying poetry with the feelings of the average individual and in recapturing some of its lost objectivity. On the other hand, in their search for a realistic form they are sometimes tempted to write prose rather than poetry. They sometimes mistake the “fresh” for what is only startling, and confuse the “vital” with an attempt to shock.

Thus Raymond Souster is more convincing in a sensuous poem like *Apple Blow* than when he tries to describe the brutality of bombing or the emptiness of modern society. Saul Brott, in trying to extract romance from the noise and ugliness of Montreal, creates

a catalogue instead of a poem. Goldberg achieves simplicity, and yet he will hardly escape the charge of being sentimental. David Mullen's work, which stands rather apart from the rest, lacks unity and control, but appeals with its creative freshness and richness of imagery.

Although the contents of the present issue are uneven, the policy of *Direction* is a vigorous and promising one. Future issues should prove of interest to those concerned with the development of Canadian poetry.

J.S.

STILL LIFE AND OTHER VERSE, by *E. J. Pratt*. Toronto, The Mac-Millans in Canada. 40 pages.

In Thomas Wolfe's book *You Can't go Home Again*, Mr. Lloyd McHarg is at some pains to explain to the young writer George what can happen to him, now that his first book has been published and the critics are free to offer him a multitude of suggestions. McHarg is inebriated and he uses picturesque language. What he likes about George as a writer is the power of his right hand punch. He is afraid that the clamour of the critics will persuade George to feint and spar, and that, in the process, George will lose the power of his good right hand. He is evidently successful in convincing his listener that his future reputation depends on his ability to retain his right hand punch.

Mr. McHarg's effusions suggest an appropriate parable for contemporary Canadian poetry. E. J. Pratt is almost alone among the present writers in being able to deliver a right hand blow. The younger writers have been listening so long to the literary critics, or to the critics in themselves, that they can do nothing but feint and spar. They do not have the energy of Pratt, and they do not have his ease and naturalness in writing. Pratt is one of the few Canadian poets whose work evokes a direct and enthusiastic

response from the reader.

Undeniably, however, he has limitations that become most apparent when he abandons narrative for a shorter form. It would be worth while to analyse the process by which the qualities which serve him so well in his narrative work cease to be an asset, or become a hindrance, in his short poems. Pratt's imagination is a cumulative one that demands the maximum space in which to develop a whole series of ideas or images. He does not possess the power for the striking individual line or the varieties of sensuous texture that characterize the lyrical poet. He casts his theme in the heroic mould, and the dimensions of the lyric are too narrow for him. Nor does he have a subtle enough sense of form to achieve consistently the finish and completeness that are required.

Pratt's latest volume, *Still Life and Other Verse*, bears out this impression that he is at his best when the theme offers him full scope. In this description of a U-boat's dive, from the story called *The Submarine*, there is a typical directness and power of expression:

" . . . Two generators
Sparked her fins and drove her under
Down the ocean escalators."

There is all of Pratt's zest for Gargantuan detail in these lines from the same poem:

"In her thoracic cavities
One hundred tons of batteries
Were ready on the dive, to start
The musculation of the heart."

Pratt, more than any other Canadian poet, has been able to create poetry out of science. In the other long poems of this volume — *The Radio in the Ivory Tower*, and especially *The Truant* — he uses a scientific vocabulary for the maximum effect of fantasy and wit.