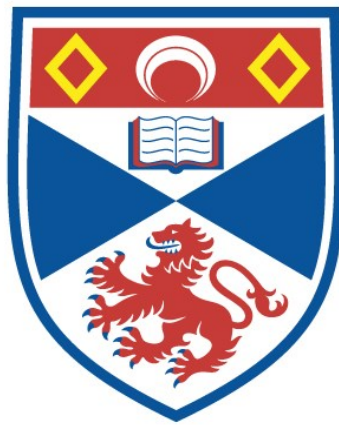


**IN SEARCH OF A NATIONAL VOICE : SOME
SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SCOTTISH AND
CANADIAN POETRY 1860-1930**

Linda Christine Knowles

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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This thesis has been composed by me, and the work of which it is a record has been done by myself. It has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I have carried out research in Canadian and Scottish poetry in the Department of English, University of St Andrews under the supervision of Dr R.P. Doig. I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance General No. 12 in October 1976, and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. on June 24th 1977.

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Ronald P. Doig
Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The work is a study of poetry in Scotland and Canada in the period 1860-1930, with a special emphasis on the influence of nationalism.

A discussion of the problems of literary nationalism in both countries is followed by a survey of national verse anthologies which illustrates the extent to which editors allowed their critical judgment to be coloured by the popular image of the national character. The importance of the Scottish vernacular and the Canadian wilderness to the establishment of a sense of national identity are considered in relation to a general discussion of language and nationalism. Two important elements in this discussion are the role of the untutored poet as a natural spokesman for his country and the swing from conservative poetic diction to a freer use of colloquial language during this period, and this portion of the thesis contains a survey of representative Scottish and Canadian poets. There is also a comparison of the difficulty of establishing an appropriate mode of expression in a new country with the problems encountered by Scots whose traditional way of life was being disrupted by the industrialization and urbanization of their society. The study concludes with a comparison of the two poets, E.J. Pratt and Hugh MacDiarmid, whose work marks a transition from poetic conservatism to the experimentation characteristic of many twentieth century writers.

Finally, it is argued that although poets and critics lamented the failures of publishers and readers to support

national poetry, there was considerable enthusiasm for local poetry in Scotland and Canada. It is maintained, however, that there was too clear a popular image of the Canadian or Scottish character, and that this prevented many poets from rising above mediocrity.

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Chapter One: Introduction:

Nationalism and Literature in Scotland and Canada

For who indeed but the most dull and stupid of wretches would employ his time in a quarry of diamonds with raking after dirt and pebble-stones, because such things might possibly be found there.¹

In the greater world of literature in English, Canadian literature sometimes seems like so much gravel in a diamond quarry. As Northrop Frye observed, "The literary, in Canada, is often only an incidental quality of writings which, like those of many of the early explorers, are as innocent of literary intention as a mating loon," and, even when it is literary in the orthodox sense of poetry or fiction, "it is more significantly studied as a part of an autonomous world of literature."²

While it might be injudicious to apply these comments to Scottish literature, equally scathing remarks have been made by Scottish critics, as the following examples show:

It is now generally agreed that no Scottish poetry of great consequence³ was produced between the death of Burns in 1796 and 1922.

[Victorian Scottish verse] is the lowest ebb of Scottish poetry since John Barbour, and there is no need to prolong a chapter already likely to be the duller in this book.⁴

Without having to agree with all of these statements it is still fair to say that, for the period of history since Canada's Confederation, neither country has produced a classic author "in the sense of possessing a vision greater in kind than that of his best readers."⁵ But there are other reasons for studying literature beyond the need to "define and canonize the genuine classics of literature."⁶ As Douglas Young asserted in his foreword to

Scottish Verse 1851-1951, "I am as much interested in tendency as in achievement,"⁷ and one may believe, with Northrop Frye, that it is "much easier to see what literature is trying to do when we are studying a literature that has not quite done it."⁸

Canada and Scotland share more than a common failure to produce a literary classic. Both Canada and Scotland have two languages and two main cultures: comparison between the French-Canadian of Quebec and the Gaelic-speaking Highlander is natural. They also have, in part, a common history, since so many of Canada's colonists were Scots exiled by the Highland Clearances. Both live within the shadow of a larger southern neighbour. These similarities alone make the two countries interesting subjects for comparison, and one would expect to find similar responses to problems in their literature, but no feature is more striking than the fact that each is a national literature in a sense that the literature of England or the United States is not.

The literary history of England is the account of the discovery by successive generations of what literature ought to be. The history of Scottish or Canadian literature, in contrast, is the account of efforts by successive generations to define the quality of mind and language which distinguishes the literature of their nation from that of any other. It has been said of Canadian literature, and it appears to be as true of Scottish literature, that "the national identity sometimes seems to give force to the literature rather than the other way around."⁹

To a certain extent this is true of the United States as well, but the Revolution and written Constitution provided the people of the United States with a cultural identity which Canada's evolutionary history did not. As for the Scots, the political union with England interrupted their cultural tradition, or at least gave it new direction, at the same time that the independence of the United States was first being felt.

Neither Canada nor Scotland possesses both of the elements which, taken together, ensure the recognition of an independent national literature; political autonomy and a distinctive national culture. Indeed, as both countries produce their literature in English, it has been suggested, perhaps with justification, that they ought to be considered simply as regional variations in the larger field of English literature; at best, Canada should be considered in a study of North American literature. But, in spite of the fact that they recognize their place in a broader framework of English-language literatures, Scots and Canadians have generally refused to accept these alternatives. They have taken the existence of the Scottish and Canadian nations as a sufficient reason for the literature they produce to be studied as separate literatures, and have defined the successes and failures of their literatures in terms of the life of the nation.

In this thesis it will be shown that the Scottish and Canadian preoccupation with the relationship between nationalism and literature since the middle of the nineteenth century has affected the poetry of those countries in similar ways. An examination of opinions and attitudes

towards literary nationalism will indicate the extent of the preoccupation, and will be used to assess the development of Scottish and Canadian poetry in the first thirty years of this century.

In 1864, three years before the formal creation of the Dominion of Canada with Confederation, E.H. Dewart published a volume entitled, Selections from the Canadian Poets.¹⁰ An optimistic and far-sighted production, this anthology set the pattern for succeeding anthologies, for the confidence in the reading public which its publication implied was undercut by the rather jaundiced view of the fate of Canadian literature expressed in the introduction. Though later critics have elaborated on the points which Dewart brought to light, the attitudes he expressed are substantially the same as those still held by literary nationalists today.

"A national literature," Dewart asserted, "is an essential element in the formation of a national character," but he went on to complain, "There is probably no country in the world, making equal pretensions to intelligence and progress, where the claims of native literature are so little felt."¹¹ Ninety years later, Ralph Gustafson attempted to explain the slow and uneven development of Canadian poetry by saying, "The poet cannot be expected to find his national identity before the factors that present it to him exist. Canadian poets identifiable as such have had to wait for Canada."¹² Both Dewart and Gustafson, from slightly different points of view, assert the interdependence of national literature and national identity, and their sense that this identity was lacking is what one

would expect to find in a young, newly-independent country. But Edwin Muir's comments on Scottish literature make it clear that the problem of national identity can perplex older nations as well:

. . . it is of living importance to Scotland that it should maintain and be able to assert its identity; it cannot do so unless it feels itself a unity; and it cannot feel itself a unity on a plane which has a right to human respect unless it can create an autonomous literature. Otherwise it must remain in essence a barbarous country.¹³

Nationalism has been defined as "the desire to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity when that identity is threatened, or the desire to transform or even create it when it is felt to be inadequate or lacking."¹⁴ While Edwin Muir denied that he was a Scottish Nationalist,¹⁵ his assessment of the problems of Scottish literature clearly falls within the scope of this definition, and, in fact, despite their distance in time and space, Muir and Dewart are examples of a similar literary nationalism: they contend that the weakness of a national literature implies some flaw in the nation itself.

In considering the problems faced by literary nationalists in any country it is important to recognize that nationalism itself can be regarded as a symptom of a cultural problem. John Plamenatz points out that nationalism develops under particular circumstances:

. . . Nationalism is a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage. Not any reaction that comes of a sense of weakness or insecurity but a reaction when certain conditions hold. Where there are several peoples in close contact with one another and yet conscious of their separateness, and these peoples share the same ideals and the same conception of progress, and some of them are, or feel themselves to be, less well placed than others to achieve these ideals and make progress, nationalism is apt to flourish. This is not to be set down as merely a kind of envy. It is to suggest, rather, that is it to

be found only among peoples who are, or are coming to be, sharers in an international culture whose goals are worldly. Nationalism is confined to peoples who, despite the differences between them, already belong to, or are being drawn into, a family of nations which all aspire to make progress in roughly the same direction.¹⁶

Canada and Scotland belong to just such a family of nations, one whose dominant members are England and the United States, and the literary nationalism in both Canada and Scotland has generally taken the form of complaints that the literature of these other countries competes unfairly with the home product. Compare, for example, the following comments:

There is probably no country in the world, making equal pretensions to intelligence and progress, where the claims of native literature are so little felt And what is more to be deprecated than neglect of our most meritorious authors, is the almost universal absence of interest and faith in all indigenous literary productions, and the undisturbed satisfaction with a state of things that, rightly viewed, should be regarded as a national reproach Booksellers . . . because they make surer sales and large profits on British and American works, which have already obtained popularity, seldom take the trouble to judge of a Canadian book on its merits, or use their influence to promote its sale.¹⁷

Moreover, Canadian authors have been handicapped in having to compete in their own market with -- it must be admitted --¹⁸ better creations than theirs by British and American authors.

. . . a formidable body of evidence can be adduced to show that a comparatively inferior English poet can secure an amount of appreciative notice, a status as one of the poets of his time, a place in the anthologies, and the other concomitants or sequelae of recognition which are invariably denied to Scottish poets of superior calibre writing in English.¹⁹

This last comment by C.M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), is particularly interesting, as he makes a distinction between the fate of Scottish writers in English and in Scots, recognizing, as even the most ardent Scottish nationalist must, the handicap which the use of the Scots vernacular must represent to writers competing for the attention of the English-speaking world.

Language is one of the primary features which is considered in defining a nation: this is true of the Quebec Separatistes as it is of Scottish Nationalists, but it is also a consideration which affects concepts of nationalism even where independent countries, like Canada as a whole, are concerned. For many Scots, the vernacular has represented the native tradition, and they have seen its decline as part of a general decline in a distinctively Scottish way of life. Douglas Young, for example, concluded that the Industrial Revolution had disrupted the Scottish traditions, and "the initial result of the railway age and of popular education was that Scots were enfeebled in their grip of Lallans and Gaelic without gaining any compensating power of utterance in standard English,"²⁰ a view which was expressed earlier in "On the Decadence of Scottish Language, Manners, and Customs" by James Logie Robertson ("Hugh Haliburton") in 1878.²¹ The centralization of social and political, as well as economic power in London, rather than in Edinburgh, following the Union of the Crowns, and later the Union of Parliaments, resulted, it is commonly believed, in the substitution of English for Scottish standards of culture, and a corresponding petrification of what native tradition still remained: ". . . a narrow round of subject and form, to be worked and reworked, by a sort of law of permutations and combinations."²²

A similar, though more radical, disruption can be seen in Canada, where the past tradition could offer no satisfactory means of interpreting the new environment in which the early settlers found themselves. Just as the Scottish critics regard English standards as inappropriate to

Scottish literature, so Canadian critics believed (and still believe) that the British tradition represents a foreign standard which inhibited the development of a native culture:

In this country the civilization is not . . . indigenous: it is a perfected mechanism, evolved under very different conditions and introduced ready-made.²³

John Penguerne Matthews, in comparing Canadian and Australian literature, accounted for the relative slowness with which Canadians developed a national voice by the fact that the Canadian climate, while harsher, was not as different from the British climate as the Australian, and Canadians could "coast along comfortably for a while" on the borrowed tradition.²⁴ Generally, however, literary historians have tended to comment on the inappropriateness of English models to the Canadian environment, and have attributed the failure of Canadian poets to the "foreign" models they were obliged to imitate. J.D. Logan, in Highways of Literature (1924), explained that, "the emigre poets were bound by English models according to which they must write, or not write at all."²⁵ Roy's The Scot and Canada (1947) makes a similar comment:

These emigre poets had one standard -- the work of the poets in the country of their birth. They made no attempt at originality; they had no new-fangled theories about their craft. They merely sought to interpret their emotions in the speech and the rhythms they had been brought up on. They had no conception that there might one day be a truly Canadian literature which would seek to express itself in the rhythms of a Canadian people.²⁶

and to this one might add E.K. Brown's assessment of the damage which is done to a colony's literature simply by being a colony:

A colony applies to what it has standards that are imported, and therefore artificial and distorting. It sets the

great good place not in its present, nor in its past nor in its future, but somewhere outside its own borders, somewhere beyond its own possibilities.²⁷

Indeed, for some Canadian critics, Canada's colonial status limited the country, almost by definition, to a position of cultural inferiority:

Striking originality can hardly be developed to any great extent in a dependency which naturally . . . looks for all its²⁸ traditions and habits of thought to a parent state.

However, these critics often confuse two situations: that in which the immigrant arrives and must, of necessity, interpret his new surroundings according to the standards of the culture he has brought with him, and that in which the native-born of a colony express their sense of inferiority to the mother country. In the first case the standard can not be considered foreign since it is native to the immigrant, if not to the country in which he has settled; in the second case, the "foreign" standard has become an integral part of the colony's cultural history and has influenced, for good or ill, the shape of the developing culture.

If nationalism is, as John Plamenatz described it, "a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage,"²⁹ it is not surprising that Canadian nationalism should have taken the form of the demand for an independent culture, but few countries have a completely indigenous and homogeneous culture, and it is perhaps an indication of Canada's sense of inferiority that this should be considered a necessity of nationhood.

Though it is convenient to speak of the relationship between colony and colonizer as that between parent

and child, a more appropriate analogy is needed to understand the development of Canadian literature. The laws, institutions and culture of a colony are not taught by the mother country but are transplanted. The question then is which of the transplanted institutions will best adapt to the new environment. The development which takes place, the culling of unsuitable stock, the hybridization of successful imports with native products whose special virtues are expected to be useful, contributes to the vitality of the cultural environment, but it does not imply the rejection of ~~that~~ ~~which~~ has gone before nor does it mean that the colony necessarily lacks the originality to create its own culture.

It is not that Canada has no native tradition which has presented so many problems to the Canadian poet, but the need to incorporate the old tradition into the new environment. If he had no European heritage, no classics against which he might measure his achievement, the Canadian poet might more easily create a distinctively Canadian poem, but the fact is that he does not exist in a vacuum, any more than the modern-day English poet who must reconcile his heritage with the demands of the world in which he is living. Every generation must reassess its relationship to the classics upon which it has been nurtured: this is a fact of literary creation which a change in place may emphasize but cannot alter.

A national literature must tread a narrow path between the demand that it reflect the conditions of life within the nation, strengthening the nation's consciousness of itself, and the demand that it conform to the standards

of art recognized by the rest of the world: it must be local, rooted in the national experience, and yet it must not be provincial. Scottish and Canadian literature both reflect the difficulty of trying to establish a cultural identity in a new order. In Canada, attention has been centred on the environment, in Scotland, on the language, but in both countries the problem has been the same: that of encouraging the development of a national poetry appropriate to the national experience, distinguishable from that of any other people, and yet capable of reaching out to the wider realm of world literature.

Political events such as the Union of the Parliaments and the Jacobite Risings made it necessary for Scots to develop an image of their identity which could accommodate loyalty to their past without prejudice to their future. The contradictions involved in being simultaneously a sentimental Jacobite and a pragmatic North Briton were not resolved but suspended: Scots put "the great good place" outside their temporal borders and located it in their past: the great days of Scotland's independence and her literary flowering in the work of Robert Burns became two standards against which the Scots measured their present. They developed a romantic, nostalgic poetry in order to keep the past alive, but they transformed their national loyalty into pride in the Empire to which so many Scots had contributed.³⁰ Emigrant Scots carried this convention of nostalgic nationalism to the New World and this accounted for some of the colonial spirit which E.K. Brown criticized in the Canada of the nineteen thirties and forties:

One can easily forgive Sir Daniel Wilson, although he spent almost his entire active career in Canada, for wishing to lie in Scottish earth. . . . What is odd, and unsatisfactory, is the perpetuation of this kind of colonialism in the descendents of emigrants even to the third and fourth generation. It is clear that those who are content with this attitude will seek the best in literature, where they₃₁ seek the best in jam and toffee, from beyond the ocean.

Yet Canada, as Roy Palmer Baker emphasized, has never, since the days of New France, been a homogeneous colony. Many of the "English" settlers came from Scotland and Ireland, and not all the new settlers in Canada were new to North America. The United Empire Loyalists who had rejected the American Revolution affirmed their loyalty to Britain by clinging to British institutions. This distinguished them from the people of the United States, but presented an obstacle when they began to consider themselves as Canadians. Unable (and unwilling) to look back to an independent past, they found it necessary to emphasize some other aspect of Canadian life which would distinguish their literature from that of both the United States and the Mother Country.

Canadian history was short and there were relatively few dramatic events which could be used as the foundation of a national myth, and these were often rendered unsuitable by later developments. The conquest of New France, an obviously popular subject, ultimately lacked dramatic force because it was necessary to emphasize the later reconciliation of the two peoples in the new nation. The expulsion of the Acadians, which had provided Longfellow with an epic theme (Evangeline), evoked a mixed response from the descendents of those who benefited from the expulsion. Similarly, the decline of the Indians and the

usurpation of their land by Europeans could be seen as the reluctant working out of an inexorable Progress, but because it was carried out by treaty, it was regarded as a fair settlement to be contrasted with the lawlessness and violence of the opening up of the Western United States.

Canadians, having rejected the American Revolution, founded a country in which the rule of law kept pace with expanding settlement. As William Morton points out, historically they preferred allegiance to the Crown to a Social Contract, the "secret growth of tradition" to the "rationale of a revolution", and based their system of government upon ideals of "peace, order, and good government" instead of the ideals of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."³² These ideals were noble but undramatic, and it was difficult to reconcile them with the type of action which is popularly thought of as epic. Canadian history remained episodic, unresolved into the coherent expression of a theme.

There remained one confrontation which could be given dramatic, even epic, treatment, and from which an attempt at creating a Canadian historical myth could be made: the confrontation between the settler and the environment. Canadians could be identified by their response to the land, a response historically different from that found in the United States, determined by their allegiance to Britain, but different from that which was possible in Britain.

Canadians, especially those who had been compelled to leave the New England colonies because of their loyalty to Britain, could not share the American ideal of the New World as an Eden:

Still must she fight who long hath fought;
 Still must she bleed who long hath bled;
 There is no consecrated spot,
 No clime where she alone doth tread.
 Devise for her your 'simple plan',
 Or 'perfect system' as of old;
 They count not where insensate man
 Spurns his own right to be controlled.

(Charles Mair, "Kanata")

This "right to be controlled" is, according to John Matthews,

. . . the touchstone which Canada as a place brings to join in partnership with the inherited legacy of British and French traditions and institutions, the one supplementing and strengthening the other.³³

Nature in Canada exerted a control over man which could not be ignored with impunity. Northrop Frye gives perhaps the clearest analysis of the difference between the United States' experience of a seaboard community and inland frontier, and the Canadian experience. The frontier was not a straight line being pushed ever westward, as it was in the United States, but was everywhere, surrounding pockets of civilization as it still does today.

In the Canadas, even in the Maritimes, the frontier was all around one, a part and a condition of one's imaginative being. The frontier was what separated the Canadian, physically or mentally, from Great Britain, from the United States, and, even more important, from other Canadian communities. Such a frontier was the immediate datum of his imagination, the thing that had to be dealt with first.³⁴

Much has been written about the pioneer Canadian's sense of fear at the immensity of the wilderness and his task in clearing and settling it. It is interesting to compare the Canadian Goldsmith's The Rising Village (1834):

How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes
 Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;
 Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,
 Heightening the horror if its gloomy shades . . . 35

to Rupert Brooke's report of his visit to Ottawa in 1913:

They told me, casually, that there was nothing but a few villages between me and the North Pole. It is probably

true of several commonly frequented places in this country. But it gives a thrill to hear it.³⁶

Between these two observations lie several generations of settlement, but the impressions received by both writers differ only in intensity from that Mrs Moodie recorded in Roughing It in the Bush (1852):

In more remote regions, where the forest has never yet echoed to the woodman's axe, or received the impress of civilization, the first approach to the shore inspires a melancholy awe which becomes painful in its intensity.³⁷

This sense of awe was not minimized by the expansion of settlement, but continued to strike successive generations of immigrants. The initial reaction of terror may have softened to one of wary respect among the native-born generations, but it is doubtful if the urban Canadian of today is better prepared than his pioneer grandfather to meet the challenge of the wilderness, and that challenge still remains.

The Scots possessed a tradition of nature poetry which prepared them to admire and to express their admiration for the Canadian landscape, but no settlers were more struck by the emptiness of the landscape and its lack of history and legendary associations. Their traditions were rooted in a landscape with a rich past and they were quick to remark the absence of legends in the new country:

Oh' stately bluffs! As well seek to efface
The light of the bless'd stars as to obtain
From thy sealed, granite lips, tradition or refrain!

(Charles Sangster, "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay," LXXXIV, 11. 7-9)³⁸

. . . let the traveller in Nova-Scotia ask what is the name of yonder dwelling? the answer is almost universally Mr. Such or such-a-one's farm, and that contains all the variations of its History.³⁹ . . . (Andrew Sheils, "Preface", The Witch of the Westcot)

Thou art not a land of story;
 Thou art not a land of glory;
 No traditions, tales, nor song,
 To thine ancient woods belong;
 No long line of bards and sages
 Looking on us down the ages;
 No old heroes sweeping by
 In their war-like panoply.

(Alexander McLachlan, "The Emigrant")⁴⁰

In his long narrative poem, The Witch of the Westcot, Andrew Sheils attempted to provide a legend for Nova Scotia similar to those in Scotland. Alexander McLachlan did not attempt to romanticize pioneer life, but, in "The Emigrant," looked for a different kind of heroism:

Yet heroic deeds are done
 Where no battle's lost or won;
 In the cottage in the woods,
 In the desert solitudes,
 Pledges of affection given
 That will be redeem'd in heaven.
 Why seek in a foreign land
 For a theme that's close at hand?

("The Emigrant," Poetical Works, p. 212)

This difference between the landscape of Scotland and Canada was, however, one which existed chiefly in the mind of the beholder, for both landscapes, in their wilder regions, were empty, each with a quality of emptiness which was movingly described by Hugh MacLennan in an essay entitled "Scotsman's Return":

The next day I was in the true north of Scotland among the sheep, the heather, the whin, the mists and the homes of the vanished races. Such sweeps of emptiness I never saw in Canada before I went to the Mackenzie River later in the same summer. But this Highland emptiness, only a few hundred miles above the massed population of England is a far different thing from the emptiness of our own North-west Territories. Above the sixtieth parallel in Canada you feel that nobody but God has ever been there before you, but in a deserted Highland glen you feel that everyone who ever mattered is dead and gone.⁴¹

This comment is a further reminder that, while fashions in form and diction changed during the period

under consideration, it would be a serious mistake to believe that there has been any radical difference between the Canadian response to the wilderness then and now. In both countries conventions in poetry led to faults of expression which may appear to be symptoms of the poet's lack of understanding of his environment: in many cases this may be true, but it is by no means a general rule.

A full realization of the relationship between the Canadian and the wilderness will perhaps be impossible as long as the frontier remains so much a fact of Canadian existence but undoubtedly it was in the early days of Canadian settlement, and particularly in the Loyalist communities, that the Canadian response to nature began to be seen as a fundamental national characteristic, and to become the focal point of Canadian national literature. Canadians could continue to look with pride upon the achievements of their ancestors in Britain and France and, like the Scots, derive satisfaction from their role as participants in the building of an Empire, regarding themselves, as some did, as citizens of a "Greater Britain",⁴² but the wilderness was something that was their own. As the Scots tended to concentrate upon language as the feature which distinguished their poetry from that of any other country, so the Canadians concentrated upon their relationship with nature.

Yet, as it has already been shown, the Canadian response to the wilderness was, to a great extent, determined by the attitudes carried over from the mother country, and literary models which were often inappropriate to the new

situation. In Canada, as in Scotland, language, and the development of an appropriate diction, was an important element in the development of a national poetry. In the following chapter the publishing industry and its role in the establishment of the conventional image of Scottish and Canadian poetry will be discussed, and a survey of popular anthologies of national verse will reveal the effect which this had on the choice of theme and form.

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2. Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 822. Hereafter referred to as LHC.
3. George Bruce, The Scottish Literary Revival: an Anthology of Twentieth-Century Poetry (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968), p. 1.
4. Douglas Young, "Scottish Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century," Scottish Poetry: a Critical Survey, ed. James Kinsley (London: Cassell, 1955), pp. 245-246. Hereafter referred to as SP.
5. Frye, LHC, p. 821.
6. *ibid.*
7. Douglas Young, Scottish Verse 1851-1951 (London: Nelson, 1952), p. xxviii.
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12. Ralph Gustafson, ed., "Introduction," The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1958, rev. 1975), p. 23.
13. Edwin Muir, Scott and Scotland: the Predicament of the Scottish Writer (London: Routledge, 1936), p. 182.
14. John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism," Nationalism, ed. Eugene Kamenka (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), pp. 23-24.
15. Muir, p. 181.
16. Plamenatz, p. 27.
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Chapter Two: Editors and Nationalism:
National Verse Anthologies in Scotland

Publishers and Nationalism

One of the most severe disadvantages felt by literary nationalists in Canada and Scotland is the competition offered by the powerful publishing industries of England and the United States, for no national literature can survive unless it has the support of publishers. As William Kirby, one of the first Canadian novelists to achieve any success, complained in 1883, "Authorship without publishers is like the voice of one crying in the wilderness."¹

E.H. Dewart, in his criticism of Canadian booksellers for the apathy they showed towards Canadian poetry, blamed Canada's "colonial position" and the fact that "our mental wants ~~are~~ supplied by the brain of the Mother Country, under circumstances that utterly preclude competition,"² a comment which is echoed by C.M. Grieve in the passage quoted on p. 6 above. However, it is all too easy to accuse publishers and booksellers of failing to give sufficient encouragement to a struggling national literature without acknowledging the problems which might have made that support difficult, or even impossible. An examination of the history of publishing in Scotland and Canada reveals, in fact, that the publishers, far from being reluctant to publish native material, consistently, but with varying degrees of success, attempted to launch native work.

In the publishing industry, as in so many areas of Canadian life, Scots took an early lead. Scottish publishing houses were producing many of the books of the "Mother Country" which offered such unfair competition to Canada; moreover, many of the early Canadian publishers were themselves Scots who had received their training in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dundee. Elizabeth Waterson, in "The Lowland Tradition in Canadian Literature," discusses the popularity of the kailyard novel in Canada and its influence on Canadian novelists.³ She also gives an impressive list of Canadian journals edited by Scots and concludes: "Histories of Canadian journals sound like a directory of Aberdeen or Glasgow: Hugh Scobie, Hugh Graham, J.A. Macdonald, David Creighton -- the Lowland names are legion."⁴

Despite the common belief that such luxuries as the arts had to take second place to the task of clearing the land and establishing a secure life in the new environment,⁵ publishing began very early in the history of English Canadian settlement. The first printing press was established in Halifax in 1751, and newspaper offices, the King's Printers, and, somewhat later, bookstores, were the first publishers. The Literary History of Canada provides a good summary of the development of Canadian publishing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,⁶ and therefore it is unnecessary to go into detail here, but it is important to note one significant development: the gradual centralization of English-language publication in Toronto. Though literary publishing began in Halifax in the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties under the

influence of Joseph Howe and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, Maritime publishers "supplied local needs, but never succeeded in competing for the central market."⁷

Scotland's early publishing history is a more impressive one than Canada's. Beginning with Constable, "the first publisher of the modern school,"⁸ Scotland in the nineteenth century had a thriving publishing centre in Edinburgh which "took the limelight from London and became not only a centre of publishing but also of social eminence."⁹ In fact, many of the great British publishing firms of the present day began in Scotland during this "magnificent period".¹⁰ But in Britain, as in Canada, centralization was the rule. Beginning with A. and C. Black in 1890, Scottish publishers moved their head offices to London until, by the middle of the present century, only the larger and more successful firms, like Nelson, Blackie, Chambers, Collins and Blackwood, continued to operate from headquarters in Scotland.¹¹

R.D. MacLeod regarded this "drift south" as an economic necessity since publishers must be near their market: "the fact is clear that the Scotland of today is not a big enough field for an ambitious publishing house."¹² No doubt there is some truth in this assertion, but it has also been claimed that centralization, for Scots, meant that the publishing industry was more and more "in the hands of those . . . inevitably most anxious for the complete assimilation of Scotland to England."¹³ In 1889 J.S. Blackie could see the danger that local culture and history would be swamped by foreign influences, and recognized that the natural influence of the larger country (England)

over the smaller one (Scotland) was aided by the centralization of political and cultural power in London.¹⁴

Blackie was more concerned that the education of the upper classes was becoming so anglicized that they no longer gave their patronage to local artists and writers, and were no longer interested in Scottish song, but his concern foreshadows Grieve's later, more aggressive reaction.

The average Scotsman may not, as MacLeod asserts, care whether his books are published by an English or a Scottish firm, but both Professor Blackie and C.M. Grieve recognize the problems which arise when the press becomes anglicized, and therefore either indifferent or actively hostile to matters of interest to Scotsmen. Grieve gives the example of Edwin Muir who, lacking a Scottish literary journal in which to express his opinions, was "compelled to devote himself to English or American periodicals where his subject-matter seldom had any reference to Scottish interests, and in which he is practically debarred from a creative Scots propaganda of ideas."¹⁵ The "slavish" copying of London opinion which Grieve deplores was understandable as the result of writers' and publishers' attempts to reach a larger market than that afforded by Scotland alone, but it was no less inimical to the production of a vigorous and independent stock of native writing.

If Scotland, once the intellectual centre of Britain, was too small a field for an ambitious publisher, Canada, with her sparse population was an even smaller one, and had the additional handicap that books had to be distributed over a very wide area in order to capture what market there

was. When one considers that the whole of Great Britain can be fitted into Southern Ontario the difference in scale becomes readily apparent. In 1938 E.K. Brown made a statement similar to that of R.D. MacLeod's which was quoted earlier: "Economically the situation of our literature is and always has been unsound. No writer can live by the Canadian sale of his books."¹⁶ For Canadian publishers the next step in centralization was absorption by a successful New York firm. Even if this did not happen, a book which could be expected to sell in the United States had better prospects of publication than one of interest only to Canadian readers. Canadians were encouraged to write for the United States rather than for Canada.

This state of affairs cannot reasonably be thought of as the responsibility of the publishers alone. In the nineteenth century there was a phenomenal growth in the number of newspapers and magazines published in Scotland. Alan M. Duncan's study of popular literature of the period 1860-1900 presents abundant evidence that the publishers of local newspapers and magazines did much to popularize Scotland and Scottish writing at a period when it had been in severe decline. Booksellers and newspaper publishers alike contributed to provide a forum for local verse. The same is true of Canada:

Unimpressive as were the results of [the] early, self-conscious urge to launch Canadian literature, it is worth noting that its promoters in widely separated parts of the country were newspaper and bookstore publishers. With little or no prospect of financial gain, they attempted to provide an outlet for writers on a higher literary level than that of the common weeklies. What was lacking were sufficient subscribers, and, above all, an author whose gift of imagination was matched by fresh and vigorous powers of expression.¹⁷

In the eighteen-twenties it was Thomas Chandler Haliburton whose "fresh and vigorous powers of expression" brought international recognition to himself and prosperity to his publisher, Joseph Howe; but other publishers were not as fortunate as Howe, and ambitious journals like The Canadian Magazine (ed. W. Sibbald, 1833) and the Canadian Literary Magazine (ed. John Kent, 1833) failed to survive. Indeed, the history of Canadian journal publication is one of repeated earnest but unsuccessful efforts to provide a vehicle for a literature which could scarcely be said to exist. The editor of the Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository (1823) expressed the publisher's point of view in this way:

There are men of genius in this country . . . but it is no less true that they seldom devote much of their time to literary composition. Deeply engaged in other avocations, although good judges of what they read, but few of them can spare time for writing. From this cause the conductor of a periodical publication in Canada has a heavier task to perform than in older countries . . . and is more dependent upon his own talents and resources.¹⁸

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the encouragement of national literature for both writers and publishers was straightforward competition from Britain and the United States: not only did the "Mother Country" supply the colony with her vast fund of creative production,¹⁹ the United States quickly flooded the North American market with cheap pirated editions of popular English works and was able to appropriate any Canadian works which proved successful because Canada had no effective copyright protection.

The Imperial Copyright Act of 1842 (amended, 1847) prohibited the printing of British books in the colonies

but allowed the import of American books on payment of a duty of twelve and one-half percent designed to offset loss of royalties to the authors. A United States publisher could, however, establish temporary residence in Canada and send advance copies of his books to be published initially in Britain. These books came under the protection of the Imperial Act and could not be reprinted in Canada. United States publishers were free to print as they wished in Canada, but a Canadian author's copyright was forfeit if the form of production was considered inferior to British standards. Efforts to remedy this situation continued throughout the nineteenth century and are concisely dealt with in the Literary History of Canada: it is sufficient to point out that it was not until 1911 that Canada was enabled to pass her own copyright legislation and that it was only in 1962, after many delays, that Canada joined the Universal Copyright Convention sponsored by the United Nations.²⁰ The intervening years of unequal competition against the publishing houses of the United States undoubtedly contributed to the ineffectiveness of the efforts by Canadian publishers to create and maintain a market for native literature.

Even without this problem of competition with the literature of other countries, the support and encouragement of publishers is not enough if the quality of the writing does not meet an acceptable standard. Too often, indeed, the anxiety of publishers and critics to encourage national literature can result in an unhealthy promotion of the second and even third rate. In Scottish and

Canadian publishing the effects of the publishers' nationalism can be seen very clearly in the various popular verse anthologies which will now be considered.

Anthologies, Editors and the National Voice

Anthologies are, by definition, appreciative collections: the original meaning of the Greek root, "flowers" or "garland of flowers" indicates the ideal of the anthology; the flowers of verse displayed in a beautiful arrangement. In an anthology a publisher may choose to display the best of all kinds of poetry, or may restrict his selection to one genre, the verse of one particular era, or a school of poets: in every case it may be understood that the anthology is designed to stimulate or encourage the reader's interest in its contents, and we may assume that the compiler has selected what he considers are the best examples of the chosen category in order to achieve that end.

Every anthology can be criticised for including one piece at the expense of another. Anthologies are limited in scope; they tend to favour shorter works and to ignore the more ambitious genres such as epics or verse dramas, but, while recognising these limitations, it is possible to learn from anthologies something of the standard of taste at the time they were compiled. No anthologist would publish a selection of admittedly bad verse; there is always some rationalisation which permits him to regard the work as worthy of the public's attention. His comments, in preface or introduction, indicate his opinion

of the selection and the material from which it was drawn; these, and the work itself, suggest the editor's taste; the popularity of a particular type of anthology suggests the taste of its readers. In this way, the anthology may "imply judgments by one generation of poets on their own or by-gone generations: besides it may be representative of the variegated impulses and multifarious poetic experiments discernible over short or long periods."²¹

The national anthology is particularly useful in implying judgments on past or present generations of poets, and is peculiarly subject to the kind of rationalization which permits the inclusion of work of doubtful merit, for the national verse anthology is one of the few, perhaps the only one, where literary considerations are secondary: even in a collection of the verse of a particular period in history the initial premise is that there is some unifying literary characteristic which sets the verse of this period apart from that of any other; the dates which open and close the survey are a convenient framework applied after the initial selection has been made. National anthologies, however, begin with a field already limited geographically and politically, rather than by standards of literature. Considerations of quality come later and are often dictated by this first consideration.

Of course it may be argued that most anthologies are national in scope. The earliest anthologies, after all, contained only the verse of the country in which they were published; but this is the result of historical circumstances. When the first "modern" anthologies were pro-

duced in the sixteenth century, linguistic and political boundaries were generally the same: to produce a volume of verse in English was to produce "English" verse, in the sense of nationality; it was only later, principally after the American Revolution, that verse began to appear which was English in language but foreign in nationality.

The English tradition of verse anthologies is an old and well-established one. The first English anthologies, Tottel's Miscellany (1557), The Phoenix Nest (1593), England's Parnassus (1600), and England's Helicon (1602) were collections of contemporary or near-contemporary verse. The only hint of nationalism was expressed in the titles England's Parnassus and England's Helicon: these made an implicit comparison between the work of modern poets and the classics, but no sense of contemporary nationalism was implied, although national feeling was high at the time. As time went on English anthologies became more comprehensive, attempting to give representative samplings of this historical development of English verse; but though they were often patriotic, nationalism, as it has been defined above, "a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage,"²² was unimportant.

In marked contrast to their English counterparts, the first Scottish anthologies were definitely nationalistic in purpose. James Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems (Edinburgh, 1706, 1709, 1711), "the first of its nature which has been published in our native Scots dialect,"²³ Alan Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1724, 1725, 1727, 1732) and

Ever Green (Edinburgh, 1724) were not only nationalistic but antiquarian, reviving poems and songs which were fast being forgotten.

James Watson made his nationalism clear in his prefatory remarks, "The Publisher to the Reader":

As the frequency of Publishing Collections of Miscellaneous Poems in our Neighbouring Kingdoms and States, may, in a great measure, justify an Undertaking of this kind with us; so, 'tis hoped, that this being the first of its Nature which has been published in our own Native Scots Dialect, the Candid Reader may be the more easily induced . . . to give some Charitable Grains of Allowance, if the Performance come not up to such a Point of Exactness as may please an over nice Palate.

Here the characteristic plea of the nationalistic anthologist (to be echoed again one hundred and sixty years later by the first Canadian anthologist, E.H. Dewart), that the reader excuse the quality of the verse because of its national origin and the novelty of the attempt, has its first expression. Alan Ramsay's nationalism is more forcefully stated:

. . . the following Old Bards present you with an Inter-tainment that can never be disagreeable to any Scots Man, who despises the Fopery of admiring nothing but what ^{is} ~~is~~ either new or foreign, and is a Lover of his Country.

In the Preface Ramsay enlarges upon his patriotic theme:

When these good Old Bards wrote, we had not yet made use of imported Trimming upon our Cloaths, nor of Foreign Embroidery in our Writings. Their Poetry is the Product of their own Country, not pilfered and spoiled in the Transportation from abroad: Their images are native, and their Land-skip domestick; copied from those Fields and Meadows we every day behold.

The Morning₂₅ rises . . . as she does in the Scottish Horizon

Here Ramsay touches upon one of the fundamental characteristics the Scots claimed for their own verse: that in it the face of the Scottish countryside was lovingly and

truthfully portrayed. This feature will be discussed later, but the more interesting point, at present, is that Ramsay is defending the study of Scottish verse on the ground that it is the Scotsman's heritage. He uses the same idea in the condemnation with which he anticipates the criticism which will meet a collection of verse in Scots:

There is nothing can be heard more silly than one's expressing his Ignorance of his native Language; yet such there are, who can vaunt of aquiring a tolerable Perfection in the French or Italian tongues, if they have been a Forthnight in Paris or a Month in Rome: but shew them the most elegant Thoughts in a Scots Dress, they as disdainfully as stupidly condemn it as barbarous.²⁶

True gentlemen, he goes on to say, who are "masters of the most useful and politest languages" take pleasure "for a Change" in reading their own.

Like Watson, Ramsay refers to the novelty of his collection, but, paradoxically, says his collection is novel because it is composed of "old Bards":

Thus the Manners and Customs then in Vogue, as he ^{the} reader will find them here described, will have all the Air and Charm of Novelty; and that seldom fails of exciting Attention and pleasing the Mind.²⁷

Thus Ramsay intended his collection to appeal to the reader on grounds of familiarity and of novelty; familiarity because the scenes and the language in which they were described were native, not foreign; novelty because the scenes were those of the Scotland of another day and therefore strange.

The Watson and Ramsay anthologies represented the first literary resistance to the anglicization which took place in Edinburgh society during the eighteenth century. Not unnaturally the emphasis in these collections was on

language, and the preservation of the old songs in which the language had been kept alive. The antiquarian interest which Ramsay recognised as an important feature of his collection became the standard for later collections which also tended to be backward-looking, not only when they were explicitly historical, like David Herd's Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs (1776), but also in the forms and subjects which they popularised.

The second generation of Scottish anthologists ignored the scholarly and antiquarian approach of the earlier anthologists and attempted to prove that the poets of the nineteenth century were "minstrels" in the sense they believed their predecessors to have been. Thus we have in this period collections like Charles Rogers' The Modern Scottish Minstrel (Edinburgh, 1855) and Alex. Gardner's The Harp of Renfrewshire (Paisley, 1873), with their emphasis on "song" as the peculiar birthright of the Scot; and it is interesting to observe the confidence with which these anthologists asserted the Scottish talent for song-writing:

All readers and singers will readily admit that the stores of Scottish song are not only extremely fertile, but that the Scottish mind has a tendency to develop its overflowing tenderness and earnest passionateness in lyrical strains of the simplest beauty, which no literature and no age of the world have surpassed.²⁸

Scotland has probably produced more patriotic and more extended minstrelsy than any other country in the world. Those Caledonian harp-strains, styled by Sir Walter Scott "gems of our own mountains," have frequently been gathered into caskets of national song, but²⁹ never have been stored in any complete cabinet

D.H. Edwards repeats almost word for word the introduction to the Illustrated Book of Scottish Songs³⁰ and speculates on the reasons for the comparative rarity of

English song:

It does seem singular that the wild rose of song, which blooms so freely in rugged Scotland, is rarely to be met with in the garden of England. While superior education, and independent thought and action, which have been so long the heritage of Scotchmen, may in some measure account for the greater number of song writers here as compared with England, we believe that poets, like other gifted actors, are to the manner born. And no doubt such inspiring natural surroundings as rugged hills, swift³¹ flowing rivers, and brawling streams, inspire her sons.

Walter Kaye's The Leading Poets of Scotland from Early Times³² makes the startling claim that "Scotland rivals the land and age of Homer in committing to memory's page the songs of well-beloved bards,"³³ while John MacIntosh concluded, "In no country of the world has the lyrical gift been more widely diffused than it has in Scotland."³⁴

This chauvinism was modified by the anthologists who tried to prove that English and Scottish folk songs came from a common stock:

Most writers upon the subject of Scottish song and music have hitherto drawn a marked distinction between England and Scotland. They have considered the people on the two sides of the Tweed to be quite distinct -- each with a music and a literature as well as opinions of its own. While it has been impossible to deny that England possessed a literature exclusively of English growth, of which it might well be proud, and of the whole benefit of which Scotland has been the partaker, it has very generally been denied that England possessed any music worthy of the name. On the other hand, honours have been heaped upon Scotland, both for her literature and for her music, which, though by no means undeserved, ought to have been shared with England³⁵ as the mother and source from which they were derived.

Mary Carlyle Aitken, in her Preface to Scottish Song, a Selection of the Choicest Lyrics of Scotland, after remarking, "The peculiar merits of the Songs of Scotland have . . . often been insisted upon," goes on to assert:

Hitherto compilers have studied to have quantity rather than quality; there is not a sufficient number of really excellent Scottish Songs, exclusive of Burns's, to fill more than a small volume; so that the wheat has in few cases been separated from the chaff.³⁶

Generally, however, Scottish anthologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reiterated the complacent belief that the Scots were a nation of song-writers, a belief that found its way at last into the pages of the Canadian Magazine of 1907:

Scotland is known the world over, as the Land of Song. It has been estimated that 'the Land of Brown Heath and Shaggy Wood' has given birth to two hundred thousand poets. This seems like an exaggeration, but that the statement has been made is quite true.³⁷

This emphasis on song to the exclusion of other kinds of poetry is in part a consequence of the example set by such publications as Watson's and Ramsay's anthologies which contained a high proportion of songs; it is also a natural response to the success which Burns had in reviving and recreating old songs. With such models before them it is not surprising that the Scots should have felt that this genre was their particular forte. Nor were they alone in this opinion. Goethe remarked on the continued vitality and popularity of Scottish song and contrasted it with the obscurity of German songs:

Now take up Burns. How is he great, except through the circumstance that the whole songs of his predecessors lived in the mouth of the people, -- that they were, so to speak, sung at his cradle Again, why is he great, but from this, that his own songs at once found susceptible ears amongst his compatriots, that, sung by reapers and sheaf-binders, they at once greeted him in the field; and that his boon-companions sang them to welcome him at the ale-house? . . .

On the other hand, what a pitiful figure is made by us Germans! Of our own songs -- no less important than those of Scotland -- how many lived among the people in the days of my youth? Herder and his successors first began to collect them and rescue them from oblivion; then they were at least printed in the libraries. Then, more lately, what songs have not Bürger and Voss composed! . . . but which of them so lives among us that it greets us from the mouth of the people? -- they are written and printed and they remain in the libraries, quite in accordance with the general fate of German poets.³⁸

This observation supports the claim that Scotland was fortunate in the preservation of her national song:

It never became the fashion to deny the existence of her national melodies, whether of her own or of English growth; and zealous collectors appeared from time to time to preserve both her songs and her music.³⁹

The popularity and quality of Scottish songs may frequently have been exaggerated, but it is nevertheless true that there was a broad spectrum of Scottish society which continued to appreciate "national song", and considered it a matter of pride to be able to say, "while our country's poets exhibit the most varied pedigree, the palm of numbers falls not to the purple and fine linen of Society, but to the hoddin gray of Labour."⁴⁰

The origins of this view of "national song" will be considered in the discussion of the vernacular in Chapter Four; it is sufficient to note here that it tended to encourage the acceptance of unsophisticated writing and led editors and critics alike to think of the folk song as peculiarly suited to the natural genius of Scottish poets: this, quite as much as any consideration of the appropriateness of the Scottish vernacular to serious verse, contributed to the restrictions of Scots to a few traditional forms, and, indeed, to the increasingly conservative nature of Scots verse during the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century anthologies tended to contain a majority of poems on themes and in forms made popular by the earlier anthologies. They placed a strong emphasis on the use of the Scottish vernacular, the writing of ballads and humorous accounts of local activities and personages, and on sentimental songs in imitation of Burns.

Their interest in the origins of the poets led some anthologists to follow the practice, introduced by Charles Rogers in The Modern Scottish Minstrel,⁴¹ and include short biographical sketches of their contributors. These sometimes had unconsciously humorous results, as in John MacIntosh's comment on the Ayrshire versifier Hugh Craig: "He wrote prose sketches as well as verse, but both are lacking in delicacy of literary perception. Perhaps he was too able a man of business to be a success in literature,"⁴² or James Knox's comment on Airdrie's "Rambling Rose": "The only resemblance I see in him to the 'Rambler' is that he is a most profuse and perfect 'bloomer'."⁴³ In spite of such lapses, however, the biographical sketches are often useful sources of information, and frequently of greater interest than their subject's verses.

To survey the anthology publication of the nineteenth century in detail would be a task too great for the scope of this thesis but fortunately it is possible to examine a collection which contains examples of every type of poem written during the period, and from most of the poets of the day, and so obtain a satisfactory picture of the state of poetry at the turn of the century.

D.H. Edwards, One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets

During his years as publisher of the Brechin Advertiser D.H. Edwards came in contact with a great many aspiring poets, most of whom were working men. Impressed by the "diffusion of the taste for poetry among the masses of the people"⁴⁴ which this indicated, Edwards hoped to encourage

this taste by giving the working-class poets a wider audience. By the time the first volume of One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets had been issued Edwards had received enough material for a second and third series which he thought would make the collection a "complete dictionary or gazetteer of Modern Scottish Poetry."⁴⁵ The prefatory notes to the succeeding thirteen volumes give ample evidence of Edwards' surprise at the bulk of the material available to him. Every series was intended to be the last but one, but as each "final" volume was readied for publication, enough material for a further volume had already appeared.

Hugh MacDiarmid (writing under his own name, C.M. Grieve), called Edwards' collection an "amazing array of mediocrities . . . all of whom were dreadful examples of the excesses of self-parody into which imitative Post-Burnsianism has been forced under conditions of progressive Anglicisation."⁴⁶ Edwards himself did not make high claims for the work he published but defended it on the grounds of human interest:

There are those who cannot tolerate or recognize poetry in any other strain but that of the highest order; yet surely the wide world of humanity, the hopes, the fears, the thoughts and affections of the industrious, who form the great bulk of the human family, may be sung in the strains of natural simplicity, and find an echo in any feeling human breast. While neither soaring into sublimity, nor sinking into dullness, they may in their true exposition of life and character be exponents of the best elements of song -- the poetry of the human heart.⁴⁷

Here Edwards uses the same argument that Watson used when he published his selections of Scottish verse, appealing for "some Charitable Grains of Allowance, if the Performance come not up to such a Point of Exactness as may please an over nice Palate."⁴⁸

The shortcoming of Edwards' collection is that there is not enough of the "true exposition of life and character" necessary to compensate for the failure to rise to "the highest order". The poems contained in his series are so conventionalized that they are often, as Grieve maintains, merely parodies, though perhaps it is kinder to think of them as unconscious parodies. This is not to say, however, that there is no merit in the verse produced by Scottish tradesmen: the Scottish working-class was comparatively well-educated, and certain occupations, such as handloom weaving, ploughing, and tending sheep, which permitted the mind to wander while the body was engaged in earning its living, were especially favourable to budding poets, and a more detailed examination of some of their work will be found in Chapter Five.

The index to the Modern Scottish Poets series⁴⁹ contains a list of poets according to their occupations which was, no doubt, intended to substantiate the claim that "the palm of numbers falls . . . to the hodden gray of Labour,"⁵⁰ but even a cursory glance at this index shows that this is not the case. In spite of the variety of occupations represented, which are as different as mole-catcher and U.S. Consul, and as commonplace as baker, policeman and farmer, very few contributors are clearly identifiable as manual workers. Six labourers, fourteen weavers (only two handloom weavers), one crofter, and three shepherds, do not provide much support for the traditional view that these trades are fertile sources of homespun poetry; but twenty-two journalists, sixty-eight teachers and one hundred and twenty-one ministers are

clear evidence that the "palm of numbers" must go to the minor academics. When booksellers, printers, publishers, and editors are added to the list it becomes evident that the popular image of the labouring poet depended more on wishful thinking than on accurate observation.

Nevertheless, the majority of the contributors are neither in trades associated with writing, nor in those in which a tradition of folk verse existed: bankers, butchers, house agents, merchants, commercial travellers, and post-office employees represent the occupations which, by ones and twos, make up more than half of the Modern Scottish Poets. Most of them are clerks, managers, or self-employed business men with a standard education and sufficient leisure to attempt verse. If it is possible to generalize from the sample given by Mr. Edwards, it seems that the majority of Scottish poets were those who had sufficient education to be inspired to write, but not enough to discourage the attempt.

Not all the contributors to Modern Scottish Poets were tradesmen; however, of the sixteen "litterateurs" included in the collection, only the poetry of R.L. Stevenson and Andrew Lang attracts any serious literary interest today. Others, like George Macdonald, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Thomas Carlyle are better known for their prose work. A third group, the Scottish academics, Prof. John Veitch, John Stuart Blackie, and James Logie Robertson, are interesting for their comments on Scottish literature.

The rest of the contributors are minor versifiers. Some of them achieve a reasonable technical standard but none could be said to be of any intrinsic literary signifi-

cance, though some, like Alexander McLachlan, Thomas McQueen, and Robert Reid are of interest because they emigrated to Canada.

In spite of the disappointing quality of the material it contains, the Modern Scottish Poets series is the most comprehensive of the nineteenth century anthologies and it is possible to use it to discuss the categories of verse popular in Scotland at that time.

Forms

It might be expected that the simpler verse forms, imitating traditional songs, ballads, and paraphrases of the psalms, would be very common in a collection of this type, and this is certainly true. There are countless quatrains like the following, chosen at random, showing the general standard of writing:

Tho' stately the hills in the north and the south,
Nae hills are to me like the hills of my youth;
Its joys have an echo that time never stills,
Frae the glens i' the bosom o' Lammermoor Hills.

("The Lammermoor Hill", M. Crackett, MSP II,
p. 345)

or

The sun i' the lift was shinin' fu' bonnie
As I and my Jeannie strayed roun' the Braid Hills;
The lassie whase looks are mair witchin' than onie,
Whase voice is far sweeter than murmuring rills.

("The Sun i' the Lift . . .", M'Laren, MSP II,
p. 348)

and an equally copious supply of stanzas which seem to be inspired by popular songs like those of Tannahill:

The bright sun o' summer sinks grandly to rest,
Mid calm rosy clouds doon the far gowden west;
Th' blue hills are smilin' wi' glory arrayed,
Th' bonnie wee birds i' th' hawthorn glade
Are carollin' sweetly on ilka green spray,
As hameward I truge frae th' toils o' th' day.

("The Bairnies at Hame", Tasker, MSP II, p. 281)

Surprisingly, however, there is also a wide variety of other verse forms, including heroic couplets (I:135; V:195), blank verse (I:333), sonnets (IV:56; V:144, 145), and Spenserian stanzas, generally in imitation of Byron (I:132, 133). Indeed, examples can be found for most of the poetic forms normally available in conventional anthologies, where, no doubt, many of their models were found.

In spite of Grieve's complaints of "imitative Post-Burnsianism"⁵¹ there are remarkably few direct imitations of Burns, either in the "Burns Stanza" ("Standard Habbie") which he popularized, or in any other traditional Scottish stanza, although echoes of them abound. For example, the stanza which Burns used in "Mary Morrison", a traditional form known in the days of James VI as "Ballat Royal",⁵² is infrequently and ineffectively used, though eight-line stanzas which seem to recall it are common. One poem which does reproduce this stanza is Thomas Watson's "The Weary Spule" which is also of interest for its comment on the life of the weaver poet:

Yet drivin' thee, thou weary spule,
 I whiles maun woo the Muse sae shy,
 And spurn oblivion's drumly pule;
 When Pegasus shall scale the sky,
 Awa' in Gilpin trim, we fly
 To list the music o' the spheres,
 Till, crash! -- a score o' threads to tye /sic/
 I'm down -- wi' patience and the shears.

(MSP II, p. 223)

The "Standard Habbie" stanza is often given with variations in metre which suggest the writer's carelessness or imperfect memory of the stanza rather than any deliberate attempt at novelty. Compare, for example,

The Auld House and the golden lea,
 The broomie knowes an' rowan tree,
 Whaur aft we roam'd in childish glee,
 Will mellow a'
 Till life's bit thread, sae short an' free,
 Breaks richt in twa.

("The Auld House at Hame", White,
MSP III, p. 45)

which is in "Standard Habbie" with the following:

Mine ain wee mensefu', mindfu' minny
 Sae couthy, kindly, cosh, and canny;
 Just sit yetstill a wee, an' dinna
 Tent your ain callant,
 Until he sketch your picture in a
 Wee hamely ballant.

("A Song to His Mother", Ballantine,
MSP III, p. 31)

"The Cherry and the Slae" stanza, so favoured by
 "Hugh Haliburton" (James Logie Robertson) in his Horace
in Homespun does not seem to have been admired as much
 by others, and there are only a few examples of it in the
 collection (MSP VI, 174, 176).

The influence of the traditional ballad is particu-
 larly strong in the narrative verses, even when a ballad
 effect is not intended. This is particularly clear in
 "The Wa'gaun o' wee Nell," where the mother's speech to
 her child has a true ballad ring, though the rest of the
 poem is simply an exercise in nineteenth century sentimen-
 tality:

"Noo whaur hae ye been a' the day, my bonnie, bonnie bairn?
 Your broo is like the lowin' coal, your feet as cauld as airn
 Awaukrife licht is in your e'e, my lassie you're to blame --
 Ye shouldna roam the eerie woods, nor stray sae far frae hame."

(Murdoch, MSP II, p. 184)

Conscious attempts at imitating ballads are less success-
 ful; they usually involve too much description and too
 little narrative force, though occasionally traditional
 ballad devices are used with some understanding:

Lilly Lorn gaed down the shaw,
 Far frae her minnie's dwellin';
 An' lang she stray'd wi' restless e'e,
 Till curfew bells were knellin'.
 An' aye the warblers blithely sang,
 In notes baith sweet an' mony;
 For Lilly Lorn was young an' fair,
 An' Lilly Lorn was bonnie!

.

"Gae hame, gae hame, sweet Lilly Lorn!"
 She heard the cushet wailin';
 "Ye're cauld an' lanely i' the shaw,
 Far frae yer minnie's dwellin'!"
 The tears ran down her bonnie face,
 To hear the cushet cryin';
 But aye she twined the rowan wreath,
 An' sabbit "Fause Glenlyon!"

She laid her down beneath a birk,
 Wi' cauld and deidly shiver;
 An' sigh'd aince mair Glenlyon's name,
 Syne closed her een for ever!
 An' saft an' wae the warblers sang,
 In notes baith sweet an' mony;
 For Lilly Lorn was young an' fair,
 An' Lilly Lorn was bonnie!

("Lilly Lorn," James Smith, MSP I, p. 264)

Subjects

The conservatism of Scottish versifiers during this period is also apparent in the predominance of certain subjects. The preceding examples, which were chosen without regard to their subject matter, are typical of the series in general: the poet's home, the poet's mother, a dying child and a ruined maid are themes which are treated with depressing frequency and uniformity. Even "The Weary Spule" has its parallels in verses on the various trades.

In his introduction to volume Sixteen Edwards gives an amusing, if rambling, account of the attitudes of some of the amateur versifiers and the nature of some of the

verses he was compelled to reject. Some of the pieces must have been truly lamentable if the following examples can be considered representative:

I know it is wrong, but I'm bent on the notion,
I'll throw myself into the deep briny ocean,
Where mud-eels and cat-fish select me for diet,
Where soundly I'll slumber beneath the rough billow,
Where crabs without number will crawl o'er my pillow.

(p. xv)

Oh ye black clouds keep up the air,
An' let the lovely sun shine clear;
We wish for much of his bright rays,
To hasten on the harvest days --
There is great need of a good crop
To give poor wretched creatures hope.

(p. xvi)

The melancholy tone which many amateur versifiers felt was necessary in poetry was noticed by Edwards who remarked:

In the piles of "addresses" we have been compelled to reject, the bent of the writers' minds is much in common with the somewhat coldly expressed opinion of Mr Andrew Lang, who says that "the young writer has usually read a great deal of verse, most of it bad. His favourite authors are the bright lyrists who sing of broken hearts, wasted lives, early deaths, disappointment, gloom. Without having even had an unlucky flirtation, or without knowing what it is to lose a favourite cat, the early author pours forth laments, just like the laments he has been reading. He has, too, a favourite manner, about the hectic flush, the fatal rose on the pallid cheek, about the ruined roof tree,⁵³ the empty chair, the rest in the village churchyard." (p. xiii)

Unfortunately, Andrew Lang's description also sums up the favourite manner of many of the writers Edwards did not reject.

Twenty-six titles in the anthology include the word death or some variant of it and twenty-nine refer to the deaths of children. The grim facts of infant mortality are clearly an influence on many writers, but this does not entirely account for the morbid satisfaction which so many minor poets seemed to find in writing verses of

sentimental pathos like "Oor First Wee Graves," "A Little Coffin," "Oor Wee Willie's Deid," and "Baby Died To-Day." Related to these are the poems on orphans, cripples and beggar children, of which there are at least twenty-one clearly recognizable by their titles, and numerous others less immediately identifiable.

Sentimental nostalgia is also evident. Of the thousands of titles in the collection, the largest concentration referring to any particular theme is in the group of one hundred and forty-seven in which the word auld or old occurs: "The auld ash tree," "The auld bleachin' green," "the auld folk," "the auld kirkyard," are only a few examples of the verses in this category. In contrast to the large number of nostalgic poems on a theme of age, only nine titles have the word young, and only two have the word new as the first word: one of these is "The New Year," a subject which necessarily involves a reflective look at the past as well as anticipation of the future. A survey of titles can only give a rough indication of the number of poems devoted to a particular theme, but it corroborates the impression, gained from even a limited examination of one of the volumes in the series, that the nostalgic hearkening back to "an auld sang" which had begun with the Union of the Parliaments and the defeat of the Jacobite cause had become a sentimental cherishing of anything old.

Poems of exile belong to this nostalgic, sentimental group. Some, like Robert Reid (I:pp. 318-320) are true exiles (though none of Reid's emigrant verses appear in the collection), and if their verses are sentimentalized

and exaggerated somewhat, the emotions have their basis in reality. Others, like James Hedderwick's "The Emigrants," (III:413) or J.S. Blackie's "The Emigrant Lassie" (I:379), are simply exercises in a conventional genre which is favoured for its pathos. A brief quotation from the latter will show the degree of sentimentality which was appreciated:

As I came wandering down Glen Spean,
Where the braes are green and grassy,
With my light step I overtook
A weary-footed lassie.

(The speaker offers to carry the heavier of the girl's two bundles, but she refuses.)

"No, no!" she said, "this, if you will,
That holds -- no hand but mine
May bear its weight from dear Glen Spean
'Cross the Atlantic brine!"

(He asks what it is, suggesting that it might be a gift, or her dowry.)

She drooped her head, and with her hand=
She gave a mournful wave:
"Oh, do not jest, dear sir! -- it is
Turf from my mother's grave!"

I spoke no word; we sat and wept
By the road-side together;
No purer dew on that bright day
Was dropt upon the heather.

(stanzas 1, 8, 11, 12)

Domestic subjects of all kinds were popular, and it is an indication of Edwards' taste that he says, "We are disposed to accept as a compliment the assertion of a popular English writer, that where a woman or a child is concerned a Scotsman is a sentimental idiot!"⁵⁴ Certainly the children who are not lamented in these volumes appear to be the most heartily spoiled of any generation, there are so many descriptions of their mischievous ways:

Wee Joukydaidles --
 Where's the stumpie noo?
 She's peepin' through the cruivie,
 An' lauchin' to the soo!
 Noo she sees my angry e'e,
 An' aff she's like a hare!
 Lassie, when I get ye,
 I'll scud you till I'm sair!

Wee Joukydaidles --
 Noo she's breakin' dishes --
 Noo she's soakit i' the burn,
 Catchin' little fishes --
 Noo she's in the barn-yard,
 Playin' wi' the fouls;
 Feedin' them wi' butter-bakes,
 Snaps an' sugar-bools.

("Wee Joukiedaidles," James Smith, MSP I,
 p. 266, 2 & 3)

"Wee Joukiedaidles,"⁵⁵ is obviously inspired by the popular "Wee Willie Winkie" which appeared in Whistle Binkie in 1853. Closer imitations of "Willie Winkie" are found in "Wee Davy Daylicht" (R. Tennant I:170) and "Auld Daddy Darkness" (J. Ferguson I: 150). Sentimental portraits of faithful old couples, honest tradesmen and devoted pets make up the rest of the domestic themes. Temperance verses may be included with these as they uphold the ideal of the home.

Everyone could write a hymn or a paraphrase, it seems, and examples of "pious effusions" are many and varied, although the modern reader is unlikely to find them moving. The thought is often shallow and the execution trite:

When clouds of sorrow dim thy faith,
 And tears bedew thine eyes,
 O, drooping soul, sing with the sun --
Resurgam! I shall rise.

The lark, though wet with dews of even,
 At morn shall greet the skies,
 On joyous wing its anthem sing --
Resurgam! I shall rise.

The battle o'er, the victory won,
 In calmness close thine eyes;
 For death is vanquished in the cry --
Resurgam! I shall rise.

(Charles Neill, "Resurgam," st. 1, 2, 9,
MSP IV:205)

So, too, the comic verses, often, though not invariably, in Scots, are conventional and the humour forced. Nevertheless, there are many which have a rough, lively charm, and perhaps succeed because the writer was less concerned with "flights of poesy" than with relating an amusing anecdote. One such is "The King's Welcome:"

As honest, thrifty Matty Gray
 Was sitting busy spinning,
 She looked out, an' doon the brae
 Saw Robin, barefoot, rinning.

.

"O what's the matter, Robin, man?"
 Quo' Matt, "what's a' the hurry?"
 Half breathless he replied, "A'm gaun --
 A'm gaun to Edinburgh. . . ."

.

"The man's gane skire," muttered Matt
 Wha partly heard his sonnet,
 As she was taking doon his hat,
 And hanging up his bonnet.

For though she answered his demands,
 As well became her station,
 Her tongue gaed faster than her hands
 In quest o' information.

(Robert Howden, MSP II:34)

It is impossible, without devoting more attention to it than the subject deserves, to categorize all the poems in the Modern Scottish Poets series, but it is possible to say with a fair degree of certainty that the next most popular type of verse is the local description. Reflections on the beauty of obscure streams, hills and woodlands were intended to demonstrate the writers' sen-

sitivity to nature and love of his native land: the comment by the editor of Songs of Scotland (1871) that "There is now hardly a village, river, or glen without a song in its honour; . . . every battlefield has been celebrated or wailed. . . ." ⁵⁶ is fully supported by the contents of the Edwards anthology.

Experienced writers are always telling novices to write about what they know best: it is a valuable lesson but Scottish poets seem to have thought that it was the only one, with the result that they have produced local verse of unsurpassed banality. Nevertheless, while it does not often rise above mediocrity, there is occasionally a naive charm to their work, and every instance of fresh and acute observation is the better appreciated. The chief difficulty is that the Scottish local nature poet knows too little: not about his own countryside, but about the discipline of poetry and the wider perspective of life which would give his perceptions greater depth and significance to a wider audience. There are far too many verses in praise of valleys and streams which, like the Rev. James Bell's

Annan Water, sweet and fair,
To the Solway flowing,
Blithe about thee is the air,
Pleasant is thy going!

(Poets of Dumfriesshire, p. 312)

can say nothing new, and would not be damaged if another stream were substituted.

Regional Anthologies

Burns began as a local poet, but gave universal significance to his subjects: his imitators remained local poets, so convinced of the native poetic talent of the Scottish people that their local pride began to assert itself at the expense of their nationalism:

In no country of the world has the lyrical gift been more widely diffused than it has in Scotland, and to no Shire of Scotland have⁵⁷ its poets brought more glory and renown [than Ayrshire].

. . . if there should be a competition as to which town can produce the best local anthology Airdrie would have a fair chance of . . . securing first honours. In any case our town is the first in Lanarkshire to have such an anthology in print which may be taken as an⁵⁸ additional proof of the town's progressive character.

Few counties can show more poets, and none where their work reaches a higher standard of excellence.⁵⁹

The regional anthologies which began to be published in the eighteen-seventies maintained the conservatism evident in Edwards' and the other nineteenth century anthologies. Even those published in the nineteen-thirties are virtually indistinguishable from anthologies published sixty years before. They carry the myth of the natural poet to absurd lengths, each county, city, and even small town boasting at least one "votary of the Tuneful Nine"⁶⁰ to bring a name for poetry to his birth-place. Even Galloway, an area which had not produced many true poets, a fact admitted "by almost everyone whose attention has been drawn to the subject,"⁶¹ has its own anthology, in which the editor asserts:

There never was any age so prolific in poets and poetasters as that in which we now live, and, whatever barrenness of talent in this respect Galloway may in former times have evinced, it will now generally be conceded

that, in the recent productions of her muse, she affords a number of proofs of poetic genius and descriptive talent. . . .⁶²

These anthologies are, for the most part, historical: the first, The Harp of Renfrewshire,⁶³ for example, gives a representative selection of Renfrewshire verse from the earliest days; The Poets of Ayrshire from the Fourteenth Century attempts to prove that its poetic reputation does not depend entirely on Burns. The Poets of Dumfriesshire, much more of a historical survey than The Poets of Ayrshire, emphasises the richness of the county's ballad tradition:

The literature of the county is particularly rich in ballads: indeed, with the possible exception of Roxburgh, no other shire has so fine a body of popular verse, or one so unmistakably the outcome of its peculiar life. In every part of Dumfriesshire,

'The air is full of ballad notes,⁶⁴
Borne out of long ago.'
(p. 324)

Even the town of Airdrie attempts to counter-balance its progressive character, evident in such poetic gems as "Lines (On Laying Foundation Stone of New Head Office of Airdrie Savings Bank -- 4th July, 1924)," with historical references. However important the historical background might be, however, it is the modern writer who is given the preferential treatment, and many versifiers of little merit seem to have been included because they wrote on matters of local interest.

Invariably the editors claim to have been guided in their selection by "considerations of poetical merit only," though a few pieces which, "though of small intrinsic value, are yet invested with historical interest or have become popular."⁶⁵

This may well be what the editors believed, but often their biographical sketches of individual poets and their comments upon their work reveal how faulty their own taste can be. The following, from John MacIntosh's sketch of the Ayrshire poet Mungo Crawford, who was employed as a purser on one of the Allan Line steamers, is given as a representative example:

It is the fewest number of bards who have been enamoured of the uncertain luxuries of a seafaring life. Still we do not think it would be inimical to the poetic fancy to experience the rousing dangers of a great storm at sea. Not having the experience we know not what thoughts it might arouse, but we think it must have a stimulating effect on the imagination to witness the rise and fall of the tremendous Atlantic billows as the labouring steamer triumphantly ploughs its way through them, unawed by the full diapason of their threats and hisses so far as we are aware Crawford's experience of the briny deep did not lend much colour to his verse His verse flows in smooth and harmonious measure but is not marked by any great depth or subtlety of thought. (p. 89)

The banality of those remarks is matched by a sample of the poet's work:

A little flow'r of genus rare
 Bloom'd in a lonely glen;
 No idle stranger wandered there,
 To gaze upon its colours fair,
 Far from the haunts of men.

("The Fate of a Flower," ll. 1-5)

As an excuse for including some work which does not measure up to the highest standard, editors often referred to the large number of contemporary poets from which they had to choose, and maintained that their aim was to make the selection representative.⁶⁷ John MacIntosh reminded the readers of The Poets of Ayrshire that "the field of Poesy" has been picked over for centuries, and so they ought not to find a lack of originality in modern poets

surprising, and added, "If the patient reader should happen to scowl over an insipid effusion here and there we beg to remind him that 'even the good Homer sometimes nods'".⁶⁸ Alan Reid, in his introduction to The Bards of Angus and the Mearns, goes farther in defending the minor poet:

I might plead that genius is so rare a thing that it is worth while to gather even the thinly scattered grains of gold in an ineffectual writer. I might also say that it is impossible to understand the dii majores unless you understand the conditions from which they sprang; and it is in the lot of many men of genius, as Robert Browning said, to be influenced more by minor literature than by greater⁶⁹

The Scottish editors considered in this chapter evidently preferred to err on the side of generosity rather than risk neglecting some unrecognized genius. Their motives were admirable, but the result was disastrous for Scottish poetry. By their tolerance of insipid thought, uninspired rhymes and sterile traditionalism, the Scottish anthologists encouraged the cult of the amateur and local poet. They perpetuated the idea that verse was natural to the Scot, and did not provide enough of the careful editing which would have emphasised the best work and avoided the mediocre. Instead, the better pieces tend to be overwhelmed by the mass of inferior writing: everything sinks to the same dead level. Nevertheless, though they encouraged the production of much which is now considered worthless, they also preserved many lively and interesting pieces, and kept alive the interest in Scottish poetry and the Scots language which was to flower in the literary revival of the nineteen twenties.

Twentieth Century Scottish Verse Anthologies

The first anthology of Scottish verse to depart from nineteenth century models was C.M. Grieve's Northern Numbers.⁷⁰ Not intended as an anthology of contemporary Scottish verse, the collection was described by its editor as "an experiment in group publication" and compared to the Georgian Poetry series edited by Edward Marsh:

Group-poetry developments have been a marked feature of recent British publishing It is hoped that the present volume may do for some of the leading tendencies in contemporary Scottish poetry what the "Georgian Poetry" series has done for a particular group of mainly English poets of our period.⁷¹

In anticipating the production of further issues of Northern Numbers, Grieve emphasised the group publication idea by asserting that "No new contributor will . . . be admitted without the approval of the majority of the present group."⁷² In the two succeeding issues Grieve was to repeat that the works were selected "for the most part" by their authors, but his later comments on the inclusion, and later exclusion, of works by John Buchan and Neil Munro suggest that Northern Numbers was subject to considerable editorial discretion. That Buchan and Munro were included was

not a matter of using them to climb up on and then kick away; it was because I wanted on the one hand to represent what was generally considered to be the best of current Scottish poetry, and on the other hand set against it the work of younger poets determined to supplant these elder writers and supply poetry of a very different kind. The difference was not perhaps very obvious at first, but it became progressively more marked, and, as it did, I⁷³ discarded the older contributors in favour of the new.

The difference, in fact, is not very obvious at all. The selections in the third series are not notably more

modern than those in the first: Roderick Watson Kerr's war poems are the most "modern" (in the sense of harsh realism) of any in the collection, and John Ferguson's theatre poems appear in all three volumes. The traditionalism of Buchan's "Fisher Jamie" is matched elsewhere in the series, and surpassed by the kailyard nostalgia of Mary Symon's "Echt-Day Clock" and "The Wag-at-the-Wa'" which appear in the second and third series respectively. Buchan's Kiplingesque "Wood Magic," with its cynical supematuralism, "For the gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them all," (II, 17) is much more modern in its effect than "Mirror Magic," by Christine Orr, which appears in the third series:

The night turns twelve: from hearth-stones chill
 The shivering spirits pass;
 Oh, Jean and Janet lie right still,
 But May flings down the glass.
 Whatever thing she saw has burned
 The tranquil grey from out her eyes,
 And all the smiling, maiden-wise,
 To fixed fear has turned.

(stanza 5, p. 95)

Like the Georgian poets in England, the contributors to Northern Numbers (even the title sounds rather old-fashioned) do not correspond to any strict definition as a group. They happened to be writing at the same time and to be influenced by many of the same things, but they wrote as individuals and not, as the Imagists, for example, as members of a group. It is possible, however, to see that the Georgians share certain characteristics which set their verse apart from that of the Victorians, and it is perhaps useful to examine Northern Numbers in conjunction with the collection it was intended to emulate.

Georgian Poetry 1911-1912 was issued "in the belief that English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty."⁷⁴ One of the signs of its new beauty was the diction which avoided all forms of poetic licence and preserved, as far as possible, the natural word order. Just as restrained as the diction were the emotions expressed by the Georgian poets, who, in their preference for nature and country life as subjects for their poetry, expressed, "Very little nostalgia and no wild yearning."⁷⁵ They avoided all stridency in their work, all rhetoric, rhapsody, and specifically Christian themes, and showed, as A.C. Benson put it, "no sense of revolt, no hint of a desire to arrest or impress at any cost."⁷⁶

To a great extent this is true of the contributors to Northern Numbers as well. Their diction is clear and "unpoetic", and they avoid much of the stridency of contemporary "modernist" verse, although the war poems of Roderick Watson Kerr are an exception to this rule. They are, like the Georgians, unwilling to sacrifice the poem to the telling phrase, and their verse tends not to impress with individual lines, but with the poem as a whole.

The Georgian vogue faded. Edith Sitwell's caustic catalogue of Georgian characteristics can hardly be called unbiassed, but it is interesting in that it highlights some of the features of Georgianism which can also be found in the work of the young Scottish writers of the twenties:

In that verse, as in much of the verse of our time, the praise of early home life is alternated with swollen inflated boomings and roarings about the Soul of Man. These beauties reigned triumphant, together with healthy, manly, but rather raucous shouts for beer, and advertisements of certain rustic parts of England, to the accompaniment of a general clumsy clodhopping with hob-nailed boots. . . . Any mention of a nest of singing-birds threw the company into a frenzy. Dreary plaster-faced sheep with Alexandra fringes and eyes like the eyes of minor German royalties, limpid, wondering, disapproving, uncomprehending, these were admired, as were bulldogs weeping tears of blood. Nor was Romance absent. At one moment, any mention of 'little Juliet', 'Helen of Troy',⁷⁹ or of Troy itself, roused a passionate interest. . . .

The "Soul of Man" is here, in poems like W.H. Hamilton's "Tribute," (III, p. 66) and C.M. Grieve's "Sonnet of the Hills: V. Valedictory," (III, p. 55):

Schiehallion and Calvary are one.
 All men at last hang broken on the Cross,
 Calling to One who gives a blackening sun.
 There is one hill up which each soul is thrust. . . .
 (ll. 7-9)

Whether the "dreary sheep" have Alexandra fringes or not, they are there in good numbers, as is their sheep-dog, in a wistful poem by Mabel Christian Forbes:

Where is now his spirit? In the cot beside
 his master?
 "No. I see his spirit now. It lies
 On the green field
 Where the sheep
 Are folded --
It is the fold."

("The Fold", II, p. 39, ll. 16-21)

Nature is prominent in Northern Numbers, in spite of John Ferguson's sketches of lower-class urban and theatrical characters, and Muriel Stuart's examination of such daring subjects as "The Bastard" and "The New Aspasia". The laverock has disappeared, but the thrush has taken its place as the subject of careful musings, and in Christine Orr's "Youth Hears a Sweet Music", an unnamed bird symbolizes the call of life to the awakening

soul. However, the charm of this poem lies not in its rather trite ideas but in the acute and sensitive portrayal of the small child's waking in a strange house:

In the tall house of life a bird's at song.
 Thro' shuttered doors its golden note is strong.
 I am the child that wakens in the time
 Of dew and unfamiliar morning chill,
 Who from the mountainous, tumbled bed must climb
 To stand a-tiptoe, heavy-lidded still,
 Charmed by the dumbness of the waking house,
 Who at each earliest step and sound afraid,
 Makes of the creaking window-sash a mouse,
 A stealthy devil of the rising maid:
 Then marks the red-gold of the rejoicing sun
 Beneath the flapping curtain leap and run
 To the invasion of the shaded room . . .

(III, p. 92, ll. 1-13)

There are few descriptions of nature simply for the sake of description. Some other element of nostalgia, patriotism, or philosophy is usually present.

More explicitly Georgian are the references to Classical myth, especially to figures like that of Helen of Troy which Edith Sitwell so devastatingly singled out. Here Grieve himself provides an example:

Helen's white breasts are leaping yet,
 The blood still drips from Jesus' feet,
 All ecstasies and agonies
 Within me meet. . . .

Aphrodite, I rise again;
 Eurydice, am drawn from Hell;
 And lean across the bar of Heaven,
 The Damozel.

("The Universal Man," III, p. 54)

This is perhaps an unfair example of Grieve's work in Northern Numbers. Though the pieces in this collection suggest little of his later accomplishment as Hugh MacDiarmid, indications are there of the type of image he was to develop in his maturity: images of stones, water

and planets, for example; and the type of nursery image which is found in "The Bonnie Broukit Bairn" is faintly explored in "Playmates":

Do you remember
That funny old spare star
On which we kept pet nations?

(II, p. 50, stanza 3)

Nevertheless, while Grieve's are among the strongest and most distinctive of the poems in Northern Numbers, they offer nothing incompatible with Georgian poetry: "La Belle Terre Sans Merci", for example, with its contrast of exotic beauty and depravity, is strikingly similar to attitudes to the East which James Elroy Flecker expressed in his verse drama Hassan, "The Gates of Damascus", and the very early "From Grenoble". This last poem, with its complaint,

I hate this glittering land where nothing stirs:
I would go back, for I would see again
Mountains less vast, a less abundant plain,
The Northern Cliffs clean-swept with driven foam,
And the rose-garden of my gracious home.

(Collected Poems, London, 1916)

is paralleled by Grieve's "Allegiance", written on the Mediterranean:

"The ancient chorus of the rich blue flood,
The mystic sundance of the Middle Seas,
What have you in your heart, Scots Borderman,
Prithee, that can compare to these?"

"A brown stream chunners in my heart always.
I know slim waters that the sun makes dance
With splendid subtlety and suppleness,
And many a green and golden glance."

(I., p. 68)

Grieve's nationalism, both as poet and editor, is only given limited expression. The Foreword to the first series makes only a passing reference to the pro-

motion of Scottish literature, and seems to acknowledge Scottish literature as part of British literature. Other contributors are equally mild in their expressions of patriotism. Mary Symon's "Hame (St. Andrew's Day under the Southern Cross)" reproduces the standard song of the Scottish exile which has become a cliché almost impossible to read seriously:

It's Hame, it's Hame for ever,
 Let good or ill betide!
 The croon o' some dear river,
 The blink o' ae braeside.

(II, p. 127, refrain)

and Violet Jacob's "Jock to the First Army" has a ring of cant in the reply of the dead soldiers, "We're near, we're here, my wee recruit, /An' we fecht for Scotland still" (I, p. 29, ll. 23-24) but otherwise the contributors to Northern Numbers successfully avoid triteness even when dealing with the traditional themes such as nostalgia:

Craig Woods, wi' the splash o' the cauld rain beatin'
 I' the back end o' the year,
 When the clouds hang laigh wi' the weicht o' their
 load o' greetin',
 And the autumn wind's asteer;
 Ye may stand like ghaists, ye may fa' i' the blast
 that's cleft ye
 To rot i' the chilly dew,
 But when will I mind on aucht since the day I left ye
 Like I mind on you -- on you?

(Violet Jacob, "Craig Woods," I, 28)

In his introduction to The Northern Muse John Buchan had complained of the "gross pawing" to which the minor Scottish writers of the past century had subjected the emotions of which they wrote.⁷⁸ In Northern Numbers children, lost love, and death are just as popular subjects

as they were in the nineteenth century anthologies, but these writers do not "gloat over domestic sentiment till the charm has gone, . . . harp on obvious pathos till the last trace of the pathetic vanishes, or make so crude a frontal attack upon the emotions that the emotions are left inviolate."⁷⁹

As an example of the difference in the approach found in the work of this twentieth century anthology one may contrast the treatment of a very popular subject, the Covenant martyrs, in two poems entitled "The Martyrs' Graves," the first from the Modern Scottish Poets series, and the second from Northern Numbers:

O! martyr-sprinkled Scotland!
 Thy Covenanted dust,
 Like gold amid our mountains,
 Gleam through tradition's rust.

.

These altar-stones of sacrifice,
 Incarnate truth hath stored,
 Where faith, in love-drawn characters,
 Her red libation poured.

.

The auld cairn, where the plover walls,
 And fern and thistle waves,
 'Mid green spots in the wilderness --
 There, seek the martyrs' graves.

(Marion Paul Aird, III, p. 95, stzas. 1, 4, 11)

Dead, long dead,
 Irrevocably lost and dead
 Years and years ago,
 And over their bones the hill winds pass
 In the trail of the weeping mists --
 The mists that go sheeted and grey on the moors,
 Like desolated spirits
 Of some dead day.

A voice calls
 From the hopeful, hurrying past
 In splendid faith about the bracken void,
 And old grey days of home,

Faded and tawdry,
 Burst to life again,
 Transfigured with the glow of transient time,
 As some procession in an Eastern land
 Emerges to the radiance of the sun.
 And here to-day,
 On the vague Covenant moors
 And uplands, grey with death and mist of stones,
 Far away,
 From where the sickly generations go,
 I see the children of an early faith
 Pass in their fame. . . .

(T.S. Cairncross, NN, I, p. 53, ll. 1 24)

It is not just that the second is a better poem, containing a wealth of imagery which the first cannot approach (though it too has its share of latent potent symbolism), but that the second poem assumes no shared belief, and works towards the subject of the martyrs' faith from the description of nature, developing the scene through the poet's perceptions until he can introduce the vision which he sees and offer it to the reader. The sense of desolation and defeat which is expressed in the poem is an admirable counterfoil to the splendour of the faith which he sees in the martyrs, and Cairncross returns to the image of defeat in the final lines:

But who will save
 The feeble, flickering race
 Upon whose martyr graves
 The shadow falls,
 And in whose fleeting day
 The hour is late?

Elsewhere, speaking of a ruined Abbey, Cairncross states:

Nothing to me -- all its lost chapters,
 Yet have I part in it all.
 And since I am child
 Of the Borders and this Border glory,
 Shall I not honour
 The name and the fame
 In a garland of song!

("Glendearg," I, p. 51, ll. 28-34)

One of the advantages of Northern Numbers is that its contributors had an opportunity, imposed by the War, but nonetheless an opportunity, to see something beyond the Scottish borders against which they might test their feelings of loyalty. Grieve's "Allegiance" shows the effect of this contact, as does "Beyond Exile," in which the poet turns the traditional poem of exile into an assertion of spiritual unity with his beloved:

Praise God that still my feet can find
 In distant lands the old hill-road,
 And tread always no alien clay
 But their familiar sod.

And all the ocean's broad estate
 Be but a gleaming band to me
 That slips between the bending fields
 To find no foreign sea.

No stranger's roof-tree covers me,
 Albeit I travel far and wide,
 And sundering leagues but closer bind
 Me to my darling's side.

And if I pass the utmost bourne
 Why then, I shall be home again --
 The quick step at the quiet door,
 The gay eyes at the pane!

(I., stanzas 1, 3, 4)

The last stanza would not be out of place in a nineteenth century anthology, but the second, with its reduction of the ocean to "a gleaming band" is a hint of the later MacDiarmid.

Herbert Palmer claimed that there was in Georgian poetry "Very little nostalgia and no wild yearning,"⁸⁰ but he also acknowledged the importance that the verse of Walter de la Mare had for the Georgians. This verse, compared to "the fairy-land strangeness of Coleridge,"⁸¹ even though it was not as naturalistic as it ought to

have been to be strictly Georgian, was, according to Palmer, "so disciplined and carefully wrought that it became a sort of lodestar for all the best Georgian verbal art."⁸² Nevertheless, de la Mare's verse owes its appeal quite as much to the slightly "fey" effect which is achieved in such poems as "The Traveller":

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor.

This quality of restrained eeriness, of the discreet employment of folklore for its mystery, is one which is prominent in Northern Numbers. Unlike the credulous and rather crude supernaturalism of the nineteenth century minor versifiers, the contributors to Northern Numbers present the mysterious and uncanny in much the same spirit as Andrew Lang's Fairy Book series: they revive and explore belief in the uncanny with a full regard for its quaint charm which implies a sophisticated mind suspending its disbelief.

This suggestion of the uncanny which has already been seen in John Buchan's "Wood Magic," is most apparent in the work of the female writers: Violet Jacob, Marion Angus, Helen B. Cruickshank, and the lesser-known Mabel Christian Forbes and May Fairlie:

The sheep-track knows the wanderers no more.
They left the dull hard road at break of dawn:
They fled the formal intercourse of yore
To count red daisies on a sunlit lawn.

.

Outside the glade the corn is cut and gone;
Outside the garden-gate the flow'rs are furl'd;
Outside the dream the dreamers stand alone --
Apart -- and gaze upon an empty world.

(M.C. Forbes, "Flight," III, p. 34, st. 1, 3)

Here they come, the wee folk,
 Speedin' fast and fleet --
 There's a queer low lauchin' on the grey hill
heids --
 An' the bricht drops, glancin', followin' at their
feet --
 It's green, green beads --
 The last ye'll ever see o' yer bonnie green beads.

(Marion Angus, "Treasure Trove," III, p. 14,
 final stanza)

It is also found in Will H. Ogilvie's "Flodden Hill":

When the dusk draws home the cattle
 What knights in their trenches turn,
 What fires of the pride of battle
 Through the bars of their helmets burn?

(I, p. 43, ll. 1-4)

and in his "Water-in-the-Wood" Ogilvie also uses a fairy-
 land imagery which somewhat resembles the illustrations
 of Arthur Rackham:

Maid of many moods
 That vary
 'Twixt the first green willow and the snow,
 Water-in-the-Wood's
 The fairy
 Sweetest of the fairies that I know!

.

Summer! -- 'Neath the wood
 Slow swinging
 Built her by the boughs' new green,
 Water-in-the-Wood
 Runs, singing
 Ballads of the beauty she has seen!

("Water-in-the-Wood," II, p. 108,
 ll. 1-6, 13-18)

Donald A. MacKenzie, a descendant of the Gaelic
 bard Rob Donn, who seems to have taken his heritage
 seriously, also gives clear examples of this revived
 folklore (itself perhaps a type of nostalgia) in "The
 Song of the Bannock":

Oh! the good-wife will be singing
 When her meal is all but done:
 "Now all my bannocks have I baked;
 I've baked them all but one;
 And I'll dust the board to bake it,
 I'll bake it with a spell --
 Oh! it's Finlay's little bannock
 For going to the well. ⁸³

and in "The Banshee":

Knee-deep she waded in the pool --
 The Banshee robed in green:
 Singing her song the whole night long,
 She washed the linen clean . . .

The Banshee I with second sight,
Singing in the cold starlight;
I wash the death-clothes pure and white,
For Fergus More must die tonight.

(I, p. 119, stanza 1, ll. 1-4
 and refrain)

Surprisingly, a similar folkloric effect is achieved
 by Roderick Watson Kerr in "The Grave-Digger":

A digger he digs in the dark,
 In the naked remains of a wood,
 For his friend that lies stiff and stark,
 On his head hard blood for a hood;

The digging is painful and slow,
 Yet the digger he sweats like a slave;
 But he did not know what I now know:
 The digger he dug his own grave.

(I, p. 127)

In spite of (perhaps because of) the heavy-handed irony
 and the crude inconsistencies of tense in the last stanza,
 these two laconic stanzas suggest some grim kind of riddle,
 and recall the traditional ballad.

Northern Numbers is not entirely free of nineteenth
 century rhetoric or traditional religious associations,
 as Georgian poetry tended to be, but the piety often has

an unconventional flavour; for example, in "Via Dolorosa," where the poet argues with Christ:

Thou wilt not chide if for a while at length,
Weakened with anxious vigil, wrestling, loss,
Sinking, and finding none to raise my cross,
I lie where fallen, and wait returning strength.

(Jessie Annie Anderson, III, p. 16)

and in John Ferguson's "Christ at 'Aladdin'" where the poet, watching street urchins at a Pantomime, concludes

O marred yet merry little ones, I know
The Christ Who smiled on children long ago,
Himself hath entered by the gallery stair.

(II, p. 32)

Ferguson's sketches of theatrical people and people of the streets have a striking realism about them, though the effect of the cant words in inverted commas is distracting in some; but there is nothing new in his choice of subject which had been popular with the "Decadent" poets of the nineties. Muriel Stuart's "Lady Hamilton," "The Bastard," and "The New Aspasia," belong to this tradition, but "Mrs Eppingham's Swan Song" is a character sketch which takes on a life of its own,

And now the day draws on of my defeat.
I shall not meet
The swift, male glance across the crowded room,
Where the chance contact of limbs in passing has
Its answer in some future fierce embrace.
I shall sit there in corners looking on
With the older women, withered and overblown,
Who have grown old more graciously than I,
In a sort of safe and comfortable tomb.
Knitting myself into Eternity.
And men will talk to me because they are kind,
Or as cunning or as courtesy demands;
There will be no hidden question in their eyes
And no subtle implication in their hands.

(III, p. 112, ll. 16-29)

Many other current trends in British poetry can be seen in Northern Numbers: Roderick Watson Kerr's "The Corpse," for example, is an Imagist piece:

It lay on the hill
 A sack on its face,
 Collarless,
 Stiff and still,
 Its two feet bare,
 And very white,
 Its tunic tossed in sight
 And not a button there --
 Small trace
 Of clothes upon its back --
 Thank God! it had a sack
 Upon its face!

(I, p. 127)

and Mabel Christian Forbes's "To Death, the Only Faithful Lover," besides echoing the Decadents of the nineties, suggests the cynical verse which Dorothy Parker was to make popular, though here the tone is repellently rhapsodic:

Give me my destiny!
 -- Mortal I ask,
 Suffering my litany,
 Love all my task.
 Sparing no scrutiny
 Ply me with pain!
 Mine is no mutiny --
 Victim unslain!

Wreathed and bounden
 Strike, love, yet again!
 Scatter'd my beauty --
 Gather me slain!

(III, p. 37)

Herbert Palmer noted of the Georgians that they realized that "Though you might not be able to achieve major poetry, you could rise to a prominent platform just below it -- that is pure poetry, something quite distinct from minor poetry, though it might belong to the lower range."⁸⁴ This distinction is a useful one when considering the works which appear in Northern Numbers,

for, especially in the works in the Scottish vernacular, the traditions which had been debased in the minor poets of the nineteenth century anthologies, are here raised to a standard which permits them to be thought of as pure poetry: that is, work which though not in a major form, nor perhaps containing the profundity of thought which might set it at the first level, has a fitness of expression and a spark of life which commends it to the reader's attention.

Among the pieces in Northern Numbers which might qualify for this designation are the selections by Charles Murray including "Gin I was God," (later to be echoed in Hugh MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*), Violet Jacob's "Howe o' the Mearns" and "Tam i' the Kirk" (particularly the last stanza), "Craig Woods," and Marion Angus's "Treasure Trove" and "the Graceless Loon". These writers do not take the Scottish vernacular out of the limits of subject and form to which it had been bound in the last century, but they refine it and treat it with rare delicacy.

Northern Numbers contains many echoes of the past, and makes few strong advances towards modernism, but, because it is a strictly limited selection, it offers a much higher standard of verse than many previous anthologies, and this is displayed to advantage. For this reason alone the verdict of W.J. in the Bulletin, which was quoted among "Some Opinions" at the end of the second series of Northern Numbers, that "Northern Numbers is the most important Scottish book that has appeared within

recent years," is not unwarranted. Northern Numbers presented Scottish poetry in a modern context, making constant references to the mainstream of British poetry, an achievement which was only to be superceded by Grieve's individual performance as Hugh MacDiarmid.

The Northern Muse

After the unashamedly nationalistic prefaces to Scottish verse anthologies of the nineteenth century it is a relief to turn to John Buchan's The Northern Muse and find an introduction which begins, "I have made this little anthology with no other purpose than to please myself."⁸⁵ Unlike the earlier anthologists who included poems for reasons other than artistic merit, Buchan claimed to have selected only "pieces which in varying degree seem to me to be literature, from a bottle song just redeemed from doggerel by some quaintness of fancy to the high flights of Burns and Dunbar."⁸⁶ These he arranged according to subject, often an arbitrary classification depending on the editor's interest in one particular aspect of a poem, and did not hesitate "boldly [to] mingle old and new." More important than this, however, is his decision to represent some poems by only a few lines or a single verse. The result is a compact anthology in which, for the first time since Alan Ramsay, the best of Scots verse is successfully presented.

In contrast to the practice of other anthologists who tended to give undue representation to contemporary poets, Buchan keeps the modern selections in the minority

and reserves the bulk of the volume for the poets whose work has stood the test of time. Over one-half of the selections are by Burns and that other prominent Scottish poet, Anon.; Dunbar is represented by fourteen pieces, and the rest by one, two or three, with the exception of Violet Jacob and R.L. Stevenson who have six each, and George Outram, the poet of Scottish laws and fishing, who is represented by five selections.

The Northern Muse is a popular not an academic anthology, meant to entertain rather than to support a critical theory, but in his Introduction and Commentary Buchan airs his views on the state of Scottish language and poetry, and prescribes some remedies which, if not radical, are soundly practical and based on the example of the most successful Scots poets from Burns to Violet Jacob. Taking his cue from the comment by Burns that "There is a naivete, a pastoral simplicity in a slight admixture of Scots words and phraseology which is more in unison . . . with the simple pathos or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever,"⁸⁷ Buchan suggests a Scottish literature based on such a "slight admixture":

In such work the drawbacks of the pastiche would disappear; because of the Northern colouring it would provide the means for an expression of the racial temperament, and because it was also English, and one of the great world-⁸⁸ speeches, no limits would be set to its range and appeal.

In his arrangement of the poems in The Northern Muse Buchan attempts to show something of this "racial temperament". The poems are grouped so that the subjects follow a natural progression from "Youth and Spring" through the various stages of love, marriage and home life; then from

there the subject widens to include the larger world of society and the characters, activities and incidents which are met there; and so to the more contemplative poems, the wistful longings of the section entitled "Lachrimae Rerum," the poems on philosophy and death, and finally the devotional poems of "Divine Philosophy".

Some of the poems, like Buchan's own "Fisher Jamie" and "Tam Samson's Elegy," by Robert Burns, which were placed in the section on Sport but which deal with the death of colourful local characters, might well have been placed in another category, but this tends to support Buchan's opinion that the Scots character, as revealed in verse, readily combines disparate emotions. Even the nostalgic or regretful poems which he includes have a salt tang of realism which prevents them from becoming morbid. This characteristic shrewdness of observation compensates for the "inevitable provincialism" which Buchan saw as a consequence of the post-Reformation restriction of the Scots vernacular:

. . . much Scots verse is marred by a cheap glibness, an admiration for the third or fourth best, which is due to the lack of a strong artistic canon. It is a defect which is found in popular songs and popular hymns, the price which poetry must pay for popular handling.

This final comment is very different from the confident reliance on the popular taste which was expressed by nineteenth century critics and anthologists, and it is for this attitude, as much as for the standard of the collection, that Buchan's anthology is important. In spite of the whole-hearted admiration which Buchan brings to the conventional models, his recognition of the need for

a stricter concern for technique and an end to provincial complacency is thoroughly modern.

Succeeding anthologies, like William Robb's A Book of Twentieth-Century Scots Verse (London and Glasgow, 1925) and W.H. Hamilton's Holyrood: a Garland of Modern Scots Poems (London and Toronto, 1929) continued to offer too wide and indiscriminating a selection of verse, but they show more of the influence of their English contemporaries of the Georgian School than of their Victorian forebears. Holyrood is an undisguised imitation of The Northern Muse and is arranged in similar subject groups: "The Ways of Youth," "The Heroic," "The Open," "Glamourie," and "The Soul of Man," and in spite of a strong reliance on the conventional themes, offers selections from most of the prominent names in the Scottish Literary Renaissance, though no selections from Hugh MacDiarmid's A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle. It is an interesting source of verse which otherwise might escape the reader's attention, but Holyrood and its equivalents in the nineteen twenties and thirties can claim little other significance.

"Poetry, composed with infinite pains from a thousand echoes, may have the sound of the natural voice, and to this virtue I think some of our modern Scots verse attains." This comment by John Buchan in the Introduction to The Northern Muse⁹⁰ can be applied to much of the writing which is contained in the anthologies of the twenties and thirties from C.M. Grieve's Northern Numbers to Hugh MacDiarmid's Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry.⁹¹ The technical innovations of form and language which charac-

terise the Scots Literary Revival tend to be lost in the larger number of conventional poems which, nevertheless, attain a high standard, not least in the new restraint of emotion taught by the Georgians, and a corresponding interest in the towns and a wider range of social classes inspired by some of the Decadent writers of the nineties. But perhaps the greatest difference to be seen between these anthologies and those of the nineteenth century is that the "natural" poet, the uneducated amateur, is no longer so prominent. No longer restricted to a few forms, the contributors to these anthologies, writers like Marion Angus, Violet Jacob, Charles Murray and even Hugh Haliburton display competence in a variety of verse forms, and a command of subtle expression of emotion. Certainly there were poets like Andrew Lang and Robert Louis Stevenson whose work appeared in the anthologies of the last century who were equally capable of technical excellence, but the general standard of the verse which appeared beside theirs was considerably lower.

The shift in emphasis from the untutored to the academic which this difference implies is an important element in the development of modern Scottish poetry. Without this change in attitude it is doubtful that the more striking works of Hugh MacDiarmid and other figures of the twentieth century literary revival could have exerted the influence they did.

NOTES

1. LHC, p. 174
2. Dewart, p. xiv
3. Elizabeth Waterston, "The Lowland Tradition in Canadian Literature," The Scottish Tradition in Canada, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976; rpt. 1977), pp. 220;223.
4. Waterston, p. 215
5. Typical expressions of this attitude are found in Dewart, p. x; Marquis, p. 494; E.K. Brown, "The Contemporary Situation in Canadian Literature," Canadian Literature Today: a Series of Broadcast Talks Sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), p. 14.
6. H. Pearson Gundy, "Literary Publishing," LHC, pp. 174;188.
7. *ibid.*, p. 175.
8. Robert Duncan MacLeod, The Scottish Publishing Houses (Glasgow: W. & R. Holmes, 1953), p. 5. The remainder of the paragraph is taken from this account of Scottish publishing.
9. MacLeod, p. 7.
10. *ibid.*
11. MacLeod, p. 25. This trend recalls the movement of printers to St Andrews, the ecclesiastical capital of Scotland in the sixteenth century which MacLeod also notes, p. 5.
12. MacLeod, p. 25.
13. Grieve, Contemporary Scottish Studies, p. 90.
14. Blackie, Scottish Song: its Wealth, Wisdom and Social Significance (Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1889) pp. 8-9.
15. Grieve, p. 110.
16. E.K. Brown, Canadian Literature Today, p. 10.
17. H. Pearson Gundy, "Literary Publishing," in Literary History of Canada, p. 177;178.
18. Gundy, LHC, p. 177, quoting from the Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository, III, p. 113.

19. A great deal of this imported material was, of course, Scottish. See Elizabeth Waterston, "The Lowland Tradition in Canadian Literature," The Scottish Tradition in Canada, ed. W. Stanford Reid.
20. LHC, pp. 183-188.
21. Cassell's Encyclopedia of Literature, ed. S.H. Steinberg (London: Cassell, 1953).
22. Plamenatz, p. 27.
23. James Watson, "The Publisher to the Reader," Choice Collection (Glasgow: rpt. for private circulation, 1869).
24. Allan Ramsay, "Dedication to James, Duke of Hamilton," The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600. 2 vol. Reprinted from the original edition (Glasgow, 1876), p. iv.
25. p. vii.
26. p. x.
27. p. ix.
28. The Illustrated Book of Scottish Songs, 2nd ed. (London: Nathaniel Cooke, 1854), p. 2.
29. Charles Rogers, The Modern Scottish Minstrel, 6 v. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1855), p. i.
30. D.H. Edwards, One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets, 17 v. (Brechin, 1880-1897), III, p. iv.
31. Modern Scottish Poets, III, p. ii.
32. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1891.
33. Kaye, p. 7.
34. John MacIntosh, The Poets of Ayrshire (Dumfries: Thomas Hunter and Co., [1910]), p. v.
35. The Illustrated Book of Scottish Song, "Introduction," pp. 1-2.
36. Mary Carlyle Aitken, Scottish Song (London: MacMillan, 1874), p. iii.
37. William Campbell, "Scottish Canadian Poetry," p. 585.
38. Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret, trans. by John Oxenford (London: George Bell and Sons, 1874), pp. 254-255.
39. The Illustrated Book of Scottish Song, p. 12.
40. Alan Reid, The Bards of Angus and the Mearns (Paisley: J. and R. Parlane, 1897), p. xx.

41. So Rogers claims in his preface, p. vi.
42. Poets of Ayrshire, p. 202.
43. James Knox, Airdrie Bards Past and Present (Airdrie: Baird and Hamilton, 1930), p. 7.
44. One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets, (hereafter referred to as MSP), I, p. 17.
45. MSP, II, p. 11.
46. Grieve, Contemporary Scottish Studies, p. 60.
47. MSP, I, p. 6.
48. "The Publisher to the Reader," Choice Collection.
49. MSP, XVII.
50. MacIntosh, p. xx.
51. Contemporary Scottish Studies, p. 660.
52. Thomas Crawford, Burns: a Study of the Poems and Songs (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 11.
53. The Andrew Lang quotation is from his lecture How to Fail in Literature (London: Field and Fuer, 1890), pp. 47-48.
54. p. xlvi, Edwards attributes this remark to Sydney Smith.
55. Jouk: to evade, dodge; of a light, to flicker, appear and disappear; n. a dodge, trick.
Daidle: to dawdle; to trifle; to saunter.
56. p. xxii.
57. John MacIntosh, The Poets of Ayrshire (Dumfries: Thomas Hunter and Co., 1910), p. v.
58. James Knox, Airdrie Bards Past and Present, p. 3.
59. Review of The Harp of Perthshire, Scottish Review, XXII (July, 1893), p. 245.
60. MacIntosh, p. 116.
61. Malcolm M'L. Harper, The Bards of Galloway (Dalbeattie: Thomas Fraser, 1889), p. vi.
62. *ibid.*, p. xix.
63. The Harp of Renfrewshire, 2nd series. (Paisley: A. Gardner, 1873).

64. Frank Miller, The Poets of Dumfriesshire (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1910), p. 324.
65. *ibid.*, p. v.
66. MacIntosh, p. 89.
67. MacIntosh, p. vi; Harper, p. xx.
68. MacIntosh, p. vi.
69. Alan Reid, The Bards of Angus and the Mearns (Paisley: J. and R. Parland, 1897), p. xxi.
70. C.M. Grieve, ed., Northern Numbers (1st and 2nd series, Edinburgh: J.N. Foulis, 1920-21; 3rd series, Montrose: Grieve, 1923).
71. Grieve, Foreword, Northern Numbers (1920), p. [9].
72. *ibid.*
73. Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve), The Company I've Kept (London: Hutchinson, 1966), p. 257.
74. Edward Marsh, ed., "Prefatory Note," Georgian Poetry 1911-1912 (London: the Poetry Bookshop, 1913).
75. Herbert Palmer, Post-Victorian Poetry (London: J.M. Dent, 1938), p. 76.
76. Timothy Rogers, ed., Georgian Poetry 1911-1912: the Critical Heritage (London, 1977).
77. Edith Sitwell, Aspects of Modern Poetry, 1934, p. 18 in Rogers, Georgian Poetry, p. 39.
78. John Buchan, ed., The Northern Muse (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1924), p. xxix.
79. *ibid.*
80. Palmer, p. 76.
81. *ibid.*, p. 79.
82. *ibid.*
83. The bannock was given to a child in return for bringing water from a magic well. Buchan, p. 118.
84. Palmer, p. 78.
85. Buchan, p. xxix.

86. *ibid.* On p. 524 Buchan mentions "The Land o' the Leal" as "too deeply enshrined in Scots hearts to permit of criticism," but this is a rare exception and does not mean he considers the poem to be anything other than "literature" in the sense given above.
87. Robert Burns, Letter to George Thomson, 26 January, 1793, quoted by Gregory Smith, pp. 149-150.
88. Buchan, p. xxvii.
89. *ibid.*, p. xxix.
90. *ibid.*, p. xxvi.
91. Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve), ed., Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry (London: MacMillan, 1946).

Chapter Three: National Verse Anthologies of Canada

Canadian anthologies, like the Scottish, began with a nationalist purpose, but with the difference that there was no established stock of material on which the anthologist could draw. The first selection of Canadian verse had to be made from an undifferentiated mass: there were few images which could be described as characteristically Canadian, and few poems were popular enough to gain admission because of public acclaim. There were no native bards of the past and no folk tradition was yet recognized, and so Canadian anthologists lacked even the dangerous resource of an antiquarian approach to their task.

E.H. Dewart, *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864)

The first Canadian anthology, E.H. Dewart's *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864) was initially designed to give permanent form to poems which had previously appeared only in newspapers, but it was also intended to "direct the attention of my fellow-countrymen to the claims of Canadian poetry"¹ and this became the most important consideration to its first readers, as to the critics of succeeding years. Dewart was well aware of the problems involved in his project and his comments on them show that, whatever his original intentions, the collection is not simply a showcase for newspaper verses, but an effort of research into the resources of Canadian literature:

The fact that I entered on an untrodden path, without any way-marks to guide me, necessarily caused me a vast amount

of labor, and extensive correspondence; as, in many instances, both poets and poetry had to be discovered by special research.²

Evidently the motive behind his collection was an ambitious one, but Dewart was modest in his claims for his work: "I must remind readers that this is not 'a work on the Poets and Poetry of Canada' . . . The collection makes no pretensions to such a character,"³ but he recognized the field he was opening up to the later explorers. His introductory essay, as stated earlier, touches on most of the important criticisms of Canadian poetry and the state of Canadian culture which have ever been made. The comprehensiveness of his approach and the enthusiasm with which he undertook his task (in spite of his incomparable caution) are indicative of his awareness of the possibilities before him.

Despite the one hundred and fifty-eight years between them, there are some similarities between Dewart's anthology and James Watson's Choice Collection. Like Watson, Dewart begins by defending the production of yet another book:

Only the illiterate and unreflecting adopt the sentiment, that, because more books have been already produced than can possibly be read in the compass of the longest life, to increase the number of books or the quantity of literature, is undesirable and unnecessary.⁴

Unlike Watson, however, it is not a matter of unmixed pride for Dewart to produce the first anthology of Canadian verse. By Dewart's time it was almost axiomatic that "A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character,"⁵ but Dewart must say of his country that "There is probably no country in the world

making equal pretensions to intelligence and progress, where the claims of native literature are so little felt."⁶ Dewart, in fact, implies an apology, not for the book's appearance, but for the fact that it has not appeared before.

Dewart, again like Watson, excuses his work on the grounds of the novelty of the undertaking. For Watson's: this being the first of its Nature which has been published . . . the Candid Reader may be the more easily induced . . . to give up some Charitable Grains of Allowance, if the Performance come not up to such⁷ a Point of Exactness as may please an over nice Palate.

we have Dewart's:

The fact that I entered on an untrodden path, without any way-marks to guide me, necessarily caused me a vast amount of labor This will, I hope, be duly considered by readers in judging of the work,⁸ should it be found less perfect than they had anticipated.

There is even a trace of Watson's astringency in Dewart's later remark:

It is easy for persons who have neither literary nor financial responsibility, to suggest changes in such a plan of work. But the same persons might, in a different position, fail to act on their own suggestions.

Dewart, as a pioneer anthologist, cannot help but echo the comments which another pioneer has made. It is interesting to note how often he touches upon the same points as Watson and his successor Ramsay, although frequently from a slightly different point of view. Ramsay, for example, commented with approval that the verse of the "Old Bards" was the "Product of their own Country, not pilfered and spoiled in the Transportation from abroad,"¹⁰ and disparaged the poets of his own day who had to resort to "Foreign Embroidery" in their writings. Dewart, too, remarks on the reluctance of the public to accept native images and subjects:

. . . let any Canadian bard presume to think that the wildflowers which formed the garlands of his sunny childhood, the sweet song-birds that sang him to sleep in infancy, or the magnificent lakes, forests, and rivers of his native land, are as worthy of being enshrined in lyric numbers, and capable of awaking memories of days as bright, associations as tender, and scenery as beautiful as ever was sung by hoary harper of the olden time, and he is more likely to secure contempt than sympathy or admiration.

But, while Ramsay can look back to poets in whose verses the "Landskip [is] domestick; copied from those Fields and Meadows we every Day behold,"¹² every aspect of the tradition which lies behind Dewart's anthology is foreign.

Dewart, too, remarks upon the human fascination with things old and strange, but while this is an advantage to Ramsay: "the Manners and Customs then in Vogue . . . will have all the Air and Charm of Novelty; and that seldom fails of exciting Attention and pleasing the Mind",¹³ it is patently a disadvantage to Dewart:

Things that are hoary with age, and dim in their distance from us, are more likely to win veneration and approval, while whatever is near and familiar loses in interest and attraction. There is a large class of persons who could scarcely conceive it possible that a Canadian lyric might have as deep and true feeling as those they have most admired.¹⁴

Clearly the problem, for Dewart and for the Canadian poetry he champions, is that there is no native standard, either of literary merit or popular approval against which Canadian poetry can be measured, and which will give the reader confidence in judging the native product. "The mass of readers," as Dewart points out, "find it easier and safer to re-echo the approbation of others . . . than to form an intelligent and independent judgment of their own,"¹⁵ and until such judgment has been made, Canadian poetry, Dewart fears, will continue to be ignored.

The limitations of Dewart's sources can be seen in the fact that, of the forty-eight poets included in his anthology, only two have any significant reputation today: these are Charles Sangster and Charles Heavyside, both of whom are important figures in Canadian literary history; minor figures like Alexander McLachlan, Evan MacColl, and Thomas McQueen, who are interesting as representatives of the Scottish immigrant tradition, are well represented; as are the once-popular Mrs Leprohon, Mrs Moodie (now better known for her prose writing) and William Kirby, as well as Thomas D'Arcy McGee who is generally remembered as a politician. Of the remaining thirty-one poets, few are remembered even in historical surveys of Canadian literature. It is to Dewart's credit that he recognized the quality of Sangster's work and included sixteen of his poems in the anthology, the highest number by any one poet. Heavyside, whose best work was in long verse dramas, is, of necessity, not so well represented, but it is significant that Dewart includes some long extracts from his work.

The proportion of space allotted to the various poets is interesting as an indication of Dewart's judgment. The names which are least well-known today tend to appear only towards the end of the volume, among the "Miscellaneous Pieces". The book is divided into three unequal sections of which the other titles are "Sacred and Reflective" and "Descriptive and National." The third section, "Miscellaneous Pieces," is the longest of the three, containing eighty-one poems, but it is in the first section that the

most frequently represented poets appear. The better, and perhaps the most prolific writers are found in every section, the less able appear only in one. Significantly there are only two poets in the first section and four in the second section who only appear once. Of the poets appearing for the first time in the last section only one is represented by as many as five selections. Of the eighty-one poems in this final section, twenty-three are by poets not found elsewhere in the book.

This arrangement may be influenced by Dewart's subject division, but it seems more likely that he used the "Miscellaneous" category for work that was not up to the level of the other two sections. It would have been possible to arrange the various poets' work evenly throughout the volume but Dewart has, in fact, arranged his poets (with minor exceptions) in descending order of poetic ability and possibly also of popularity. It seems significant that there are no important names after Charles Heavyside who first appears on page 148, almost half way through the volume. From this point on the new names introduced are, as individuals, of no importance to the literary history of Canada.

Even a brief glance at the titles listed in Dewart's anthology reveals how predictable were the themes chosen by the Canadian poets of this time. The "Sacred and Reflective" poems perhaps give an unfair impression because of their conventional nature, but they are particularly trite, as a random sampling will show: "The Dying Warrior" is followed by "Seeking," "What do we Live for," "To the

Sea" and "I am not Sad"; further down are found "Voices of the Death-Chamber," "Emigrant's Funeral" and "My Soul is Heavy"; later still is the inevitable "Death of the Pauper Child". The "Descriptive and National" poems fare a little better, as they include stirring patriotic sentiments such as those expressed by Charles Sangster's "Brock" or historical narratives in literary ballad style, like Thomas D'Arcy McGee's "Jacques Cartier," a poem still recently found in school readers:

In the sea-port of Saint Malo 'twas a smiling morn
in May,
When the Commodore Jacques Cartier to the westward
sailed away;

.

He told them of a region, hard, iron-bound, and cold,
Nor seas of pearl abounded, nor mines of shining
gold,
Where the wind from Thulé freezes the word upon the
lip,
And the ice in spring comes sailing athwart the
early ship;
He told them of the frozen scene, until they thrill'd
with fear,
And piled fresh fuel on the hearth to make them
better cheer.

Historical subjects, such as "The Plains of Abraham" and other dramatic moments from Canada's as yet brief history are popular as one would expect: there are poems referring to the Battle of the Plains of Abraham; William Kirby's "Approach to Quebec," a landscape description, concludes with the obligatory comment on the scene's historical significance:

Oh! glorious spot! The Briton's boast and pride,
Where armies battled and where heroes died,
Where gallant Wolfe led his devoted band,
Rejoiced in death, and waved his dying hand . . .
And noble Montcalm! well thy honoured bier
May claim the tribute of a British tear.

Although the lilies from these ramparts fell,
 Thy name, immortal with great Wolfe's shall dwell:
 Like him, the consciousness of duty done,
 Soothed thy last pang, and cheered thy setting sun.

Charles Sangster's "The Plains of Abraham" makes a similar point:

I saw two great chiefs die,
 Their last breath like a sigh
 Of the zephyr-sprite that wantons on the rosy lips
 of morn;
 No envy-poisoned darts,
 No rancour, in their hearts,
 To unfit them for their triumph over death's impending
 scorn.

(Stanza 5)

It is interesting to note that two poems on the Crimean War are presented in nearly identical terms, so that if it were not that they mention the Alma, the reader might conclude that they were also about Quebec:

Oh, may the memory of the heart grown cold by Alma's
 shore,
 Draw closer yet the bands of love between us ever-
 more;
 England and France, together joined, resistless in
 the fight,
 May conquer still for those oppressed, may still defend
 the right.

("Alma," Annie L. Walker, st. 6)

This is particularly noticeable in Sangster's "The Two-fold Victory," where the central image recalls Wolfe's last words:

"Comrades," said he, rising slowly,
 Kneeling on one bended knee,
 "Comrades," said he, feebly, lowly,
 Is that cheer for Victory?"
 "Yes! -- they fly! -- the foe is flying!"
 "Comrades," said he, ardently,
 "Cheer for me, for I am dying,"
 Cheer them on to Victory!"

(Stanza 2)

Most often, however, the poems are general reflections on the country: "Our Native Land," "Canada," "Song for

Canada," "Canada's Welcome," and "The Emblems of our Homes," may well have been sincerely felt, but they strike the modern reader as conventional and trite.

The series of emigrant verses, "The Highland Emigrant's Last Farewell" (Evan MacColl), "Home-sick Stanzas" (Thomas D'Arcy McGee), "Oh can you leave your Native Land" (Mrs Moodie), and "The Englishman's Farewell" (John Scoble) share this quality. Like the patriotic verses, there are so conventionally expressed that it is difficult to feel that any true emotion is conveyed.

Mrs Moodie's "Oh can you leave your Native Land," the plea of a young man that his sweetheart think carefully before deciding to emigrate with him to Canada, focusses on the nostalgia which will affect the emigrant:

.. Amid the shades of forests dark
 Our loved isle will appear
 An Eden, whose delicious bloom
 Will make the wild more drear --
 And you in solitude will weep,
 O'er scenes belov'd in vain,
 And pine away your life to view
 Once more your native plain!

(stanza 3)

This is a sentiment which is shared by Thomas D'Arcy McGee:

My eye delighted not to look
 On forest old or rapids grand;
 The stranger's pride I scarce could brook,
 My heart was in my own dear land.

Where'er I turned, some emblem still
 Roused consciousness upon my track;
 Some hill was like an Irish hill,
 Some wild bird's whistle called me back;
 A sea-bound ship bore off my peace,
 Between its white, cold wings of woe;
 Oh, if I had but wings like these,
 Where my peace went, I too would go.

(stanza 2, ll. 5-8; stanza 3)

Neither of these poems conveys any clear sense of what either landscape is actually like. One can perhaps forgive the conventional (and somewhat inaccurate) "wilds more drear" of Mrs Moodie's piece because the description is made by someone who has not yet seen Canada and who does not wish to minimise the possible discomforts of the pioneer life, but Mrs Moodie's prose account of just such struggles and just such home-sickness is far livelier and more direct.

On leaving her backwoods home Mrs Moodie expressed similar nostalgia for the country she once hated "with hatred so intense that I longed to die, that death might effectually separate us for ever."¹⁶

Many painful and conflicting emotions agitated my mind, but found no utterance in words, as we entered the forest path, and I looked my last upon that humble home consecrated by the memory of a thousand sorrows. Every object had become endeared to me during my long exile from civilized life. I loved the lonely lake, with its magnificent belt of dark pines sighing in the breeze; the cedar swamp, the summer home of my Indian friends; my own dear little garden, with its rugged snake-fence which I had helped Jenny to place with my own hands. . . where I had so often braved the tormenting mosquitoes, black flies, and intense heat, to provide vegetables for the use of the family.¹⁷

Evan MacColl's "The Highland Emigrant's Last Farewell" also uses the Eden image found in Mrs Moodie's verses:

Come weal, come woe -- till life's last throe,
My Highland Home shall seem
An Eden bright in fancy's light,
A Heaven in Memory's dream!

(stanza 2, ll. 5-8)

and conventionalized nostalgia and piety come together in "The Emigrant's Funeral":

Strange earth we sprinkle on the exile's clay,
Mingled with flowers his childhood never knew;
Far sleeps he from that mountain-top so blue,
Shadowing the scene of his young boyhood's play.

But o'er his lonely trans-atlantic bed
 The ancient words of hopeful love are spoken;
 The solitude of these old pines is broken
 With the same prayers once o'er his father said.

(11. 1-8)

More interesting to the present-day reader are the poems which introduce subjects characteristic of Canadian nature: "Our own Broad Lake," "The Forest," "The Rapid," "The Maple," "Snow," "Winter in Canada" are but a few of the titles which reveal an attempt to describe some distinctive feature of the Canadian environment. These, and poems set in distinctive localities ("The Falls of Niagara" and "The Chaudiere Falls" or "the Thousand Islands") or which consciously employ subjects from Canadian life ("The Canadian Herd-Boy," and "The Old Sugar-Camp"), somewhat soften Dewart's criticism of Canadians for failing to recognize the poetic value of native subjects, but, inevitably, this sort of poem became the pattern for many writers who simply re-used the same subjects without treating them in any specifically native way.

A refreshing exception to the usual conventional descriptions of the Canadian seasons is to be found in McGee's "Jacques Cartier," where the Spring passage is particularly perceptive:

But when he chang'd the strain -- he told how soon is
 cast
 In early Spring the fetters that hold the waters fast;
 How the Winter causeway broken is drifted out to sea,
 And the rills and rivers sing with pride the anthem
 of the free;
 How the magic wand of Summer clad the landscape to
 his eyes,
 Like the dry bones of the just, when they wake in
 Paradise.

(stanza 5)

Here the details of the break-up of the ice have the immediacy of first-hand experience, in spite of the "poetic diction" in which they are given. So, too, George Chapman's "A Canadian Summer's-Night" contains a few verses which seem more truly Canadian than others, especially where a touch of French, and a certain conversational tone bring the speaker's character to life:

Such quaint, quick pipings -- two and two:
Half a whistle, half a coo:
Ah, Master Tree-Frog, gare-a-vous!

The owls on noiseless wing gloom by
Beware, lest one a glimpse espy
Of your grey coat and jewelled eye --

And so, good night! . . .

(VI, ll. 4-10)

Mrs Moodie often gives details appropriate to the Canadian setting, as in "Indian Summer":

'Tis pleasant now in forest shades; --
The Indian Hunter strings his bow,
To track through dark entangling glades
The antler'd deer and bounding doe, --
Or launch at night the birch canoe,
To spear the finny tribes that dwell
On sandy bank in weedy cell,
Or pool the fisher knows right well --
Seen by the red and vivid glow
Of pine-torch at his vessel's bow.

(stanza 4)

though it may be doubted whether Indians still hunted with bow and arrow in Mrs Moodie's day, and the passage is a romanticised general description rather than first-hand observation.

An interesting example of this type of description, although it does not appear in Selections from Canadian Poets, is Alexander McLachlan's "Indian Summer":

The ox, let loose to roam at will,
 Is lying by the water still;
 And on yon spot of green
 The very herd forget to graze,
 And look in wonder and amaze
 Upon the mystic scene.
 And yonder Lake Ontario lies,
 As if that wonder and surprise
 Had hushed her heaving breast -
 And lies there with her awful eye
 Fixed on the quiet of the sky
 Like passion soothed to rest; . . .

(100 Poems)

This type of generalized description given a particular setting is not restricted to Canadian poems; it is a symptom of second- and third-rate verse throughout this period; but it is particularly noticeable in this type of verse where the writers are trying so hard to say something Canadian.

W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889)

E.H. Dewart understood the problems of Canadian poetry, but had not begun to see how they could be solved, though some of the solutions were already being tried out in Selections from Canadian Poets. By the time W.D. Lighthall came to prepare his anthology, Songs of the Great Dominion (1889),¹⁸ a set of subjects and images had been established as Canadian; though there was, and still is, some reluctance to accept native images as worthy of poetry, these images were so widely accepted and so often repeated that they presented a picture of Canada, not entirely false, but nevertheless highly conventionalized and threatening to lose all contact with reality.

The difference between the two periods is made clear even in the subtitle of Lighthall's anthology: "Voices

from the Forests and Waters, the Settlements and Cities of Canada." Where Dewart could only present a "selection" of Canadian poets, Lighthall is able to offer a thematically organized anthology in which the contents attempt to present a complete picture of the country. Lighthall's "Introduction," so different in its optimistic enthusiasm from Dewart's jaundiced view of the prospects for Canadian poetry, makes it clear that he and the poets whose work he presents to the public have identified the Canadian spirit, and have established its characteristics:

The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with the consciousness of young might, public wealth, and heroism. Through them, taken all together, you may catch something of great Niagara falling, of brown rivers rushing with foam, of the crack of the rifle in the haunts of the moose and caribou. . . . The tone of them is courage; for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm one must be a man! . . .

The delight of a clear atmosphere runs through it too, and the rejoicings of that Winter Carnival which is only possible in the most athletic country in the world. . . . 19

Simply to compare the divisions into which Songs of the Great Dominion is divided with the divisions of Selections from Canadian Poets is to recognize how much Canada, and literary attitudes to Canada had changed in the intervening twenty-five years. It may seem incredible that it is such a short time between the two books. Instead of Dewart's three simple divisions, Lighthall gives us nine: "The Imperial Spirit"; "The New Nationality"; "The Indian"; "The Voyageur and Habitant"; "Settlement Life"; "Sports and Free Life"; "The Spirit of Canadian History"; "Places"; and "Seasons". These divisions permit Lighthall to organise the poems so that they present a progressive transition from the Old World to the

New, from the earliest days of Canadian history to the present; instead of Dewart's concluding "Miscellaneous" section, Lighthall's anthology is rounded off by two sections in which the places and the seasons of Canada are celebrated. In the latter of these, the titles "The Fir Woods," "Frogs," "The Whip-poor-Will," "The Fire-Flies," "The Maple," "Bobolink," and "The Canadian Song-Sparrow" seem to indicate that a great many poets had responded to Dewart's plea that they employ native subjects in their verse; but the most impressive change is found in the number of poems (in every section of the book) which employ the image of the boat or the canoe. From "The Canadians on the Nile," in which William Wye Smith portrays Canadians lightening their toil in moving a boat up the Nile by imagining it is the Ottawa:

O the East is but the West, with the sun a little
hotter;
And the pine becomes a palm, by the dark Egyptian
water:
And the Nile's like many a stream we know, that fills
its brimming cup, --
We'll think it is the Ottawa, as we track the batteaux up!
Pull, pull pull! as we track the batteaux up!
It's easy shooting homeward, when we're at the top!

to Charles Sangster's "The Rapid," there are at least fifteen poems in which the canoe is an important image, and this does not include the numerous others in which rivers, lakes, and marshes appear. So prominent, in fact, are the river and the canoe that Alexander Charles Stewart complained about them in his satirical review of Lighthall's anthology, The Poetical Review:

Reform ye scribblers, leave your mists and frogs,
Lakes, Loons and Injuns and Acadian bogs --
And hang the eternal paddle up to dry;
Canoes good sooth; when Pegasus can fly,

To read our bards the world might well mistake
 Our wide Dominion for an endless lake,
 Dotted with isles where birch expressly grows
 The raw material for bark canoes.²⁰

This attack ignores the considerable variety of subject and tone of Songs of the Great Dominion, but it draws attention to one aspect of Canadian life which was already becoming fossilized into a poetical cliché.

By the time Lighthall came to publish his collection of Canadian verse the "Confederation Poets," Bliss Carman, Charles G.D. Roberts, and Duncan Campbell Scott had appeared on the scene, and Canadian poetry had experienced its first surge of international success. There was, in the Canada of the eighteen eighties, what there had not been in the Canada of the sixties, a school of Canadian poets whose mutual encouragement and criticism gave new seriousness to their work. This, of itself, ensured that Lighthall's collection would be superior to Dewart's; he simply had better resources with which to work; but one also feels, in the different organization of the two books, that Lighthall, perhaps because of the different circumstances in the country following Confederation, perhaps because he was a more imaginative man, had a clearer idea of the best way to present the verse so that his volume could not only display the Canadian poetry of the present day but encourage its development into a truly national poetry.

D. Clark, Selections from Scottish Canadian Poets (1900)

In spite of the efforts of Lighthall and others to define the Canadian spirit, nineteenth century Canada

still consisted of many separate communities only loosely knit into a nation. As Dewart had complained in the preface to his collection, "the tendency to sectionalism and disintegration, which is the political weakness of Canada, ~~met~~ no counterpoint in the literature of the country."²¹ The national pride expressed in much Canadian poetry of the late nineteenth century, while perhaps deeply felt, was at the same time so conventional that it could not be seen to have any serious relation to the real state of affairs. There was, in fact, no cultural or social characteristic which could be found to apply to all Canadians, or to every region of Canada. Only a few regions, notably Quebec, because of the well-defined features of language and culture, and the Maritime provinces, because of their longer history, could be expected to exert any significant influence: Canada, even within the various regions, was not sufficiently homogeneous for this to occur. Complicating this state of affairs was the tendency of certain groups within Canadian society to maintain their own cultural identity and to resist absorption into a uniformly Canadian (in those days "British") culture. The most obvious groups were the Middle European immigrants but just as resistant, though less objectionable to the Imperialists, were the Scots who represented a large proportion of the population of Canada and who had been influential in the formation of Canadian education, business, and government. Just as various towns and regions of Scotland asserted their importance to national poetry by producing anthologies of local verse, the Scots

in Canada attempted to define their place in Canadian letters by publishing an anthology of Scottish-Canadian poetry.

Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poetry, published by the Toronto Caledonian Society and edited by Daniel Clark²² is in many ways a descendent of E.H. Dewart's Selections. The title is reminiscent of the earlier anthology, and the introduction, with its justification of national poetry through historical example bears a marked resemblance to Dewart's work; but Clark, in fact, is more closely related to the anthologists and historians of Scottish literature than to any Canadian editor. His introduction follows a pattern established by such writers as J.S. Blackie and Prof. Veitch, whose studies of Scottish song related Romantic ideas of Scottish folk song and Scottish sensibility to the criticism of work by contemporary authors.

In his introduction Clark surveys the history of "national song" (what we would call folk song) from Ancient Egypt to his own day, taking the familiar position of the Scottish literary nationalist:

You may apply any test you like to estimate their comparative merits. Judge them by the effect they have on your own mind; weigh them . . . and Scottish songs have had no equals in the recorded history of the world.²³

a statement which recalls the more tempered one of J.S. Blackie:

Of all the species of the genus Volkslied, so generally appreciated since Cowper and Wordsworth brought poetry back to Nature, the most extensively known and the most largely acknowledged is the Scotch. This extensive recognition it owes, no doubt, in some degree, to the far-travelled habits of the people to whom it belongs; partly to the crown put upon its glory by the fervid genius of

Burns and the wide human sympathies of Scott, but unquestionably also, in no small degree, to its own intrinsic excellence.²⁴

Scottish song was also fully the song of the people:

So that Scottish songs are not the songs of Ramsay, or Burns, or Ballantine, as men with a special personality to reveal, but the songs of the Scottish people, of whom Ramsay, or Burns, and a host of others, were merely the spokesmen for the nonce.²⁵

Clark develops the idea of the spokesman of the people even further, extolling the virtues of the untutored "natural" poet:

It is interesting to note that the song-writers who have filled best the popular heart are and were usually self made men. They sang their best in their younger days and often in want and misery. The irresistible impulse to warble immortal lyrics defied external circumstances and conditions. They needed not culture nor education to evoke the poetic fire. With them invention, inspiration and genius were the ruling forces. We see this intuitive instinct in the odes of Sappho, Anacreon, and Pindar, who were the song-writers of ancient Greece; in the verse composing of Lucretius in the palmy days of Rome; in the Petrarch of modern Italy, and in the Beranger of France. None of these, however, can compare with James Hogg, Allan Ramsay, Burns,²⁶ Tannahill, Falconer, Motherwell, Cunningham or Wilson.

Clark may not have been aware of Blackie's Scottish Song, but the ideas which Blackie expressed about folk poetry seem to have filtered through to Clark where they have become patently absurd. Blackie, for example, contrasted the popular sympathy of Ramsay and Burns with the individuality of Milton, Shelley, Southey, Byron,

Wordsworth and Browning:

These men, however diverse in the distinctive type of their genius, speak mainly for themselves: they not only do not declare the genius of the people in whose language they sing, but, like the prophets among the Jews, they not seldom deliver themselves of a burden directly antagonistic to it.²⁷

Clark's conviction of the ability of the folk artist to transcend the disadvantages of poverty and lack of education leads him to the following conclusion:

Take away from Pope and Dryden education, taste and wit, and it is possible they never would have been heard of as rhymesters. Strip Wordsworth and Tennyson of culture and there is reason to believe their versification would have been very commonplace in form and idea. Natural poets are better with education, but they do not depend on its advantages.²⁸

Here he has carried the idea of the poet as the spokesman of the people to its furthest limits: the best poets are those that speak to the widest audience; the most popular have often been least educated, therefore the educated poets are essentially deficient in true poetry.

We have already seen examples of the Scottish emphasis upon the untutored poet: Scotland, as a country of natural singers, was expected to produce a great many "true poets" whose inspiration made up for a lack of education, and so anthologies like Edwards' Modern Scottish Poets are full of the work of tradesmen and other who perhaps might not be expected to write poetry. So, too, Daniel Clark justifies the inclusion of some "commonplace" poems because:

. . . in the writer's uncouthness, there is a ring of genuine ideality which lifts the work above the mere prosaic and commonplace. The words which are the vehicles of thought are unhappily selected to present that which is worthy of commendation and preservation. Some of the best have the ideality badly clothed, and thereby ungainly.²⁹

Clearly, Clark's sympathy with the untutored poet has damaged his critical judgment.

His taste in general verges uncritically close to the sentimental, and he is easily influenced by romantic notions of the Scottish character, as his description of the Scot's humour reveals:

Even his grim humor has a streak of feeling and sentiment in it. It does not sparkle and scintillate like wit, nor does it go out like a rocket in the darkness. His humor is philosophic, sarcastic, biting, but full of an inward chuckle of enjoyment. The fact is, pathos and humor are not the ill-matched pair that some would assert -- they are twin sisters in the same nature.³⁰

This assessment is fair enough but combined with other statements on poetry and poets, for example, "The true poet clothes everything he descants upon with pathos, beauty or sublimity,"³¹ and the others already quoted, it encourages the modern reader to be wary of Clark's critical standards. Like any other national anthology, this one is based upon considerations of nationalism first and only secondarily on poetic merit.

Clark divides the contributors to his anthology into three groups; those who write subjective verses, those who write about nature, and those who combine the two with transcendent knowledge;³² but it is difficult to see that these categories have any real relation to the verse which appears in the collection. Apart from the mention of Canadian place names, flora, and fauna, the contents display an extraordinary resemblance to traditional Scottish anthologies of the preceding century. Indeed, the impression one receives is that the collection belongs to a much earlier period than it actually does. There is no trace of the influence of the Confederation poets, and the tone, far removed from the rather hectic Imperialistic enthusiasm of Lighthall's anthology (though Imperialist themes are present) is predominantly nostalgic, sentimental, and pious.

The collection consists of the usual mixture of songs, ballads, sonnets, verse epistles, and dialect verse of the

type to be found in any nineteenth century anthology of Scottish verse: some examples are better than others, but there is no poet of the first, or even second rank, in the collection. Alexander McLachlan, Evan MacColl, Isabelle Ecclestone MacKay, and Robert Reid are among the best of the contributors, and are the only ones of any note in Canadian literary history. Of them, Alexander McLachlan, in spite of his technical deficiencies, is perhaps the most worthy of study because of his unique attempt, in "The Emigrant," to portray the life of the pioneer in verse. Unlike the many immigrant poets, like Robert Reid, who called himself "Rob Wanlock" to keep alive the memory of his birthplace, Wanlockhead, and made his nostalgia his central poetic theme, McLachlan was one of the few who responded positively to the challenge of the new country: yet the verse which appears in Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poets is his weakest; philosophical, reflective pieces, trite in thought and form, rather than his lively homespun satire. Other contributors, such as John Imrie and Andrew Wanless, are examples of the worst type of amateur versifier: the only merit in much of their work is that it is so bad it is amusing.

Despite its deficiencies in quality, Clark's anthology seems to have been given a kind reception by the critics, probably because it was the first of its kind. William Campbell, in an article on Scottish-Canadian Poetry which appeared in The Canadian Magazine in 1907 recalled that

From a financial standpoint, the book was not a success; but the critics all spoke of it in kind and exceedingly

complimentary terms. Had the sales of the first volume been sufficiently encouraging, a second volume, and probably a third, would have followed. There was no lack of material.³³

In his article Campbell goes on to review the lives and work of some of the principal contributors to Clark's volume. His comments, and the reports he gives of his contemporaries' response to the work of these poets help to establish the status which the Scottish-Canadian poets held at this time. Campbell's article is therefore a useful starting point for a discussion of some of the individual contributors to the collection and their work.

Campbell's declaration that "Alexander McLachlan occupies a first place among Scottish poets who have made Canada their home,"³⁴ is acceptable, but his further assertion, "Measured by what may be called the Burns standard, he is almost the equal of his great prototype; certainly he comes nearer to the Ayrshire bard than any other,"³⁵ is less easy to accept. First of all, the sentence is ambiguous; we do not know whether Campbell means to say that McLachlan is closer to Burns than other Canadian poets were, or that McLachlan resembles Burns in his work more than he resembles any other poet. In any case it is difficult to see that McLachlan's verse is like that of Burns in any significant way: it is true that he writes a homely kind of satire which might well be derived from Burns, but his technique is far inferior.

Further descriptions of now justifiably forgotten writers as "true poets" encourage a healthy scepticism in the modern reader, but generally Campbell is careful not to claim too much for his poets. Though he welcomes the

opportunity to praise John Imrie, a personal friend, he is careful to establish the social sphere in which the man's work was so popular (five editions were printed by the time Campbell's article had appeared): Imrie, he remarks, intended his verse "to please and encourage the toiling masses," a task in which, according to Campbell, he was "successful in a marked degree."³⁶ He admits that Imrie's muse "did not soar quite so high as McLachlan's," and points out that Imrie was "particularly happy in the home circle" writing "fireside lyrics": with this sort of comment he avoids having to give either negative criticism or unwarranted praise. A summary like the following:

Dr Harper's poetic works breathe out a nobility of sentiment and a robustness typical of the man. At the same time he writes with³⁷ a sweetness and tenderness which stamp him as a true poet.

belongs to the tradition of popular criticism which we have already seen in the long series of nineteenth century Scottish anthologies. Campbell's comments are exactly what we would expect to find in a collection such as D.H. Edwards' Modern Scottish Poets; the same attitudes and the same expectations are implied.

Campbell's conventional approach to Scottish-Canadian poetry did not allow him to criticise one aspect of the Scottish-Canadian's sensibility which is strongly marked in the Selections, and which critics such as E.K. Brown found so disturbing: the persistent nostalgia for Scotland. To Campbell, as to us, it is simply natural that an emigrant should retain strong feelings of attachment for the land he has found it necessary to leave, but Campbell, like most of the Scottish-Canadian poets, persisted in

extracting as much poignancy as possible out of the situation. Thus we find Campbell asserting that the Scot "has a happy faculty of getting reconciled to new environments; and time has proved that he can sing -- if not as blithely, certainly as ably and as sweetly, under the shade of the Canadian maple as when he trod his native heath."³⁸ Campbell remarks on the variety of Canadian themes the Scottish poets have chosen, but concludes that "some of the tenderest and most heart-stirring among their productions" are those inspired by their native land:

It could not well be otherwise. Those of us who have spent our early days in Scotland, however strong the ties we form in this new land . . . cannot forget the mother land, and the expatriated Scot's pent-up feelings have found an outlet in describing, in glowing language, the scenes of his happy boyhood and the faces of those who were dear to him in the 'days o' Lang Syne.'³⁹

While he is careful to show how fairly poets like John Imrie, Robert Reid, and even the Highland Bard, Evan MacColl divide their affections between their native and adopted lands, Campbell gives his sympathies away in the following absurdity:

If ever a man was filled with that burning love for Scotsmen and for Scotland, which is so characteristic of his countrymen, that man was Thomas Laidlaw. Although only six years of age when he came to Canada, he had within his nature, in large measure, that ingenium perfervidum Scotorum possessed, more or less, by every true Scotsman.⁴⁰

It is not absurd that a six year-old boy should remember and be nostalgic for his first home, but it is absurd to put such excessive emphasis on that nostalgia.

Nostalgia is, of course, a prominent theme in this collection. "The Scottish Emigrant's Lament" (John Simpson, p. 19), "The Whaup" (Robert Reid, p. 161), "When the Heather Scents the Air" (John Macfarlane, p. 236),

and "The Lost Langsyne" (Macfarlane, p. 240) are but a few of the titles which suggest the traditional clinging to the past which is a characteristic of the stay-at-home as well as the "exiled" Scot. However, feelings of nostalgia are not felt toward Scotland alone: Lockhart's "Acadie" (p. 249) expresses the longings of a different kind of exile, the French Acadians, expelled from the Annapolis Valley in 1755:

Like mists that round a mountain gray
 Hang for an hour, then melt away,
 So I, and nearly all my race,
 Have vanished from my native place.

O Acadie! fair Acadie!
 Where is the world of charm for me?
 Dull are the skies 'neath which I range,
 And all the summer hills are strange.

(stanzas 1 & 3)

It is not surprising that in a collection of Scottish-Canadian verse most of the contents should be devoted to Scottish subjects. Twenty-six of the poems have titles like "The Gael's Heritage" (MacCormack, p. 233), "The Hills of the Heather" (MacColl, p. 35), or "Oor Mither Tongue" (Wanless, p. 107), or are about some specifically Scottish personage or type, as "Robert Burns" (Burgess, p. 270; Steele, p. 282), "The Young Minister," or "The Precentor" (Anderson, pp. 287 and 289). There are even three poems on Scottish food; Allan Ross's "Haggis" (p. 189), John Imrie's "Scotch Dainties" (P. 45):

(Chorus)

Brose, parritch, kail, haggis, an bannocks,
 Are dainties abune a' compare!
 Nae English, French, Yankees or Canucks,
 Could mak' such a gran' bill o' fare!

and John Steele's "Oatmeal" (p. 281):

My blessing on the happy man
 Who first could ride his carriage:
 And double blessing on the man
 Who first invented porridge.

(stanza 1)

Many of the contributors to Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poets were born in Canada. Several of the ladies Campbell mentions in his survey were the daughters of immigrants and were born in Canada, but this does not seem to have prevented them from developing an acute consciousness of their heritage. Mrs Georgina Fraser Newhall's "Fraser's Drinking Song" is an excellent example of the kind of thing which can result from the enthusiasm of such ladies. The incongruity of its presence in the same volume with several temperance poems seems to have been overlooked by the editors. It is evidently inspired by Browning's Cavalier songs to some extent, and was made the "Failte" of the Clan Fraser Society of Canada and "set to a stirring martial tune"⁴¹:

All ready?
 A Fraser! A Fraser-forever, my friends;
 While he lives how he hates, how he loves
 till life ends,
 He is first,
 Here's my hand
 Into grand
 Hurrah burst --
 Are you ready?
 All ready!
 All ready!!
 All ready!!!

(last stanza)

Campbell's selection of this particular poem as his only quotation from Mrs Newhall's work does not speak well of his judgment, nor does his assertion that Miss Isabel Graham "has written many poems that will live."⁴² Miss

Graham is among the many poets who appear in this collection who have now been all but forgotten. It is perhaps worth noting here that none of the young poets of Scottish descent and Canadian birth who made their name as poets (Duncan Campbell Scott, for example) appear in this collection. This may have been because they did not write in Scots or about Scotland, though Bliss Carman was a post-graduate student in Edinburgh,⁴³ or it may have been because they were already well-established and copyrighted, or other considerations intervened, but whatever the reason, their absence contributed to one of the weaknesses of the anthology; that it ignores the developments in Canadian poetry which had taken place with the appearance of the "Confederation Poets". The collection would not seem quite so antiquated or anachronistic if some of these poets had been included. As it stands, *Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poets with Campbell's survey*, is an example of the type of lax, appreciative criticism which was the chief guide the Canadian reading public had.

Scottish Songs

Some prominent themes in the anthology have already been discussed; to continue the examination of the most popular subjects will reveal further how firmly tied to convention these writers were. For example, imitations of Scottish songs are plentiful, and many of these, like Alan Ross's "Song" are strongly reminiscent of the ever-popular Tannahill:

The sun i' the west had gane doon to rest,
 The face o' auld Nature blinked bonnie an' still;
 The birds 'mang the boughs had a' gane to repose,
 But the robin alane sang clearly and shrill.

.

The rose in its pride micht hae blushed at her side,
 An' so micht the lillie that grows i' the dell;
 Ca' them thegither, they'll no mak' anither
 Like Maggie, sweet Maggie, the pride o' Hunthill.

(p. 190; stanzas 1 and 4)

Here the opening stanza is very similar to Tannahill's "The Soldier's Adieu" (see appendix) while the last line recalls "Jessie, the Flower O' Dunblane". A.J. Lockhart's "Jeanie" (p. 253) falls somewhere between Burns and Tannahill:

O come, an' walk wi' me, Jeanie
 Bleak winter cometh nigh,
 When lovers rue, an' frien's are few,
 And we grow sad an' sign, --
 When shrill wi' snaw, the nicht-win's blaw,
 An' mony a hope maun die;
 Walk doon the lane the noo Jeanie,
 An' dinna pass me by.

(stanza 4)

One may note in this, among several errors in dialect, the rhyme of die with by and sigh: Lockhart was born in Nova Scotia and though the rhyme may have dictated the pronunciation, it is to be expected that he was simply unaware of the slip.

The Scottish-Canadians did not simply imitate Scottish songs, they analysed their response to them. Georgina Fraser Newhall in a pleasant lullaby reflects on the songs which her mother sang to her and which she now sings to her infant son:

To and fro
 To my list'ning bairn I croon
 "Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon"
 Soft and low;
 "Allister McAllister" --
 All my Scottish blood astir --
 Loud and gay.

Soon I hear
 Laughter sweet, brown peeping eyes
 Open roundly in surprise,
 Half dismay;
 Till I murmur Gaelic dirges,
 With the moaning of the surges,
 In their tones.

Do you think
 While he lies my heart abune,
 Feels it throb with ev'ry tune
 Vengeful gay,
 While he sees me smile or weep,
 My sweet lad will ever sleep?
 Bless you, nay!

So I turn
 Slowly rocking to and fro
 To some other songs I know,
 Soft and low;
 Words that sterner tongues would spurn
 Melodies that do not turn
 Into wails.

And he sinks,
 Slowly, closer to my breast,
 Drifting, dreaming, to his rest
 While I clasp;
 Slowly rocking to and fro,
 To and fro.

("Songs I Sing," p. 259,
 stanzas 3-8)

Thomas Laidlas's "The Old Scottish Songs" (p. 149) attempts to convey a similar sense of the emotional power of Scottish song but does so in a more conventional manner:

O, sing us to-night from the old Scottish songs --
 The songs which our mothers would hear
 In the old cottage homes, that were covered with thatch,
 In a land that will ever be dear.

The songs themselves are almost forgotten as Laidlaw uses this poem as an opportunity (as did so many of his pre-

decessors) of recalling once more the sufferings of the Covenanters:

To the hills then they looked for the spirit and power
 To strike from oppression the rod;
 Nor were they denied, and they fought as they died
 For the kirk and their covenant God.

(stanza 8)

More striking in its imagery, though it is only a single stanza, is Lockhart's "The Ancient Bards" (p. 254).

This fragment recalls the tone of the excerpt from his "The Masque of the Minstrels" which appeared at the beginning of Lighthall's Songs of the Great Dominion and resembles Fiona MacLeod's Celtic twilight quality more than it resembles the other selections in the anthology:

Like thunderstorms o'er rivers broad
 Their mighty course they hold;
 The sounds of winds and ocean waves
 Are in their harps of gold;
 Like sunset sheen
 Each dazzling mein;
 Their speech is strong and bold.

Canadian Patriotism

There was, of course, an equally strong attraction in the romance of the new country, and Scottish-Canadian poets were quick to give it expression. Their patriotism is given a hearty, if uninspired voice in such poems as "No Country's Like Our Own Dear Land" (H. Isabel Graham, p. 125), "Canada, Land of the Free" (Nelson, p. 228) and Alexander McLachlan's "Hurrah for the New Dominion" (p. 73):

Hurrah for the grand old forest land
 Where Freedom spreads her pinion;
 Hurrah! with me, for the maple tree,
 Hurrah! for the New Dominion!

(stanza 2)

Perhaps the best-known of the patriotic songs included in this anthology is Alexander Muir's "The Maple Leaf Forever" (p. 294) which was once popular in the schools but has since dropped out of favour because of the emphasis which it places on the Conquest of Quebec, and also because it is unfashionably imperialistic:

In days of yore, from Britain's shore,
 Wolfe, the dauntless hero, came,
 And planted firm Britannia's flag
 On Canada's fair domain.
 Here may it wave, our boast and pride,
 And, joined in love together,
 The Thistle, Shamrock, Rose entwine
 The Maple Leaf forever!

Chorus --

The Maple Leaf, our emblem dear,
 The Maple Leaf for ever;
 God save our Queen, and Heaven bless
 The Maple Leaf for ever!

Another of Muir's patriotic songs repeats the reference to Wolfe and Montcalm:

Where brave Montcalm unflinching bled,
 And Wolfe his blood for Britain shed,
 Their monument uprears its head
 In token of our grief;
 The men who scaled the frowning rock
 Met foemen of a noble stock;
 Their sons shall arms in friendship lock
 Beneath the Maple Leaf.

("God Bless the Maple Leaf," p. 16,
 stanza 2)

Reactions to a more recent historical event are given in Mrs Margaret Burgess' "In Memoriam" on the death of Private John Rogers who was killed at the battle of Cut Knife Creek (1885), and George Pirie's "The Murder of Thomas Scott" who was killed by followers of Louis Riel. The North West Rebellion presented these writers with dramatic contemporary situations in which they could extol the virtues of bravery and patriotism:

Brave souls were they, though the way was rough,
 And the days and nights were cold;
 O'er the weary gaps, through the hail and sleet,
 With snow-blind eyes and blistered feet,
 They marched like heroes bold.

("In Memoriam," p. 274, stanza 4)

Pirie's "The Murder of Thomas Scott" is particularly interesting because, like so many early ballads based on true events, it is accompanied by a full prose account of the facts. According to the Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature Scott had been dismissed from his duties as a roadworker in the Red River area after leading a strike and assaulting his superior, John A. Snow: it is unlikely that he would have been flattered by being described as "A loyal son of the dear old land, /For the brave old flag to die." Similarly, the patriotism of Pirie's verse

A voice has gone out from that blood-stained pile,
 A shout like an eagle's scream,
 "Shall Britons be butchered on British soil,
 For their fealty to Britain's Queen?"

(stanza 4)

has become unpopular in the later development of Canadian nationalism. There is, however, a rough vitality in this piece which resembles Kipling and Robert Service almost as it resembles the chapbook ballads and distinguishes it from the other examples of patriotic verse in this anthology:

By traitors beset, not a comrade nigh,
 He knelt on the snow-clad ground;
 And they murdered him there for his loyalty,
 As they'd slaughtered a mangy hound.

(stanza 3)

Nature

The familiar effort to prove that Scots and Canadians are peculiarly sensitive to the beauties of nature is found here in numerous poems on woods and rivers; there is, however, no example of the Canadian landscape being treated in a typically Canadian way. The nature poems in this volume show little real feeling for the place: John Simpson's "The Banks of the Irvine" is a particularly good example because in describing a Canadian river Simpson has simply transferred traditional images which were used in similar poems on Scottish rivers and modified them slightly to fit the new context. The Indian takes the place of the Highlander; Indian wars replace Scotland's romantic battles; the graves of the brave pioneers are substituted for the inevitable Covenanters' graves; all are presented in traditional diction:

The banks of the Irvine! the home of my childhood!
 What feelings of joy from my heart ever well,
 When rambling again as of yore in the wildwood,
 And culling the fern and the fairy bluebell!

In years that have vanished, the Indian pursuing
 His course by the river, was wont on his way
 To gaze with delight on the rocks that were wooing
 The waters, as if they would lure them to stay.

Perchance the fell war-whoop, the signal of battle,
 Rose thrilling and loud by the beautiful stream:
 Methinks I can still hear the swift arrows rattle,
 And see in the forest the tomahawks gleam.

.

The brave pioneers of the forest are sleeping
 Beneath the white stones on the brow of the hill;
 They peacefully rest where the willows are weeping,
 Their labors are over, their voices are still.

(stanzas 1-3, 9)

John Mortimer's "The Felling of the Forest" attempts an ambitious treatment of the conflict between man and nature required in opening the new land. Composed in rhymed couplets, this extended rhapsody on the clearing of the land recalls Goldsmith's The Rising Village, though its reflective tone, and the contrast which is shown between past and present, youth and age, is Wordsworthian. The poet is cast into a nostalgic reverie in which he re-lives the adventure of clearing the land:

. . . as soldiers tried,
 Who fought in many a battle, side by side,
 And camped in many a field in stranger lands --
 Formed friendships that the gay world understands
 But dimly, nor hath further wish to know;
 So we who in thick forests, years ago,
 Toiled side by side, formed friendships just as true
 That mem'ry loves to dwell on and renew
 For us who still remain. We backward gaze
 And fondly dwell on those loved forest days
 With joy the present cannot give nor take;
 For age and mem'ry fond companions make,
 By present joys untempted -- this is meet.

(11. 5-17)

The military imagery which Mortimer introduces in comparing the friendship of the settlers with the camaraderie of soldiers is carried on in the description of the actual felling, where the trees are "forest monarchs," the woodsmen "climbed each swaying wall" as though attacking a besieged castle, and the trees at last are burned, becoming "Triumphant beacons". Mortimer does not exploit the metaphor consistently, or with any clear effect, but he certainly intends by his heightened diction to emphasise the romantic aspects of the task:

But slowly did the work advance; to tell
 How, thrown with skill, the forest monarchs fell,

To me were pleasant -- prone and parallel;
 This way and that, their huge boughs interlaced,
 Tier over tier, for giant bonfires placed,
 With terrible descent; but fearless all
 We laid them low and climbed each swaying wall
 To cut the higher trunks and boughs, and lay
 Compact for burning, at some future day, --
 And listening now I hear those bonfires roar,
 And see great sheets of flame that skyward soar,
 Triumphant beacons of thy future great,
 Oh, Canada! our dearly loved estate!

(11. 47-59)

It is perhaps significant that Mortimer refrains from giving a clear description of the forest in its original state until the last six lines of the poem: the last image which is given the reader is of the vanished beauty of the forest as it was before the settlers arrived:

Thus fared the noblest of our forest trees,
 Whose branches mingled, bending on the breeze
 For broad, unmeasured leagues on every side,
 All green and glorious in their summer pride!
 The home of rustling wings and nimble feet,
 The Red Man's shelter, and the deer's retreat.

(11. 78-83)

We have already seen Canada's emblem, the maple leaf, used in patriotic verses; Alexander McLachlan provides a poem in which the maple is praised as an object of nature, but in the usual manner of the immigrant poet, McLachlan fails to present the most striking characteristic of the maple, its brilliant autumn colouring, and actually describes it as though it were an evergreen in verses faintly reminiscent of "O Tannenbaum":

O, Maple tree! O, Maple tree!
 O, thou'rt a pride and joy to me;
 Of all the trees of the forest green
 There's none compares with thee, I ween;
 Long may you stand, so green and grand,
 Pride and joy of our happy land --
 O, Maple tree!

("The Maple Tree," p. 75)

This is typical of the nature verse which appears in Selections from Scottish-Canadian poets: traditional images are used in traditional forms without regard to the actual circumstances which they are intended to convey.

Pathos

A collection of this type would not be complete without its complement of "pious effusions," elegiac laments and inspirational verses. To quote them at length would be to tire the patience of the reader unnecessarily. Poems like "Nobody's Child" (John Simpson, p. 15), "The Prodigal Child" (H. Isabel Graham, p. 126), and "Crape on the Door" (Alexander Wingfield, p. 263) conform precisely to the models established in the earlier anthologies. Evan MacColl's "The Child of Promise," translated from the Gaelic by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan of Methven, Perthshire, has a delicacy of expression which sets it apart from the usual run of morbid verse:

She died -- as die the roses
 On the ruddy clouds of dawn,
 When the envious sun discloses
 His flame, and morning's gone.

She died -- like waves of sun-glow
 Fast by the shadows chased;
 She died -- like heaven's rainbow
 By gushing showers effaced.

She died -- like flakes appearing
 On the shore beside the sea;
 Thy snow as bright! but, nearing
 The ground-swell broke on thee.

.

She died -- and died she early:
 Heaven wearied for its own.
 As the dipping sun, my Mary
 Thy morning ray went down.

(stanzas 1-3, 6)

This was a very popular piece which appears whenever MacColl is mentioned.

Among the pious, inspirational verses, Dr Clark's "Trials" has an effective metre which adds interest to a trite theme:

The clouds may hide, but cannot reach,
 The stars afar;
 The waves may spend their noisy strength
 On rock or scar

Vengeful winds may sway the bending fronds
 Of forest trees;
 The lightning's flash may strike in vain
 The rolling seas.

.

The spirit quivers and passion's floods may flow
 In angry quest;
 But God commands and says, "Be still, --
 Give rest."

(p. 172)

Alexander McLachlan, often perturbed by the unfathomable mystery of existence and the meaning of life (so much so that he complained that Carlyle, whom he greatly admired, could not help him to solve the riddle of existence)⁴⁴ is represented by two philosophical pieces: William Campbell called "God" "a masterpiece of its kind," claiming, "had he written nothing else it would have brought him into prominence," (p. 589) and declared that "Mystery" was "indicative of profound thought on the mysterious in nature. A stanza from each is sufficient to show how easily, in spite of their dislike of religious cliches, Campbell and his contemporaries were impressed by "religious sentiments":⁴⁵

God of the great old solemn woods,
 God of the desert solitudes,
 And trackless sea;
 God of the crowded city vast,
 God of the present and the past,
 Can man know thee?

("God," p. 153, stanza 1)

Mystery! Mystery!
 All is a mystery,
 Mountain and valley, woodland and stream;
 Man's troubled history,
 Man's mortal destiny,
 Are but a phase of the soul's troubled dream.

("Mystery," p. 168, stanza 1)

Humour

It must not be thought that pious and pathetic subjects were favoured to the exclusion of other moods: there are several examples of lighter verse, often involving the description of a character type, as in "The Precentor," by the Rev. R.S.G. Anderson:

A dour and thrawn-like man was Tam,
 Wi' lungs o' brass and airn;
 A massy pow wi' lyart locks
 Like some aul' chieftain's cairn;
 An' somewhaur ben though sneckit up
 The hert o' a wee bairn.

A wilfu' man maun hae his w'y --
 Tam never cared a haet --
 He picked his tunes and sang them thro',
 At his ain shachlin' gait;
 "With a spirit," cried the meenister,
 But Tammass took "Retreat!"

.

He ettled first the "Martyrs" tune,
 When something took the gee,
 An' aff he gaed to clim' "Coleshill,"
 But brocht up i' "Dundee;"
 An' when he made for "Newington,"
 'Twas "Martyrdom" to me.

(p. 289, stanzas 2, 3, 5)

Elizabeth Ecclestone MacKay's "The Apple-Parin' Bee" (p. 224) is an attempt to transcribe a rural Canadian accent in an amusing monologue with a sentimental tag at the end:

My gals is struck on parties, the kind that's known
as "balls;"
They spend their lives in dancin' an' returnin' dooty
calls;
They never seem to get much fun, in fact it 'pears
to me
We were a sight more jolly at an apple-parin' bee.

.

And I can't help a-thinkin' these hazy Autumn days
About the home that used to be and all the dear old
ways;
Why, bless their hearts! The gals forget their mother
promised me
A walkin' home by moonlight from an apple-parin' bee!

(stanzas 1 & 6)

Allan Ross's "The Old Moss-Back" (p. 193) gives a similar serio-comic treatment of the backwoods farmer in which the occasional colloquialism gives the regional flavour:

High perched upon his rural train,
Upon the topmost sack,
He's off to market with his grain --
The old moss-back.

Who smiles out o'er the whiskey jug
While the landlord draws the stopper,
And deftly lifts his rustic plug --
'Tis the old clodhopper,

Who works the hardest of his kind,
And gets the smallest copper,
And commonly is left behind --
'Tis the old clodhopper.

But better days are drawing near,
The tide is ebbing back,
United efforts soon will cheer
And guide the old moss-back.

(stanzas 1, 2, 5, 6)

The Canadian accent is invariably used for humorous or sentimental pieces; its use is far more restricted than Scottish dialect in verse.

Conclusion

Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poets may be regarded as another example of that "tendency to sectionalism and disintegration" which Dewart felt literature ought to be attempting to correct, but this would be to take too narrow a view of the anthology and its implications. First of all, the anthology reveals an overwhelming conservatism in the Scottish-Canadian community, a conservatism which permitted a highly conventionalized nostalgia for Scotland to co-exist with an equally conventional loyalty to the new country. The Scottish-Canadian poets whose works appear in this collection contributed nothing new to Canadian poetry, but they earnestly, if uninspiredly kept alive the idea of national poetry. The anthology is perhaps most valuable today as a source of biographical information about people who are only memorable for having been published in such collections as this, but it is also a useful document which reveals how out-of-date the popular idea of poetry can become. Even in comparison with Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets this is a backward-looking anthology.

Later Canadian Anthologists: Rand and Garvin

Dewart and Lighthall had begun the task of collecting Canadian poetry and displaying it so that its national characteristics could be recognized; Daniel Clark and William Campbell explored a minor area of nationalism within the broader framework of the Canadian nation as it

was developing; it remained for two more Canadian anthologists to give us the canon of early Canadian poets which exists today.

Theodore Harding Rand (1835-1900) is the first of the modern Canadian anthologists. His collection, A Treasury of Canadian Verse (1900)⁴⁶ belongs to the nineteenth-century tradition we have already seen at work in Dewart and Clark's collections, but there is a noticeable tightening of critical standards. There are still many poets included who have been almost forgotten today, but each is represented by a few well-chosen pieces, and many more of the poems in this collection are still read today. The poems fall into the same categories of "rhapsody," "the pathetic," and social consciousness that we have seen in other anthologies, but the work shows much more awareness of the tendencies which Canadian verse was beginning to develop: in spite of a great many nineteenth-century characteristics, this is the first twentieth-century Canadian anthology.

In his foreword to Garvin's anthology of light verse, Cap and Bells, Lorne Pierce gave his highest praise to Garvin's anthology, Canadian Poets:

None, perhaps did so much for the recognition of our older poets, in sifting out much of the dead wood by which they were chiefly known in similar collections. Rand began the winnowing, and Garvin all but completed it.⁴⁷

Garvin, whose most important contribution to the history of Canadian literature was undoubtedly his edition of the poems of Isabella Valency Crawford, was, like most Canadian anthologists, anxious to promote native talent. Pierce says of him that he "sponsored a few indifferent

poets, and knew they were not great, but he did so out of a boundless warmth of heart, hoping that the multitude of capable writers whom he had helped would shrive him of any small sin of commission."⁴⁸ This is D.H. Edwards of Brechin, and William Campbell all over again, or would have been, if it were not for the fourteen or fifteen poets still recognized today who found their way into the pages of Garvin's anthology. Certainly fewer of the older poets are found in these pages: Mair and Sangster are the only two of the Pre-Confederation period to be included; the Confederation poets are represented in strength, and some of the more capable "songstresses" like Jean Blewett and S. Frances Harrison (Seranus) are found along with the truly remarkable Isabella Valency Crawford and the Pre-Raphaelite-like Marjorie Pickthall; but there is the expected number of new names destined to lapse into obscurity, and this number is larger than the astute reader would like to see.

Garvin's anthology is above the level of the nineteenth century anthologies to which I have been comparing it, but only because of the restraint and the careful selection Garvin has made; the quality of the poetry of the early part of the twentieth century in Canada was, in fact, as desperately low as it was in Scotland. Munro Beattie, in his astringent survey of this period for the *Literary History of Canada* gives a succinct diagnosis of the problem:

Worst of all, the versifiers of this arid period, having nothing to say, kept up a constant jejune chatter about infinity, illicit love, devotion to the Empire, death, Beauty, God, and Nature. Sweet singers of the Canadian

out-of-doors. they peered into flowers, reported on the flittings of the birds, discerned mystic voices in the wind, descried elves among the poplars. They insisted upon being seen and overheard in poetic postures: watching for the will-o'-the-wisp, eavesdropping on "the forest streamlet's noonday song," lying like a mermaid on a bed of coral, examining a bird's nest in winter, fluting for the fairies to dance, or "wandering through some silent forest's aisles." John Garvin's anthology, Canadian Poets (1916, revised 1926), in which appear most of these instances, abundantly demonstrates that poetry in Canada as the 1920's opened was dying of intellectual and emotional anemia.

Yet this was the period in which six other anthologies of Canadian verse were published (one each year up to 1927), some intended for use in schools, some to contain the poetry of the first World War, but most simply to promote Canadian verse. It is not difficult to imagine that poets and anthologists in this period were still convinced that a Canadian national poetry could be created if enough work and enthusiasm were put into it: there was an idea of what poetry ought to be, and this, combined with the over-anxiousness of writers and editors to have it succeed was almost enough in itself to destroy any freshness of vision or expression which might have existed.

There was, however, one advantage which the anthologists of the first quarter of this century possessed which their predecessors did not have; that is, the twentieth-century anthologists could be historical; they could draw upon an ever increasing stock of works which time and critical opinion had proven to be successful, if not major, poetry. If their judgment of their contemporaries was faulty (and it is the rare critic who can pick out the best features of his own generation) a critical concensus on the strengths of the earlier Canadian poets was being

developed. The inspiration of the Confederation poets was waning and nothing native had arisen to take its place; there was not even a foreign model which Canadian poets were prepared to imitate in order to pull themselves out of the round of fruitless repetition of outworn 'sentiments into which they had stumbled, but it was during this period that Canadians began to apply systematic historical criticism to their own literature, and it is in this period that the groundwork for the modern assessment of nineteenth century Canadian poetry was laid.

Between 1864 and 1930 over seventeen major anthologies of Canadian verse were published, not counting such things as school texts and small volumes introducing new writers. Some were reprinted several times, notably Lighthall's Songs of the Great Dominion, which appeared in a special edition in England⁵⁰ and E.S. Caswell's Canadian Singers and Their Songs (1913, 1919, 1925)⁵¹ Mrs Whyte-Edgar's A Wreath of Canadian Song (Toronto, 1910),⁵² a historical-biographical survey in the tradition of J.S. Blackie's Scottish Song, as well as introducing little-known works to the Canadian public, began to trace the pattern of development of Canadian poetry. In all three of these, an increasing awareness by poets and by editors of the Canadian identity can be seen; that this identity became increasingly formalized and conventionalized in verse is perhaps a natural development during a period when so many writers, anxious to prove that their country had both a national character and a national literature, had so few models. The most easily recognised native images quickly became over-worked and trite. Lighthall's Songs of the

Great Dominion, in spite of the many weaknesses in the book, stands apart from the other anthologies as a successful attempt by an editor to compile an anthology which would represent the national spirit in its most distinctive characteristics. More than any other Canadian anthologist, Lighthall imposed his vision of the Canadian nation upon its poetry: the succeeding anthologies, though they acknowledge no debt to Lighthall, are filled with verses which derived their sense of place, in great measure, from the vision which he presented in Songs of the Great Dominion.

NOTES

1. Dewart, p. vii.
2. *ibid.*, p. vii.
3. *ibid.*
4. Dewart, p. ix.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*, p. x.
7. Watson, "The Publisher to the Reader," Choice Collection.
8. Dewart, p. vii.
9. *ibid.*, p. viii.
10. Ramsay, Ever Green, p. vii.
11. Dewart, pp. xiv-xv.
12. Ramsay, p. vii.
13. *ibid.*, p. ix.
14. Dewart, p. xv.
15. *ibid.*, p. xv.
16. Susanna Moodie, Roughing It in the Bush, p. 30.
17. *ibid.*, p. 231.
18. W.D. Lighthall, ed., Songs of the Great Dominion (London: Scott, 1889; rpt. Toronto: Coles, 1971).
19. *ibid.*, p. xxi.
20. A.C. Stewart, The Poetical Review; a Brief Notice of Canadian Poets and Poetry (Toronto: Anderson, 1896), p. 24.
21. Dewart, p. x.
22. Daniel Clark, ed., Selections from Scottish Canadian Poets (Toronto: Caledonian Society, 1900).
23. Clark, p. viii.
24. J.S. Blackie, Scottish Song: its Wealth, Wisdom, and Social Significance (Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1889),
25. Blackie, p. 5.

26. Clark, p. viii.
27. Blackie, p. 5
28. Clark, p. ix.
29. Clark, p. xvii.
30. *ibid.*, p. ix-x.
31. *ibid.*, p. v.
32. *ibid.*, p. xviii.
33. William Campbell, "Scottish-Canadian Poetry," Canadian Magazine 28 (1907), p. 586.
34. Campbell, p. 587.
35. *ibid.*
36. *ibid.*, p. 589.
37. *ibid.*, p. 590.
38. *ibid.*, p. 585.
39. *ibid.*
40. Campbell, "Scottish-Canadian Poetry," Canadian Magazine 29 (1907), p. 170.
41. *ibid.*, p. 178.
42. *ibid.*
43. The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse, p. 324.
44. "Biographical Sketch," The Poetical Works of Alexander McLachlan (Toronto: Briggs, 1900; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 27.
45. For an example of a critic's claim not to be affected by "religious sentiments" see Clark, p. viii.
46. Theodore Harding Rand, A Treasury of Canadian Verse, 2nd ed. enl. (London: Frowde, 1904).
47. Lorne Pierce, "Foreword," Cap and Bells, ed. John William Garvin (Toronto: Ryerson, [1936]), p. v-vi.
48. *ibid.*, p. v.
49. Munro Beattie, "Poetry 1920-1935," LHC, p. 724.
50. Lighthall, Canadian Poems and Lays (London: Scott, 1893).

51. Edward Samuel Caswell, Canadian Singers and Their Songs, 3rd. ed. (Toronto: McClelland, 1925).
52. Mrs C.M. Whyte-Edgar, A Wreath of Canadian Song (Toronto: Briggs, 1910).

Chapter Four: Language, Poetic Diction, and the Vernacular

The preceding survey of Scottish and Canadian verse anthologies reveals how deeply the poetry of both countries had become entrenched in a "narrow round of subject and form"¹ which bore little relation to life. Some reasons for this limitation of poetry have already been put forward, but it is necessary now to examine more closely the features most often blamed for this state of affairs. In Scotland, discussion of the failure to produce a vital national literature has always been linked with questions of language; the decay of the Scottish vernacular as a living language has been considered the most important reason for this failure to the extent that it has tended to overshadow many other important problems. A similar situation exists in Canadian studies where the problem of interpreting the new landscape within an old literary tradition has been treated as though it were the only, or the paramount, obstacle in the path of the emerging Canadian tradition. In fact, both problems are the same: the age-old problem which faces each new generation of poets, of reconciling inherited traditions with the demands of the present. Different in each case are the circumstances which have dictated both the tradition, and the way in which it has developed.

The Scottish Vernacular

The Scottish vernacular occupies its central position in debates over the fate of Scottish poetry because the de-

mise of Scots as a literary language and the decline of Scottish poetry seem to have begun at the same time. The first chapter outlined the change in attitude to Scottish culture which was brought about by the Union of the two Kingdoms which was completed in 1707 with the Union of the Parliaments. Scottish society in the eighteenth century began to conform to the standards of the new capital, London, and tastes in literature and speech began to change accordingly. This was a gradual process which went on throughout the eighteenth century but has always been considered the source of all of Scotland's difficulties with language. Scots had one language for their private, domestic, emotional life, and one for public and intellectual life; as Edwin Muir saw it, the result was a division between emotional and intellectual life which was fatal to Scottish poetry:

When emotion and thought are separated, emotion becomes irresponsible and thought arid. When they are separated so radically that they require two separate languages to express them, the first takes on very much the aspect of indulgence and the second of disapproval.²

Under these conditions, says Muir, criticism loses contact with sensibility, and "consists in the mere elaboration or application of theories":

Criticism, like poetry, requires a union of emotion and intellect, and where that union is broken, criticism comes off as badly as poetry itself.³

Muir concludes with the devastating definition, "Any emotion which cannot be tested and passed by the mind of the man who feels it is sentimental,"⁴ a definition in which one must recognise a great deal of the poetry of the later nineteenth century.

From about the end of the seventeenth century, the range of Scots, which had hitherto embraced the whole gamut of intellectual and emotional expression, began to be restricted, and Scots began to adopt a new attitude to their language. Scots intellectuals who no longer used the language for their "serious" writing began to be self-conscious about the purity of their English and sought to expunge usages which were appropriate in Scots but not in English. Gregory Smith points out how this new attitude of self-consciousness regarding the use of Scots stemmed from the growing need for Scots to be proficient in English:

The word [Scotticism], which is no older than Defoe, was to the Englishmen who first used it merely a label for the characteristics of the new-settled London-Scot, but it soon became more familiar in Scottish mouths as a confession and self-criticism . . . Scots had come to wonder how much of the native element had remained as a barrier to the desired perfection in writing and speaking.

Discussions of the eighteenth century Scot's sense of linguistic inferiority usually consider the problem only in terms of their relationship to the English. The "desired perfection in writing and speaking" is understood to be an English standard against which Scots felt themselves to be at a disadvantage. This is certainly the way most Scots at the time viewed the situation, and the impression is correct as far as it goes, but the problem is more complex than this: such ideas of linguistic inferiority as the Scots held must be seen in the wider context of contemporary opinions of the English language in order to be understood properly.

It is easy to assume that the London-migrating Scot entered a society in which a uniform standard of English existed and to which he was expected to conform. His Scotticisms would appear to be barbarisms, corruptions of the polite tongue. In fact, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English men of letters had been constantly anxious about the condition and reputation of their own language. Helen Donaldson, in an unpublished M.A. thesis, Opinions of the English Language . . . 1660-1714, observes that a public interest in language can be traced through the comments of writers who referred to general opinions of language, and through the continuing demands for an Academy to regulate usage: this interest was "in many ways confused by a conflict between feelings of pride in the native language and the idea, emphasised by classical education, that English was a harsh or at best an imperfect instrument for artistic writing."⁶

James Beattie, who compiled a pamphlet entitled Scotticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order to Correct Improperities of Speech and Writing "to put young writers and speakers on their guard against some of the Scotch idioms, which, in this country, are liable to be mistaken for English,"⁷ is a convenient scapegoat for those who wish to attach blame for the Scottish sense of inferiority to a particular person or type of person. Beattie's manual belongs, however, to the climate of opinion in which even the normal speech of Englishmen was not free from criticism: many grammars and guides to correct style were being produced in that century, and Beattie's contains several criticisms of commonly accepted English idioms.

Beattie's list is not without its faults; it does not distinguish clearly between Scotticisms, which are simply local usage not conforming to the national standard, and vulgarisms or examples of ignorance. Several "Scotticisms" which he records, for example, "head of the table," "narrate," and "liberate," are now perfectly common English usage. Yet Beattie did not consider the Scottish dialect to be inherently bad:

[When Scots was the language of the court] it had all the dignity that any other tongue, equally scanty and uncultivated, could possess; and was a dialect of English, as the Dutch is of German . . .; that is, it was a language derived from and like another, but subject to its own laws, and regulated by the practice of those who writ and spoke it. But, for more than half a century past, it has, even by the Scots themselves, been considered as the dialect of the vulgar; the learned and polite having, for the most part, adopted English in its stead; -- a preference justly due to the superior genius of that noble language, and the natural effect of the present civil constitution of Great Britain.

In spite of the flattering tone of the last sentence, this is not an unfair description of the state of affairs in Beattie's day. Like their English neighbours, the Scots recognised that their language needed to be brought into order, but the problems were complicated in Scotland where literary prose of any consequence had never appeared, and where, as John Ramsay of Ochtertyre admitted, "for more than a century nothing of character had appeared in the dialect usually called "Broad Scots".⁹ Ramsay said of his language, and in the light of the general attitude to language at the time it may be believed, that, "To render it polished and correct would have been a Herculean labour, not likely to produce them much renown. Nothing, therefore, remained but to write classical English, which,

though exceedingly difficult . . . was greatly facilitated by the enthusiastic ardour with which they had studied the best English authors."¹⁰

Modern linguistics dismisses the idea that a language can be considered inferior to any other language, either as a "degenerate" form of a parent language, or because it lacks "polish" or "refinement". To a student of linguistics there are no primitive languages: "Anything that can be said in one language can be said in any other, though perhaps more clumsily."¹¹ Similarly, "Dialects . . . are more a product of our conceptualization and desire for simplification than a natural linguistic phenomenon It should be evident that the distinction between related languages and dialects of a single language is only a matter of degree."¹² William Neill, in an article entitled "Heat, Light and Language," puts the point both forcefully and succinctly:

All languages are quite adequate for intellectual discussion at any level, since they can find new terms from within their own resources (like Anglo-Saxon) or can borrow them from other languages (like modern English).¹³

The problem with Scots, particularly in the eighteenth century, is that linguistically it stands on the borderline between dialect and language. The differences between Scots and English are often so slight (frequently a matter of accent rather than differences in vocabulary) that it is quite reasonable, and not necessarily disparaging to Scots, to think of them as different dialects of the same language. If they once were, as Douglas Young argued in "Plastic Scots" and the Scottish Literary Tradition,¹⁴ separate languages with a common origin but diffe-

rent paths of development, their paths have converged in recent centuries so that the more frequently Scots borrows from English (or vice-versa), the more likely it is that the two languages will become one:

If we cannot coin a suitable Lallans neologism, in view of the alarmingly high quota of Anglicisms already entered into Lallans, we would do well to take in Gallisms, Latinisms, Amurricanisms, even Hottentotisms, rather than admit too many more English strangers within our gates.¹⁵

Young had taken exception to Gavin Douglas' apology for the adoption of some foreign words into his translation of the Aeneid:

And yit forsuyth I set my bissy pane
 As that I couth to mak it braid and plane,
 Kepand na sudron bot our awyn langage,
 And spekis as I lernyt quhen I was page.
 Nor yit sa cleyn all sudron I refus,
 Bot sum word I pronunce as nyghtbouris doys:
 Lyke as in Latyn beyn Grew termys sum,
 So me behufyt quhilum or than be dum
 Sum bastard Latyn, French or Inglis oys
 Quhar scant was Scottis -- I had nane other choys.
 Nocht for our tong is in the selven skant
 But for that I the fowth of langage want
 Quhar as the cullour of his properte
 To kepe the sentens tharto constrenyt me,
 Or than to mak my sayng schort sum tyme,
 Mair compendys, or to lykly my ryme.

(11. 109-124)¹⁶

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the English were similarly concerned with the capacity of their language to bear the weight of intellectual discourse. They were also as concerned as the modern Scots that the tendency to borrow terms from other languages would result in the loss of its characteristic flavour. It is interesting to compare the following comments by Dryden, who strikingly echoes Douglas, and even more startlingly anticipates Young:

I will not excuse, but justify myself, for one pretended crime, with which I am liable to be charged by false critics, not only in this translation, but in many of my original poems; that I latinize too much. 'Tis true, that, when I find an English word significant and sounding, I neither borrow from the Latin, nor any other language; but, when I want at home, I must seek abroad.

If sounding words are not of our growth and manufacture, who shall hinder me to import them from a foreign country? I carry not out the treasure of the nation, which is never to return; but what I bring from Italy, I spend in England: here it remains, and here it circulates; for, if the coin be good, it will pass from one hand to another. I trade both with the living and the dead, for the enrichment of our native language. We have enough in England to supply our necessity; but, if we will have things of magnificence and splendour, we must get them by commerce. Poetry requires ornament; and that is not to be had from our old Teuton monosyllables: therefore, if I find any elegant word in a classic author, I propose it to be naturalised, by using it myself; and, if the public approves of it, the bill passes. But every man cannot distinguish between pedantry and poetry: every man, therefore, is not fit to innovate. Upon the whole matter, a poet must first be certain that the word he would introduce is beautiful in the Latin; and is to consider, in the next place, whether it will agree with the English idiom: after this, he ought to take the opinion of judicious friends, such as are learned in both languages: and, lastly, since no man is infallible, let him use this licence very sparingly; for if too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed not to assist the natives, but to conquer them.¹⁷

Ronald W. Langacker claims "Every dialect is adequate to its job; if it were not, its users would modify it until it were,"¹⁸ but it is clear that some dialects are modified beyond recognition, as Latin was modified into Italian, Spanish, and French. If dialects are inadequate to their job, they may be abandoned rather than changed. The situation in eighteenth-century Scotland was that, for many purposes, particularly those in which there was a high degree of contact with the English, Scots was being abandoned, but this does not mean that there was a concerted effort to dispose of one language and adopt another. Thus, Beattie's main concern in writing his Scoticisms was

not so much the abolition of local dialects, as clearing up the confusion over what was or was not English usage. He is quite prepared to accept the continued use of Scottish legal terms in Scots law, which differs from English law, but points out, not unjustly, some of the humorous situations which can result from a conflict between the two forms of usage:

A permanent fund, bequeathed for a charitable purpose, is in some parts of Scotland called a mortification, and the founder of the charity is called the mortifier. -- A gift in mortmain is a term in the law of England, of the same import. Donation, Foundation, Endowment, are common words of similar meaning. At Aberdeen, the manager of certain public funds is called the master of mortifications. "We have lately got a mortification here," said a northern burgher to a gentleman from England. "I am very sorry for it," said the Englishman. The other stared, and added, "Yes, a very considerable mortification: an old miser died the other day, and left us ten thousand pounds to build an hospital." "And you call that a mortification?" said the stranger. "Yes," replied the Scotchman, "and we think it a very great one."

The process of adopting English was accelerated by the political union of the two countries, and Scots perhaps made more completely English than it would have been otherwise, but there is little doubt that such a transformation of the language would have tended to occur even without political encouragement.

Diglossia

It is not the purpose of this thesis to conduct an exhaustive examination of the Scottish sense of linguistic inferiority, but to consider some of the areas of national poetry which it affects. One of these, the one which is the most striking, is the extent to which Scots became restricted to certain uses. It has been observed, for

example, that while Burns employs Scots for satire, songs, and for description, he uses English whenever he wishes to achieve a loftier tone. "Hugh Haliburton" (James Logie Robertson), in a note on the glossary to his Horace in Homespun, gives an interesting explanation of his own use of English which perhaps throws some light on the practice of his predecessor:

Lastly, it will be noted that whole verses are occasionally presented in English forms. For this change of form the sentiment of the passage will readily account. An unusually elevated or serious train of thought in the mind of a Scottish peasant seems to demand for its expression the use of a speech which one may describe as Sabbath Scotch. The Scottish accent, of course, is preserved.²⁰

Edwin Muir considered that this division of language must be harmful to Scottish poetry:

The pre-requisite of an autonomous literature is a homogeneous language Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another Scots poetry can only be revived . . . when Scotsmen begin to think naturally in Scots. The curse of Scottish literature is the lack of a whole language, which finally means the lack of a whole mind.²¹

It is a commonplace observation that a poet has difficulty in creating in a language other than his own, but this has not prevented a great many poets throughout history from creating great poetry in their second or even third languages, while a novelist like Conrad could claim that he could not have written if it had not been for the English language and that there was "a subtle and unforeseen accord of [his] emotional nature with its genius."²² And there is also the example of Rilke whose French "was not native, but he had considerable control of the language and spoke and wrote it with some elegance, tempered with what Leon-Paul Fargue called 'une gaucherie subtile' which

lent it a peculiar charm to French ears."²³ But these are isolated examples of individuals with a particular attraction to a foreign language.

The condition of language division which Edwin Muir recognized in Scotland is known as "diglossia". Leonard Forster, in The Poet's Tongues, an illuminating study of multi-lingualism in literature, defines diglossia as a state in which two parallel languages or states of language take separate roles: the example he gives is Switzerland, where dialect German is used for conversation and literary German for formal speech. Forster goes on to quote Hans Kuhn who reported that "many Swiss find it easier to make conversation in French or English than in Standard German, because they have no practice in using Standard German in everyday speech."²⁴ For people who have a reasonable control of two or three languages other than their native language it is often natural to reserve particular languages for certain purposes:

one is more at home in dealing with certain subjects than in another; one may conduct one's emotional life in one, one's intellectual life in another, and do the shopping in a third.²⁵

In this way the three languages become "simply tools appropriate to certain definite purposes, analogous to the different stylistic levels within any one language."²⁶

This attitude to language is an old one, perhaps best summed up by Charles V, King of Spain, Emperor of Germany, and Duke of Burgundy who maintained (so tradition asserts), "Je parle espagnol a Dieu, italien aux femmes, francais aux hommes et allemand a mon cheval."²⁷ Nils Erik Enkvist

gives several other historical examples of situations in which the choice of language within a society has been determined by context:

Obvious European examples include the use of Greek in the Roman Empire, of Latin in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, of French in England during the Middle-English period, of Danish in Norway, of Swedish in Finland at least before 1863, and of French among the upper classes of eighteenth-century Europe and pre-revolutionary Russia.²⁸

This use of various languages for different purposes within a single community is similar to the practice of extending one language by borrowing from another; however, instead of a few words being borrowed, a whole language is adopted. The strong similarity between Scots and English made this sort of borrowing easy, particularly in comparison to the situation in Switzerland.

Edwin Muir's complaint that Scotland has no homogeneous language thus begins to appear much less serious, but it cannot be entirely dismissed. All languages may be adequate for intellectual discussion at any level, but no poet would argue that all levels of language are equally suitable for all the uses of poetry, and there are certain consequences of a division of linguistic function which cannot be ignored. Languages may not "degenerate" in the sense that Ronald Langacker understands the term, but poetry is a process which constantly fights against the tendency of words to lose their precision of meaning, and, in that sense, Middleton Murry's discussion of the degeneration of language is not incompatible with the linguist's understanding of the term:

. . . a felicitous epithet, or a good metaphor, in so far as it is approved by a number of members [of the society] is liable to become current. A new power of definition

has been added to speech; it obviously behoves those who can, to use it: and, just as obviously, in use it must lose little by little its precision. It was originally made to express one personal perception: now it has to conform to many. Language at any moment is full of metaphors in all stages of the progress from full vigour through half-life to the morbidity of the cliché it is the business of the correct writer to withstand this degeneration of language.²⁹

Poetry, in fact, differs strongly from other uses of language because it is not simply a matter of conveying meaning, but of conveying a complex association of ideas and sensations which colour the main thought. Far more important to poetry than the capacity for intellectual discussion is the capacity of the language to convey the different levels of discourse, known in linguistics as registers. Nils Erik Enkvist defines registers as "Those sub-varieties of style which correlate with the varying social roles of a given speaker or writer,"³⁰ while John Spencer and Michael J. Gregory break this down into considerations of field, mode, and tenor of discourse.³¹ For the present, however, Geoffrey Leech's account of the importance of registers is sufficient. He simply points out that the type of language which is used is determined by the social relation of the speaker (or writer): according to the social relationship and the immediate situation, the register may be colloquial or formal, personal or impersonal, familiar or polite. The context, whether legal, journalistic, or literary is also important. Human beings are capable of recognizing even subtle differences in register:

Any deviation from expected patterns of linguistic behaviour will bring about a reaction of disorientation and surprise. . . .³² Registers, like dialects, are different 'Englishes'.

Nils Erik Enkvist relates examples of two different "Englishes" which aptly demonstrate the concept of registers:

To me, Professor Hockett's examples, Sir, I have the honor to inform you and Jeez, boss, get a load of dis immediately evoke two so different situations and contexts that I should hesitate ³³ before regarding their information as approximately the same.

Shifts from one style to another for literary effect rely on the reader's expectation of a particular register or style in a particular context. Similarly, shifts of dialect, as Enkvist illustrates with a reference to Mellors's change from Standard English into dialect in Lady Chatterly's Lover, may involve the use of two registers (Standard English and dialect) which can be sub-divided into the social registers in which they occur.³⁴ Inappropriate shifts in language, intentional or unintentional, "can be compared to the wearing of brown shoes with black tie; its effects vary from the striking through the humorous, the awkward and the rude to the disastrous."³⁵

Recognition of the ludicrous effects which could result from a shift of style or register was largely responsible for the rigidity of the Augustan desire for "correctness" which also manifested itself in the Augustan concept of the language appropriate to the various "kinds" of poetry. Each genre had its appropriate form and diction and, while the kinds could be mixed to gain a particular effect, the wise poet was cautious in his attempts:

Though Virgil, in his pastorals, has sometimes six or eight lines together that are epic: I have been so scrupulous as scarce³⁶ ever to admit above two together, even in the Messiah.

Certain types of diction, subject, and metre were considered to be inherently comic or low, and did not belong to the realm of serious poetry.

Paul Fussell, in Theory of Prosody in Eighteenth Century England gives an interesting example of the extent to which an unusual metre could be regarded as comic:

. . . the anonymous author of Pendragon (an iambic tetrameter burlesque on the model of Hudibras) lays down some rules for the composition of verse in this genre, and admits that the syllabic limitations may be broken, if only such a substitution justifies itself by being sufficiently comic . . . to this author, trisyllabic substitution is a mechanism comic by its very nature, and one which he is confident can be the agent of risibility by its mere appearance in a duple cadence . . . ³⁷

Dr. Johnson's objection to Lady Macbeth's speech

-- Come, thick night!
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes;
Nor heav'n peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, Hold, hold!

is an example of a similar response to the use of certain words which were considered to be too "low" to be used in serious poetry:

In this passage is exerted all the force of poetry; that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment, and animates matter; yet, perhaps, scarce any man now peruses it without some disturbance of his attention from the counter-action of the words to the ideas. What can be more dreadful than to implore the presence of night, invested, not in common obscurity, but in the smoke of hell? Yet the efficacy of this invocation is destroyed by the insertion of an epithet now seldom heard but in the stable, and dun might come or go without any other notice than contempt. ³⁸

Geoffrey Tillotson points out that the diction to which Johnson objected had gone out of favour much earlier than his own day, and quotes the emended version of William Davenant (1674):

. . . make haste dark night,
 And hide me in a smoak as black as hell,
 That my keen steel see not the wound it makes:
 Nor Heav'n peep through the Curtains of the dark,
 To cry hold! hold!³⁹

It was important to the readers of the eighteenth century to preserve the level of diction appropriate to the type of verse at hand. The objection to the words knife and blanket was that they suggested commonplace household objects rather than the weapons or camouflage appropriate to the dignity of a queen: Shakespeare's purpose in using these terms, which Dr Johnson did not understand, was that Lady Macbeth was casting off her queenly dignity to become a base murderess, for whom the most savage vocabulary was appropriate.⁴⁰ Even if he had understood Shakespeare's purpose in using these particular words in Lady Macbeth's speech it is doubtful if Dr Johnson would have approved of the device: the Augustan idea of the types of poetry was part of a long tradition which had served a useful purpose in preserving the balance of tone so essential to the effect of any work of art.

By the eighteenth century Scots had begun to lose many of its functions: it was no longer used for prose, and it is even possible to say that modern prose was never developed in Scots. The vernacular was used only for verse, and because formal diction was increasingly being taken over by English, only a few forms of verse continued to be written in Scots. As Gregory Smith says:

That would not have made the creation of a national prose impossible, had not the tradition grown up that the vernacular should be the medium for the humorous and the burlesque. To be comic one must write in verse -- the better in vernacular verse.⁴¹

Once again James Beattie provides us with a sample of eighteenth century opinion on the subject of the appropriate level for Scots:

There are also certain phrases and words, which may properly be called mean; because used chiefly by persons of no learning or breeding, or by others on familiar occasions only, or in order to express what is trifling or contemptible. Such are trite proverbs; colloquial oaths, and forms of compliment; the ungrammatical phrases of conversation; the dialect peculiar to certain trades; the jargon of beggars . . . ; foreign and provincial barbarisms, and the like. These, if intelligible, may be introduced in burlesque writing with good effect, as in Hudibras⁴² . . . ; but ought never to find a place in serious writing.

Few things in language have a more debasing influence than provincial barbarisms; because we seldom hear them, except from illiterate people, and on familiar occasions And this is so much the case, that in North Britain it is no uncommon thing to see a man obtain a character for jocularly, merely by speaking the vulgar Broad Scotch. To write in that tongue, and yet write seriously, is now impossible; such is the effect of mean expressions applied to an important subject: so that if a Scotch merchant, or man of business, were to write to his countryman in his native dialect, the other would conclude that he was in jest. Not that their language is more ridiculous than others⁴³

Beattie takes great pains to show that the meanness of the Scottish dialect is the result of the associations it has for the reader. Speaking of Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd he says:

To an Englishman, who had never conversed with the common people of Scotland, the language would appear only antiquated, obscure or unintelligible; but to a Scotchman who thoroughly understands it, and is aware of its vulgarity, it appears ludicrous; from the contrast between meanness of phrase, and dignity or seriousness of sentiment. This gives a farcical air even to the most affecting parts of the poem; and occasions an impropriety of a peculiar kind, which is very observable in the representation. And, accordingly, this play, with all its merit, and with a strong national partiality in its favour,⁴⁴ has never given general satisfaction upon the stage.

It is a mistake to think that this attitude applied only to the Scottish vernacular: it was not the language that was being attacked but inappropriate diction. David Nichol Smith's comment

The language of Burns, unlike that of Thomson, does not seem to have detracted from his appreciation by English readers. They only have difficulty in understanding it, but they never mistake it for 'vicious' English.⁴⁵

supports Beattie's estimate of the Englishman's response to Scots and reminds us that, as long as the register and tone were appropriate, Scots diction was acceptable to the English and Scottish Augustans alike. Indeed, there was an unexpectedly strong vernacular revival in the eighteenth century which has been attributed to a reaction to the English domination following the Act of Union in 1707.⁴⁶ We have already seen how the publication of Watson's and Ramsay's anthologies confirms this impression, but it is doubtful that the feeling was as strong as Angus-Butterworth's account would suggest.

He claims "Revulsion from the use of the language of those regarded as little better than conquerors caused particular value to be placed on the vernacular,"⁴⁷ and this may be an exaggeration, but even so, the transfer of official activities into English confirmed the relegation of Scots to informal occasions and must have encouraged the sense that Scots was a private speech. It may not have become the subtle expression of rebellion which Angus-Butterworth believes it to have been, but otherwise he summarises the state of affairs succinctly:

For the intimate things of family and home, and relations between the sexes, the use of the mother-tongue was natural. Both new poems in the vernacular and the revival of old ones, together with traditional songs and the folklore sometimes incorporated in them, were seen as something peculiar to the Scottish people which could not be taken away, and in which those alien in blood had no share. And this precious private domain was outside the scope of authority, so that although potent in the emotion it released, it could be enjoyed without pains and penalties.⁴⁸

Without attaching undue importance to the anti-English elements of this view of the language, it is certainly possible to see that by the latter half of the nineteenth century Scots had become associated with a certain nostalgic image of the Scottish character. James Logie Robertson, who was to achieve considerable popularity under the pseudonym "Hugh Haliburton", attempted to analyse the problem of Scots in a long poem entitled "On the Decadence of the Scots Language, Manners, and Customs,"⁴⁹ in which (like Edwin Muir and Douglas Young some years later) he associated the decay of Scots with the disruption of the old Scottish way of life:

They're wearin' by, the guid auld times
O' Scottish rants and hamet rhymes,
In ilka biggin' said or sung
In the familiar mither tongue. . . .

They're wearin' by, the guid auld days .
O' simple faith an' honest phrase
Atween the maister an' the man . . .

(ll. 1-4, 7-9)

Robertson blames the passing of the "good old days" on the creation of the large farms. An idyllic description of village life

Afore the muckle farms came in,
Like Pharaoh's cattle lank an' thin,
An' swallow'd up -- it's e'en a sair joke --
The bein bit crofties of the puir folk.

(ll. 168-171)

portrays a static society in which the young grew up among the old, learning their ways, and did not run off to the cities, tempted by "sinfu' thochts o' wild ambition" (l. 190)

Literary Scots had not, historically, been limited to associations with a predominantly rural way of life:

the courtly poems of Henryson and Dunbar, and latterly Fergusson's sharp portrayal of Edinburgh life were as little occupied with the "bein bit crofties of the pair folk" as those of any other urban poets, though these subjects were by no means ignored. The example of Burns was, however, very strong and certain other factors combined to restrict the language to the "narrow round of subject and form"⁵⁰ which threatened to stifle it by the end of the nineteenth century. In order to understand how the language came to be associated almost exclusively with a nostalgia for rural life, one must look more closely at the implications of a nationalist attitude to language.

Language Loyalty

The idea that each nation ought to have its own distinctive and homogeneous language appropriate to the national character is a comparatively recent one. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance it was believed that language simply dressed the thought and that it was possible to say exactly the same thing in many different languages; indeed, one of the attractions of the emblem book in which an allegorical or symbolic picture was accompanied by interpreting verses in two or three languages, was the attraction of seeing the same thought in different forms.⁵¹ Thomas Gawen of New College, Oxford, was struck with admiration for the linguistic ability of Landgraf Moritz of Hessen, who was able to converse even in Hungarian and English, and marvelled at the advantages this must give him:

What Eloquence

And forcing Rhet'rick must arise from hence?
 When ev'ry single thought might have the use
 Of soe well furnish'd Wardrobes, and might chuse
 Figures that best befit itselve, to-day
 Walke out in such a sute, to-morrow may
 It put on that, still var'ing, as the sense⁵²
 Should prompt, decorums, or the audience.

Languages had their different virtues and disadvantages, but these did not affect the thought they expressed, only drew attention to it in a different way. Language was a medium like oils or watercolours to the writers of the seventeenth century⁵³ and it was only towards the end of the French Revolution, when the rise of nationalism in Europe can be said to have begun, that it began to be recognized that the language could affect the thought, and that "what is cogitated in one language can never be repeated in the same way in another."⁵⁴ In the vocabulary of modern linguistics, the same idea can be stated as: "two stylistically different utterances can never mean exactly the same."⁵⁵

Samuel Johnson spoke in a historical sense when he said, "I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigree of nations,"⁵⁶ but it is also true that a great deal of the distinctive character of a nation can be lost when its language becomes completely identified with the language of a larger group. Language, accent, and dialect are all marks of identity which have varying degrees of importance from one place to another.

It was common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to think of Italian as the most musical language, French the most polite, and English the most forthright

and concise. Thus Addison summarised the qualities of the nations according to the character of their languages:

I have only considered our language as it shews the genius and natural temper of the English, which is modest, thoughtful, and sincere, and which, perhaps, may recommend the people, though it has spoiled the tongue. We might, perhaps, carry the same thought into other languages, and deduce a great part of what is peculiar to them from the genius of the people who speak them. It is certain, the light talkative humour of the French has not a little infected their tongue, which might be shown by many instances; as the genius of the Italians, which is so much addicted to music and ceremony, has moulded all their words and phrases to those particular uses. The stateliness and gravity of the Spaniards shows itself to perfection in the solemnity of their language; and the blunt honest humour of the German sounds better in the roughness of the High-Dutch, than it would in a politer tongue.⁵⁷

Romanticism, as well as the rise of nationalism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, led to the phenomenon known as "language loyalty".⁵⁸ It was no longer considered right, although it might well be useful and practical, to employ a foreign language when the native language could be made to serve the same purpose. This was a gradual process, occurring at different times in different nations, and the self-confidence in the vernacular which it required implied a corresponding belief that the national language in some mysterious way expressed the nature of its speakers. The identification of nation and language also led to the development of the Landsmaal in Norway to consolidate the various Norwegian regional dialects and to replace Swedish as the official language. The promotion of Gaelic in the Republic of Ireland and the division of the southern part of the Soviet Union into Socialist Republics according to linguistic boundaries are further examples of political efforts to preserve or enhance linguistic nationalism.⁵⁹

Modern linguistics dismisses the idea that there is any necessary relation between language and either race or culture but nineteenth century scholars found it natural to attribute the characteristic differences between nations and languages to the influence of nature:

A dialect is formed in any district where there are persons of intelligence enough to use the language itself in all its fineness and force, but under the particular conditions of life, climate, and temper, which introduce words peculiar to the scenery, forms of word and idioms of sentence peculiar to the race, and pronunciations indicative of their character and disposition. Thus "burn" (of a streamlet) is a word possible only in a country where there are brightly running waters, "lassie," a word possible only where girls are as free as the rivulets 60

Examples of this kind of thinking have already been seen in the attitudes of "Scottish song" expressed by the editors of popular verse anthologies:

All readers and singers will readily admit . . . that the Scottish mind has a tendency to develop its overflowing tenderness and earnest passionateness in lyrical strains of the simplest beauty, which no literature and no age of the world have surpassed.⁶¹

Attempting to explain the pre-eminence of Scottish song in terms of language led to observations like that made by the anonymous reviewer in The Scottish Review who remarks that English "bristles with consonants," while Scots is "spangled with vowels" and is much softer than the harsh and sibilant English,⁶² and John Stuart Blackie's description of Scots as "the most uncorrupted and the most musical dialect of our common English tongue."⁶³

By Blackie's day it had become a virtue to speak an uncorrupted example of an older language: the anthropologists and folklorists (the brothers Grimm, for example) had done their work well, and it was, therefore, in no disapproving sense that Charles Mackay, tracing English and

Scots back to their common origins, the "Low Dutch or . . . Flemish spoken in Belgium," claimed that Scots was less affected by borrowings from Latin and French.⁶⁴ Rather than despising the language for its lack of contact with Latin, as they would have in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,⁶⁵ critics were impressed by any language which retained evidence of its "pedigree". This interest was increased by the publication of Macpherson's Ossian and the re-discovery of the Border Ballads.

Closely allied to these historical considerations was the growing appreciation of the simplicity and naturalness of folklore. A.M. Kinghorn's essay, "Aesthetics in Scottish Criticism"⁶⁶ traces the aesthetic theories of Blair and Beattie, who emphasized the power of poetry to touch the heart, to its logical conclusion in the Scottish "quest for original genius " and Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.⁶⁷ This preface, as Kinghorn points out, re-states but does not add to the theories of Blair and Beattie:

Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from these elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.⁶⁸

In their search for poets whose work sprang directly from human emotions and was expressed with "manly unaffected simplicity,"⁶⁹ these critics were willing to overlook awkwardness of expression if the poet touched the sentiment.⁷⁰

Belief in the innate truth to human nature of the ballads and folk songs led Goethe to remark:

The special value of what we call national songs, or ballads, is that their inspiration comes fresh from nature. They are never got up; they flow from a pure spring. The poet of a literary age might avail himself of this advantage, if he only knew how. There is always one thing, however, in which the former assert their advantage. The unsophisticated man is more the master of direct effective expression in few words than he who has received a regular literary training.⁷¹

J.S. Blackie quoted this statement in his Scottish Song and amplified it:

He is always true in tone, because he has no motive to be false; he must stir the popular heart by touching a universally human heartstring, otherwise he is nothing In this way he is practically infallible, because nature is infallible; and whosoever is moved simply and singly by the direct indication and inspiration of nature cannot go wrong.⁷²

Uneducated poets had already attracted some attention in the early years of the eighteenth century. Men such as Stephen Duck, the thresher poet, who wrote Georgics based on their experience of a trade, were valued for the practical information they imparted.⁷³ Robert Burns revived this vogue and gave it new dimensions by emphasising his closeness to nature in such poems as "To a Mouse" and "To a Mountain Daisy". Moreover, he deliberately disguised the extent and quality of his education, preferring to be known as an untutored ploughman of natural poetic genius. When Robert Anderson taxed him with being more learned than he pretended to be, Burns frankly admitted the deception: "It was . . . a part of the machinery, as he called it, of his poetic character to pass for an illiterate ploughman who wrote from pure inspiration."⁷⁴ James Hogg, who was only semi-literate until the age of twenty-six, was inspired by Burns's example and also cultivated the image of the

rustic, natural poet, "The Ettrick Shepherd". In his introduction to Hogg's Selected Poems, Douglas S. Mack referred to the poet's adoption of the image of himself which appeared in Blackwood's "Noctes Ambrosianae" as "a kind of public pose, comparable to Burns's impersonation of the 'Heaven-taught Ploughman'. Both men, being peasants, found it necessary to adopt a defensive mask when they came in contact with the sophisticated society of Edinburgh."⁷⁵ Yet another example of the extent to which interest in uneducated poets had been aroused is Robert Southey's publication of the verse of his servant, John Jones, prefaced by an essay (by Southey) "On the Lives and Works of Our Uneducated Poets".⁷⁶

Interest in uneducated poets was scarcely less in England than it was in Scotland, but the example of Burns, combined with a real wealth of ballads and folk songs encouraged the Scots to believe that they possessed a special quality in their language and culture which gave an advantage to their uneducated poets. D.H. Edwards of Brechin pointed out on more than one occasion:

The Scottish dialect, so simple, touching and pawky, lends itself so naturally to song that the feelings of the illiterate as well as of the educated seem to flow more copiously into lyrical expression than is the case in other countries.

The long history of Scots poetry's close contact with the language of the common man was well known, and this too encouraged the Scots in their readiness to accept less formally polished types of poetry. From the beginning of its history Scots poetry has been characterised by conversational freedom and intimacy of tone: the satires of Dunbar, the flytings, Henryson's Fables, and Gavin Douglas's

prologues to the books of the Aeneid, are only a few examples of occasions on which the Scots poet preferred to use, if not a coarse diction (as in the flytings), at least an informal one. There are, as well, numerous examples of highly artificial diction, notably in the aureate style of the Scottish Chaucerians, but it cannot be denied that the Scottish poets have had their greatest success in their most direct and conversational passages, and that the language seems to lend itself to this sort of writing.

Iain C. Walker, in attempting to discover why the Scottish poetry of Fergusson and others in the Weekly Magazine is so much better than the English poetry, including Fergusson's own, concluded that it is because the attitude of the eighteenth-century Scot tended to be more relaxed and spontaneous. The Scots were less likely to be condescending: their language was closer to the common people and gave almost the impression of the poet's participation in the scene.⁷⁸ Gregory Smith remarked that in Scots "the zest for handling a multitude of details rather than for seeking broad effects by suggestion is very persistent." He calls this the "Dutch style," where the reader finds "everywhere a direct and convincing familiarity; little or nothing left out, and much almost pedantically accurate."⁷⁹

Here Smith is speaking of the contents of Allan Ramsay's Ever Green, and it is significant that this, along with the other antiquarian anthologies of the eighteenth century, provided most Scots of their day with their idea of what the characteristics of Scottish expression were: they revived quaint and amusing examples of earlier writing, and re-introduced traditional verse forms which were fast being

forgotten, but they did not include much serious or any extensive work from the past. This was the type of model which Robert Fergusson had, and it was he who influenced Burns to write in Scots as well. Certainly this could not help but encourage the writers from Fergusson onwards to believe that the forte of Scottish verse in the vernacular was in "concrete, earthly colloquialism".⁸⁰ Gregory Smith declared that the success of Burns "confirm~~ed~~^{ed} his successors in their liking for the intimate genre probably more than we can estimate,"⁸¹ and this is probably true; however, it is important to realise that the liking was there first, and that it was a combination of circumstances, not simply the example of one man, or even several men, who created it.

NOTES

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Chapter Five: The Practice of Naïveté

Closely allied to the traditional concept of the virtues of Scots was a surprising development in the popular press of the nineteenth century. John Leng and other newspaper publishers, primarily in the Dundee area, began to achieve success with such magazines as The People's Friend in which they promoted a particular image of Scottish life which was to have a great influence on the literature of Scotland.

A.M. Duncan's study of this phase of Scottish publishing shows how the Dundee periodicals shaped the image of Scottish nationality by transferring the virtues of the Scottish rural character to the context of the cities.¹ Leng and the other publishers of this school, which promoted (if it did not create) the kailyard novel, encouraged their readers to believe that certain characteristics were peculiarly Scottish. It is significant that it was Leng who published John Logie Robertson's Poems, in which "On the Decadence of the Scots Language, Manners and Customs" appears, for in the Dundee periodicals the idealized past, before "the dawning of the railway age,"² became the model for the shifting, unassimilated present, just as it was for Robertson.

The "Scottishness" which these publishers fostered depended on the vernacular which, "as a visible sign of separate identity was indispensable,"³ but both language and culture were firmly linked to the plain man's way of life: the character, familiar to the reader of the kailyard novels, of a sturdy, self-confident working-class man

who knows both his station in life and his rights, came to dominate the literature as an image of what "Scottishness" implied. His pawky wit, based on a shrewd observation of the world about him, an observation which had not been clouded by an undue concern with tact but which was based on a hearty admiration for the truth, can easily be recognized in the tradition of Scots literature which preceded this phase, but here it assumed remarkable importance. His patriotism and lack of ambition, here depicted by J.L. Robertson, clearly represent a Wordsworthian figure "incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature":

The neuk o' Scotland's auld grey plaid
 Was his -- his shelter an' his shade;
 An' jealous was he of his corner,
 Quick to resent the scoff of scorner,
 An' ready for his right to stand
 As ony lordling in the land.

Nae tourin' schemes o' foreign gain
 Ayont the wide Atlantic main,
 Nae sinfu' thochts o' wild ambition
 Garr'd him despise his low condition;
 His twa-'ree acres delv'd an' plantit,
 He whistled, and was weel-contentit.

("On the Decadence," ll. 182-193)

By Robertson's day this was the only level of society at which Scots was the usual form of speech: whether they wished it or not, the use of Scots tended to restrict the writer to this register, but the influence of the Dundee publishers and the writers they employed was to fix this image in the public mind. The intimate and the colloquial had become the rustic and the naive.

However these attitudes limited the use of Scots in poetry, they presented certain advantages to the uneducated poet. Restricting himself to folk measures and

traditional themes helped him to avoid the ludicrous effects which could result from the use of unfamiliar diction and often prevented him from being self-consciously "poetic". For such a poet Scots provided a language which was in literary use but which was also colloquial, and thus many works by uneducated poets have a vitality and charm which is lacking in more formal attempts at verse by technically proficient writers. There were, too, in Scotland, certain trades traditionally associated with poetry and which had given the Scots good reason to have a particular interest in their tradesman poets.

During the last two decades of the eighteenth century when handloom weavers were at the height of their prosperity, "it was a common saying . . . that in Paisley every third man you met was a poet."⁴ As T.C. Smout says, the weavers' songs were not subtle;⁵ like the sea chanty they were dominated by the rhythms of the work involved and were generally restricted to the conventional subjects established by Burns. Indeed, this conservatism may well explain the surprising absence of references to weaving which Smout noticed.⁶ The sentimental songs in the manner of Burns or Tannahill tend to have a melancholy, nostalgic tone, but occasionally one finds a piece which rattles along like a busy loom in full production:

My name is Tammie Treddlefeet,
 I live in Shuttle Ha';
 And I hae been a weaver lad
 This twenty year and twa:
 Wi' waft and warp, and shears sae sharp,
 My rubbin' bane, my reed and heddles,
 Sae nimbly as my shuttle flees,
 While up and doon I tramp my treddles.

(David Shaw, "Tammie Treddlefeet", Young,
Scottish Verse 1851-1951, p. 2)

When handloom weaving began to fail in the eighteenth-thirties, the weaver's songs remained as a mark of status: the weaver could still be a poet, even if he could no longer expect to earn a living at his trade. William Thom, whose Rhymes and Recollections of a Hand-Loom Weaver⁷ provide much first-hand information about the conditions in the weaving trade at this time, recalled that he and other Aberdeen weavers "who had a turn for reading," would gather for a while in the garden of Gordon's Hospital to trade information: "Then came glimpses, -- the only glimpses afforded us of true, and natural, and rational existence,"⁸ Though there was a special affection for the poems of Tannahill, their "ill-fated fellow-craftsman," all the Scottish poets were popular, as Thom's panegyric on Scottish song shows:

Let me again proclaim the debt we owe those Song Spirits, as they walked in melody from loom to loom, ministering to the low-hearted; and when the breast was filled with everything but hope and happiness, and all but seared, let only break forth the healthy and vigorous chorus "A man's a man for a' that," the fagged weaver brightens up. His very shuttle skytes boldly along, and clatters through in faithful time to the tune of his merrier shopmate! . . . Poets were indeed our Priests. But for these, the last relic⁹ of our moral existence would have surely passed away!

The publication of his poem "The Blind Boy's Pranks" in the Aberdeen Journal and the subsequent patronage of James Gordon of Knockespock saved Thom and his children from the workhouse. Asked by his prospective patron what he looked forward to in life, Thom replied:

Lately I looked to nothing but increasing labour and decreasing strength -- interminable toil and ultimate starvation -- such is the fate of nine-tenths of my brethren -- but now daylight breaks on my destiny. Since you wrote me, my verses have attracted the notice of several literary gentlemen in Edinburgh, who . . . are to use their influ-

ence in my behalf in the event of my publishing . 10 .
Hence I dream of making my 'escape' from the loom.

So it was with other trades as the century went on; poetry satisfied certain of the tradesman's ambitions, while the fact that it was produced by a working man added some interest to otherwise undistinguished verse. Thom quotes a comment given in the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle, February, 1841, which presents the popular attitude:

Literature, when pursued as a profession, confers dignity on its votary; but when, as in the case of the amiable and gifted Thom of Inverury, Aberdeenshire, and many others of his class similarly situated, it is resorted to amid the little relaxation which a laborious profession allows, we confess we reverence the man who can thus vindicate the superiority of mind over matter.

Anthologists like John MacIntosh, who insisted on labelling each of the versifiers in The Poets of Ayrshire with his occupation: "Knights of the Shuttle," "Sons of Vulcan," or "Sons of St Crispin" (weavers, blacksmiths, and cobblers, respectively), also reflect this climate of interest. In D.H. Edwards' index to Modern Scottish Poets only two poets are listed as handloom weavers, perhaps an indication of how seriously the industry had declined. Thirteen of Edwards' poets are weavers in other branches of the trade.

One exception to the general rule that the poet's trade is not evident in his verse,¹² is the work of Alexander Anderson, known as "Surfaceman," whose employment on the railway inspired Songs of the Rail,¹³ though his most popular piece was the sentimental "Bairnies Cuddle Doon". Anderson's is a remarkable success story, for he began by working as a surfaceman with the Glasgow and South-Western Railway Company and worked sixteen years at this job, but

in the mean time taught himself French, German, Italian, and Spanish, as well as Latin and Greek, and eventually became an assistant librarian at the Edinburgh University Library. A rather incoherent but lively account of Anderson's life is given by David Cuthbertson, a colleague in the Library, who records that Professor Tait "thought it was beneath the dignity of a University to appoint a man as chief assistant who was merely a working man without a liberal education,"¹⁴ and frankly testifies to Anderson's coarseness of language and ignorance of Library methods: "It was indeed fortunate for him that for several years he did nothing practically but give out books across the counter as they were required."¹⁵

In 1880, the year before Anderson began his employment in the University Library, D.H. Edwards wrote of him that he was still a surfaceman and, "He says he wishes for no more We believe a purer-minded man does not exist."¹⁶ His fellow-librarian's account of Anderson's rough language and the many reprimands he received for swearing in the library somewhat relieve the popular image of the saintly, self-taught poet, as well as testifying to the difficulties Anderson had to overcome in order to write at all.

Ifor Evans says of Anderson and the other tradesman poets of that generation that while they had first-hand experience of a non-academic, non-literary way of life they lacked the ability to express themselves; but when they had received enough education to be able to express themselves clearly, they no longer possessed the immediacy of the experience.¹⁷ Anderson, however, is more capable

than the others of conveying his message, and some of his "Songs of the Rail" have a rough energy and enthusiasm which make up for the weaknesses in his technique.

Anderson, like his exiled countryman, Alexander McLachlan¹⁸ was strongly influenced by Carlyle and his philosophy of work. As one would expect, the songs of this self-made man constantly return to the theme of work as the salvation of the lower classes, but Anderson is more of a materialist even than McLachlan, and he suffers from none of McLachlan's bewilderment with the mysteries of nature: he enters wholeheartedly into the Victorian belief in the upward progress of mankind, while McLachlan holds a more traditional view, that man has fallen from an Arcadian golden age and must work very hard so that "what has been may be again".¹⁹

Industry and locomotion are not unpoetical in Anderson's eyes, but full of the romance of power and speed:

"Hurrah! for my path I devour in my wrath,
 As I rush to the cities of men
 With a load I lay down like a slave at their feet,
 Then turn and come backward again.
 Hurrah! for the rush of the yielding air
 That gives way to my wild, fierce springs,
 As I keep to the rail, while my heart seems to burst
 In a wild, mad craving for wings

"I tear through the caverns of sudden dark,
 Like that in which first I lay,
 Ere the cunning of man had alit on a plan
 To drag me up to the day.
 I rush with a shriek, which is all I can speak,
 A wild protest against fear;
 But I come to the light with a snort of delight,
 And my black breath far in the rear. . . ."

("The Song of the Engine," stanzas 2, 4,
Songs of the Rail, p. 74)

Clearly imitating Shelley's "The Cloud," Anderson carries his personification of the engine to rather absurd lengths,

attributing to it the emotions of fear and delight, for example, but the stanza is effectively used to express the motion of the train, and the pride Anderson shows in this invention is understandable:

"Did the Greek ever dream, in his talk with the gods,
Of a black beast of burden like me?"

(final line)

"A Song of Progress" and "The Spirit of the Times" are but two of the poems in which Anderson exults over the achievements of "nineteenth century men" ("The Song of Progress," p. 85):

O, fellows, but this is a wondrous age,
When Science with faith in her eyes,
Springs up in her birth from this planet of ours
To the stars in front of the skies.
And we -- we watch her as onward she glides
Leaving wonders behind her track,
Like a huntsman that jerks a hawk from his wrist,
But who will whistle her back?

("The Spirit of the Times," st. 6)

It is interesting, in this example, that Anderson sees the prospect that science may prove uncontrollable, but does not hesitate to express pleasure in its triumph. He is convinced that material improvements presuppose a moral and spiritual improvement as well.

Anderson was better read than many of the self-taught poets of his day. His favourite model seems to have been Tennyson, and the "Locksley Hall" metre which he borrows for several of his songs of the rail was eminently suited to convey the sensation of speed and energy, but he was not skilful enough to turn it into anything much better than a jog-trot doggerel:

Arm to arm, and let the metals into proper range
 be thrown
 Let us smooth the iron pathway to the monster
 coming on.
 Lo! he dawns adown the distance, and his iron
 footway rings
 As he bounds, a wand'ring meteor, muffled up in
 smoky wings --
 Earth beneath his mighty footsteps trembles at
 the sudden load,
 As of old the flood Scamander at the falling of
 the god.

("A Song of Labour," 11. 19-24)

Elsewhere he uses it as a variety of ballad stanza, as in "The First-foot":

"Twelve o'clock will strike, dear wife, before the
 train comes in to-night,"
 Said my husband at the doorway, he too, glad at
 heart and gay;
 And he turn'd a step to meet me as I whisper'd,
 soft and light,
 "Let him enter first," and, smiling at my words,
 he went away.

(11. 5-8)

Anderson's poems of railway incidents, like "The First-foot," "Jim's Whistle," and "Blood on the Wheel," are usually melodramatic accounts of disasters in which coincidence plays a large part. Anderson claimed that they were based on true events which he heard of from the men with whom he worked, or from newspapers, but admitted to "altering details in order to create a more complete whole."²⁰ One can only suspect how much Anderson tampered with the facts in order to make them exciting enough, but the popular railroad songs of the day were melodramatic and the narrative usually involved the death of at least one person.

Anderson's later poems tend to confirm Ifor Evans' opinion that education did not improve the work of the naive poets, since they are more about literature than

life. His ambitious poems on Keats, Tasso, Scott, and a series of sonnets entitled "In Rome" (written before he had seen that city), impress the reader more by the difficulties Anderson had to overcome in order to be able to write them than by the quality of the finished product. Nevertheless, there are occasional flashes of Anderson's personality which enliven otherwise undistinguished verse. In his "Recollections of Byron,"²¹ for example, he shows how faithfully he imitated his poetic heroes:

Some half-a-dozen years or so,
 When life had yet no crown of iron,
 I took my pilgrim staff to go
 And worship at the shrine of Byron;
 And there, before the mighty dead,
 In hero-worship prostrate lying,
 The thought first came into my head
 To tell the world that I was dying.

And so, in verses neat and trim,
 But with a rhythm most despairing,
 I told to men and cherubin,
 The sorrows of my own preparing.
 I hinted how my life was gloom,
 That all my hopes but came to leave me,
 And wormy goals -- I meant a tomb --
 Could only from such ills relieve me.

(stanzas 1 and 2)

He also reveals his bewilderment at the conflicting advice he gets from his reading of other writers:

How long this might have posed my head
 I know not, but I thought 'twas pretty,
 Till "Sartor" shook his head, and said,
 "Go, shut thy Byron, and open Goethe."
 I pondered for a while on this,
 Then, trusting to such sage adviser,
 Took Goethe, read that "Faust" of his --
 And, himmel, am I any wiser?

(stanza 4)

I own my sneers have passed away --
 I own I never write a stanza
 Beginning with "When I am clay,"
 And all your pale extravaganza.
 But in the place of this I see
 A host of dim chaotic fancies,
 That in their reeling seem to be
 For ever at Walpurgis dances. (stanza 5)

Anderson concludes:

My curse be upon such books that set
This life in hues to make one falter!
And so I'll shift my worship yet
And bow before a purer altar.

(stanza 6, ll. 5-8)

He does not, however, indicate who his next model might be.

Of all his verses, the railroad and progress songs are the most interesting. In them he displays an energy and enthusiasm which make up for the weaknesses of his technique, and attempts to communicate, not only his own experience of a world which academic poets were often unprepared to consider, but to speak to that world as well. In two or three poems, indeed, Anderson employed a rough form which was appropriate to his subject, and which escaped the trap of illiteracy, without becoming pedantic.

Other tradesman poets, like Hugh MacDonald²² and Matthew Anderson²³ produced work far inferior to Anderson's subject matter and technique. Perhaps the latest and most notorious of their line was the bard of the Tay Bridge Disaster, William McGonagall. Ludicrous as it is, his account of his inspiration to write poetry shares many similarities with the experience of better writers. During the Dundee holiday week in June of 1877, he mused upon the delights experienced by travellers to the country of Burns, or Tannahill, or Rob Roy:

A flame, as Lord Byron has said, seemed to kindle up my entire frame . . . I began to pace backwards and forwards in the room, trying to shake off all thought of writing poetry; but the more I tried, the more strong the sensation became. It was so strong, I imagined that a pen was in my right hand, and a voice crying, "Write "Write!"²⁴

The product of this inspiration was an address to the Rev. George Gilfillan, the critic whose support of Alexander

Smith and the Spasmodic school of poetry had betrayed his lack of literary judgment and given him his present day reputation as a promoter of new but scarcely deserving writers:

Rev. George Gilfillan of Dundee,
 There is none can you excel;
 You have boldly rejected the Confession of Faith,
 And defended your cause right well.

(11. 1-4)

McGonagall's total lack of self-consciousness or modesty, and his ignorance of the methods of other poets are well displayed in his own biographical sketch:²⁵ he is the extreme to which the Scottish cult of the uneducated poet was tending throughout the nineteenth century.

In spite of the ludicrous consequences of Scottish interest in self-educated poets, it is important to recognize its beneficial consequences as well. There was a lively interest in local verse, and though the standards may have been low, it was possible for self-educated poets to reach a level of competence beyond the doggerel with which they might have been satisfied.

The most serious problem, as far as the Scots vernacular is concerned, stems from the fact that the vocabulary of these writers was extremely limited, even in the tongue of their childhood, and their reliance on traditional models, while it preserved them from the uncouthness of a McGonagall, put strict limits on the variety of effects they attempted to create with the language. John Buchan described as the chief defects of popular handling of poetry "a distressing facility, a preference for easy cadences and trite epithets and tedious jingles, a lack of the classic reticence and discipline."²⁶

Robert Swan, a draper of Lockerbie, provides a typical example of the preference for "easy cadences and trite epithets" in a poem of which the subject is no less trite:

Beside oor cheerie hearth there staun's a wee arm chair,
 An' in its kindly grasp there sits a wee wean there,
 Wi' bonnie een o' bricht sky-blue, an' locks o' gowden hair,
 A queen to me she seems to be in oor arm chair.

("A Sang to the Wean," MSP X, 11.1-4)

The "Blind Poet of the Deans," Henry Shanks, gives another example, this time of excessive reliance on a traditional measure with little regard for its appropriateness to the subject:

Old England may her cricket boast,
 Her wickets, bats, and a' that;
 And proudly her Eleven toast,
 Wi' right good will and a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 It's but bairn's play for a' that;
 The channel stane on icy plain
 Is king o' games for a' that.

("Curling Song," MSP XI, 11.1-8)

Other examples have already been given in the chapter on Scottish verse anthologies, and it would be tedious to include more. It is necessary, however, to notice that, with few exceptions, the Scots vernacular is used much as it is in these two examples, by suggesting pronunciation of some words in a non-standard English and the inclusion of a smattering of words like wean, or (given later in "Curling Song") cauldrie coof along with English words like grasp and blue, ignoring the available Scots alternatives grup and blae. The Scots words are there in order to give a local flavour to the verse, but the language can by no means be called consistent Scots. The jingling echo of "A Man's a Man for a' That," perhaps the most popu-

lar of the models taken from Burns, often relieved the poet of the necessity of any careful use of Scots: the refrain of "and a' that," like the rhyme of "man" or "Nannie, O" to pad out the rhyme also provides an easy solution to the difficulties of rhyming in a distinctly Scottish manner.²⁷

The Scottish cult of the amateur poet could only keep Scots poetry alive at its most basic level by encouraging an interest in native poetry among people with little opportunity for formal education. The very expectation that every Scot could be a poet, and that every village ought to have its bard²⁸ is certainly a contrast to the situation in Canada where it was believed (if it was not actually true) that the general population had no time for such luxuries as verse,²⁹ but it coincides with a dangerous lowering of critical standards, particularly regarding language, which could not help but affect the quality of the work.

Faux-Naif Vernacular Poets

More damaging was the practice of educated poets whose efforts in reviving or sustaining Scots tended to conform to the habit of regarding Scots as the language of half-educated rustics. Instead of raising the language to their own level of discourse, they used the language when they wished to bring their own thoughts down to a common level.

The use of the Scots vernacular as a sort of literary recreation by people who were capable of polished English verse is so widespread in Scottish literature that it is

impossible to consider the subject exhaustively here. It is sufficient to recognize it as a substantial part of that inherited tradition in which Scots writers felt most comfortable. While one need not go so far as to agree with W.P. Ker that Scots poetry from the eighteenth century onward was "all a game of language, 'crambo-clink,' with rules and patterns of its own, used for fun by men who wrote their serious business letters in English,"³⁰ one can recognize that much of it was "an affair of art, an assumed and artificial style,"³¹ so conventionalized that it did not imply any particular philosophy in its practitioners. There are, however, several Scottish poets, some of them mentioned by Ker as players of "crambo-clink" for whom this literary recreation seems to have had a deeper significance. Not only did their Scots verse indicate a nostalgic perpetuation of traditional themes and images, it had become even more closely identified with the attitudes and expressions of the Scots labouring man to the extent that these poets developed a different persona when writing in Scots from that which they maintained in English verse.

This was not without its advantages. Identifying Scots with rustic or peasant speech has always not only permitted but encouraged Scots poets in the freedom and directness of expression which has given their verse its characteristic vitality. The tendency to reserve Scots for homely or humorous subjects makes it seem that they are only capable of expressing certain facets of their personality in Scots.

Ifor Evans observes this of George Macdonald³² who certainly found that Scots furnished him with a robust, less conventionally pietistic language for his religious verse, though his English verse was equally colloquial. The difference seems to lie in the interest which the Scots diction adds to otherwise unoriginal ideas, and the fact that some of Macdonald's keenest interests are only expressed in Scots. Douglas Young, for example, found Macdonald's Scotch Songs and Ballads (1893) "intellectually unexciting" but "genuine enough in feeling and sensitivity in language."³³

Something of this can be seen in "The Laverock"³⁴ where a dialogue between man and skylark sets out the old conflict between the active and contemplative lives. The man's complaint:

Laverock i' the lift,
 Hae ye nae sang-thrift,
 'At ye scatter't sae heigh, and lat it drift?
 Wastefu' laverock!

(11. 1-4)

.

Come doon and conform,
 Pyke an honest worm,
 And hap yer bairns frae the comin' storm,
 Spendrife laverock!

(11. 29-32)

is saved from peevishness by the vocabulary which marks him as a man for whom the maintenance of food and shelter are matters of constant concern. Similarly, the reply of the bird:

The lift it's sae cheery!
 The win' it's sae free!
 I sing ower my dearie
 And sing 'cause I see.

My wifie's wee breistie
 Grows warm wi' my sang,
 And ilk crumpled-up beastie
 Kens no to think lang.

(11. 37-44)

with its constant repetition of ie endings not only suggests the shrillness of the bird's song, but, through the use of affectionate diminutives, such as wifie and breistie, reflects the fragile security of the nest that lies "I' the how o' a han'" (1. 33).

The earlier part of the man's reply seems less in character than his initial protests:

Ye wee feathert priestie,
 Yer bells i' yer thro't,
 Yer altar yer breistie,
 Yer mitre forgot --

Offerin' and Aaron,
 Ye burn hert and brain;
 And dertin and daurin,
 Flee back to yer ain!

(11. 53-60)

Though the concept is accessible to any one educated from the Bible, these lines sound more like the Rev'd. George Macdonald than the later lines:

For birdie, I'm thinkin'
 Ye ken mair nor me --
 Gien ye haena been drinkin'
 And sing as ye see.

(11. 69-72)

More typical of Macdonald's tone in these Scots Songs and Ballads are the "Godly Ballants," such as "This Side an' That," where the retelling of parables and incidents from the Gospels is given with the direct simplicity of folklore:

The guid upo' this side, the ill upo' that --
 Sic was the rich man's waesome fa'!
 But his brithers they eat, an' they drink, an' they chat,
 An' carena a strae for their Father's ha'!

(11. 17-20)

or, as in "Wha's My Neighbour?," with the colloquial immediacy of local anecdote:

By cam ane gaed to the wrang kirk;
 Douce he trottit alang.
 "Puir body!" he cried, an' wi' a yerk
 Aff o' his cuddy he sprang.

(11. 17-20)

In this last example, by the use of the word kirk, Macdonald is able to point the parable directly at the rival factions of Scottish Presbyterianism, the "Auld Lights" and the "New Lights," while, at the same time reducing the complexity of first century religious politics to the limits of the common man's education.

A similar effort in English, "Cottage Songs IV - Drawing Water," attempts the same directness and simplicity, but lacks vigour:

Dark, as if it would not tell,
 Lies the water, still and cool:
 Dip the bucket in the well,
 Lift it from the precious pool!

Up it comes all brown and dim,
 Telling of the twilight sweet:
 As it rises to the brim
 See the sun and water meet!

See the friends each other hail!
 "Here you are!" cries Master Sun;
 Mistress Water, from the pail
 Flashes back, alive with fun!

.

Jesus sits there on its brink ^{of the primal}
 well of life/
 All the world's great thirst to slake,
 Offering every one to drink
 Who will only come and take!

(11. 1-12; 25-28)

In Scots Macdonald avoids this preaching note more successfully, submerging it in the persona of one who has discovered these truths for the first time.

Lighter poems, like "The Waesome Carl," are more clearly "crambo-clink," in which the capacity of Scots to describe the grotesque and "thrawn" is exploited to the full:

There cam a man to oor toon-en',
 And a waesome carl was he,
 Snipie-nebbit, an crookit-mou'd,
 And gley't o' a blinterin ee.
 Muckle he spied, and muckle he spak,
 But the owercome o' his sang,
 Whatever it said, was aye the same: --
 There's nane o' ye a' but's wrang!
 Ye're a' wrang, and a' wrang,
 And a' thegither a' wrang;
 There's no a man aboot the toon
 But's a' thegither a' wrang.

Macdonald is clearly more at ease writing this sort of verse in Scots than in English.

It is in his Scots verses that Macdonald comes closest to the eerie world of his goblin stories for children and the more complicated fantasies for adults, Phantastes and Lilith:

Ane by ane they gang awa',
 The Gatherer gathers great an' sma',
 Ane by ane makes ane an' a'.

("Ane by Ane," Penguin Book of Scottish Verse, ll. 1-3)

"The Herd and the Mavis," with its oddly incantatory refrain:

An' aye he sang, an' better he sang,
 An' the worms creepit in an' oot;
 An' ane he tuik, an' twa he loot gang,
 An still he carolled stoot.

repeats this theme of mortality, as does the old man's only song in "Time and Tide":

"Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns;
 They playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
 Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
 And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush."

(ll. 9-12)

Like "The Waesome Carl" there are no parallels to these songs in Macdonald's English verse; and also like "The Waesome Carl" it is the quality of the language as well as the debt to folk rhymes and ballads which gives them their interest. The archaic or rustic diction, however one regards it, is admirably suited to the air of the "uncanny" which these poems bring to their theme, and enhances the folkloric quality of "The Herd and The Mavis" in particular.

In turning from George Macdonald's English to his Scots poetry one has a clear sensation that in Scots the poet was writing in a language that was natural to him. This is not to say that his English poetry is not flexible and competent, but that there is no sense of strain in his Scots verse, and that he chooses to write in this idiom on themes which he avoids in English. His Scots verse represents a return to the home and to the folkways of his childhood; in Scots Macdonald speaks to his children and to the people of Aberdeenshire, not to the world at large. It is an intimate diction, and while this is the source of its charm, it is also part of the reason for its lack of intellectual excitement.

J.L. Robertson

Like George Macdonald, James Logie Robertson is a poet who is more lively and interesting when he writes in Scots. His earlier works, published under his own name, are competent, but they have little of interest in them beyond the evident enthusiasm of the poet. He attempts a vivid, ener-

getic and enthusiastic portrayal of nature in his sonnets, but lacks the power to give intellectual depth or significance to his subject. The taste for the exotic which he displayed in poems such as "Orellana," "Mexico," and "The Spectre of the Amazon," is perhaps an interesting feature of his personality, but the poems themselves are unimpressive. In Scots, and particularly in those poems written under the pseudonym of "Hugh Haliburton," Robertson's weaknesses are minimised; his commonplace philosophy is given a more acceptable context in the words of a man with little formal education.

The idealized rural life which "Hugh Haliburton" brings to life is bound up with J.L. Robertson's constant desire to escape from the city and scholarship, to the country. Poems (1878) is full of such pieces. "Northern Student" complains:

I'm weary of the thing, if this be life --
 To dose and prose, companion of the clock,
 Bound to my room as seaweed to the rock

(11. 1-3)

and "A Dog-Days Petition" pleads humorously for release from the torments of the city in the summer:

I'm sick o' city soonds an' sights,
 O' feverish days an' sleepless nights,
 O' like-conditioned neebor-wichts,
 O' auld St. Giles's chime:
 - The moors and burns would put's to richts
 Within a fortnicht's time.

.

I'm dwindled doun to skin an' bane,
 Dry as a speldrin or a spune,
 A walkin' noonday skeleton,
 Nae shadow followin' after;
 I'm wanin' like the wanin' mune,
 I'm i' my hin'most quarter!

(stanzas 4 & 9)

Comparing this with "Northern Student" and "Anti-Studiois":

No! not for me the narrow hearth
 With studious chair beside it;
 But I will round the rolling earth,
 And help, who knows? to guide it.

.

So I will up, and give the slip
 To library and college,
 And listen to the living lip
 For wisdom and for knowledge

("Anti-Studiois," stanzas 1 & 10)

it is easy to agree with the reviewer of a later volume, Ochil Idylls (1891) that, "like his idol and model, Burns, Mr. Haliburton is not quite successful without his vernacular wings."³⁵

In Poems Robertson employs Scots only infrequently, and most often, as in "A Dog-Days Petition," for humorous effect, but two poems indicate that his use of Scots was to develop a conscious purpose more far-sighted than Macdonald's seems to be. We have already seen Robertson's idealization of the past in "On the Decadence of the Scots Language, Manners and Customs," in which the decline of the Scots language is related to the decline of the traditional rural life. "Horace in Hoggers" (hogger: a footless stocking worn as a gaiter) gives the first explicit reference to Horace as a model for Robertson's Scots verse, and is perhaps the first example since the Renaissance of a poet attempting to cast a classical theme into the Scottish idiom. It is thus with Robertson, as much as to Hugh Macdiarmid, that the credit for reviving Scots as a serious poetic language ought to rest. Robertson did not take his experiment far enough, and by persisting in a nostalgic recreation of the past in which Scots was a living

language, failed to further its development as modern diction, but this was, nevertheless, an important step towards reviving Scots from the morbid state into which it had fallen.

Other Scots translations of the classics appeared after Horace in Homespun and some of these will be considered below. Robertson's are less translations than imitations, and the spirit behind them owes more to the eighteenth century tradition and to Robertson's personal taste than to a serious revival of Middle Scots classicism, but, in choosing a classical model, Robertson restored some of the confidence in Scots as a literary language which Gavin Douglas had demonstrated in his translation of the Aeneid.

It is not surprising that Robertson should have found Horace such an agreeable model: the nostalgic contrast between city and country life which is characteristic of Horatian odes, and the loving depiction of nature, are themes which also appealed to Robertson. "Horace in Hoggers," which appears in Horace in Homespun as "Hughie's Winter Excuse for a Dram," is a free translation of Horace's Car. I. "Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte" is given: "A snawy nichtcap may be seen upon Benarty's pow," but the flavour of the piece is definitely Horatian, complaining cheerfully about the winter conditions from the warmth and security of the hearth:

Come, reenge the ribs, an' let the heat
 Down to oor tinglin' taes;
 Clap on a gude Kinaskit peat
 An' let us see a blaze.
 An', since o' water we are scant,
 Fesh ben the barley bree, --
 A nebfu' baith we sanna want
 To weet oor whitles wi'.

Noo let the winds o' winter blaw
 Owre Scotland's hills an' plains,
 It maitters nocht to us ava
 -- We've simmer in oor veins!

(Poems, stanza 2)

Horace in Homespun develops from both "On the Decadence" and "Horace in Hoggers". In its imitations, if not actually translations of Horace, bring to life the kind of community which Robertson had mourned in "On the Decadence." The choice of the English homespun rather than the Scots hoggers is probably an indication that Robertson intended to reach an audience outside of Scotland where hoggers would have no meaning, and for the sake of assonance the Scots hamespun also had to be rejected. Thus the book begins with a compromise between English and Scots which many readers might feel was inappropriate in a book seeking to revive Scots, but Horace in Homespun is not a book of challenging poetry; its simple nostalgia for a tranquil rural life offers little criticism of traditional attitudes regarding Scotland and Scotsmen. Its importance lies in the context of classical pastoralism in which this nostalgia is placed. The full title Horace in Homespun: a series of Scottish Pastorals by "Hugh Haliburton," shepherd of the Ochils, with preface, notes and glossary by J. Logie Robertson, M.A., makes it clear that, although the plain man's vision of the world is being expressed, it is seen in the context of a much more sophisticated world.

"Hugh Haliburton," who enjoys his dram in moderation, is mildly philosophical, has a resilient temperament which recovers quickly from trouble and is not overly sentimental, is a Horatian figure with a personality distinct from that

of his creator. He is described in considerable detail in the preface to the first edition, and it is clear that he is the embodiment of the virtuous Scots peasant described in "On the Decadence" (ll. 182-193). Hughie is a bachelor, tended by a "single" sister, and his philosophy of life is "at once cheerful, manly, and practical."³⁶ As another stroke of realism in the fiction that Hughie exists, Robertson notes:

The bit of Latin at the beginning of each sketch is put there by the Editor, who sees in Hughie's experience of life among the hills of Scotland a remarkable correspondence³⁷ to that of Horace, twenty centuries ago, in ancient Rome.

and adds:

It may be remarked generally that, if they [Hughie's neighbours and friends] stand forth with the dramatic distinctness of figure and character which obtains in real life, it is because they are no mere imaginary abstractions, but flesh and blood realities, moving about among the Ochils at the present moment, lusty and world-like with the solitary exception of Andro, whose untimely death still casts a gloom over one nook of the hills.³⁸

The use of Scots by educated writers can seem to be a kind of literary "unbending," descending to the common level a little stiffly, and self-consciously. In adopting the persona of Hugh Haliburton, J.L. Robertson dramatizes his Scots poems and puts the language into the mouth of one for whom it is the accustomed speech. The distance between the poet and his persona is increased by his references to the "editor" as the initiator of the Horatian tags to the poems, ignoring the fact that several of the poems are definitely modelled on the Latin. In this way, the poet achieves much the same effect as Burns when he disguised the extent of his reading and emphasized his role as an untutored ploughman-poet. The simplicity and the roughness of the rhymes may be assigned to Haliburton, the classical scholarship belongs to Robertson.

As "Hugh Haliburton" provides Robertson with an appropriate speaker for the language and sentiments which he wishes to use, so he provides the necessary unity to Horace in Homespun in general. There is little that is profound in any of Robertson's books, but there is a sense of ordered perception in Horace in Homespun which makes it a more satisfying work. This is partly because of the more restricted scope of the book which is confined to a particular locality and a few neatly sketched characters: the other volumes range farther afield and the people addressed often merely names as in "Boyhood in the Ochils,"³⁹ where "Tam" is addressed simply to fit the poem's jingling rhythm:

The fairy time of life, Tam,
It's noo the time of yore!
And whatna lovely world we lost
When boyhood's hour was o'er!

(stanza 1)

.

It's no' upon the green hillside,
Nor yet within the glen;
The gate of boyhood's Eden, Tam,
It's barr'd to bearded men.

(stanza 9)

This last stanza's longing for "boyhood's Eden" is a sentiment which finds counterparts in many of the poems of Horace in Homespun, significantly sub-titled "Scottish Pastorals," and the volume is clearly an example of the pastoral genre. Hughie is a shepherd; he and his companions lead a simple life which is contrasted with that of the city and of more ambitious men.

The return of Geordie Sym from Australia ("Hughie at the Smiddy") demonstrates this contrast most clearly. The

lad, "lang, louse an' slim/The wind could bend him," (l. 169) who had left Scotland twenty years before, has come back a rich man:

. . . . brawny, big, an' weel;
 Beard like a buss, kite like a creel,
 As roond an' soond as ony wheel
 Ye ever chappit, --
 A buirdly, business, wice-like chiel
 As ever stappit.

But Geordie Sym has become a hard materialist, arrogant and abrupt with his old neighbours. His call at the smithy is announced by the unpromising

Who owns the hole? Holloa there ---
 you!
 Blacksmith or blackguard.

("Hughie at the Smiddy," Part II, ll 1-2)

and the horseshoe quoited in to the Smith who remonstrates:

Man, folk hae time to dicht their mou'
 I' th' heat o' hairst!

(ll. 7-8)

The temptation of exotic lands where "they've neither craws nor doos/But cratur's they ca' cockatoos," ("Hughie at the Smiddy," Part I, ll. 85-86) and the promise of prosperity:

His farm's a coonty, an' his sheep
 The coonty's boun's can hardly keep;
 He says a telescope micht sweep
 His ootmost border,
 But ae inch owre it couldna peep
 Tho' made to order!

("Hughie at the Smiddy," Part I, ll. 53-58)

is met by the traditional answer of the happy shepherd:

As sweet to me amang the knowes,
 Whaur Devon's caller current rows,
 To lead the lambs an' ca' the yowes
 As to command them;
 As sweet to view the hechts an' howes
 As if I awn'd them.

("Hughie at the Smiddy," Part II, ll. 72-77)

Hughie reminds Sym that he owes Scotland his brains, but the emigrant will not admit that Scotland's gifts have been anything but paltry:

No more, I trow,
 But hip-room on a thistly knowe,
 Or scartin' rocks ahint a plow,
 For a rich neighbour --
 Out yonder, lads, there's room to grow,
 An' wealth for labour!

(ll. 38-43 approx)

Nevertheless, the poor ploughmen are resentful of Sym's attitude, even if they are impressed by his riches:

He'd gar ye troo it was a wrang
 To breathe in Scotland.

(ll. 59-60)

As a collection of pastoral lyrics, Horace in Homespun belongs to the Georgic tradition of Thomson's The Seasons, though it differs very greatly in form. In his study of the English Georgics Dwight L. Durling lists a number of features commonly found in Georgic poetry, several of which can also be recognized in Horace in Homespun. These include religious reflection ("Hughie Seeks to Console"), useful knowledge about nature, exotic scenes ("Hughie at the Smiddy"), genre scenes of peasant employment, and narrative and panegyric ("Hughie's Appraisalment of the Ochils").⁴⁰ Only the fact that it is not a didactic poem in blank verse prevents it from being clearly recognizable as a Georgic poem. The various elements of the Georgic are diffuse and presented in lyric form, but this is comparable to the modifications which Thomson himself made when, unable to adopt Vergil's epic vein, he concentrated on the description of nature. In Thomson the description of rural employments is incidental to the progress of the seasons;

in Horace in Homespun it is Hughie's character which takes precedence, and the seasons are seen through his eyes. The formality of Thomson's language is inappropriate to Haliburton, but just as Thomson used narrative to inspire "social feeling" and "social virtues,"⁴¹ Hughie's account of the progress of life in the Ochils is meant to inspire the virtues of the community described in "On the Decadence".

It is the pastoral theme which keeps the language of Horace in Homespun limited to the rustics and which, however carefully Robertson delineates his characters, the hardships as well as their pleasures, tends to keep the book an observation from outside rather than from within. Nevertheless, there are occasional passages, as in "A Wet Day: Hughie's Pity for the Tinklers" where a sense of immediacy both of observation and expression vivifies the verse beyond its usual capacity:

On sic a day wha tak's the gate?
The tinkler, an' his tousie mate;
He foremost, wi' a nose o' flint,
She sour an' sulky, yards ahint.

A blanket, fra her shouthers doun,
Wraps her an' a her bundles roun';
A second rain rins aff her skirt;
She skelps along through dub and dirt.

(stanzas 5 & 6)

Especially vivid is the detail of the woman's hair:

The yellow hair, like wires o' bress,
Springs, thrivin' in the rain, like gress.

(stanza 7, ll 3-4)

Hughie's pity is confined simply to describing their plight and imagining the scene at "the howff" they will reach before nightfall. The closing stanza underscores the tinklers' plight by its very simplicity:

Already on the rain-washed wa'
 A darker gloom begins to fa':
 Sooms fra the sicht the soakin' plain, --
 It's closin' for a nicht o' rain.

In spite of the seriousness which J.L. Robertson brought to Horace in Homespun, and the variety of stanzas which he employs with real skill, the most serious flaw in his work is that which plagues the verse of the uneducated poet as well, the tendency to jingle. A poem like "A Weet Hairst" is an excellent example of the poet's lack of care in choosing a stanza appropriate to his subject, even though in the second stanza the "bob" accentuates the feeling of frustration expressed in it:

What touch o' comfort can ye feel?
 It's sad, it's angersome atweel,
 To think that folk like you
 Wha saw'd gude seed in gude dry laund,
 An' spared nae sweat o' head or haund,
 In hopes to cairry thro' --
 Wha watched it fra the wee green breer
 To Autumn's stately show
 O' mony a gallant gowden spear
 In serried rank an' row --
 Maun see't noo and dree't noo,
 Lie rottin' i' the rain!
 The mense o't, the sense o't,
 Nae mortal can explain!

("A Weet Hairst: Hughie Condoles wi'
 Saundie," stanza 2)

This, the "Cherry and the Slae" stanza, is used again in "Hughie's Advice to auld Tammy to Tak' the Use o' His Savings," and in "Autolycus in Glendevon: Hughie Falls in with Shakespeare," but by far the more common stanza in Horace in Homespun is the "Standard Habbie":

Come, leave awhile the stoory toun,
 The mill-horse track, the endless roun',
 The jaded sicht, the jarrin' soun',
 The haste an' hurry,
 An' look from pastoral summits doun
 On Edinburgh.

("Hughie's Invitation to a Friend in the City",
 11. 31-36)

Robertson frequently used standard four, six, and eight line stanzas. The stanza used in "Hughie's Early Memories"

When green again, a gledsome hue
The auld hill-taps cam' back to view,
An' cluds broke up, an' skies shone thro',
An' glorified the Ochils!

(stanza 1)

is one which he seems particularly to have favoured. None, however, is treated with the authority which Burns gave the metre of "Holy Willie's Prayer" or even "Mary Morison" their inevitability.

After Horace in Homespun "Hugh Haliburton" seems to have become simply a pseudonym for J.L. Robertson in the same way that James Brown used the name J.B. Selkirk for his poetry. Ochil Idylls (1891) contains many of the same poems and adds others that portray the Ochil community, but "Hughie" is no longer central, the titles are shortened, and the references to him are removed. Without this central figure, and particularly without the pretence that it is Hughie who is the poet, much of the charm of the work is lost. It becomes much more a scholarly poet on holiday, adopting a rustic manner, not as self-consciously as James Beattie's:

Thy hamely auld warl'd muse provokes
Me for awhile
To ape our guid plain countra' folks
In verse and stile.

("To Mr. Alexander Ross," ll. 3-6,
Penguin Book of Scottish Verse)

but still aware that he is stepping down to use it.

R.L. Stevenson

"Hugh Haliburton" is the most extreme solution to the problem of using Scots as an appropriate register.

Robert Louis Stevenson used a similar device in "The Scotsman's Return from Abroad," in which the often-quoted "A' the bonny U.P. kirks!" is found.⁴² The poem is subtitled "In a letter from Mr. Thomson to Mr. Johnstone," the characters invented by Stevenson and his friend Charles Baxter when students. In her note to this poem Janet Adam Smith quotes Stevenson's description of Thomson:

A plain, auld ex-elder that, tak him the way he tak himself', 's just aboot as honest as he can weel afford, an' but for a wheen auld scandals near forgotten noo,⁴³ is a pairfec'ly respectable and thoroughly decent man.

Smith adds, "Several of the Scots poems in Underwoods might be spoken in the character of Thomson."⁴⁴

Thomson's direct ancestor is surely Burns's Holy Willie. Like Burns with Holy Willie, Stevenson employs a fictional persona for the purposes of satire, though his satire is more mellow and Thomson a less reprehensible figure than Willie. The poem is an affectionate one, not an attack, but it holds Thomson up to gentle ridicule which the true "kailyarder" might overlook:

O what a gale was on my speerit
 To hear the p'intis o' doctrine clearit,
 And a' the horrors o' damnation
 Set furth wi' faithfu' ministration!
 Nae schauchlin' testimony here --
 We were a' damn'd, an' that was clear.
 I owned, wi' gratitude an' wonder
 He was a pleasure to sit under.

(11. 99-106)

It is a weakness of "The Scotsman's Return from Abroad" that it is possible to take "a' the bonny U.P. kirks" at face value and miss the implied criticism of the narrowness and parochialism of Thomson's standards, but this is a danger with any satire.

Stevenson was well aware of his debt to Burns and the other great names in Scottish poetry; once signing himself "Robert Ramsay Fergusson Stevenson" to Henry James.⁴⁵

Janet Adam Smith emphasises the play element, the "game of crambo-clink," in Stevenson's Scots verse⁴⁶ but most of Stevenson's verse was occasional and written for the pleasure of exploring the different types of verse.⁴⁷ The title Underwoods, borrowed from Ben Jonson, is a suitably modest one, implying that Stevenson's verse does not presume to greatness. But Stevenson's experiments in Scots were more than playful. He was well aware of the language as the heritage of his childhood and his country's past:

. . . I am from the Lothians myself; it is there I heard the language spoken about my childhood; and it is, in the drawling Lothian voice that I repeat it to myself.⁴⁸

From this passage it is easy to see that however nostalgic Stevenson may have been about the language of his childhood, he does not refer to it as a language which he himself speaks: he heard it spoken around him in his childhood, and as an adult he repeats it to himself. For Stevenson it is already a dying language, and his use of it is an attempt to slow down an inevitable progress:

The day draws near when this illustrious and malleable tongue shall be quite forgotten Till then I would love to have my own hour as a native Makar, and be read by our own countryfolk in our own dying language: an ambition surely rather of the heart than of the head, so restricted as it is in prospect of endurance, so parochial in bounds of space.

This is the sentiment of "The Maker to Posterity" which opens Book II of Underwoods, "Songs in Scots":

'Few spak it than, an' noo there's nane.
My puir auld sangs lie a' their lane.
Their sense, that aince was brow an' plain,
Tint a'thegither,
Like runes upon a standin' stane
Amang the heather.

(11. 19-24)

The idea of a poet speaking to men of a distant age was to be used some years later in James Elroy Flecker's "To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence,"⁵⁰ where the future poet is imagined as a "Student of our sweet English tongue," (l. 18) but Stevenson concentrates on the fact that the book "in some braw new tongue" which questions the meaning of his Scots

Will still be just a bairn, an' young
 In fame an' years,
 Whan the hale planet's guts are dung
 About your ears;

An' you, sair gruppin' to a spar
 Or whammed wi' some bleezin' star,
 Cryin' to ken whaur deil ye are,
 Hame, France, or Flanders --
 Whang sindry like a railway car
 An' flie in danders.

(ll. 39-48)

This whole poem, with its aggressive tone, its cosmic scope and the energy of the final stanza (a kind of flyting?) is a surprising anticipation of the kind of Scots which Hugh MacDiarmid was to use. Even the "runes upon a standin' stane/Amang the heather" which his song will become anticipates MacDiarmid's "The Eemis Stane."

Though Stevenson's Scots is far less dense than MacDiarmid's, it is far more concentrated than that of any of the Victorian Scots poets considered so far. A poem like XIII beginning "Late in the nicht in bed I lay," contains some excellent examples of Stevenson using real dialect words, not simply a "mispronouncit English, wi' never a sklent o a Scottish word or idiom to be seen":⁵¹

The winds were at their weary play,
 An' tirlin' wa's an' skirlin' wae
 Through Heev'n they battered;
On-ding o' hail, on-blaff o' spray,
 The tempest blattered.

The masoned house it dinled through;
 It dung the ship, it couped the coo;
 The rankit aiks it overthrew
 Had braved a' weathers;
 The strang sea-gleds it took an' blew
 Awa' like feathers.

(11. 2-12)

Words and phrases like collieshangie and scaddit (XIII); roustin' skelp; a steigh brae (VIII); sneckdraw, for-jaskit, and clamjamfried (VII) are words which rarely occur in any poets before MacDiarmid; the fact that Stevenson used so many is impressive.

In spite of his contribution of a fine technique and virtuosity in the use of old Scots words, Stevenson's Scots, like that of J.L. Robertson, George Macdonald and others, is still retrospective. The poems either lament the passing of the good days of the poet's youth; "Sing Me a Song," "Ille Terrarum," or "A Mile an' a Bittock"; or they conjure up, as in "A Lowden Sabbath Morn" an idealized picture of a quickly-vanishing way of life. Even a simple poem like "When aince Aprile has fairly come," has the bittersweet flavour of fleeting happiness:

An' I, wha sang o' rain an' snaw,
 An' weary winter weel awa',
 Noo busk me in a jacket braw,
 An' tak my place
 I' the ram-stam, harum-scarum raw,
 Wi' smilin' face.

(11. 19-24)

Stevenson's Edinburgh could be the Edinburgh of Fergusson.

Compare

An' noo the winter winds complain;
 Cauld lies the glaur in ilka lane;
 On draigled hizzie, tautit wean
 An drucken lads,
 In the mirk nicht, the winter rain
 Dribbles an' blads.

("Ille Terrarum," 11. 55-60)

with

Now mirk December's dowie face
 Glours our the rigs wi' sour grimace,
 While, through his minimum of space,
 The blear-ey'd sun,
 Wi' blinkin light and stealing pace,
 His race doth run.

.

Auld Reikie! thour't the canty hole,
 A beild for mony caldrife soul,
 Wha snugly at thine ingle loll,
 Baith warm and couth;
 While round they gar the bicker roll
 To weet their mouth.

("The Daft Days," 11. 1-6, 19-24)

"The Blast -- 1875," "The Counterblast -- 1886" and "The Counterblast Ironical" which examine three different ways of coming to terms with the contrariness of nature and man's ignorance of his purpose on the earth are amusing variations on the usual moral theme; "Embros Hie Kirk" (surely another Thomson poem) and "Their Laureate to an Academy Class Dinner" are examples of Stevenson's ability in satire and verse epistle. Stevenson added no new forms, nor did he modify any of the traditional ones, but by the freshness of his treatment gave the old ones continued currency. This is very much what one would expect from the poet who wrote:

It's an owercome sooth for age an' youth
 And it brooks wi' nae denial
 That the dearest friends are the auldest friends
 And the young are just on trial.

.

There are kind hearts still, for friends to fill
 And fools to take and break them;
 But the nearest friends are the auldest friends
 And the grave's the place to seek them.

(Collected Poems, XVI, 11. 1-4,
 9-12)

Charles Murray

Charles Murray is one of the few Scots poets writing at the turn of the century whose work is of interest both for its popularity and for the quality of the language in which it is written. In the authentic dialect of his childhood Murray portrays with great accuracy of detail the region and the people living in the countryside around Aberdeen, and this is both praised and disparaged by his critics.

Douglas Young called Murray "the first poet to achieve a mass-public with verse of a relatively pure and copious canon of Scots," though he reminded his readers that Stevenson had already "raised its status with the literary world."⁵² Tom Scott commented:

His work was very popular at one time, particularly his masterly character-sketches His Scots is consistent dialect, but his range too constricted and local for him to rank as a national poet. He is the best of the dialect poets before MacDiarmid restored Scots to its national and international stature.⁵³

Nan Shepherd, in her foreword to Hamewith: the Complete Poems of Charles Murray,⁵⁴ regretted that "his reputation outside the North-East, for nostalgic and rather facile verse, has congealed on the early editions of Hamewith and the anthology pieces, which do not contain his mature work,"⁵⁵ and Maurice Lindsay called him "an establishment figure [who] appeared to have some of his previously predictable rural attitudes disturbed by the war."⁵⁶ Recognition of Murray's popularity has always been combined with regret that he "made no effort to take Scottish verse out of the narrow and dismal rut in which he found it,"⁵⁷ and thus there is, even in his staunch admirers, a sense of disappointment

with his work. As for Hugh MacDiarmid, whom Murray is generally thought to anticipate, he said scathingly: "Charles Murray has not only never written a line of poetry in his life, but . . . he is constitutionally incapable of doing so."⁵⁸

If one accepts MacDiarmid's narrow definition of poetry, one is forced to agree with him that Murray is not a poet; but that would be to restrict the term to those of the very first rank. Though Murray is not of that quality some of his work is distinguished and ought to be given some recognition. Indeed, much of MacDiarmid's dissatisfaction, and that of other critics as well, stems from Murray's popularity, which seems out of proportion to the range and importance of his work. As a traditionalist, and a regional poet, his work did not challenge the conventional ideas of Scottish culture and his popularity seemed to be the result of his reinforcing the stereotype of the Scottish poet.

Certainly Murray's view of himself as a poet was highly conventional. In "The Remonstrance" he reviews the criticism of those who feel he is wasting his time in writing:

I've taul ye aft eneuch it's nae
As if ye'd aught 'at's new to say,
Or said auld things some better way

(11. 7-9)

"The Reply" is the traditional argument which is overly-familiar to anyone who has glanced through the pages of Edwards' Modern Scottish Poets:

Tho' loud the mavis whistles now
 An' blackbirds pipe fae ilka bough
 An' laverocks set the heart alowe --
 Mid a' the plenty
 You'd miss upon the wayside cove
 The twitt'rin' lintie.

(11. 1-6)

He directs his poems, he says, to those who need them:

So tho' my sangs be as you say
 Nae marrow for the blackbird's lay,
 They may hae cheered somebody's way
 Wha wanted better,
 And sent him happier up the brae
 My welcome debtor

(11. 13-18)

The poet concludes with the modest explanation:

Nae care hae I, nor wish to speel
 Parnassus' knowe, for many a chiel
 Has tint his time, his life as weel
 To claim a bit o't:
 I only crave a wee bit biel'
 Near han' the fit o't.

(11. 19-24)

Even in its choice of form this poem echoes Burns's
 "Epistle to J. L——k"⁵⁹:

I am nae Poet, in a sense,
 But just a Rhymer like by chance,
 An' hae to Learning nae pretence
 Yet, what the matter?
 Where'er my Muse does on me glance,
 I jingle at her.

(11. 49-54)

Burns's modest disclaimer highlighted his accomplishment, making it appear more striking against the image of the untutored ploughman poet. Charles Murray uses the device for a similar effect, not claiming too much for himself and so anticipating the criticism of people like MacDiarmid, but in Murray's hands this also suggests that he begins with a lowering of his ambitions which cannot help but handicap his work.

Murray clearly accepts the role of the Scots poet as Burns established it, and for Burns himself this seems to have required a certain limitation of his subject matter:

The Kilmarnock volume, which expresses so much of the life of Ayrshire, leaves out a great deal. Burns keeps to the region he knows; neighbouring provinces are left unnoticed, though he might easily have touched upon them Why does he go down to the sea, and no further? . . . If he was too proud to speak of the Arran hills which did not belong to him, might he not have gone sailing with the fishermen of Girvan or Ayr, Dunure or Turnberry? No, they were not his own people; his own subjects are the farmers or their cotters, and it was not his business to go looking for subjects. The fishermen are left out. So on the other side the further moorlands and their shepherds are left out. He takes the Doon where it comes near him⁶⁰

Limiting himself to Ayrshire and a particular group of people did not prevent Burns from being a national poet. Though he set limits for himself they were not narrow limits and Burns was not strictly bound by them. The satiric bite of poems like "Holy Willie's Prayer" and the comment Burns offered on the politics of his day give breadth to his poetry, as does the sheer volume of his work and the variety of moods and occasions which it celebrated.

Charles Murray's work, in contrast, is very slight. Only ninety-seven poems were published out of a lifetime of seventy-eight years, and the majority of these are short lyrics; there are no attempts at extended forms. Almost half of his published verse is found in Hamewith; the remaining fifty-two poems distributed among three slim volumes. A Handfull of Heather (1893), which was issued in twelve copies for private circulation was later withdrawn and destroyed.⁶¹ The range of subject and theme within these four volumes is severely limited, so much so

that a great deal of Murray's personal experience, which one would have thought excellent material for his poetry, is almost totally ignored.

For example, Murray spent about thirty-six years in South Africa, and yet only three poems contain any reference to that country. There is the epigraph to Hamewith:

Here on the Rand we freely grant
We're blest wi' sunny weather;
Fae cauld an' snaw we're weel awa',
But man, we miss the heather.

"The Alien":

In hot December weather when the grass is caddie high
I've driven clean an' lost the ball an' game,
When winter veld is burned an' bare I've cursed the
 cuppy lie --
The language is the one thing still the same;
For dongas, rocks an' scuffled greens give me the links
 up North,
The whins, the broom, the thunder of the surf,
The three old fellows waiting where I used to make a
 fourth --
 I want to play a round on turf.

and the well-known "Scotland Our Mither":

Scotland our Mither -- since first we left your side,
From Quilimane to Cape Town we've wandered far an wide;
Yet aye from mining camp an' town, from koppie an' karoo,
Your sons richt kindly, auld wife, send hame their
 love to you.

There is nothing in these poems that anyone with a basic knowledge of South African geography and a vivid imagination could not supply; no sense of immediacy in the description of Africa, only the concentration on the differences between it and Scotland.

These are among Murray's weakest poems, and it is unfair to attach too much importance to them, but they illustrate the extent of his limitation in subject matter.

Apart from these three (and his translations from Greek and Latin) his poems are carefully restricted to Buchan rural

life. Even the war, which Maurice Lindsay felt had shaken Murray out of his traditionalism, is only treated in its effect on the social relationships at home in Scotland.

The difference between Murray's war poems and those which preceded and followed them is almost entirely one of context. The war provides an interesting and unusual setting for the examination of very familiar relationships: Dockens and his neighbours working out the extent of their mutual corruption in the increasing tensions after the first flush of enlistment fever has passed; the friendship and loyalty of Sandy the poacher towards the son of the Sherriff who fined him for brawling ("Fae France"); and the formidable farmer's wife whose sharp tongue and restless energy enliven many Scots poems ("The Wife on the War") all take on new significance as actors in a larger drama. It is the accident of the War which provides this background, and Murray makes good use of it, but the attitudes he expresses and his use of language do not change markedly.

None of the war poems can be said to deal with the experience of the trenches with any degree of realism. Only "Fae France" follows a soldier to the Front, and this poem is in the form of a letter home. Unlike the work of War poets like Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owen, this is not a soldier's poem for other soldiers, or one designed to bring home the horrors of war, but a picture softened for civilians. It may simply be an accurate reflection of rural life as it was near Aberdeen during the war that there is not a single mention of mechanized farm equipment in any of the poems, but it is interesting

that there are also no airplanes, no field telephones or motorized vehicles near Sandy Aberdein's trench. The absence of this sort of detail, as well as the prominence of time-worn objects like the plough, serves to impart an antique flavour to the activities described and highlights the remoteness of the community of A Sough O' War. The world that Murray portrayed was shaken out of its traditional isolation, but one can scarcely say with any degree of truthfulness that the poems show any change from Murray's "previously predictable rural attitudes." It is the reader, the modern reader in particular, who finds one set of poems more satisfactory than the other.

Limitation of his subject matter to events of concern to the Buchan community is matched by Murray's limitation of his choice of lyric forms to those traditionally used in Scots verse. The war poems like "Dockens afore his Peers" and "Fae France" are perhaps exceptions, but they are still conventional forms, and Murray generally avoids unrhymed verse. This reliance on traditional forms contributes to the impression of impersonality which his poetry gives, and perhaps accounts for the old-fashioned flavour of his work. Only a few poems, like the late, occasional poems, "Advice to the Sit Siccars" and "J.F.T.," as well as the few references to South Africa already mentioned, stamp Murray's work with the impression of a particular individual, and even these are highly conventional.

Impersonality can often be an admirable quality in a poet. T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent,"⁶² makes a strong case for it as well as for the necessity of recognizing the poet's need for a tradition. With Charles

Murray, however, it is necessary to ask whether the tradition has not narrowed the poet's view of his role and of his subject; whether he would have avoided writing on certain subjects, like South Africa, if he had not been writing in Scots.

It is clear that one of the reasons Murray restricts himself to Buchan characters and events is that he is writing in Scots and so he restricts himself to writing about people to whom this is normal daily speech. This restriction, while it may prevent Murray from achieving great breadth, allows him to concentrate on the accuracy of his description and characterization. Thus all of the poems can be seen as contributing to a composite picture of the region, and examples of sentimentality and nostalgia can be seen in new proportions when placed beside less emotional observations.

Even so, the sentimental, "Scotland Our Mither," type of nostalgia is quite rare in Murray's work. More characteristic is a sketch like "The Whistle" which derives much of its charm from the aura of a vanished way of life which it carries; a nostalgia which is implied rather than stated. The title poem and "Scotland Our Mither" frame the poems in Hamewith, allowing the reader to see all the poems as implicitly nostalgic, and the scenes they portray as memories.

Nan Shepherd takes this interpretation of a later poem, "Noo that cauldribe Winter's here":

The goodness of this tiny poem lies partly in its power to evoke and partly in the perfection of its form, but largely also in the subtle way two experiences of life play upon each other, of those to whom these hardships are hard, and

of the reminiscent man who sees them across many African summers and recalls them with an affectionate chuckle.⁶³

While this may be the case for the poet, the poem itself does not give any indication of these African summers, nor do any of the poems in Hamewith necessarily play against the experience of the "reminiscent man". A subtler kind of nostalgia is in operation here. Nan Shepherd remarked that, "There is a speaker implicit in every poem, in There's aye a something as much as in Dockens afore his peers,"⁶⁴

This implicit speaker must be recognized as the same sort as (if not identical to) the speaker in the poems of George Macdonald, Hugh Haliburton, and even on occasion, Robert Louis Stevenson. It is the kailyarder once again; sometimes represented rather vaguely in "There's aye a something," or the different character sketches in which the speaker may be recognized as a member of the same community as the people he describes; sometimes, in "Dockens afore his peers" or "Hairry hears fae hame," identified by name; but in "Gin I was God" self-revealed in his mental imagery:

Gin I was God, sittin' up there abeen
Weariet nae doot noo a' my darg was deen,
Deaved wi' the harps an' hymns oonendin' ringin',
Tired o' the flockin' angels hairse wi' singin',
To some clood-edge I'd daunder furth an', feth,
Look ower an' watch hoo things were gyaun aneth.

(11. 1-6)

The very concreteness of the speaker's idea of heaven, and of a God who will "cast my coat again, rowe up my sark," (1. 11) like any other hardworking man who has seen his best efforts, "a hale week's wark" (1. 10) spoiled, implies a naïveté in the speaker which is only equalled by the keenness of his observation.

This is not Charles Murray speaking. Though he may have been a plain man who took an honest interest in the ordinary people around him, the writer of "Horace in Scots" has more sophistication about him than the speaker of "Gin I was God". Yet the poet is not laughing at his creation: the diction of "Gin I was God" is entirely consistent, and the man is, after all, picturing himself in God's place; it is a portrait of himself that he is giving. Even the word hypothec is appropriately sounding and yet vague: as colloquial as clamjamfrey but ringing with grander connotations, particularly in its legal sense as "legal security for rent or money due."⁶⁵

The earlier character sketches, with their unnamed narrators, have a definite flavour of reminiscence, not only reminiscence of the people portrayed, who have, like "Skeily Kirsty" and "The Antiquary," long gone to their reward, but of the now vanished world in which such people once lived. With "A Green Yule" we have for the first time a monologue from one of these. The grave-digger who tells the sad tale of the death of the laird and the decay of the old way of life mourns the fact that he is outliving his own world:

Twa lairds afore I've happit, an' this noo will mak'
the third,
An' tho' they spak' o' him as bein' auld,
It surely seemed unlikely I would see him in the yird,
For lang ere he was beardit I was bald.

(11. 25-28)

These reminiscences are immediately identifiable as the thoughts of an individual, even though the poem itself conforms to traditional models. The vivid detail:

Up on the watch-tower riggin' there's a draggled
 hoodie craw
 That hasna missed a funeral the year . . .

(11. 9-10)

has all the traditionalism of an old ballad ("The Twa Corbies" for example) and resembles the kind of detail George Macdonald included in poems like "The Herd and the Mavis," but it is also the very detail that someone like the old sexton would notice. The solidity of its realism cuts through the noralising of the rest of the poem and almost by itself makes the poem memorable.

"A Green Yule" is a character sketch, but an interior one; the man talking to himself. As such it is the precursor of the monologues and epistles in A Sough O' War which continue to increase the sense of the speaker's presence. In A Sough O' War we find poems that are no longer records of reminiscences but of participation in events.

The people whom he describes recognize the war's immediate disruption of their way of life and so nostalgia for pre-war times is natural to them; but there is a strong undercurrent of irony in the fact that the protagonists can still hope for a return to a way of life the poet knows is dead. Perhaps the most poignant of the war poems is the most timeless: the incantatory, nursery-rhyme quality of "When Will the War be By" could be about any war, and it underscores the inevitability of the war's destructiveness with an understatement which anticipates Hugh MacDiarmid's "Empty Vessel":

"Weel, wounded, missin', deid,"
 Is there nae news o' oor lads ava?
 Are they hale an' fere that are hine awa?
 A lass raxed oot for the list to read --
 "Weel, wounded, missin', deid";
 An the war was by for twa.

A Sough O' War has a loose chronological structure which is not found in any other of Murray's books. Beginning with the sough itself:

The corn was turnin', hairst was near,
 But lang afore the scythes could start
 A sough o' war gaed through the land
 An' stirred it to its benmost heart.

(11. 1-4)

the volume proceeds through the traditional martial poems like "Wha Bares a Blade for Scotland?" and "To the Hin'-most Man" to the more specific reactions of those who would fight if they could, in "The Thraws o' Fate" and "The Wife on the War". "Fae France" brings a report from the front, light, and cheerful, but nonetheless an attempt to bring the war home. "Bundle an' Go" and "When Will the War be By?" provide contrasting but fully traditional views of the war; and "At the Loanin Mou'" and "Lat's Hear the Pipes" strike a more sombre note. "Hairry Hears Fae Hame" is another bit of social documentation like "Dockens Afore his Peers" or "Fae France" with the difference that it is a series of monologues and gives several points of view.

The letters, "Hairry Hears Fae Hame" and "Fae France" are not especially convincing as realistic imitations of homely Scots letter-writing. One suspects that the spelling would not be either as complicated or as consistent as Murray makes it, (e.g. "my sodger laad" ("Harry Hears Fae Hame"), etc.) and it is probable that the letters Sandy or Hairry's family would write would be more stilted than this:

There's naething new, excep' that ye're awa';
 Fae year to year it's aye the same aul' thing,
 Up to the gartens twa-three month in snaw,
 Syne rivin' win's that tirr the byres in Spring;
 A caul' coorse Simmer, only gweed for girse,
 An' 'Hairst is on ye or ye hardly ken.

("Harry Hears Fae Hame," 11. 5-10)

These are actually speaking voices that Murray has caught, and these poems carry a different kind of authenticity. "Furth Again," which ends A Sough O' War, though it does not actually refer to the war, has the same conviction; the resignation in its tone is that of a war-weary man whose leave is all too short:

Ye're hardly hame till furth again
 It's buckle the brogues an' fare
 To the wearisome ends o' the earth again,
 An' the wark that is waitin' there.

(11. 1-4)

Charles Murray's sketches of Buchan characters contrast in many ways the vague nostalgia of his contemporaries and predecessors. Some, like "The Packman" reflect the changes which individuals make in themselves; the colourful packman disappears in the prosperous merchant:

Sae yon's his hoose, an' there he sits; supposin' we
 cry in,
 It's cheaper drinkin' toddy there than payin' at the
 Inn,
 You'll find we'll hae a shortsome nicht an' baith be
 bidden back,
 But -- in your lug -- ye manna say a word about the
 Pack.

("The Packman," 11. 93-96)

Others, like "The Whistle," which C.M. Grieve was generous enough to call "a little classic of our literature,"⁶⁶ express a nostalgia for lost childhood which is tempered by the vividness of the portrayal of a boy's way of thinking:

The kye were late for milkin' when he piped them up
the closs;
The kitlin's got his supper syne, an' he was beddit
boss;
But he cared na doit nor docken what they did or thocht
or said,
There was comfort in the whistle that the wee herd made.

.

But the snaw it stopped the herdin' an' the winter
brocht him dool,
When in spite o' hacks an' chilblains he was shod
again for school;
He couldna' sough the catechis, nor pipe the rule o'
three,
He was keepit in an' lickit when theiither loons got
free;
But he aften played the truant - 'twas the only thing
he played,
For the maister brunt the whistle that the wee herd
made.

("The Whistle," 11. 9-12, 31-36,
Hamewith)

In spite of the rattling rhythm, "The Whistle" movingly contrasts the freedom of the wee herd's life in the summer and his creativity then with his rebelliousness against his winter captivity which destroys his songs. It is the same rebelliousness that J.L. Robertson tried to express in his poetry, and its relationship to the pastoralism of the other poems cannot be ignored.

In most of his Scots poems Murray adopts the persona of the Scots farmer, or some other member of the rural community to whom this is everyday speech. In doing this, however, he is conforming to the popular idea of Scots as an inherently rustic language and it has the disadvantage of limiting his choice of subject matter. However, another tradition available to Murray was the use of Scots for verse translation from the classics. Gavin Douglas's translation of the Aeneid is the finest example of the classics in Scots; Hugh Haliburton's Horace in Homespun

not so much translation as adaptation, is a much weaker, and less ambitious attempt. In his translations Murray was able to demonstrate the capacity of the language and explore its special virtues while the classical poet provided him with models of excellence in another language: like the emblem books which displayed the same thought in several languages, Murray's translations from Latin and Greek possess the attraction of seeing a familiar work in a new context.

Robert Fagles said of his translation of the Orestia, "A translator's best hope, I think, and still the hardest to achieve, is Dryden's hope that his author will speak the living language of the day."⁶⁷ In using Scots to translate Virgil and Horace, Murray was able to bring them into closer contact with the modern reader by removing the barrier of archaic and academic language which often prevents him from obtaining an impression of the work's original impact, and, for this purpose, the rustic associations of Scots are very useful. But, in modernizing the classics the poet runs the risk of merely reducing the original to a rough colloquialism: as E.V. Rieu pointed out in his preface to the Odyssey,⁶⁸ the modern translator cannot translate directly Homer's epithet as "the fishy sea" because modern English has acquired too many unfortunate associations with the word fishy.

Murray's translations and adaptations successfully avoid too casual colloquialism, but they do not in any way elevate Scots. They rely for their effect on keeping the colloquial, the non-literary flavour of Scots; at one level, indeed, their attraction lies in the contrast between

the urbane nature of the original and the homespun context in which Murray places them. This is certainly the effect of "Virgil in Scots" (Aeneid, Book III, 588-640) in which Murray gives the account of Ulysses' escape from the Cyclops in these words:

But never was Ulysses' slack
 To pay where he was awin',
 An' starkly did he gie him 't back,
 An' bravely cleared the lawin'.
 For while the hoven monster snored,
 An' rifted in his dreams,
 We first the great God's help implored
 An' blessing on our schemes;
 The kavils cuist: a feerious thrang
 Syne gaithered roond about,
 An' wi' a sturdy pointed stang
 We bored his ae e'e oot.

(11. 81-92)

Apart from the marked contrast between the abruptness of Murray's lines and the smooth sonority of Virgil, this version is much rougher. Though the diction might be appropriate to one of Ulysses' sailors, and aptly conveys the sharp violence of Ulysses' strategy -- "We bored his ae e'e oot" -- with a grim relish, it is very far from conveying the manner of Virgil.

This is a criticism which E.M.W. Tillyard makes of the translation of the Aeneid by Murray's great predecessor, Gavin Douglas: "There is a good deal of noise and violence here, but it is not especially appropriate."⁶⁹ C.S. Lewis asserted that when we forget that Scots was a courtly and literary language in Douglas's day "then it is we and not the poet who are provincials,"⁷⁰ but Murray's language is not courtly and literary, and it is his responsibility to overcome the unfortunate associations which might occur. Like Douglas, Murray provides a fresh vision of the classics which may, at times, be closer to the original than

a reverent and academic approach might be, but Murray fails to demonstrate that his language has any virtues other than vividness and particularity.⁷¹ It is self-consciously colloquial where Gavin Douglas's is direct and single-minded:

Nor Ulixes list not lang suffer this,
 Ne this king of Itachy him self nor his
 Myghtyn forget, into sa gret a plyght.
 For sammyn as that horribyll fendlich wight
 Had eyt his fyll, and drunk syne he hym gave,
 Sowpit in sleip, his neck furth of the cave
 He straucht, fordronkyn, lyggyng in his draym
 Bokkis furth and zyskis of zowstyr mony streym,
 Raw lumpys of flesch and blude blandyt with wyne.
 We the great goddys besocht and kavillys syne
 Kastis, quhat suld he every mannys part;
 Syne al atanys abowt and on hym start,
 And, with a scharpyt and brynt steyng of tre,
 Out dyd we boyr and pyke hys mekil E,
 That lurkit alane under his thrawn front large,
 Als braid as is a Gregioun scheild or targe,
 Or lyke onto the lantern of the moyn:
 And thus at last have we revengit soyn
 Blithly the gostis of our feris ded.

(11. 5-23)⁷²

Murray's is in every way a paler version of Douglas's translation, and it diminishes the sense of the original rather than raising the language to a level at which it is fit to carry it.

Murray's translations from Horace and the Greek Anthology fare better, perhaps because the originals are simpler, particularly Horace, whose characteristic love of simplicity can be conveyed easily in Scots. Even his urbanity can be conveyed in the appropriate suggestion of Scots used in relaxation in the manner of Prof. Blackie, Principal Shairp, and even R.L. Stevenson:

Foreign fashions, lad allure you,
 Hamespun happit I would be;
 Bring nae mair, for I assure you
 Ferlies only scunner me.

This version of Carmen I, 38, "Persicos Odi" illustrates the appropriateness of Scots for certain types of translation. Here, the rejection of foreign gaudiness is underlined by the use of the native dialect.

Murray's translations from the classics may not be particularly successful; they may serve to reinforce the image of Scots as the plain man's speech more than they illustrate its suitability to polished literary endeavours, but they are significant as attempts to follow the example of Gavin Douglas, in treating Scots as a worthy literary vehicle.

In general, Murray's Scots was handicapped by carelessness in other areas of composition: his marvellously condensed language was often contradicted by the vagueness of the poem's actual subject or the lack of originality with which it was treated. Yet Murray consistently endeavoured to make his description exact. If he was not a poet, neither was he "just a Rhymer like by chance."

Conclusion

A characteristic common to all of the late nineteenth century writers in Scots is that they wrote light verse: often technically accomplished, but lacking intellectual and emotional substance. R.L. Stevenson and Andrew Lang were masters of light, occasional verse, an accomplishment not to be despised, though the lack of more profound poetry is regrettable. George Macdonald, too, has a whimsical charm which leavens his pietistic moralising. J.L. Robertson's attempts at epic verse were lamentable failures,

but in Scots he was able to concentrate on the geniality and sympathetic observation of human nature which were the strong features of his poetry. Surprisingly, J.S. Blackie, who was such a prickly champion of the Scots language, had no special talent for verse, and while he has some success with Macaulayesque historical ballads, offered no examples of Scots as a serious literary medium.

None of these poets extended the range of subjects for which Scots could be used, and they tended to stay within the traditional bounds of comedy and sentimentality, but some, like J.L. Robertson, R.L. Stevenson and Charles Murray, made efforts to use the language with discrimination and to employ a more complex and concentrated diction than the sprinkling of apostrophes and tired clichés which Scots verse had become.

NOTES

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5. Smout, p. 396.
6. *ibid.*
7. William Thom, Rhymes and Recollections of a Hand-Loom Weaver, 2nd ed. (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1845).
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9. *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
11. *ibid.*, p. 49.
12. See Chapter Three, p. 165.
13. Alexander Anderson, Songs of the Rail (London: Marshall and Co., 1878).
14. David Cuthbertson, The Life-History of Alexander Anderson ("Surfaceman") (Roseville, Inveresk, Midlothian: Privately Printed, 1929), p. 92.
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17. B. Ifor Evans, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 324.
18. See p. 119.
19. McLachlan, "The Emigrant," Poetical Works, p. 232.
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25. *ibid.*
26. Buchan, The Northern Muse, p. xxix.
27. See, for example, MSP III, pp. 36; 39; 47; 365.
28. See pp. 53-54.
29. See Chapter Two, p. 23.
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31. *ibid.*, p. 134.
32. Evans, p. 310.
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36. J.L. Robertson, Horace in Homespun (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1886), p. vi.
37. *ibid.*
38. *ibid.*, pp. vi;vii.
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43. "Letter to Baxter of 13 November, 1884, Collected Poems, p. 490.
44. Collected Poems, p. 490.
45. *ibid.*, p. 30.
46. *ibid.*
47. *ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

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49. *ibid.*, p. 486-487.
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Chapter Six: Linguistic Nationalism
and Dialect Poetry in Canada

Linguistic Nationalism in Canada

In popular thought the identification of nation and language (as in the identification of France with the French language, England with the English language, Italy with Italian) is self-evident. For this reason language has become one of the fundamental issues of nationalism:

Nationalists demand the domination of one language in their nation, the suppression of other languages, the purification of their own language from foreign elements, and the political incorporation of other countries who speak the same language.

In practice this position is untenable: there are thirty times as many languages as there are countries in the world, and so it is obvious that linguistic and national boundaries can rarely coincide. Where two countries share the same language it is necessary to develop different attitudes to the language in order to maintain language loyalty in the nationalist sense.

Unlike the Scots who can claim a native language which is clearly distinguishable from Standard English, Canadians have two official languages which they received from the founding nations, England and France. The Canadian speech has diverged from the standard of these countries, notably in Quebec where the provincial dialect is known as Jouale from the local pronunciation of cheval, but there has always been a conflict between the sense of the advantage in having a distinctly Canadian form of the language and the sense that this form is inferior to the standard of the parent country.² A comment by Stephen Leacock,

"I myself talk Ontario English; I don't admire it, but it's all I can do; anything is better than affectation,"³ reflects the Canadian's sense of linguistic inferiority, as does a wry little poem by Irving Layton:

Anglo-Canadian
A native of Kingston, Ont.
-- two grandparents Canadian
and still living

His complexion florid
as a maple leaf in late autumn,
For three years he attended
Oxford

Now his accent
makes even Englishmen
wince, and feel
unspeakably colonial.⁴

Here Layton is attacking Canadians who feel about their language as Edwin Muir felt about his: "To most of us who were born and brought up in Scotland dialect Scots is associated with childhood, and English with maturity."⁵

As in most other areas of Canadian history, the United States provides an interesting and illuminating contrast. In the early days of the American Revolution, for example, it was seriously proposed that Greek, or even Hebrew be adopted as the language of the new country.⁶ This proved impracticable, but the same linguistic nationalism was still evident in Noah Webster's belief that the language used in North America would soon change (because of the separation from Britain) into "a language as different from the future language of England as the modern Dutch, Danish or Swedish are from the German, or from one another."⁷ Webster welcomed this change with the assertion that "as a nation we have a very great interest in opposing the introduction of any plan of uniformity with the British language."⁸ The United Empire Loyalists who settled in Canada at this

period had, however, every reason to encourage uniformity with British practice both to display their loyalty and to make a linguistic distinction between themselves and the Republic. As time went on, the growing Canadian nation tended to reinforce its connection with Britain in order to avoid absorption by the United States:

Nationalism, literary or political, in the sense generally meant by that term, would have been a form of national suicide. The paradoxical dualism of loyalty to a parent tradition as a means of affirming local autonomy, encouraged, on the public level at least, an outward-looking consciously internationalist viewpoint.

Whatever the consequences for Canada's international viewpoint, one of the most concrete effects was the adoption of British spelling rather than American spelling practices. In a Minute of Council dated 30th May 1890, the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald suggested that the spelling -our in honour, etc. be made official as that "was the mode now accepted by the best authorities now in England." This was done in an Order-in-Council dated 12th June 1890.¹⁰ British spelling was given preference in Canadian schools, though American spellings were permitted and shown as variants in spelling books¹¹ but many American forms, such as tire for tyre, were adopted in Canada, and in recent years the Canadian Press Association began to conform to American usage in its newspapers.

Canadian pronunciation, too, poses a difficulty for Canadian nationalists. Canadians can be offended when a visitor from the United States expresses surprise that they do not speak with "an English accent," but they are equally offended when they are mistaken for "Americans". Certain regional accents, such as the Parry Sound, Ottawa

Valley, or Newfoundland accents can be recognized easily, but apart from these, Canadians themselves have difficulty in recognizing a Canadian accent abroad.

Part of the blame for this can be laid at the feet of the same Loyalist settlers who established the Canadian preference for British spelling and vocabulary. Morton W. Bloomfield stresses the fact that these settlers spoke English with an American accent:

American investigators, ignorant of Canadian history, are under the impression that Canadian English, as undoubtedly is the case with Australian, South African and Newfoundland English, is a direct offshoot of British English, and therefore does not belong to their field of inquiry.¹²

In other words, Canada is linguistically, as well as geographically, American and this is the source of some concern to Canadian nationalists.

Canadian English is a North American variant of Standard English, and yet is not identical to the language spoken in the United States. It is "American" in the sense of belonging to the American continent, but it is not "American" in the national sense. Indeed, it is a source of irritation to many Canadians that they have no collective noun for the people of the United States which would make distinctions like this last one unnecessary. The Scottish reviewer of J.G. Bourinot's "Canada and the United States" in 1890 lamented the possibility of Canada's being drawn "into the seductive embrace of a nation which, with a curious oblivion of geography, has generally claimed the exclusive right to be called 'American,'" ¹³ is unusual. This "oblivion of geography" is reflected in the conviction of an Australian that the term North America refers to Canada because it is situated to the north of "America"

(i.e. the United States). To a Canadian, however, the use of the term "America" for the United States immediately labels the speaker as not a native.

There are, of course, theories which attempt to account for Canadian English without placing as much emphasis as Bloomfield does upon its debt to the Loyalists. M.H. Scargill offers a convincing criticism of many of Bloomfield's arguments, but he relies heavily on the evidence of the kind of vocabulary for which there is no common object, dismissing out of hand "the usual, trivial elevator-lift, truck-lorry business that merely shows Canadians can draw on American as well as British English."¹⁴ Scargill's examples of the rich Canadian vocabulary consist of names and phrases describing animals, plants, and activities for which there are no direct equivalents in Europe; many, like the logging-bee, the corduroy bridge, and the prairie schooner are of historical importance only, and are as unfamiliar to Canadian schoolchildren today as they were to the new settlers one hundred years ago. Words of Indian and Eskimo origin make up the list of the most distinctively Canadian words. Though there are several examples of expressions which originated in Canada, few have more than local or historical interest and these generally pass into Standard English without any trace of their origins.

Interesting as surveys of the "Polyglot Vernacular of the Canadian Northwest"¹⁵ might be, they do not bring Canadians any closer to identifying a national Canadian language. The differences (apart from vocabulary, which is usually restricted to regional peculiarities of speech)

are largely differences of pronunciation, like the Canadian "bugle u," now fast disappearing, and the characteristic way Canadians pronounce words like out and about which seem to sound to Americans like oot and about.¹⁶ These subtle differences are combined with a slightly softer and lighter tone of voice than the "Standard American" accent, and which Canadians are often quicker to recognize than any other characteristic.

Like modern Scots, Canadian English is too close to the form of English spoken across its southern border to avoid further assimilation without a great deal of conscious effort by those who speak it, and there are Canadian nationalists who resent the tendency of languages to become similar:

My contention is that U.S. English is a foreign superimposition upon Canadian English. It carries with it foreign values, the weight of a foreign culture, and it is infinitely more subtle, infinitely more difficult to recognize in its influence than, let us say, the English language and its cultural influence in Nigeria, in Malaya, in Ghana.¹⁷

Unlike Scots, which has a literary tradition in a dialect which is clearly distinguishable from Standard English, Canadian literature must draw on regional peculiarities of accent and vocabulary in order to establish linguistic differences from Britain and the United States. As the speech of educated Canadians is virtually indistinguishable from that of educated people in the United States, the only distinctive speech patterns are those of people in isolated rural areas, and this tends to be rustic and coarse: the use of this kind of speech implies an ignorance greater than any which may be implied by the use of Scots.

Examples of dialect verse in Canadian literature are rare. Theodore Goodridge Roberts (the brother of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts) experimented with the Newfoundland accent in "The Wrecker's Prayer":

Give us a wrack or two, Good Lard,
For winter in Tops'l Tickle bes hard,
Wid grey frost creepin' like mortal sin
And perishin' lack of bread in the bin.

. . .

One rich wrack -- for Thy hand bes strong!
A barque or a brig from up-along
Bemused by thy twisty tides, O Lard!
For winter in Tops'l Tickle bes hard.

(Penguin Book of Canadian Verse, st. 1 and 5)

Here only the words "Tickle," a passage between two masses of land,¹⁸ and the phrase "up-along," by which the Newfoundlander refers to any part of the world which is "away," that is, anywhere that is not Newfoundland, or even his own little outport, are Newfoundland usage; the rest is simply rustic speech which could be identified with any number of isolated coastal areas.

Isabella Valancy Crawford's poetry is usually characterized by its lush, erotic imagery:

All lily-locked, all lily-locked,
His light bark in the blossoms rocked.

Their cool lips round the sharp prow sang,
Their soft clasp to the frail sides sprang

("The Lily Bed," Penguin Book of Canadian Verse, ll. 43-46)

In "Old Spookses' Pass," however, she made a notable contribution to Canadian dialect verse.¹⁹ In this poem she employs an accent appropriate to the narrator of the story, a character Roy Daniells describes as "an illiterate cowboy with a turn for moralizing."²⁰

"Old Spookses' Pass" is the story of a cowboy whose hopeless effort to stop his herd from stampeding over a cliff in a thunderstorm at midnight is aided by an invisible horse and rider. It is told in just the wandering, formless way that a cowboy would tell it, but the moments of horror in the haunted mountain pass, with the maddened cattle and the unseen rider, are effectively described:

I turned my head tew glimpse, ef I could,
 Who might the chap with the lariat be.
 Wal, pard, I weakened - ye bet yer life!
 There wasn't a human in sight around,
 But right in front uv me cum the beat
 Uv a hoss's hoofs on the tremblin' ground --

Steddy an' heavy -- a slingin' lope;
 A hefty critter with biggish bones
 Might make jist sick -- could hear the hoofs
 As they struck on the rattlin', rollin' stones --
 The jingle uv bit -- an' clar an' shrill
 A whistle es ever left cowboy's lip;
 An', cuttin' the air, the long, fine hiss
 Uuv the shirlin' lash uv a cowboy's whip.

(p. 276)

Even the conventional piety which this homespun philosopher expresses, and which Crawford repeated in other poems on rural themes is given with unconventional toughness:

Fur I reckon the hills an' stars an' crick
 Are all uv 'em preachers sent by God.
 An' them mountains talk tew a chap this way:
 "Climb, if ye can, ye degenerate cuss!"
 An' the stars smile down on a man, an' say,
 "Cum higher, poor critter, cum up tew us!"

(pp. 267-268)

The cowboy's speech gives an air of authenticity to the tale, and removes the narration from any question of the poet's belief or disbelief, but it is distracting to

the reader, and Miss Crawford's efforts to reproduce the accent give some of the words a harsher emphasis in print than they would have in speech:

We'd camped that night on Yaller Bull Flat, --
 Thar wus Possum Billy, an' Tom an' me.
 Right smart at throwin'a lariat
 Wus them two fellers, as ever I see;
 An' fur ridin' a broncho, or argyin' squar
 With the devil rolled up in the hide uv a mule,
 Them two fellers that camped with me thar
 Would hev made an or'nary feller a fool.

(p. 265)

The use of broad vowels in thar and squar, as well as the rhyming of lariat and Flat slows the pace of the poem to a cowboy's drawl, as does the slight awkwardness of phrasing in the last line. Another example shows this device even more clearly:

I'd jest got tew leave tew thet thar chunk
 Uv a mustang tew keep in the proper track.

(p. 267)

The clash of consonants in "jest got tew" forces the reader to labour over the words, and effectively suggests the cowboy's manner of "chewing over" his words as he speaks them. There is, however, a difficulty in that the word tew gives too sharp a sound to a word that would be better represented by tuh. Similarly, Crawford adopts the conventional spelling pootyish for the word which is more accurately rendered as purdyish or puhdyish. No Canadian would recognize pooty as any regional variation of the standard pretty. Her spelling steady as steddy, while the word heavy is given its conventional spelling in the same line shows that Crawford is not attempting to reproduce the cowboy's accent phonetically but simply giving the reader the necessary cues in order to imagine the appropriate accent.

Like many of the academic Scots writers, Isabella Valancy Crawford was attempting to write in an accent which was not natural to her, and depended to a great extent on written models rather than first-hand experience. To her experiment with cowboy dialect she added several poems in Scots and in Irish which reveal her lack of confidence in handling dialects in verse.

The three Scots poems, "The Rowan Tree," "I'll Lauch to See the Year In," and "My Ain Bonnie Lass O' the Glen" are reasonably convincing because they are entirely conventional, but they contain awkward expressions which betray a lack of sensitivity to the language:

Gin I wed there's a winklot kept by,
 Wi' bodles an' gear i' her loof --
 Gin ony tak her an' her kye,
 He'll glunsh at himself for a coof.

("My Ain Bonnie Lass O' the Glen," ll. 13-16)

"A Hungry Day," the story of an Irish immigrant at the time of the potato famine, is told in the tritest of Irish dialect impressions. The outburst of righteous indignation in the fourth stanza cannot save the poem from its conventional dullness:

If we wor haythens in a furrin land,
 Not in a country grand in Christian pride,
 Faith, then a man might have the face to say
 'Twas of stharvation me poor Sheila died.

(ll. 13-16)

There are, as far as one can be certain, no examples of a poet writing in a Canadian regional accent which is his normal speech; any references to Canadian English are made by writers who consciously adopt a less sophisticated form of speech, as in the Roberts and Crawford examples. William Henry Drummond is the only Canadian

writer to adopt this sort of speech as his usual style, and his Habitant Poems are the only consistent parallel in Canadian verse to the Scots tradition of dialect verse.²¹

The Habitant Poems were once extremely popular, but they are less well thought-of today since they are regarded as potentially insulting to the French-Canadians whose speech they were intended to imitate. Drummond himself recognized that he could be criticized for this, and defended his practice in his preface:

. . . I have endeavoured to paint a few types, and in doing this, it seemed to me that I could best attain the object in view by having my friends tell their own tales in their own way, as they would relate them to English-speaking auditors not conversant with the French tongue.²²

Louis Frechette, the French-Canadian poet who had been called by Longfellow "the pathfinder of a new land of song," understood Drummond's intentions and in his introduction to The Habitant transferred the title of pathfinder to Drummond, pointing out that Drummond had opened up a new field and, "il en a fait l'exploitation à sa manière, avec des outils et des moyens de son invention."²³

Certainly in attempting to write in the accent of the French-Canadian Drummond was breaking new ground, but the methods, the outils et des moyens, which he employed were not startlingly new. Indeed, his subjects, and his manner are strikingly familiar to readers of Scots verse.

Drummond was born in Ireland in 1854 and came to Canada before he was eleven years old. He carried with him, however, fond memories of

The fisher folk of Donegal,
Kindly of heart and strong of arm,
Who plough the ocean's treacherous farm,
How plainly I behold them all.

("Child Thoughts,"²⁴)

They and their little white cottages were soon replaced by the equally kindly and strong habitants, and Drummond's affection for the two communities is similarly bound up with a nostalgic relish for their vanishing way of life.

The social setting Drummond portrays is very similar to that drawn by Haliburton, Murray, and others of the Scottish "pastoral" school. The Quebecois, like the Scots crofter, has his "twa 'ree acres," or his "hundred arpent," is contented with his rustic life, and his ambitions are few. In "Chibougamou" (Poetical Works, p. 394), for example, Drummond portrays a situation strikingly similar to Hugh Haliburton's "Hughie at the Smiddy". The habitants consider the rumours of a gold rush in the Chibougamou district and discuss the possibility of joining it with the hope of quickly becoming rich. The accounts of gold to be picked up in the streets are met with some scepticism, but the temptation is still great. Nevertheless, the habitant decides that wealth is not everything, and he would not trade his happiness on his little farm for all the gold in Chibougamou. In "How Bateese Came Home" (Poetical Works, p. 24) the story of the restless young man who went off to find his fortune in "the States" ends with the loss of his wealth and his return to the old way of life a chastened and more contented man who now appreciates the simple friendship and support of his community.

"The Habitant" chronicles the year of the farmer and all the benefits of his way of life which make up for his lack of money and the luxuries it can provide. Like so many poems of this type in Scots, the poet contrasts the comforts of the habitant's house with the bitterness of the winter weather outside:

An' den w'en de fall an' de winter come roun' us
 An' bird of de summer is all fly away,
 W'en mebbe she's snowin' an' nort' win' is blowin'
 An' night is mos' t'ree tam' so long as de day.

You t'ink it was bodder de habitant farmer?
 Not at all -- he is happy an' feel satisfy,
 An' cole may las' good w'ile, so long as de wood-pile
 Is ready for burn on de stove by an' bye.

. . . .
 An' some cole winter night how I wish you can see us,
 W'en I smoke on de pipe, an' de ole woman sew
 By de stove of T'ree Reeve -- ma wife's fader geev her
 On day we get marry, dat's long tam' ago --

(*"The Habitant*, p. 4, ll. 41-48; 53-56)

The idyllic domestic scene, in which the children study their lessons while the dog sleeps by the fire, is somewhat reminiscent of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," a resemblance which is increased by an interlude of romance. The eldest daughter, Philomène, sits by the window:

She say de more finer moon never was shiner --
 Very fonny, for moon isn't dat side de house.

(p. 5, ll. 67-68)

and when young Isidore Gourlay arrives, the habitant cries:

Ha! Ha! Philomène! -- dat was smart trick you play us
 Come help de young feller tak' snow from hees neck,
 Dere's not'ing for hinder you come off de winder
 W'en moon you was look for is come, I expec' --

(p. 5, ll. 73-76)

It is a quieter evening than "The Cotter's Saturday Night": parents and children are in bed by nine o'clock, and there is no dancing, singing, or drinking; but Philomène and Isidore remain talking by the fire so late that the next morning "she's so sleepy on bot' of de eye" that she cannot do her work. The habitant heartily approves of his quiet life "way back on de countree," and would not trade it for "a fine house an' beaucoup d'argent" in the city.

"Leetle Bateese" is a mischievous, indulged child of the type celebrated in such poems as "Wee Joukiedaidles":

You bad leetle boy, not moche you care
How busy you're kipin' your poor gran'père

. . .

Off on de fiel' you foller de plough
Den w'en you're tire you scare de cow
Sickin' de dog till dey jomp de wall
So de milk ain't good for not'ing at all --
An' you're only five an' a half dis fall,
Leetle Bateese!

(11. 1-2; 7-12)

Of course the grandfather is tremendously proud of the tough little lad, and says to the sleeping child:

But leetle Bateese! please don't forget
We rader you're stayin' de small boy yet,
So chase de chicken an' mak' dem scare
An' do w'at you lak' wit' your old gran'père
For w'en you're beeg feller he won't be dere --
Leetle Bateese!

(11. 37-42)

There is even an equivalent to the pathetic poems of dead children in "The Last Portage," in which a voyageur is led along a difficult path in the dark by a vision of his little son:

An' I foller it on, an' wance in a w'ile
He turn again wit' de baby smile,
An' say, "Dear fader, I'm here you see --
We're bote togedder, jus' you an' me --
Very dark to you, but to me it's light,
De road we travel so far to-night.

(Poetical Works, p. 287, 11. 37-42)

But Drummond's sentimentality is usually kept at bay by the common sense directness of the habitants themselves.

The "nice leetle Canadienne," like her Scottish cousins, Nancy, Meggie and Jean, is a paragon of womanly virtue, but she also has a mind of her own, as they do:

O she's quick an' she's smart, an' got plaintie heart,
 If you know correc' way go about,
 An' if you don't know, she soon tole you so
 Den tak' de firs' chance an' get out . . .

("De Nice Leetle Canadienne," The Habitant,
 p. 35, ll. 33-36)

In "Be Stove Pipe Hole," one of Drummond's most popular pieces, young Dominique declares his love for Emmeline in an explosion of pent-up, but half-articulate emotion:

"An' if I marry on dat girl, Bagosh! she's lak' de Queen," but this echoes the narrator's comment some lines earlier when he criticizes the father's "fuss" about Emmeline:

Dat's mebbe nice girl, too, but den, Mon
 Dieu, she's not de queen!

(The Habitant, p. 118, ll. 10-11)

Having noticed some similarities between Drummond's habitant verses and the Scottish tradition of "kailyard" verses, it is not surprising that a Scot, Neil Munro, should have contributed an appreciation of Drummond to his Poetical Works. Munro praised Drummond's "scrupulous representation of their [the habitants'] racial life, customs, and character" with the "attitude of a sympathetic and admiring friend."²⁶ Munro was, however, chiefly impressed by Drummond himself, and his confirmation of the romantic image of Canada which Munro had retained from his childhood:

. . . he clinched the matter -- Canada was genuine; the moose, and the wapiti, and the bear were not mere beasts of myth like the dragons of our coinage; the trapper was still in Ungava, and the red canoe was yet upon the waters.²⁷

Yet, in spite of Drummond's verification of the romance of Canada, the way of life he depicts in these poems was beginning to disappear even as he wrote them, and there is a sense of nostalgia underlying many of them which is akin

to the nostalgia of the Scots poets. The references to the voyageurs and Louis Cyr, the Canadian strong man, in "Leetle Bateese" show that Bateese's grandfather expects the boy's life to be little different from his own:

Jus' feel de muscle along hees back,
 Won't geev' heem moche bodder for carry pack
 On de long portage, any size canoe,
 Dere's not many t'ing dat boy won't do . . .

(11. 31-34)

but already the voyageurs were becoming figures of the romantic past, as "The Voyageur" asserts:

Gone is he now, an' de beeg canoe
 No more you'll see wit' de red-shirt crew,
 But long as he leev' he was always true,
 So we'll drink to hees memory.

(Habitant Poems, p. 27, ll. 21-24)

One is subtly aware of the passage of the old way of life in the bleak statement of Leetle Bateese's gran'pere:

An' do w'at you lak' wit' your ole gran'père
 For w'en you're beeg feller he won't be dere --
 Leetle Bateese!

but it also appears in the story of "Bateese the Lucky Man":

Don't see de noder feller lak' Bateese was
 lucky man,
 He can ketch de smartes' feesh is never
 sweem,
 An' de bird he seldom miss dem, let dem try
 de hard dey can
 W'y de eagle on de mountain can't fly
 away from heem.

But all de bird, an' feesh too, is geev up
 feelin' scare,
 An' de rabbit he can stay at home in bed,
 For he feesh an' shoot no longer, ole Jean
 Bateese Belair,
 'Cos he's dead.

(Johnnie Courteau, p. 29-30, ll. 21-28)

Here, in the accent of the Canadian habitant is the laconic elegy long familiar to Scots. The form is curtailed, and

Drummond may not even have been aware of it when he wrote, but the echo is striking, nonetheless.

In his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of Habitant Poems, Arthur L. Phelps reminds the reader:

Drummond belongs to a time and a place. He is rooted in the late nineteenth and the earliest twentieth centuries in Canada, and within Canada, in Quebec,²⁸ and within Quebec, in a single stratum of her society . . .

This limitation has the same advantages for Drummond as it had for Charles Murray, or for any of the Scots poets.

The accuracy of his details, and the deftness of his characterization are firmly rooted in a recognizable tradition and, speaking from a stratum of society in which such flashes of poetry are unexpected, they interest the reader because they provide a fresh and informal view of familiar ideas. Phelps noted in Drummond's verse a characteristic which has also been observed in the work of the Scots poets, and which is related to this limitation of form and subject:

His Irish and English verse is merely verse and for the most part ordinary and flaccid; his French-Canadian work moves constantly into poetry . . . The resultant achievement is a minor one, both in quantity and scope. But it is an achievement within the tradition of Chaucer, Burns and Wordsworth, a branch on a noble tree; and its core is sound.²⁹

Unlike Scots, which is a language in itself, the dialect spoken by Drummond's habitants is broken English. Its use denotes even more certainly than the use of Scots a social register which is rustic and uneducated. This does not mean, however, that it is inherently comic, or that Drummond's characters think they are comical when they speak it. Such oddities as "De cat on de corner she's

bite heem de pup," ("The Habitant," 1. 62) reflect the speaker's tendency to continue to make distinctions in gender which are necessary in French but not in English. The narrator of "Le Vieux Temps" is handicapped when he tries to express his feelings while courting:

Some tam' you get de fever -- some tam'
 you're lak' snowball
 An' all de tam' you ack lak' fou -- can't spik
 no t'ing at all.

(The Habitant, p. 18, ll. 87-88)

His difficulty in expressing himself in English underlines his inarticulate confusion in love, but this same limited vocabulary can be vividly expressive in its own right:

W'en de small sheep is firs' comin' out on de pasture,
 Deir nice leetle tail stickin' up on deir back,
 Dey ronne wit' deir moder, an' play wit' each oder
 An' jomp all de tam' jus' de sam' dey was crack.

("The Habitant," p. 2, ll. 17-20)

Seldom has the over-worked adjective nice been so appropriately used. It is trite, the sort of word an habitant would use, and yet it is also precise if one recalls its earlier meaning of neat, precise, or dainty.³⁰

The habitant dialect can only be used for habitant poetry, and, moreover, it is only possible to write effectively in that dialect if one has a command of standard English as well. Drummond allows his friends "to tell their own tales" but it is the English-speaking Drummond who recognizes the charm of their language and who casts it into an established tradition. It may have been Gideon Plouffe's description of a storm, "An' de win' she blow, blow, blow," that rang in Drummond's ears and inspired the writing of his most famous poem, "The Wreck of the Julie Plante,"³¹ but the poem is, nevertheless, a

delightful parody, not just of the traditional ballad form, as Northrop Frye has pointed out, but of the equally popular recitation piece, "The Wreck of the Hesperus".

The captain's fair daughter in Longfellow's poem becomes the cook, Rosie, and the Hesperus becomes the woodscow, Julie Plante, but their fate is the same: the captain ties Rosie to the mast in the midst of a dreadful storm, but all are drowned. Even the moral at the end humorously recalls Longfellow's ending:

-- Such was the wreck of the Hesperus, in the mid-
 night and the snow!
 Christ save us all from a death like this, on the
 reef of Norman's Woe!³²

Drummond's piece of simplistic advice has become a part of Canadian folklore:

MORAL

Now all you wood scow sailor man
 Tak' warning by dat storm
 An' go an' marry some nice French girl
 An' leev on wan beeg farm
 De win' can blow lak' hurricane
 An' s'pose she blow some more,
 You can't get drown on Lac St. Pierre
 So long you stay on shore.

(The Habitant, p. 10, 11. 41-48)

Of Munro's comment that Drummond's verses gave English-Canadians "respect for their French compatriots," Arthur L. Phelps says, "How remote it all sounds. How innocent and refreshing."³³ Perhaps it is innocent and refreshing in comparison to the modern situation, but it ought to serve as a reminder to those who are inclined to interpret cynically the attempts of educated writers to portray the lives and sentiments of less educated people. However patronizing they may seem to be, and however influenced by the worn-out cliches and stereotypes of popular verse,

they are, nevertheless, attempts to portray their subjects realistically. William Henry Drummond's portrayal of the habitant, particularly his speech, is convincing. The personalities of his habitant farmers and lumbermen are vividly and sharply defined, maintaining attitudes which are definitely their own (for example, the independence of "De Nice Leetle Canadienne") not some wishful projection by the poet. Childlike as they may sometimes seem, it is an innocence of pretention and a lack of self-consciousness which is treated with delightful sympathy and lack of condescension. There is no more charming example of Drummond's talent for suggesting discreet and sympathetic observation than "Bateese and His Little Decoys" in which the ageing hunter is shown on his deathbed, beguiling the time by playing with his decoys and "teaching" them how to quack:

Quack! quack! quack!
 O! stop dat screechin', don't never spik no more
 For if any t'ing, sapree, tonnerre! you're worsen
 dan before,
 I wonder w'at you do wit' all your schoolin'!

Come out from onderneat' de bed Lisette!
 I believe you was de fattes' of de lot . . .

(Johnnie Courteau, p. 138, ll. 53-58)

Drummond's habitant verses lack the academic element of Hugh Haliburton's Horace in Homespun, and the unity derived from the use of a central figure, but they share a similar nostalgic idealization of country life. The contrast between city and country which is so prominent in Haliburton's poetry is equally evident in Drummond's "The Bell of Saint Michel" and "Leetle Lac Grenier". The similarities between the two poets are underlined by the simi-

larity between the illustrations by Frederick Simpson Coburn for several of Drummond's volumes,³⁴ and the illustration of Horace in Homespun (1900) by A.S. Boyd. The style of these steel engraved vignettes is typical, not only of illustrations for the fiction of the period, but of those used in journalism as well, and so emphasized the factual basis of both collections.

Uneducated Poets in Canada

William Henry Drummond, Isabella Valancy Crawford, and Theodore Goodridge Roberts were all poets who could, and did, write standard English but chose to adopt the persona of a dialect-speaker for some or all of their major work. Of the three, Drummond is the only one whose dialect verses take precedence over his English verse. As Neil Munro said, Drummond holds a unique place in the poetry of the British Empire.³⁵ Yet even Drummond, like the others, portrayed rustic life from the outside, and it is interesting to compare the work of these experimenters with dialect with efforts of the truly self-taught poets of Canada's nineteenth century.

The Scottish cult of the amateur poet was imported to Canada with the Scottish settlers, and proved both an asset and a liability as it had in Scotland. Some of their products have already been discussed in the survey of the anthology Selections from Scottish-Canadian Poets in Chapter Three. James McIntyre, the "cheddar cheese" poet of Ingersoll, Ontario is perhaps the most naive, and at the same time the most amusing of the Scottish-Canadians. His "Dairy and Cheese Odes" are unconsciously comic: he

defends his choice of cheese-making as a poetic theme with the observation, "As cheese-making first began in this county and it has already become the chief industry of many counties, it is no insignificant theme,"³⁶ and describes Canada in terms no other poet had thought of using:

Fair Canada is our Theme,
Land of rich cheese, milk and cream.

Though he wrote on many national and Imperial themes, in poems such as "Welcome to the Prince of Wales," "Canada's Resources," and "North-West Rebellion, 1885," his most original poems are the "Ode on the Mammoth Cheese; Weight over Seven Thousand Pounds":

We have seen thee, queen of cheese
Lying quietly at your ease,
Gently fanned by evening breeze,
Thy fair form no flies dare seize.

. . . .

May you not receive a scar as
We have heard that Mr. Harris
Intends to show you off as far^{as}
The great world-show at Paris.³⁷

(p. 71, ll. 1-4; 13-16)

and "Ensilage":

The farmers now should all adorn
A few fields with sweet southern corn,
It is luscious, thick and tall,
The beauty of the fields in fall.

For it doth make best ensilage,
For those in dairying engage,
It makes the milk in streams to flow
Where dairymen have a good silo.

(p. 73, ll. 1-8)

The resemblance to Dundee's McGonagall is embarrassing.

Robert Murdoch, whose Poems, Songs, Toasts and Epigrams betray their origins as occasional poems composed for the local Burns Club, informs the reader, "My birth

dates back to 26th Nov., 1863"³⁸ and is careful to note the poems, such as the following, which were "Copied from the original without any alteration," a claim which it is all too easy to believe:

When the Mariner gangs tae sea
 And trusts his steerin' gear tae me,
 Though by appearance perfect be,
 There's a' deception,
 Which causes many a watery grave
 And deep reflection.

("Holy Jimmie," stanza 10)

His toasts and epigrams are uninspired but at least have the merit of being unpretentious and direct:

Lawyer John, pray haud your tongue,
 And tend your clients' schemes,
 And tend to Maggie's natural wants,
 And bless her wi' some "weans."

(p. 95)

He also provides an interesting example of an occasion when English spelling and Scottish pronunciation are at variance:

At last, not least
 Auld Aunty Christy,
 Who brought me water
 When I was thirsty.

John William Robertson, the self-styled "Bard o' Glen-Eerie" was a doggerel rhymer most at home with laments and accounts of disasters, while Thomas Johnston concluded his Canadian and Scottish Songs and Poems (1920)³⁹ with an apology which makes up in candour for all that his verses lack in skill:

I am ending up my poetry
 Which some may criticize,
 And some may think this book it is
 A failure in their eyes.

.

There's parts of it that are not good
 And parts they're even bad
 And verses, when you read them,
 Perchance will make you sad.

.

And if I write another book
 I'll try and better do,
 But now, just at the present time,
 I'll bid goodbye to you.

The effect of naive poetry was not always ludicrous, however, and the uneducated poet often produced work which conveyed a more realistic impression of pioneer life than the formal efforts of poets like Goldsmith, Kirby, and Howe. In Alexander McLachlan's The Emigrant Canada has a unique example of an unsophisticated poet attempting to write an epic on a pioneer theme. It is incomplete and technically flawed, but it is both an ambitious attempt and an illuminating social document.

Alexander McLachlan was a Glasgow tailor who emigrated to Canada in 1840. James A. Roy concluded that McLachlan was "at best an imitator of Burns without a trace of his genius and he was not in the true sense of the word a Canadian poet."⁴⁰ In fact, McLachlan's record of the pioneer's life comes as close as possible to the heart of the Canadian experience, not only in factual matters but in its authenticity of tone: The Emigrant, with all its weaknesses, is a truly Canadian poem, and its author must be regarded as a Canadian poet, though he belongs no less to the literary history of Scotland.

The Emigrant is based on some of McLachlan's own experiences, but it reflects in wider terms the experience of the poor who were forced to emigrate in order to make a living:

I love my own country and race,
 Nor lightly I fled from them both;
 Yet who would remain in a place
 With too many spoons for the broth?

The Squire is preserving his game --
 He says that God gave it to him --
 And he'll banish the poor, without shame,
 For touching a feather or limb.

The Justice, he feels very big,
 And boasts what the law can secure;
 With two different laws in 'his wig,'
 Which he keeps for the rich and the poor.

The Bishop he preaches and prays,
 And talks of a heavenly birth;
 But somehow, for all that he says,
 He grabs a good share of the earth.

Old England is eaten by knaves,
 Yet her heart is all right at the core;
 May she ne'er be the mother of slaves,
 May no foreign foe land on her shore.

("Old England is Eaten by Knaves,"
 stanzas 2-6)

It is perhaps significant, however, that McLachlan attributes this radical song to the English emigrant, Tom, and gives the Scottish Mac a more traditionally sentimental song:

Farewell Caledonia, my country, farewell!
 Adieu ev'ry scarr'd cliff and lone rocky fell.
 Your dark peaks are fading away from my view --
 I ne'er thought I lov'd you so dearly till noo;
 For furtune hath chased me across the wild main,
 And the blue hills of Scotland I'll ne'er see again.

(Section V, p. 221, stanza 1)

The poem follows the emigrant from his parting from Scotland through his journey to Canada and his experiences in the pioneer community. The usual episodes, "Cutting the First Tree," "The Log Cabin," and "The Indian Battle" are followed by a lengthy digression which tells the story of Donald Ban, a highland hunter and bard who laments the destruction of his old home and "the banishment from his

native land" (p. 210) during which he becomes blind and loses his family, finding his only solace in playing the pipes. The poet's "parting address" to his dead friend, Donald Ban, ends with an "Au Revoir" in which he promises to go on and tell the story of the changes which have taken place since the pioneer days:

Of the swarms of public robbers,
 Speculators and land jobbers --
 Of the sorry set of teachers,
 Of the bogus tribe of preachers,
 Of the host of herb physicians,
 And of cunning politicians.

(p. 256)

McLachlan's project was, however, never completed.

The narrative, interspersed with songs in standard ballad forms, is told in straightforward rhymed couplets which move briskly, without any pretense of the grand manner:

The weary world of waters pass'd,
 In Canada arrived at last --
 Pioneers of civilization,
 Founders of a mighty nation --
 Soon we entered in the woods,
 O'er the trackless solitudes,
 Where the spruce and cedar made
 An interminable shade

(p. 222)

It is primarily in English, though some of the lyrics are in Scots, and occasionally Scots gives point to a passage, as in Doubling John's" report of "Skifflint's last advice":

It is short and soon repeated,
Simply 'Cheat or ye'll be cheated.
A' moral creeds are strings o' blethers;
The world's a goose, pluck ye her feathers;
Nae matter how ye rax and draw,
If ye aye keep within the law;
And ye may lie, and dodge, and wheel,
A's fair as lang's ye dinna steal;
And be ye either saint or sinner,
A's richt as lang as ye're the winner;
So get cash, if ye can come at it
By fair means, but be sure and get it.'

Both James A. Roy and J.P. Matthews remark on the note of egalitarianism and social radicalism which The Emigrant introduced to Canadian poetry. Roy considers McLachlan's radicalism typical of the Scots who settled in Ontario,⁴¹ but it is very strongly expressed in McLachlan's work, and so it is easy to understand Matthews' opinion that McLachlan sounds more Australian than Canadian in his radical poems.⁴²

Radicalism is a strong thread in The Emigrant but it does not make an effective element in the poem's structural or thematic development. It surfaces in the passages where the settlers reflect on their reasons for emigration and the new life they hope to find in Canada, but it becomes submerged by other themes, such as the homesickness of Donald Ban.

In his treatment of the wilderness McLachlan is equally original and equally unconscious of form. He describes the emigrants' first camp in the forest without any of the earlier poets' distrust and fear of the wilderness, emphasizing the harmony of the men with their environment:

. . . at ev'ning fix'd our camp
 Where a cool, refreshing spring
 Murmur'd like a living thing --
 Like sweet Charity, I ween,
 Tracking all its path with green
 Gipsies in the greenwood shade,
 Hunters in the forest free,
 Never camp'd more gleefully

(p. 222)

The choice of gypsies and hunters as comparable figures to the emigrants is determined by the need for an immediate simile. A few lines later the first tent is described by an image only tenuously connected to the situation, with an ambiguity of phrase which only emphasizes the carelessness of McLachlan's choice of imagery:

There our humble tent was spread,
 With the green boughs overhead,
 Such as wand'ring Arabs rear
 In their deserts lone and drear.

(p. 227)

In another brief space the harmony of men and nature is forgotten in the difficulty of felling the first tree:

Then we gazed upon the sight
 With the consciousness of might,
 And we cheer'd as when a foe
 Or a tyrant is laid low.

(p. 229)

McLachlan clearly has little control over his subject matter and his imagery. While he is capable of expressing unconventional attitudes he is not interested in developing them into a unified statement. Ultimately it is this lack of concern with unity of theme and structural coherence which is the greatest flaw in The Emigrant and which prevents it from being more than a literary curiosity.

McLachlan's other verses span a wide range, from the thorny cogitations of "God," "Awful Spirit," and "Infinite," against which the simple piety of Hugh Haliburton can be seen as an idealized portrait, to lively character sketches of country folk like "Auld Granny Broon":

Her man gaed to skin and to bane
 Wi' her changin' him into a mare,
 For wi' saddle an' bridle an' rein
 She rode him a' nicht thro' the air.

(p. 318)

and Auld Saunders in "Ahead of His Time":

A plain, unpretending apostle was he,
 Wi' a tourie-tapt, twa-storey heid,
 And under each arch'd brow a double-ring'd e'e,
 In the centre a bonnie blue bead --
 An e'e that was never intended to leer,
 That tauld o' a spirit high-toned,
 Yet seem'd half unconscious of things that were near,
 And always seem'd looking beyond.

(p. 349)

Along with his efforts in English and Scots verse McLachlan made several attempts at comic pieces in the Canadian idiom. These are effective enough as comic verse but their importance lies in the way McLachlan is compelled to use slang, not just regional dialect or accent, in order to represent the speech of the rural Canadian:

This settlement is getting old,
 And just a leetle crowdy;
 I'll not loaf around this worn out ground,
 Like any idle rowdy.
 There's few like me can fell a tree,
 I'm bully at the axe;
 I'm twenty-one, it's time dad's son
 Was up and making tracks.

("Going to the Bush," p. 425)

Occasional traces of local pronunciation are suggested by the spelling, as in "leetle" in the quotation above, and, a few lines later, "onsartin," but these are rare. More interesting, perhaps, is McLachlan's rhyming of "sleighbing" and "hurrahing" in "Young Hoss" (p. 444). If it is not simply carelessness, as in the pairing of "station" and "caution" several lines earlier, it suggests the Canadian (or North American) "hurray" rather than the older "hurrah".

In spite of his excursions into colloquialism and his fondness for the portrayal of pioneer life, McLachlan considered himself as more than just a popular rhymster. His many poems on religious and philosophical themes and the strong moralistic tone of many of his writings reveal a poet who regarded his work with great seriousness, and his contemporaries tended to measure his work by the same standards, ignoring his pioneer and dialect verses and concentrating on his attempts at a loftier tone.⁴³ The fact that modern readers are enchanted by the rough conversationalism and straightforward common sense of his pioneer

sketches is a reflection of the changed attitude to poetry since McLachlan's day and a better understanding of his real strengths as a poet.

Alexander Glendinning

A poet with a similar rough and ready directness in his verse is Alexander Glendinning.⁴⁴ Glendinning, who arrived in Canada in 1836 and settled near Scarborough, Ontario, had few pretensions to poetry but made his mark in Canadian popular culture as the writer of "The Scarborough Settler's Lament," which appears in the Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs:

Away wi' Canada's muddy creeks and Canada's fields
of pine!
Your land of wheat is a goodly land, but ah! it
isna mine!
The heathy hill, the grassy dale, the daisy-spangled
lea,
The purling burn and craggy linn, auld Scotia's glens,
gie me.

His "Epistle to the Laird of Davington and Mr. W. Elliott, Kirkhope" gives a different picture of pioneer life. He cheerfully relates the story of his journey to Canada and then sums up his account of his present condition with rueful good humour:

I whiles look down my cloutit breeks,
The crutch just now wants twa three steeks;
But what care I for Fortune's freaks?
They need nae jacket
Wha hae nought else to do for weeks
But trees to whack at.

Glendinning is at his best with the verse epistle. He writes unselfconsciously with a fluid rhythmic line and a light comic touch unusual in a backwoods poet. An excellent example of this is the conclusion to his "Epistle to Mr. John Bell":

I guess you'll be thinking this Poem's a haver
 For an auld man to write; I maun try to be graver;
 But what mair can I say?
 We're still toiling away,
 Hoping still to be rich at some no distant day;
 The date comes for certain, for Time tarries never;
 But we are as far frae the riches as ever.
 Each day brings a struggle, like four-treadle weaving;
 We have to kill ourselves nearly to keep ourselves
 living.
 After beating the air half a century or near it,
 I begin to conclude, with a writer of merit,
 'Tis vanity all and vexation of spirit.
 Now write right away, it needs but a beginning,
 And oblige your old friend,
 Alexander Glendinning.

(p. 13)

Glendinning is less radical than McLachlan, preferring
 to comment on his own experience rather than moralize upon
 the actions of others, but he is well aware of contemporary
 events and his poems include references to the American
 Civil War, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the Great
 Eastern, and the Atlantic Cable. His opinion of the
 Yankee claim to surpass Britain is typical of his direct
 colloquialism:

The maist they whip's three million slaves --
 Twa-thirds black niggers, and the laves
 Their ain py'd rout,
 Bred up and driven to fairs, Gude save's!
 Like sheep and nowt.

("Epistle to the Laird of Davington," p. 44)

These homespun poets wrote directly from their own
 experience and it is this which gives their verse its ring
 of authority, although they could not give it formal expres-
 sion. They did not make a direct contribution to the
 development of Canadian poetry but they provide an interes-
 ting contrast to the conventional image of the untutored
 poet and the uncultured pioneer. They are neither as
 simple-minded nor as contented with their lot as their

fictional counterparts, nor are their poetical talents predictably lyrical. They wrote few memorable songs but the shrewdness of their observation and the forcefulness of their social comment are striking.

Other Scottish Emigrants

Though the naive poets may attract our attention for their curiosity value and the opportunity they provide of comparing the real experience of the pioneer with the idealized vision of the academic poets, there were many competent amateur poets who made a conscious effort to balance their nostalgia for Scotland with their pride in their new home. Though their work rarely rose above the mediocre they occasionally touched upon some detail which brought it to life.

John Macfarlane's Songs of the Thistle and Maple⁴⁵ is a suitable example. The songs of the thistle are conventional tributes to the beauties of Scotland and generally express a nostalgia which is neatly expressed but scarcely distinguishable from the outpourings of numerous other exiles:

"Oh, mither, mither, we comena back,
 Tho' the bluid to come be fey,
 For the weird o' the warld that hauds us here
 Till we slumber in kirkyards grey."
 Sae the Mither sits by the wastlin' main,
 In the mirk o' eild an' care,
 An her thochts are lang for the sinder'd bairns
 That come to the hame nae mair.

("The Mither," p. 11)

In "The Twa Prayers," a re-telling in Scots of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, he shows that he can

reproduce the narrative style of a homely story-teller and the poem comes briefly to life in his description of the two men:

The ane was an up-settin' body atweel,
 Wi' an unco conceit o' himsel';
 The ither a menseless thro-ither chiel,
 Wi' nae muckle guid to tell.

(11. 5-8)

Yet the re-telling of parables is commonplace in Scots and Macfarlane does not offer anything new in his version.

Most of Macfarlane's songs of the maple are similarly conventional: "Canada Fair," "Rally Round the British Banner!," "Raise the Song for Canada," and "The Maple Tree" have their counterparts in numerous collections of patriotic verse. But, "To a Canadian Robin," in spite of its unabashed borrowing from Wordsworth, springs from an experience familiar to most Canadians, which is rarely mentioned in Canadian poetry:

This eve of spring is magical; and there,
 Beneath the greening boughs at daylight's wane,
 "Earth hath not anything to show more fair"
 Than thou, sweet warbler, singing in the rain.

These four simple lines are, in one respect, totally inadequate, too vague to convey the scene to anyone who does not already know it, and yet, to a Canadian, the single detail, that the robin is singing in the rain, stamps the poem as the product of first-hand observation and the poem as a whole conjures up a wealth of association.

Similarly William Telford, whose work is otherwise unworthy of notice, catches the reader's attention with a few lines on "First Day of April":⁴⁶

O, Canada, I gravely fear,
 This morning marks your name severe;
 The north-west winds so fiercely blow,
 And furious drives the drifting snow.
 Five months has nearly taken flight

Since woods and fields were clad in white,
Successive storms of wind and snows,
With frost that skinned the ear and nose.

.

Both man and beast to shelter cling,
Astonished at Canadian spring.

(11. 1-8; 15-16)

A complete survey of these writers would tire the patience of the reader unnecessarily. Poets like these received a degree of critical attention, both from critics anxious to promote Canadian poetry and from those particularly interested in the role of the Scots in Canada, which seems completely unwarranted today. Nevertheless, the fact that so many minor poets were writing and being read speaks well for the state of Canadian literature at the time. The standard of quality may not have been high, but it was not unduly low.

NOTES

1. Louis L. Snyder, The Meaning of Nationalism (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954; rpt. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972), p. 21.
2. The languages of the native peoples of Canada are also the subject of study and efforts of preservation and promotion but they lie beyond the bounds of this thesis.
3. Stephen Leacock was born in 1869 at Swanmore, Hampshire, and came to Canada in 1876.
4. Irving Layton, "Anglo-Canadian," Poetry of Our Time, ed. Louis Dudek (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966; rpt. 1972), p. 252.
5. Muir, p. 71.
6. Henry Alexander, "Is there an American Language?" Queen's Quarterly 34 (1926), p. 192.
7. *ibid.*
8. *ibid.*
9. John Penguerne Matthews, Commonwealth Literature, p. 27.
10. Walter Avis and A.M. Kinloch, Writings on Canadian English, 1792-1975 (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977), items 343 and 409.
11. Personal experience.
12. Morton W. Bloomfield, "Canadian English and its Relation to Eighteenth Century American Speech," Journal of English and American Philology, 1948, p. 59.
13. The Scottish Review XVI (1890), p. 1.
14. M.H. Scargill, "Sources of Canadian English," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 1957, p. 612.
15. Bloomfield, p. 59, referring to E.L. Chrionot, MLR, X (1915), pp. 88-89.
16. Bloomfield, p. 62.
17. R.D. Mathews, Commonwealth Literature, p. 162.
18. M.H. Scargill, "The Growth of Canadian English," LHC, p. 255.
19. The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford, ed. J.W. Garvin (Toronto: Briggs, 1905).

20. Roy Daniells, "Crawford, Carman, and D.C. Scott," LHC, p. 409.
21. W.H. Drummond, The Habitant; and Other French-Canadian Poems (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898).
22. Drummond, The Habitant, p. xi.
23. *ibid.*, p. v.
24. Drummond, The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond, with an Introduction by Louis Frechette and an Appreciation by Neil Munro (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), p. 235.
25. Drummond, Johnnie Courteau and Other Poems (New York and London: G. Putnam's Sons, 1901), p. 116.
26. Poetical Works, p. xii.
27. *ibid.*, p. xv.
28. Arthur L. Phelps, "Introduction," Habitant Poems by W.H. Drummond (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart, 1926; rpt. 1966), p. 12.
29. Habitant Poems, pp. 12-13.
30. R.E. Rashley, "W.H. Drummond and the Dilemma of Style," Dalhousie Review XXVIII (1949), pp. 387-396 presents an interesting discussion of this aspect of Drummond's verse.
31. J.F. Macdonald, quoted by Phelps, Habitant Poems, p.8.
32. David Charles Bell, Bell's Standard Elocutionist, with Alexander Melville Bell (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), pp. 249-250. The authors are, respectively, brother and father of Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone. The senior Bell's system of "visible speech" is but one example of the family's long interest in the physiology of the voice and elocution. The Bells, like many other Scots, emigrated to Canada in 1870.
33. Phelps, Habitant Poems, p. 11.
34. Among the works illustrated by Coburn were The Habitant (1898) and Johnnie Courteau (1901).
35. Drummond, Poetical Works, p. xix.
36. James McIntyre, Poems of James McIntyre (Ingersoll, Ontario: Chronicle, 1889).
37. The mammoth cheese was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1889.

38. Robert Murdoch, A Complete Work of Robert Murdoch . . . Containing Poems, Songs, Toasts and Epigrams. With a Sketch of the Life of the Poet (Halifax: Macnab, 1890).
39. Thomas Johnston, Canadian and Scottish Songs and Poems (Calgary: Author, 1920).
40. Roy, The Scot and Canada, p. 88.
41. *ibid.*
42. J.P. Matthews, Tradition in Exile, p. 137.
43. James Duff, "Alexander McLachlan," Queen's Quarterly VIII, pp. 132-144.
44. Alexander Glendinning, Rhymes . . . v. 1 (London, Ontario: Free Press Print, 1871).
45. John Macfarlane [John Arbory], Songs of the Thistle and Maple (Toronto: Briggs, 1913).
46. William Telford, The Poems of William Telford . . . Bard of the Peterborough St. Andrews Society (Peterborough, Ontario: Stratton, 1887).

Chapter Seven: The Assimilation of the Wilderness

Canada's Confederation, beginning in 1867, had a noticeable effect on the poetry which was produced in the newly-formed country. The patriotic verses in the Dewart and Lighthall anthologies are typical of the response which poets made to the challenge of a developing nation. As it has been shown, however, this response was conventional; an intellectual rather than an emotional response, felt deeply, perhaps, but not expressed passionately, and certainly not given an identifiably Canadian voice.

In spite of Bernard Muddiman's dismissal of the "period of [Canada's] literary crudities,"¹ it is surprising how many of Canada's early writers attempted polished, formal, "serious" poetry rather than the cruder forms of polished verse. Several, like Sangster, Heavyside, and even Andrew Shiels, undertook to write in major rather than minor forms.

The pre-Confederation poets were not notably successful in their attempts at "academic" poetry, but it is interesting to compare their efforts, as J.P. Matthews has done, with the poetic tradition in Australia where the popular tradition triumphed over the academic.² According to Matthews, the ballad tradition was more successful in Australia than in Canada because the latter has a more refined level of taste.³ It is perhaps more useful, then, when thinking of early Canadian poets, to imagine them as being all the more eager to maintain an elevated style of poetry because of their rough pioneering life. They would be more inclined to avoid the simpler colloquial manner

appropriate to a pioneer society and adopt a more literary, although unsuitable diction, in order to prove that they were not all ignorant backwoodsmen.

Fred Cogswell noted several reasons for the predominance of poetry in the Maritime Provinces between 1850 and 1880. Among these were the scattered population and precarious base for the support of literary publishing, but the strongest reason lay in poetry's value as a prestige symbol in the Loyalist society, a status which it shared with classical education.⁴

This non-utilitarian respect for education and this careful following of models kept Maritime writers from the barbarisms perpetrated by many frontiersmen elsewhere. At the same time, they inculcated the principle of imitation at the expense of originality, leading writers to rely too greatly upon forms of literature designed to meet conditions other than their own.⁵

J.P. Matthews attributed part of this dependence on the English tradition to the fact that the Canadian climate, while harsher and more extreme, was not as dissimilar as the Australian climate from that of the Mother Country.⁶ But apart from being superficially appropriate to the Canadian climate and landscape, the English literary tradition offered several effective means of treating a strange environment in poetry. One, the didactic tradition descended from Virgil's Georgics, treated landscape descriptions as an extension of descriptions of farming activities: this was easily adaptable to descriptions of the discomforts and the struggles involved in winning a livelihood from the forest. The Byronic narrative in the Childe Harold vein, in which the adventures of the traveller in the new land could be recounted was the model chosen by Charles Sangster for his The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay. Yet another

was the short lyric, often the sonnet, in which a single characteristic scene, or an example of Canadian wild life could be described. These were ideal forms for recording first impressions: chronological structure and detached observation helped overcome the difficulties involved in seeking an appropriate thematic unity in the subject; and the language, traditionally associated with the more domesticated landscape of Europe, by its very incongruity, underlined the contrast between the old and the new which was often at the heart of these poems. They were less successful in communicating any native feeling for the landscape, and the traditional elevated diction tended to keep the poem too far removed from the homespun pioneers whose struggles with the environment were being portrayed.

The "crudity" of this type of poetry resides in the inappropriateness of the diction, and, perhaps also, the lack of a settled point of view. Many early Canadian poets, like Charles Sangster, are travel or chronicle poets, attempting to take in as much of the landscape or history as possible. It is not until the Confederation poets, not until Roberts and Lampman, that we find a Canadian sitting still, "forged" with the landscape as in Lampman's "Heat".

Compare Sangster journeying up the Saguenay:

. . . . Pass the eye
 Along the ever-looming scene, where'er we go,
 What startling barriers, rising sullenly
 From the dark deeps, like giants, seem to place
 An adamantine gateway, close and high,
 To bar our progress; meet them face to face,
 The magic doors fly open, and the rocks recede apace.

("The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay,"
 LXXXV, 11. 3-9)

with Lampman, drowsing over an Ontario landscape:

I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
 The burning sky-line blinds my sight:
 The woods far off are blue with haze
 The hills are drenched with light.

And yet to me not this or that
 Is always sharp or always sweet;
 In the sloped shadow of my hat
 I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
 Nay more, I think some blessed power
 Hath brought me wandering idly here:
 In the full furnace of this hour
 My thoughts grow keen and clear.

("Heat," ll. 37-48)⁷

Sangster's is a much more restless poem, not only because it is a travel poem, but because the poet himself must be constantly exploring his environment: it is constantly opening out to him. Lampman's environment is a familiar one, in which the discoveries are in fact rediscoveries.

"The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay" suffers from Sangster's lack of technical skill; his imagery and diction are cruder than Lampman's; but both poets, if we consider their work in general, are concerned with similar things: both "muse" and "dream" in the presence of nature, and in both nature inspires thoughts that are never given full expression, whether, as in Sangster's verse, the poet's words fail him:

My lips are mute. I cannot speak the thought
 That like a bubble on the placid sea,
 Bursts ere it tells the tale with which 'tis fraught.

("The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay," st. CIII,
 ll. 1-3)

or whether, as Lampman so often does, he simply refuses to tell the reader any more than that he has thought ("Heat," line 48).

There are, however, differences in detail. Sangster's description of the beauties which inspire him to such profound thought are paradoxically full of effort and yet careless. The emotion he tries to convey is too intense for his powers of expression, and one feels he is trying too hard to convince the reader of the grandeur of the scene, while his disappointment with the landscape's lack of history and legend reflect the newcomer's anxiety to understand his new environment in familiar terms:

Oh! stately bluffs! As well seek to efface
The light of the bless'd stars as to obtain
From thy sealed, granite lips, tradition or refrain!

("The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay,"
LXXXIV, 11. 7-9)

The earlier poets laboured under considerable difficulties, quite apart from their difficulty in coming to terms with their environment. They were poets who, if they had a sense of place, could not be expected to have a common sense of nationalism for a nation which did not, as yet, exist. This, as well as the sparse population and difficult communication from one area to another, meant that they tended to write in isolation and were hindered from developing a common idea of Canadian poetry.

The four "Confederation Poets," who vitalized Canadian poetry in the eighteen seventies and eighties were all born within a few years of 1860: they belonged to the first generation to grow to maturity as Canadians. More important, perhaps, they were the first generation of native poets to form that rare thing in Canadian arts and letters, a school.

Bliss Carman and his cousin, Charles G.D. Roberts, were educated together in Fredericton at the Collegiate

School and the University of New Brunswick. Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott were Ottawa men employed in the Civil Service; Lampman in the Post Office and Scott with the Department of Indian Affairs. Both had been inspired by Roberts' Orion and Other Poems (1880), but it was Lampman who encouraged Scott to take up poetry.⁸ All four were friends and kept up a stimulating friendship with other poets such as Wilfred Campbell, Francis Sherman and Theodore Goodridge Roberts.

Pelham Edgar stressed the importance of the Confederation Poets' influence upon one another:

Roberts and Carman lived much together at one time, and were subjected to the same shaping influences. The same thing is true of Lampman and Scott, and so it is that a healthy element of rivalry, friendly emulation, and stimulating sympathy enters into our poetry for the first time. These poets wrote not only for themselves but they wrote for one another, and it was the ambition of each to have his verses commended by his friend. The comment was usually frank, and the result was always healthy.⁹

The effect of this mutual encouragement and criticism can easily be seen in the contrast between the work of these poets and that of Charles Mair. Mair's Tecumseh, a Drama and Canadian Poems, which appeared in 1901, seems considerably older in manner and poetic influence than the work of these younger poets whose most important work actually preceded it.¹⁰ As J.P. Matthews points out, there is no indication that Mair, whose poetry has considerable strength in spite of its antiquated diction and uncertain dramatic structure, was aware of what these Fredericton and Ottawa poets were doing.¹¹

Not only were they fortunate in their friendship, the Confederation poets were the first generation of Canadian poets to be educated at native universities.¹² Their edu-

cation gave them a familiarity with modern trends in poetry which had not been available to most of the earlier poets, but it did not isolate them from their contemporaries who shared the same background.

Previously, any young poet fortunate enough to have obtained a university education had to travel to England or the United States where, though he would occasionally meet with other Canadians, the emphasis in meetings of literary societies and informal discussions would certainly be on British or American literary problems rather than Canadian. This might be useful in encouraging a cosmopolitan poetry, but it could do little to encourage a distinctively Canadian literature. One thinks of Hugh MacDiarmid's comment on Edwin Muir and how his writing for a foreign market affected his work,¹³ and of E.K. Brown's comment on the Canadian novelists Mazo de la Roche and Morley Callaghan who also tailored their work for audiences outside their own country.¹⁴

If one considers the experience of John Davidson in London, when he encountered the Rhymers' Club it is possible to see an association with similarly mixed consequences, although Davidson remained apart from the Rhymers and never completely assimilated the Decadent mannerisms which he occasionally tried.¹⁵ Davidson's work took on a much more modern tone after his acquaintance with the Rhymers had been made, and was even more influenced by his friendship with Henley, but all of these influences tended to draw Davidson further away from his Scottish background, to abandon rather than explore a past which he hated.

The Confederation poets were fortunate in obtaining an education which put them in touch with the mainstream of English literature: George Parkin, who taught Roberts and Carman, had been educated at Oxford where he became acquainted with the writing of Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne and Rossetti. Roberts' account of the enthusiasm which Parkin brought to his teaching indicates how completely the new currents in English poetry were being transmitted to the rising generation of poets in Canada:

England just then was thrilling to the new music, the new colour, the new raptures of Swinburne and Rossetti: Parkin was steeped in them; and in his rich voice he would recite to us ecstatically, over and over till we too were intoxicated with them, the great choruses from "Atalanta in Calydon," and passages from "The Triumph of Time", -- but above all, "The Blessed Damozel", which he loved so passionately that Bliss suspected him of sometimes saying it instead of his prayers. But Parkin did not confine himself to the Pre-Raphaelites. He would quote Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold to us, and he taught us to know Homer and Horace . . . as supreme poets and masters of verbal music.¹⁶

But they received this education in Canada and were thus encouraged to relate it to their native experience.

A.J.M. Smith described the environment in which the Confederation poets received their education as possessing a special charm:

It is the charm of a quiet, old-world, gentlemanly society, where the culture is that of the rectory and the classics, perhaps a little provincial, but not raw or uncertain, and saved from any taint of the anemic by the forest and streams and the not-too-distant sea.¹⁷

The result was a period of literary achievement which had been unknown in Canada before. Claude T. Bissell says of the eighteen seventies and eighties:

For the first time there was a vitality and density to literary life that can make the study of taste something more than an arid documentation of the banal.¹⁸

In the following pages several representative poems by the Confederation poets and their contemporaries will be discussed in order to illustrate the ways in which their poetry introduced a native element into Canadian literature as well as the characteristics of the individual poets which make them worthy of critical attention.

Though the Confederation poets lived in different parts of the country, they lived in a similar situation, in settled communities where the wilderness was close enough to be accessible, but did not have as direct an influence upon daily life as it did on the frontier. Their landscape bore the impression of man's hand, but it was still possible to see the contrast between the cultivated and the uncultivated land which had so obsessed the poets who came before them.

We have already seen the nostalgia which this contrast called up in the early poets, such as Sangster, and the eagerness with which such writers as Andrew Shiels attempted to supply the myths and legends which they felt were lacking in the new country. In order for this nostalgia to be successfully transplanted to Canada, it was necessary for a generation of native-born poets to grow up. Duncan Campbell Scott's "The Canadian's Home-Song" is an example of the kind of writing which could then develop.

In this piece the poet has taken many of the features of Canada which were mentioned with horror by the earliest settlers and turned them into the objects of the speaker's longing in a poem which otherwise adopts the traditional

form of the song of exile. It is so clearly a conscious imitation or parody of the traditional song of exile that it is worth quoting in full:

There is rain upon the window,
 There is wind upon the tree;
 The rain is slowly sobbing,
 The wind is blowing free:
 It bears my weary heart
 To my own country.

I hear the white-throat calling,
 Hid in the hazel ring;
 Deep in the misty hollows
 I hear the sparrow sing;
 I see the bloodroot starting,
 All silvered with the spring.

I skirt the buried reed-beds,
 In the starry solitude;
 My snow-shoes creak and whisper,
 I have my ready blood.
 I hear the lynx-cub yelling
 In the gaunt and shaggy wood.

I hear the wolf-tongued rapid
 Howl in the rocky break
 Beyond the pines at the portage
 I hear the trapper wake
 His En roulant ma boulé,
 From the clear gloom of the lake.

Oh! take me back to the homestead,
 To the great rooms warm and low,
 Where the frost creeps on the casement,
 When the year comes in with snow.
 Give me, give me the old folk
 Of the dear long ago.

Oh, land of the dusky balsam,
 And the darling maple tree,
 Where the cedar buds and berries,
 And the pine grows strong and free!
 My heart is weary and weary
 For my own country.¹⁹

It is doubtful that the early settler would admit the attractions of the "lynx-cub yelling" and the howling of the "wolf-tongued rapid," but they would have understood the emotion. It is, in a sense, the native-born Canadian's answer to the "Canadian Boat-Song":

Fair these broad meads -- these hoary woods are grand;
 But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

(Penquin Book of Canadian Verse)

The Confederation poets were not the first to express nostalgia for Canada itself, instead of for the old world, but they were the first to express this nostalgia in a truly native context. Joseph Howe's Acadia, for example, could not treat of the homesickness of the exiled Acadians, or even the author's love of home, without making a special reference to the universality of the emotion, as though an attachment to Canada needed to be explained:

Where does the Sun its richest radiance shed?
Where are the choicest gifts of Nature spread . . . ?
'Tis where our household Gods securely stand
In the calm bosom of our native land . . .

Yes, there's a feeling, that, from pole to pole,
To one dear spot still fondly links the soul;
Exiled from home, Foscari pined and died . . .
And ev'n Lapland's rude, untutor'd child,
With icy pinnacles around him piled,
Slumbers in peace upon his lichens grey,
Though the gaunt wolf howls round him for his prey.

And bless the feeling, for it ever leads
To sacred thoughts and high and daring deeds:
'Twas that illumed his eye when Nelson fell,
'Twas that which urged the unerring shaft of Tell,
Inspired the plaintive and the patriot strains
That Burns pour'd freely o'er his native plains,
And breathes the influence of its sacred fire
O'er many a chord of Moore's seraphic lyre.
With daring hand that feeling bids me now
Twine a rude wreath around my Country's brow,
And tho' the flowers wild and simple be,
Take, my Acadia, those I twine for thee.

(ll. 1-4, 9-10, 17-19, 27-42)²⁰

The Confederation poets did not need to explain their nostalgia, nor did they need to create a myth of the past to explain the elegiac tone of their poetry. For them there was already a context in their own past for the nostalgia which seemed so appropriate to their writing.

This is the emotion which is expressed in Roberts' "The Tantramar Revisited":²¹

Summers and summers have come, and gone with the
 flight of the swallow;
 Sunshine and thunder have been, storm, and winter,
 and frost;
 Many and many a sorrow has all but died from re-
 membrance,
 Many a dream of joy fall'n in the shadow of pain.
 Hands of chance and change have marred, or moulded,
 or broken,
 Busy with spirit or flesh, all I most have adored;
 Even the bosom of Earth is strewn with heavier shadows --
 Only in these green hills, aslant to the sea, no change!

.

Yet will I stay my steps and not go down to the
 marshland --
 Muse and recall far off, rather remember than see --
 Lest on too close sight I miss the darling illusion,
 Spy at their task even here the hands of chance and
 change.

(first eight and last four lines)

Time, which was the central theme of Roberts' poem,
 is also at the heart of Bliss Carman's "Low Tide on Grand
 Pré":²²

So all desire and all regret,
 And fear and memory, were naught;
 One to remember or forget
 The keen desire our hands had caught;
 Morrow and yesterday were naught.

The night has fallen, and the tide
 Now and again comes drifting home,
 Across the aching barrens wide,
 A sigh like driven wind or foam:
 In grief the flood is drifting home.

(stanzas 9 & 10)

but it is Duncan Campbell Scott who makes the most power-
 ful use of the theme of time and change, imbuing the
 silent and empty northern woods with ancient memory:

The race has waned and left but tales of ghosts,
 That hover in the world like fading smoke
 About the lodges: gone are the dusky folk . . .
 Gone like a moose-track in the April snow,
 But all the land is murmurous with the call
 Of their wild names that haunt the lovely glens
 Where lonely water falls, or where the street
 Sounds all day with the tramp of myriad feet.

("Indian Place-Names," 11. 1-3, 10-14)

This poem, with its lovely catalogue of Indian place-names:

They flow like water, or like wind they flow,
Waymoucheeching, loon-haunted Manowan,
Far Mistassini by her frozen wells,
Gold-hued Wayagamac brimming her wooded dells:
Lone Kamouraska, Metapedia,
And Metlakahtla ring a round of bells.

is an effective answer to the peevish complaints of Andrew Sheils of place-names like "Nine Mile Creek," while its vivid evocation of the presence of a vanished people with a history and legends of their own replies to the poets who lamented Canada's absence of history.

A similar feeling is encountered in "Night and the Pines":

And so we cannot come within this grove,
But all the quiet dusk remembrance brings
Of ancient sorrow and of hapless love,
Fate, and the dream of power, and piercing things
Traces of mystery and might,
The passion-sadness of the soul of night.

(final stanza)

but the sense of great age is made even more powerful in "The Height of Land" where the poet stands at the watershed between

The lonely North enlaced with lakes and streams,
And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay,
Glimmering all night
In the cold arctic light

(11. 42-45)

and the "crowded southern land," feeling both peace and that

. . . . Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace, -- a spell
Golden and inappellable
That gives the inarticulate part
Of our strange being one moment of release
That seems more native than the touch of time . . .

(11. 50-59)

This last recalls Mrs. Moodie's sense of "a melancholy awe which becomes painful in its intensity,"²³ but one

could never imagine Mrs. Moodie regarding the feeling as "more native than the touch of time." Clearly Scott makes a different interpretation of the same response to the wilderness.

Initially the forest was considered something which had to be conquered, an obstacle to be overcome before the true life of the nation could begin. Joseph Howe's Acadia is a classic example of this kind of image:

. . . as night her deep'ning shadows
throws,

The hamlet's wearied inmates close.
The sturdy settler lays his axe aside,
Which all day long has quelled the forest's pride.

(Nineteenth Century Narrative Poems, p. 27)

The poets of the post-Confederation years could regard the "empty" wilderness as a source of energy and clearness of thought. They contrasted the health and vitality of untamed nature with the restricted conditions of life in human society.

Isabella Valancy Crawford

While not, strictly speaking, a member of the "Confederation School," Isabella Valancy Crawford displays many attitudes which correspond to the spirit of Confederation poetry in general. In her long verse narrative, "Malcolm's Katie"²⁴ she uses Indian imagery in a startlingly unique way, but the fact that she uses it at all shows how Canadians had begun to adopt Indian culture into their imaginative life:

The South Wind laid his moccasins aside,
Broke his gay calumet of flowers, and cast
His useless wampum, beaded with cool dews,
Far from him northward; his long, ruddy spear
Flung sunward, whence it came . . .

In this shrill moon the scouts of Winter ran
 From the ice-belted north, and whistling shafts
 Struck maple and struck sumach, and a blaze
 Ran swift from leaf to leaf, from bough to bough,
 Till round the forest flash'd a belt of flame

(Collected Poems, pp. 198-199)

Yet she also uses the same images of war and battle which
 Howe and Goldsmith drew on in order to heighten the drama
 of the human conflict with the forest:

Soon the great heaps of brush were builded high,
 And, like a victor, Max made pause to clear
 His battle-field high strewn with tangled dead.
 Then roared the crackling mountains, and their fires
 Met in high heaven, clasping flame with flame

(Collected Poems, p. 203)

The difference is that Crawford's nature is clearly alive
 and responsive, and her warlike images not entirely trite.

In a later episode in the poem, Max is confronted by
 the lying Alfred, who claims to have won Katie's affection
 away from Max. Max threatens him with his axe:

"Stand back a pace; a too far-reaching blow
 Might level your false head with yon prone trunk!"

(Collected Poems, p. 220)

In his anger and despair, Max calls on Satan:

A voice from God came thro' the silent woods
 And answer'd him; for suddenly a wind
 Caught the great tree-tops, coned with high-piled snow,
 And smote them to and fro
 With a shrill shriek of tearing fibres, rocked
 The half-hewn tree above his fated head

(Collected Poems, p. 221)

The tree falls on Max:

. . . its round and mighty corpse,
 Bark-flayed and shudd'ring quivered into death.
 And Max, as some frail, withered reed, the sharp
 And piercing branches caught at him, as hands
 In a death-throe, and beat him to the earth;
 And the dead tree upon its slayer lay.

(Collected Poems, pp. 221-222)

The threat which Max had made to Alfred is turned against himself because of his blasphemy, and this is all the more just because, unknown to Max, Alfred had saved Katie from being crushed and drowned in a log jam on the river. To have killed Alfred would have been to kill Katie's rescuer.

Duncan Campbell Scott presents a similar accident to Katie's in "At the Cedars,"²⁵ in which a young lumberjack is killed in an attempt to break up a log jam and his young lover launches her own canoe to join him in death:

She did not scream, Batiste,
She launched her canoe;
It did seem, Baptiste,
That she wanted to die too,
For before you could think
The birch cracked like a shell
In that rush of hell,
And I saw them both sink --

In both these poems nature is remorseless and harsh, but the disaster is brought about by man's interference with it. In more than one passage of "Malcolm's Katie," however, Crawford demonstrates the cruelty of nature itself, even without man's hand upon it, as in the passage where the eagle's scream in the morning is interpreted thus:

"Sun, arise,
And show me that pale dove beside her nest,
Which I shall strike with piercing beak and tear
With iron talons for my hungry young."

(Collected Poems, p. 224)

Similarly, in "At the Long Sault," Archibald Lampman, the Canadian most likely to portray a benevolent nature, uses the image of a moose hunted down by wolves as a symbol for the doomed Daulac.

Yet, in general, the savagery of nature, in its very simplicity of necessary choices, contrasts the unhappy compromises of society. The truth and steadfastness of Max

and Katie's love contrasts the deceit of Alfred and the perplexity of Malcolm, Katie's father, and in the end it is the forest home which Max builds, not the well-established farm-house Malcolm has created which is described as an Eden, though Katie dismisses Eden itself:

"Oh Adam had not Max's soul," she said;
 And these wild woods and plains are fairer far
 Than Eden's self. O bounteous mothers they . . .
 I would not change these wild and rocking woods,
 Dotted by little homes of unbarked trees,
 Where dwell the fleers from the waves of want,
 For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers,
 Nor -- Max for Adam, if I knew my mind!"

(Collected Poems, p. 236)

Indeed, Crawford makes several references to the past which leave no doubt that she considers the pioneer days to be superior, in spite of their hardship, to the present, and to the coming "age of steel." The clearest of these is in the passage in which Max's first homesteading is described. The first settlers are quickly followed by others, men unaccustomed to the hardship but heartened by the fact that each can call his land his own (p. 167). In time, however, they are followed by a different breed:

Then came smooth-coated men with eager eyes
 And talked of steamers on the cliff-bound lakes,
 And iron trunks across the prairie lands,
 And mills to crush the quartz of wealthy hills,
 And mills to saw the great wide-armed trees,
 And mills to grind the singing stream of grain.
 And with such busy clamour mingled still
 The throbbing music of the bold, bright Axe --
 The steel tongue of the Present; and the wail
 Of falling forests -- voices of the Past.

(Collected Poems, p. 205)

The rising cities and the growing industrialization which were a source of pride and comfort to the pre-Confederation poets were a matter of concern for their successors. The poets who wrote about the wilderness and

the pioneer life did so, to a great extent, out of a conviction that in these simpler surroundings were to be found more satisfactory answers to the problems of humanity.

Duncan Campbell Scott

For Duncan Campbell Scott the contrast between man and nature included Indian society as well. He did not confuse the primitive with the "natural," but emphasised the savage aspects of both man and nature, regarding nature more as a challenge to humanity than as a refuge. Scott's experience in the Department of Indian Affairs complicated his desire to explore the traditional opposition of city and country: for Scott, as it will be demonstrated, there were no noble savages; only noble or savage men, whatever their race.

Northrop Frye has written of Scott:

He writes of a starving squaw baiting a fish-hook with her own flesh, and he writes of the music of Debussy and the poetry of Henry Vaughan. In English literature we have to go back to Anglo-Saxon times to encounter so incongruous a clash of cultures.²⁶

Frye was referring to the Old English poems, "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" where, he claims,

there is a feeling which seems to a modern reader more Canadian than English: a feeling of the melancholy of a thinly-settled country under a bleak northern sky, of the terrible isolation of the creative mind in such a country, of resigning oneself to hardship and loneliness as the only means of attaining, if not serenity, at least a kind of rigid calm. It is a feeling which in later centuries becomes very rare, though there is something of it in some romantic poems, such as Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."²⁷

This is perhaps a whimsically self-conscious comparison, but it is supported by the awareness of this contrast which Scott himself displays in such poems as "Night Hymns

on Lake Nipigon," and "Indian Place Names." Moreover, Scott is also aware of the effect of the clash of cultures upon the Indian way of life.

In many ways Scott's Indian poems are inspired by similar emotions to those which inspired the Jacobite songs of Scotland; though the emphasis in much of Scott's work is on savagery and violence, his examination of the Indian's plight is torn between a nostalgic regret that an exotic and beautiful way of life must vanish, and an acceptance that this is the inevitable consequence of a benevolent progress.²⁸

G. Ross Roy contrasts the portrait of the Indian which is given by Pauline Johnson who, herself an Indian, "never fails to show him at the pinnacle of his grandeur, in the era when his race dominated the land," with Scott's, which in a poem like "Watkwenies," contrasts their former pride with their present degradation:²⁹

Now clothed with many an ancient flap and fold,
And wrinkled like an apple kept till May,
She weighs the interest-money in her palm,
And when the agent calls her valiant name,
Hears, like the war-whoops of her perished day,
The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging cold.³⁰

(11. 9-14)

Scott, says Roy, in spite of his total realism, gives a more sympathetic picture: "One feels that he exposes this state of affairs only to draw our attention to a deplorable fact -- even if the fate of the Indians was in some way inevitable."³¹

One might say that the Indian represents in Scott's work the vanishing wilderness which still maintains a hold over the Canadian's imagination but which is everywhere suffering the incursion of civilization, but that

would be to make too simple an interpretation. The Indian does represent the mystery of the wilderness, but the wilderness is there as an entity in itself, and it is just as powerful and mysterious to the Indians as it is to the relative newcomer, the European.

An excellent example of this facet of Scott's poetry is the eerie "Powassan's Drum" in which the old Indian beats rhythmically and hypnotically on his drum until he has conjured up a horrifying apparition: a canoe appears, floating in the waters of the lake, carrying the headless body of an Indian who sits proudly in the canoe, trailing his head in the water by its hair:

The face looks through the water
 Up to its throne on the shoulders of power,
 Unquenched eyes burning in the water,
 Piercing beyond the shoulders of power
 Up to the fingers of the storm cloud.
 Is this the meaning of the magic --
 The transition into sight
 Of the viewless hate?
 Is this what the world waited for
 As it listened to the throb-throb-throb-throb-
 Throbbing of Powassan's Drum?

(ll. 108-118)

This image echoes the earlier "Piper of Arll" in which the piper conjures up a strange sailing ship whose crew sings to him a song even more powerful than his own. When he is taken aboard the ship sinks and the final image is of the piper and the ship's crew staring up through the waters of the cove:

And down she sank till, keeled in sand,
 She rested safely balanced true,
 With all her upward gazing band,
 The piper and the dreaming crew.

And there, unmarked of any chart,
 In unrecorded deeps they lie,
 Empearled within the purple heart
 Of the great sea for aye and aye.

Their eyes are ruby in the green
 Long shafts of sun that spread and rays,
 And upward with a wizard sheen
 A fan of sea-light leaps and plays.

(11. 137-148)

If one wishes to see this poem, as J.P. Matthews has, as an allegory of the contact between the poet of a new age and poets of "an older, wearier tradition,"³² the submerging of the ship's crew and the piper may be seen as an allegory of the submersion of all forms of art in its greater element: in both "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" and "The Height of Land" a similar awareness of the perils as well as the joys in the meeting and merging of unlike minds suggests that the symbolism of "The Piper of Arll" may be even more important to Scott's work than has yet been realized.

Scott's concern with the clash of wilderness and society, as well as of different types of society, is often expressed in terms of the pastoral tradition. In "The Height of Land," a poem set far away from the cultivated, settled land, a sudden vision of the meaning of life comes to the poet on the uplands:

and it appears
 As simple as to the shepherd seems his flock
 A Something to be guided by ideals --
 That in themselves are simple and serene . . .

(11. 79-82)

Later in the same poem he imagines the poet of the future and asks

Shall he stand . . .
 In closer communion with divinity,
 With the deep-fathomed, with the firmament charted,
 With life as simple as a sheep-boy's song . . .

(11. 135-138)

In "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" Scott again refers to pastoral tradition in his wistfully whimsical musing on the words of a song Morris used to sing:

"He met her on the Mountain,
He gave her a horn to blow,
And the very last words he said to her
Were, 'Go 'long, Eliza, go.'"

(11. 42-45)

Scott expands on these lines, and turns the horn into a magical one:

The cadence she blew on the silver horn
Was the meaning of life in one phrase caught,
And as soon as the magic notes were born,
She repeated them once in an afterthought
His heart with a sword was sundered,
For life was changed forever
When he gave her the horn to blow:
But a shadow arose from the valley,
Desolate, slow and tender,
It hid the herdsman's chalet

(11. 161-164; 171-176)

Here the horn is clearly a variation on the shepherd's pipe and the simplicity of the meaning of life is associated with the presence of a herdsman. Similarly the enchanting and mysterious "Piper of Arll" hands on the spell of a reed pipe, the traditional instrument of the pastoral poet.

Death is involved in both of these references to traditional pastoralism: Scott asks in the first, "Was death driving the shadow?" and in "The Piper of Arll" the fullness of the piper's identification of his art with nature ends in death, not only for himself but for the crew of the mysterious ship as well.

The elegiac tone of Scott's Indian poetry is inextricably tied to the pastoral ideal. In spite of his conviction that assimilation and the eventual disappearance of

the Indian culture into a new Canadian culture was a necessity, Scott could not help lamenting the decay into which the Indian way of life was to fall before this assimilation could take place. The contrast which the Indian way of life presented to the complexities of modern society represents the contrast of all ages of pastoral innocence to the sophistication of court or city, and so it can be said that the passing of the Indian provides Scott with a focus for what Milton Wilson calls "the peevish nostalgia and spasmodic violence which are the personal sediment in his work as a whole,"³³ but the toughness and realism of his treatment of the Indian's plight counteracts the effect of nostalgia. What nostalgia there is exists in its proper place in considering the passing of a people as capable of nobility and savagery as his own.

In introducing Melvin Dagg's essay "Scott and the Indians," S.L. Dragland suggests that Scott's empathy with the Indians, particularly when he represents them as people "Wandering between two worlds", is the result of his being in the same "intermediate state himself: a Canadian with European roots; a poet without an indigenous tradition, required to mould 'bricks without straw'."³⁴

As we have seen, the problem of the lack of an indigenous tradition is, to some extent, a false one, but the search for a native context for his poetry was one which clearly preoccupied Duncan Campbell Scott. In "The Piper of Arll," as in certain of the Indian poems, like "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon," the clash, or at least the meeting of traditions provides the catalyst for an artistic experience: "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" is a particu-

larly fruitful consequence of this meeting, for the elegy is not only an elegy on the death of Edmund Morris, but also of the old Indian, Akoose, whose death at the fitting time puts the death of Morris, and indeed, of all living creatures, into the perspective of eternity.

The freshness of this comparison, and its distance from the conventional elegy, as much of the imagery is drawn from Indian myths, make it both attractive and perplexing. It is one occasion in which neither tradition has had to die in order to produce something new:

Akoose slept forever amid the poplars,
Swathed by the wind from the far-off Red Deer
Where dinosaurs sleep, clamped in the rocky tombs.
Who shall count the time that lies between
The sleep of Akoose and the dinosaurs?
Innumerable time, that yet is like the breath
Of the long wind that creeps upon the prairie
And dies away with the shadows at sundown.

(11. 256-263)

Beginning with the casual jocularly of a man writing a long-delayed letter to a friend, Scott complains of Morris's handwriting -- "It was ever a cryptic fist," (1. 14) -- in short lines that border on doggerel but which move subtly, almost imperceptibly, into a tone of simple dignity:

Dear Morris (now I'm inditing
And poring over your script)
I gather from the writing,
The coin that you had flipt,
Turned tails; and so you compel me
To meet you at Touchwood Hills:
Or, mayhap, you are trying to tell me
The sum of a painter's ills:
Is that Phimister Proctor
Or something about a doctor?
Well, nobody knows, but Eddie,
Whatever it is I'm ready.
For our friendship was always fortunate
In its greetings and adieux,
Nothing flat or importunate,
Nothing of the misuse

That comes of the constant grinding
 Of one mind on another.
 So memory has nothing to smother,
 But only a few things captured
 On the wing, as it were, and enraptured.

(11. 17-37)

As the poem becomes more and more reflective, as it turns back into memory and looks with greater sobriety upon the significance of death, the lines become longer and the diction more formal, so that the sonorous dignity of the passage on the death of Akoose is smoothly integrated with the whole.

Scott's ability to make these transitions in the diction of the elegy also enable him to approach the description of the wilderness with a flexible diction, neither elaborately poetical nor prosaically blunt, which is appropriate to his subject. Where earlier poets might have heightened their diction, Scott calmly states what he observes:

Now are there sounds walking in the wood,
 And all the spruces shiver and tremble,
 And the stars move a little in their courses.
 The ancient disturber of solitude
 Breathes a pervasive sigh,
 And the soul seems to hear
 The gathering of the waters at their sources . . .

("The Height of the Land," 11. 60-66)

The occasional inversion, as in line 60, the occasional periphrasis, as in "The ancient disturber of solitude," serve to counterpoint the simplicity of the surrounding lines, in which every word is used to its fullest effect. There is no clearer example of Scott's economy of language than in the lines:

. . . Potan the Wise
 Declares the ills of life
 And Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound
 Of acquiescence

("The Height of Land," ll. 8-11)

in which the Indian's name itself has the "mournful sound of acquiescence."

Archibald Lampman

If Scott's is the most explicitly Canadian subject matter of the four Confederation poets, Archibald Lampman's is the least Canadian; his sonnets, in spite of their careful observation of the flora and fauna of the Ottawa Valley are not so much notable for their evocation of a particular place as for their evocation of the harmony of the seasons. Only "At the Long Sault" treats a specifically Canadian event, and this is a very late work. Many of his earlier pieces are based on Biblical or Classical themes, and he is fond of imagery with an exotic Mediterranean flavour. His long narrative poems, "The Story of an Affinity," "Vivia Perpetua," "The Land of Pallas" and so on, all suggest a careful reading of a variety of English poets including Tennyson, Keats and even, perhaps, William Morris, but none of them indicate a close communion with the spirit of his own country. Yet Lampman's contribution to Canadian poetry does not depend on these poems alone, and it is no less important because it took its inspiration from outside Canada's borders. Indeed, Lampman's nature verses are perhaps more important because they do not actively seek to accentuate the differences between Canada and Europe, but simply portray a landscape that is familiar and well-loved.

Duncan Campbell Scott's landscapes are frequently wilderness landscapes, dangerous in themselves, and populated by men beyond the control of civilization and whose most savage nature meets no opposition. Archibald Lampman never roves far beyond the fringes of settlement in what Scott called "the crowded southern land" ("The Height of Land," l. 47). For those critics who equate reality with harshness and unpleasantness alone, Lampman's tranquil fields and woodlands seem an idealized vision of nature, and Lampman an escapist who runs to nature for refuge from reality.

Lampman, more than any other of the Confederation poets, has been accused of narrowness of range. Bernard Muddiman writes of the "tedious descriptive quality of Lampman's heavy Dutch landscapes,"³⁵ a comment echoed by Leo Kennedy, who draws an analogy between Lampman's work and that of Canadian painters before the Group of Seven:

No other Canadian poet has described the country scene with such meticulous detail, but for all his careful observation, little in the form of an emotional climax comes out of it. The late Raymond Knister in a few scattered impressions could catch the very spirit of his cornfield or plough land, yet use the minimum of data. For a fair analogy, consider the rural Quebec scenes of Krieghoff beside the landscapes of Morrice.³⁶

Lampman has also been criticized for making his landscapes too perfect, too free from the realistic depiction of the irritating and unpleasant aspects of nature:

. . . too often his nature poetry presents a pastoral of nature, too perfect and too peaceful to be true. (I do not find the Laurentian black fly or the whining mosquito in his idylls); so that here, in his own element, a lack of realism is his undoing. True, there are fine detailed descriptions of the Ottawa countryside; but the total picture is wrong, askew from reality. It is a pastoral dream of innocence and good, not the peasant's or the botanist's real world; and it is offered to us as a faith-

ful picture of nature and of the true life -- in other words, as part of that romantic dream which Lampman's own truth-seeking and austere mind contradicted.³⁷

One might comment here that Lampman was neither peasant nor botanist, and that the equally real experience he portrays here is that of the city dweller on holiday. His vision of the countryside may be incomplete, but it is, nevertheless, real.

Lampman was not alone in this. Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, who was capable of portraying the remorselessness of nature in his animal stories, preferred, in his poetry, to portray the gentler nature of the ploughed fields and cultivated lands:

Charles G.D. Roberts' finest poetry is undoubtedly the poetry in which he has most faithfully and soberly presented the life of the farmer, the fisherman, and the woodsman going about their eternal tasks under the changing sky of the four seasons. How Virgilian is the spirit of the sonnets .³⁸ published under the title Songs of the Common Day.

The description of Lampman's nature poetry as pastoral carries the implied criticism that it is escapist; it is therefore significant that, since his day, many of the critics who have admired him have felt obliged to make excuses for his withdrawal from society, or to put undue emphasis upon the poems in which he comments on cities and men.

Duncan Campbell Scott, in his assessment of Lampman in "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," was quick to contradict the assumption that Lampman was only a nature poet:

I trust the collected poems dispelled the illusion that had arisen, that he was a poet occupied altogether with descriptions of nature. Nature in his interest came very near to man, but did not occupy the foremost place.³⁹

Scott acknowledged that the description of nature was Lampman's first impulse, but asserted that "the desire to

deal with human emotion, with the springs of human action," was becoming increasingly important to him:

A year or two before he died he had begun to observe a more just balance between the divisions of his genius. In such grave, noble and suggestive poems, as "The City of the End of Things," "The Land of Pallas," "The Largest Life," and very many others that I might mention we possess his natural accent not less than in such pieces of realism as "Heat," or "Among the Millet."⁴⁰

Some of Lampman's city poems are derived quite naturally from his love of nature, and in them Lampman contrasts the dreariness and fatigue of the city with nature as a refuge and source of refreshment. It is the traditional contrast heightened and given dramatic force:

For when the noon was turning, and the heat,
Fell down most heavily on field and wood,
I too came hither, borne on restless feet,
Seeking some comfort for an aching mood.
Ah! I was weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind gray streets, the jungle of the throng,
Weary of hope that like a shape of stone
Sat near at hand without a smile or moan,
And weary most of song.

("Among the Timothy," ll. 11-20)⁴¹

This is given even stronger expression in "Freedom," where he declares:

Out of the heart of the city begotten
Of the labour of men and their manifold hands,

. . . .

Out of the heat of the usurer's hold,
From the horrible crash of the strong man's feet;
Out of the shadow where pity is dying;
Out of the clamour where beauty is lying,
Dead in the depth of the struggle for gold;
Out of the din and the glare of the street;

Into the arms of our mother we come,
Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,
Mother of all things beautiful, blameless,
Mother of hopes that her strength makes tameless. . . .

("Freedom," ll. 1-2; 7-16)

But it is "The City of the End of Things," a nightmarish vision of the future which has attracted most critical interest.

Margaret Coulby Whitridge exaggerates somewhat when she claims that in his city poems Lampman "struck the first authentic note of fear in Canadian literature."⁴² She goes on to characterize Lampman's unique contribution by saying that in his city poems he left "Lotus-land" behind, and "faced reality with a sense of impending terror and tried to depict the coming age."⁴³

Certainly there are critics, like Margaret Atwood, who suggest that fear is the only authentic note in Canadian literature. Northrop Frye sees the problem as the "triangular conflict of nature, society, and individual," and quotes John Robins's confession:

I can approach a solitary tree with pleasure, a cluster of trees with joy, and a forest with rapture; I must approach a solitary man with caution, a group of men with trepidation, and a nation of men with terror.⁴⁴

This is certainly a post-Romantic attitude which would have been as totally foreign to the Augustan mind, at least as far as the response to the forest goes, as it is identifiable with the attitudes expressed by the Confederation poets. Lampman's city poems most clearly express a state of mind like that of John Robins.

Yet realism is not a characteristic of Lampman's city poems; they are, indeed, less realistic, particularly if one considers them to refer only to Canadian cities, than the tranquil landscapes which he has been accused of idealizing. Such poems as "The City of the End of Things" may not be false to Lampman's genius; they may be true to the Canadian imagination; but they are false if they are meant to represent the urban reality of Lampman's Canada.

In Lampman's day Canada had very few cities of any significant size, and only Montreal and Toronto could have given any indications of becoming the mechanized horror which Lampman describes. Ottawa, which has been blamed for so much of Lampman's physical and mental distress,⁴⁵ is, even today, a relatively quiet city with little industry and all of it light industry. Duncan Campbell Scott's comments to Ralph Gustafson put this subject clearly in perspective:

I think that to fix Ottawa and its society as the only source of his outlook on life in the world is a great mistake It ought to be remembered that when he came to Ottawa it was a town of about 23,000 people, and when he died the population had struggled up to say 50,000. There was comparatively no wealth here, there were no strong men here with crashing feet, and there was no din and glare in the streets; a horse-drawn street-car crawled across the girth of the town; we walked about unless we could afford a cab. So that his idea of the cruel world and its society, came to him from the experience of others, from his socialist proclivities⁴⁶

Ottawa, even today, permits easy access to the open countryside; the Central Experimental Farm preserves fields and pastures in the heart of the city: the "maiden queen of all the towered towns," (D.C. Scott, "Ottawa") may not be as idyllic as Scott described her, but she is far from the desperate, crashing, nightmarish place of Lampman's vision.

To these facts we might add Rupert Brooke's report of the city as he found it in 1913:

The streets of Ottawa are very quiet, and shaded with trees. The houses are mostly of that cool, homely, wooden kind, with verandahs, on which, or on the steps, the whole family may sit in the evening and observe the passers-by. This is possible for both the rich and the poor, who live nearer each other in Ottawa than in most cities. In general there is an air of civilization, which extends even over the country round But what Ottawa leaves in the mind is a certain graciousness --

dim, for it expresses a barely materialised national spirit -- and the sight of kindly English-looking faces, and the rather lovely sound of the soft Canadian accent, in the streets.⁴⁷

It is perhaps significant that it was Duncan Campbell Scott who entertained Brooke and showed him around the city when he visited Ottawa.⁴⁸

The evils of Ottawa stemmed from a smug provincialism and the tedium of a Civil Service routine, not from the horrors of an embryonic machine age: whatever Lampman protested against in his city poems was not based on his own observation of Canada but gathered from his reading of Poe and also, undoubtedly, influenced by his reading of James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night."

It is at this point that Canadian and Scottish poetry once more converge, for James Thomson, also known by the pseudonym B.V., was born in Scotland, and "The City of Dreadful Night" belongs, if only by a tenuous connection, to the "Spasmodic" school of poetry begun by another Scot, Alexander Smith, the author of "A Life-Drama." Spasmodic poetry has an interesting history which, unfortunately, lies beyond the bounds of the present study, but the important feature of James Thomson to be considered here is that, while he wrote one of the gloomiest poems in the English language, Thomson was considered by his friends to be a good-tempered, charming individual who was recalled as having "a lovable and genial disposition anything but pessimistic."⁴⁹

Lampman shows a similar contradiction between his life and his works. His friends recalled him as a cheerful man,

frustrated by a lack of opportunity to travel and to be more actively involved in the wider world, but not melancholy.

As D.C. Scott says:

Like most brilliant men he had his emotional storms and variations of mood, and he had to contend with bad health which depresses anybody. He had a great sense of humour and was a man of geniality and sociability.⁵⁰

Yet W.E. Collin, speculating on the origin of "The City of the End of Things," "often wondered what could have been the experience of a man who wrote a poem like this, lurid with apocalyptic fires and dreadful fate."⁵¹

John Sutherland suggests that the "experience" was that of reading Poe, noting that none of Lampman's earlier poems, with the exception of "Easter Eve" in Among the Millet, is reminiscent of Poe. In his essay "Edgar Allan Poe in Canada" Sutherland highlights Lampman's indebtedness to Poe by giving a long list of images derived from Poe, but he also points out Lampman's indebtedness to Matthew Arnold and explains the strange conjunction of the two "in terms of Lampman's misconception of poetry and his inherent mistrust of his art":⁵²

He regarded poetry as an escape into dream, a kind of opiate, but he never ceased to feel that the desire to escape was slightly corrupt. Hence, as in Alcyone, he always felt obliged to relate the hazy reaches of the dream to a large moral truth, no matter how incongruous it might seem. What was, in effect, a split between the imagination and reality grew steadily wider . . . Poe more than anyone could satisfy that thirst for escape which Lampman felt more and more.⁵³

Many of the critics who put greater emphasis on Lampman's city poems at the expense of his nature verse evidently feel a similar unease about the desire for escape which poetry so often satisfies. Disturbed by the dream-element in Lampman's wide-awake nature poems, they tend to mistake the nightmare visions of the city for realism.

Ignoring the simple explanation that in Poe Lampman found models for poems with feverish and hallucinatory qualities of image, they tend to give totally incompatible readings of the poems.

W.E. Collin thought that in "The City of the End of Things" Lampman was "forced off his direct route, into the entanglements of allegory."⁵⁴ John Sutherland sees in it a disjunction of imagination and reality, while Margaret Coulby Whitridge feels that Lampman "faced reality" in "The City of the End of Things". The possibility that the poem is a nightmare inversion of the pastoral dream which Lampman celebrates in his nature verse seems to escape all of these critics, as does the possibility that although the poem is less pleasant than the nature poems it is no less a dream.

In fact there are many literary models for "The City of the End of Things": poems like "The City of Dreadful Night," (James Thomson); "Dream-Land," "The Haunted Palace," and "The City in the Sea," (Poe); and even, perhaps, Shelley's "Ozymandias"; and while this does not prevent the poem from being a perfectly sincere warning against a future which Lampman believed was possible, it is equally true that the genre demands that the poet express certain attitudes which he may not have held towards any real city. The fact that Lampman, like many other Canadians before and since, felt a distrust of cities and men in large numbers made this type of poetic attitude appealing but did not necessarily make it a reflection of the existing state of affairs.

The contrast between Lampman's vision of the machine age and that of the Scot, Alexander Anderson, is striking.

Anderson, the workman-poet discussed in Chapter Five exulted over the dawning age of mechanization in "A Song of Progress" and "The Spirit of the Times". A naive, self-taught poet, he wrote, apparently unconscious of any irony, of the builders of the locomotive as "Frankensteins, and frequently described the steam engine as a Frankenstein's monster; evidently his intention was to convey his sense of the engineer's miraculous design and to suggest the power of the engine. Lampman's "City of the End of Things" shows man all but extinguished by his own creation:

Once there were multitudes of men,
That built a city in their pride,
Until its might was made, and then
They withered age by age and died.
But now of that prodigious race,
Three only in an iron tower,
Set like carved idols face to face,
Remain the masters of its power

(11. 49-56)

Lampman's "The Railway Station," though less interesting in itself than "The City of the End of Things," is a useful parallel to that poem, for in it the desire to convey a sense of horror overthrows Lampman's usual close attention to realistic detail. He heightens the natural human curiosity he feels about the background and fate of the travellers into an almost morbid sensitivity to the noise, confusion and fascination of the railway station:

The darkness brings no quiet here, the light
No waking: ever on my blinded brain
The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and strain,
The engines' scream, the hiss and thunder smite:
I see the hurrying crowds, the slasp, the flight,
Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with pain:
I see the hoarse wheels turn, and the great train
Move labouring out into the bourneless night.

(11. 1-8)

Like any of Alexander Anderson's railway poems, this is charged with melodrama; it shows that Lampman was not always the restrained, reflective classicist that he is sometimes made to appear, but had his own fascination with the lurid and the melodramatic. This and "Dead Cities," in which the poet muses in fascination over the fate of great cities which are now only names:

In Pæstum now the roses bloom no more,
But the wind wails about the barren shore,
An echo in its gloomed and ghostly reeds.
And many a city of an elder age,
Now nameless, fallen in some antique rage,
Lies worn to dust, and none shall know its deeds.

(II, 11. 9-14)

provide a context in which "The City of the End of Things" can be understood as a pre-vision of a time when the future will be as the past: a kind of anticipated nostalgia. Other parallels for this kind of writing can be found in the work of James Elroy Flecker, whose taste for hectic tales of violence and destruction was coupled with reflective nature descriptions of classical restraint. Poems like "The Bridge of Fire" and "Oxford Canal" are among the many poems which are thus comparable to Lampman's verse.

Lampman is not the only poet of the Confederation group to employ horrifying imagery for an eerie effect. Duncan Campbell Scott's "Powassan's Drum" contains an image which, if not exactly comparable to Lampman's gigantic idiot with dreadful eyes (ll. 57-63), conveys the same sense of preternatural vision. Scott's "The Piper of Arll" also has this uncanny quality. This poem owes more to Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner than these other two, while Bliss Carman's "A Northern Vigil":

Here by the grey north sea,
 In the wintry heart of the wild,
 Comes the old dream of thee,
 Gwendolen, mistress and child.

.

Come, for the night is cold,
 The ghostly moonlight fills
 Hollow and rift and fold
 Of the eerie Ardise hills!

(stanzas 1 & 9)

goes back, through Poe, to the Romantic ballad tradition. To attempt to separate Lampman's city poems from this background is to distort their meaning badly.

Lampman was clearly very concerned with social problems and was a radical thinker in a very conservative society, but he was not able to express his socialist ideas effectively in his poetry. Just as his admiration for Matthew Arnold accounts for his references to "the human" and "the warm human impulses within us," which W.E. Collin quoted,⁵⁶ so Lampman's reading of Poe, James Thomson, and others might account for the tone of his city poems; but otherwise he had no model for his socialist poetry, or at least lacked one which corresponded to his taste in imagery.

D.C. Scott could write the grimly horrifying "The Harvest," an apocalyptic vision not unlike "The City of the End of Things,"⁵⁷ but Scott's poetry also includes the theme of justice to the Indians, and his experiments in form are, if less consistently successful than Lampman's, at least depart from traditional models sufficiently to be appropriate to the new subject. Lampman's attempts to deal with human problems consist of either dull narratives or of allegories like "The Land of Pallas" and "The City of the End of Things". The lone figure of the carter,

plodding silently in the distance ("Heat"), is more typical of Lampman's treatment of humanity than either "The City of the End of Things" or "The Railway Station". Whatever his opinion on the role of the poet might have been, Lampman was not a social poet, but was happiest in reflective, descriptive verse.

There are many limitations to Lampman's poetry, not the least of which is the narrowness of his effective range, but, within that range, Lampman implies a wider comment on his society, and touches the centre of the Canadian imagination more consistently than many of his critics realize. Leo Kennedy suggested that Lampman ought to have "broadened his canvas, and borrowed from sources that would have benefited him more,"⁵⁸ but, on the occasions when Lampman did broaden his canvas, as in "The City of the End of Things," he lost the sense of realism, the acuteness of observation which gave authority to his mature poetry. In a sense, he is much less himself when he is writing in a more directly critical way of the evils of society than when he offers the positive virtues of nature to the reader as an alternative.

Lampman's nature description may be narrowly confined to the gentler aspects of his surroundings, but it is exquisitely accurate in detail, and one feels immediately, as one does not in the more highly-coloured visionary poem, the sense of the poet's intimate knowledge of his subject:

The crickets creak, and through the noonday glow,
That crazy fiddler of the hot mid-year,
The dry cicada plies his wiry bow
In long-spun cadence, thin and dusty sere;
From the green grass the small grasshoppers' din
Spreads soft and silvery thin;

And ever and anon a murmur steals
 Into mine ears of toil that moves alway,
 The crackling rustle of the pitch-forked hay
 And lazy jerk of wheels.

("Among the Timothy," ll. 61-70)

The sounds captured here with perfect accuracy are matched
 by the deft visual details in "Freedom":

By the miles of the fences warped and dyed
 With the white-hot noons and their withering fires.
 Where the rough bees trample the creamy bosoms
 Of the hanging tufts of the elder blossoms,
 And the spiders weave, and the grey snakes hide,
 In the crannied gloom of the stones and briers.

("Freedom," ll. 31-36)

This poem contrasts "the din and the glare of the street,"
 (l. 12) with "Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth."
 In the passage quoted above, the man-made fence (a split-
 rail fence made of logs) is subject to nature's domination,
 and becomes one with nature. It is perhaps interesting
 to note that such a fence is often called a "snake" fence,
 from its zig-zag shape, and so its own outline suggests
 one of the creatures sheltering beneath it.

Lampman's nature poems depict every season of the
 year, and he does not shrink from portraying the harshness
 of winter, though this harshness is always subsumed in the
 grandeur which it brings to the world:

I had walked out, as I remember now
 With covered ears, for the bright air was keen
 . . . a buried fence
 Whose topmost log just shouldered from the snow,
 Made me a seat, and thence with heated cheeks,
 Grazed by the northwind's edge of stinging ice,
 I looked far out upon the snow-bound waste,
 The lifting hills and intersecting forests,
 The scarce marked courses of the buried streams,
 And as far oked, lost memory of the frost,
 Transfixed with wonder, overborne with joy,
 I saw them in their silence and their beauty,
 Swept by the sunset's rapid hand of fire,
 Sudden, mysterious, every moment deepening
 To some new majesty of rose or flame.

("Winter Hues Recalled," pp. 28-29)

Wrapt in this vision, the poet ignores "the keen wind and the deadly air," until the sky darkened:

. . . Then I awoke
As from a dream, and from my shoulders shook
The warning chill, till then unfelt, unfeared.

(p. 30)

This warning chill, perhaps a hint of death, has its counterpart in the last lines of "Winter-Solitude":

And a strange peace gathered about my soul and shone,
As I sat reflecting there,
In a world so mystically fair,
So deathly silent - I so utterly alone.

(p. 21)

In "Storm" Lampman foresakes his usual mood of dream-like stillness to respond to the wildness of the winter wind:

Nay, Wind, I hear you, desperate brother, in your might
Whistle and howl; I shall not tarry long,
And though the day be blind and fierce, the night
Be dense and wild, I still am glad and strong
To meet you face to face; through all your gust and
drifting
With brow held high, my joyous hands uplifting,
I cry you song for song.

("Storm," p. 33)

Nature is a source of refuge for Lampman, and over and over he repeats the idea that he comes to nature

. . . . weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind gray streets, the jingle of the throng

("Among the Timothy," p. 14)

and that nature is the "Mother of all things beautiful, blameless" ("Freedom," p. 17). Yet this refuge is not a permanent one. The nature which Lampman seeks is the source of comfort and strength in the midst of the strife and confusion of society.

"Winter Hues Recalled" explores the Wordsworthian ideal of the revivifying power of memory:

Life is not all for effort; there are hours
When fancy breaks from the exacting will,
And rebel thought takes schoolboy's holiday,
Rejoicing in its idle strength. 'Tis then,
And only at such moments, that we know
The treasure of hours gone

In moments when the heart is most at rest
And least expectant, from the luminous doors,
And sacred dwelling-place of things unfeared,
They issue forth, and we who never knew
Till then how potent and how real they were,
Take them, and wonder, and so bless the hour.

(pp. 27-28)

Many of Lampman's nature poems are just such recollections. Others, like "Ottawa" and "Winter Solitude," show that distance from the city imparts to it the glamour that its immediate presence lacks:

I saw the city's towers on a luminous pale-grey sky;
Beyond them a hill of the softest, mistiest green,
With naught but frost and the coming of night between,
And a long thin cloud above it the colour of August rye.

("Winter Solitude," ll. 1-4)

Lampman's holidays in the arms of nature enable him to regain his perspective on life. Like D.C. Scott at the "Height of Land," Lampman has found a less confusing world where he can let his thoughts and his dreams flow. Like Scott's "Something [that] comes by flashes / Deeper than peace," Lampman finds in a gentler landscape the same sense of compelling power:

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear.

("Heat," p. 13)

We may recognize in Lampman's desperation to rush off from the city to the countryside something of the same convention J.L. Robertson upheld in such poems as "Anti-Studious," and "The Northern Student" and for Lampman it was often as trite a pose as it was for Robertson, but the feeling that nature is a source of strength from which man often unwittingly separates himself is a feeling common to Canadians. The fact that Lampman could express this idea in accurate descriptions of the Canadian landscape without encountering the startling contrasts between wilderness and civilization which perplexed the first Canadian poets, and continued to perplex Lampman's contemporary, Scott, is evidence of the extent to which both Canadian society and poetry had advanced since the days of the pioneer.

Bliss Carman

Bliss Carman, who is as anxious to reveal the poet as a person in peculiar communion with the meaning of life as Lampman, does so in a much less disciplined and a far less realistic manner. It is generally agreed that he wrote too much, and too often on similar themes. He is in need of judicious editing, which he refused to do for himself, and yet the sheer exuberance as well as the volume of his work is rare in Canadian letters. He published an average of one volume a year in the thirty-six years between the publication of Low Tide on Grand Pré (1893) and his death,⁵⁹ but, as one of the speakers in L.A. MacKay's "Bliss Carman: a Dialogue" puts it:

the repetition is frightful. He never seems to know when he has said a thing, and keeps on attempting to do it in other words, not always very different. . . . He's a sort

of hair-trigger versifier, and so always going off at half-cock. Facile, spontaneous, and impressionable, but very diluted. He takes fire like dry grass, spreads as loosely, burns out as rapidly The fact is, he was never⁶⁰ a real master of language; he let it run away with him.

Like Robert Service, Carman seems to be one of those writers who is of interest simply because he was popular. Critics are often unwilling to admit that his facility was anything but harmful, and they often highlight his weaknesses to the extent that his real strengths as a poet fade into the background.

The problem with Carman is that he forces the critic to deal with a question which it becomes easier and easier to ignore as one becomes involved in an historical rather than a critical account of a national literature: to what extent ought a poet to engage critical attention because he is a national figure, regardless of the standard of his poetry?

Lampman, for example, receives critical attention in Canada which he does not receive elsewhere. He is a genuinely talented poet, but it is generally recognized that his technique is too conservative and his subject matter too narrowly local to encourage foreigners to take an interest in his work. Carman, however, presents a different situation: he was, for a time, extremely popular in the United States as well as in Canada. He has a reputation as one of the most prominent names in Canadian literature, and yet it is possible to feel that this reputation is unwarranted.

Part of the difficulty is caused by the sheer volume of Carman's work. If one believes part of the craft of poetry is knowing when to stop, Carman's refusal to edit

his own work is to be condemned; yet Carman continues to perplex his readers because even his best work seems not to require a great deal of critical investigation. It operates on the simpler emotional levels of nostalgia and wishful thinking and conforms to easily recognized models in English and American poetry. Having identified the source of Carman's charm, one does not feel obliged to search deeper into his poetry.⁶¹

Even Carman's importance as a Canadian poet has been disputed by Louis MacKay. Carman, he argues, spent most of his adult life in the United States and chose to be buried there:

A few place-names in his verse don't matter, and the accident of birth is rather unimportant. . . . The most important part of his training he got at Harvard; the chief influences on his thought and manner are American: Poe . . . and Emerson . . . and Thoreau, and Whitman Most of his nature poetry is quite as much at home in New England as in Nova Scotia, and he has virtually no influence on our best poets since his time.⁶²

But neither, to be fair, has Carman had any influence on American poets since his time. James Cappon's study of Carman, Bliss Carman and the Literary and Cultural Influences of His Time,⁶³ reminds us that the "new poetry" from about 1912 left Carman and his kind of poet much in the background. The result of this neglect by American critics, according to Cappon, was that Carman drew increasingly closer to Canada in his later years:

Canada was less taken up with the doctrines of the American Renaissance and the propaganda of prose-poetry. Carman always had warm admirers there of the freshness of his lyrical style and his mystically imaginative vision; but now professional circles, that had been accustomed to discuss whether he or Roberts, or Duncan Campbell Scott, or Lampman, was Canada's best poet, were coming to recognize more the unity of purpose and endeavour which gave higher significance to Carman's work.⁶⁴

Clearly Carman's importance to Canadian literary history is far greater than his importance to American poetry: in the history of American poetry his name might appear in a footnote, as a follower of the poets mentioned by MacKay; in Canada his name is central, and not only because of his immense popularity during his lifetime.

As Cappon recognizes, Carman's association with the Confederation School of Canadian poets gives him some prominence in Canadian poetry. If the most important formal influences on his work come from Harvard, the groundwork was laid in New Brunswick by his teacher George Parkin, just as it was for Carman's cousin, Roberts. More important, however, is the influence on his imagination of "Acadia," the countryside of his youth, and the formative experience which he records in "Low Tide on Grand Pré," and to which he constantly referred, even at the end of his life, in "The Sweetheart of the Sea (Forever and Forever)".

Carman's philosophy was a vague one which took on its colouring from the company he kept.⁶⁵ It is not, therefore, helpful to devote too much attention to the sources of his thought. Carman was heavily influenced by Emerson's transcendentalism and later included Delsarte's "trinitarianism" which Carman and Mary Perry King (who had introduced him to Delsarte's ideas) transformed into "unitrinitarianism"; but although a great many of Carman's poems were written to express this philosophy, it had no direct impact on the writing of Canadian poets, and was not taken seriously by his critics. It was Carman's nature poetry, and Carman as a prophet of the simple, natural life which was appre-

ciated and remembered by Canadians. Even James Cappon, who devoted a great deal of attention to the development of Carman's thought and its relationship to contemporary American ideas, concluded, "As a nature poet he is distinctively Canadian."⁶⁶

The significance of Carman's nature poetry in Canadian literature transcends even its apparent conformity to American ideals. The series of Songs from Vagabondia which Carman wrote in partnership with his Harvard friend, Richard Hovey⁶⁷ are, in their hectic optimism, much more typically New England than Canadian;⁶⁸ but, as Roy Daniells points out, Carman's Vagabondia is "less of an affectation than it appears."⁶⁹ The response to nature which he chooses to write about most often is one which everyone has felt: "To step into Carman's world is to move from one's ordinary self to best self in one easy motion."⁷⁰ The fact that this best self is not as ever-present as Carman makes it seem does not invalidate its truth as a feeling:

There is something in the autumn that is native to
my blood --
 Touch of manner, hint of mood;
 And my heart is like a rhyme,
 With the yellow and the purple and the crimson
keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
 Of bugles going by.
 And my lonely spirit thrills
 To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.⁷¹

("A Vagabond Song," 11. 1-8)

A.J.M. Smith remarked on the frequency with which Scott used colours to convey sounds.⁷² Here, more crudely perhaps, but nonetheless accurately, Carman produces a similar effect: the scarlet not only reminds him of the

scarlet of soldiers' uniforms, and so of the clamour of a parade, but the colour itself is clamorous, and the sight of it has an emotional effect of equal intensity. Similarly, the comparison of the asters with the colour of smoke, in conjunction with the word "lonely," suggests the emotional response of a traveller to a sign of habitation in an otherwise empty landscape. The senses and the emotions, particularly emotions triggered by memory, are intricately blended in these lines.

The significance of memory and association in Carman's poetry is that it is native memory and local association. Carman's response to nature, even if it is made by a vagabond who never stays long enough in one place to lose the thrill of discovery, is the response of a native. There is nothing alien to him in the swift changing of the seasons, and the landscape through which he moves is one with which he is totally familiar. He is never an explorer, like Sangster; he does not describe scenes of which he has never seen the like before; his discoveries are all, like Lampman's, rediscoveries.

In spite of his vagabond pose, his wanderings never take him beyond the range of a familiar type of landscape and the impulse behind these poems, the need to be always in a rapturous state of communion with nature, can never be satisfied in any particular place or time. A.J.M. Smith puts his finger on this element in Carman's work when he says, "I myself cannot help feeling that Bliss Carman's 'vagabond' poetry shows not so much a desire to get anywhere in particular as the desire simply to get away from the here and now."⁷³ Smith acknowledges that we may des-

pise the vagueness of Carman's goal and yet discount the vagueness "because the motive which has prompted the pilgrimage is generous and noble It is an assertion of man's spiritual triumph over time and mortality."⁷⁴

Roy Daniells believes that the immediacy of Carman's response to nature was only possible in a country where "the terrain carried few memories or associations, where no standing stones witnessed to the past, where no gods inhabited the mountains."⁷⁵ Yet Carman's mountains, hills and rivers are also possessed of a transcendent spirit:

Lord of my heart's elation,
Spirit of things unseen,
Be thou my aspiration
Consuming and serene!

("Lord of My Heart's Elation," ll. 1-4)⁷⁶

and we have already seen in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott that the Canadian landscape was not empty of "tradition or refrain" for those who cared to look for it. Carman's classical education not only enabled but encouraged him to populate his hills with gods, or at least supernatural beings:

Among the wintry mountains beside the Northern Sea
There is a merrymaking, as old as old can be.

Over the river reaches, over the wastes of snow,
Halting at every doorway, the white drifts come and go . . .

Then all night long through heaven, with stately to
and fro,
To music of no measure, the gorgeous dancers go.

("The Marring of Malyn," I, ll. 1-4; 17-18)⁷⁷

and

Come, for the night is cold,
The ghostly moonlight fills
Hollow and rift and fold
Of the eerie Ardise hills! . . .

Outside, the great blue star
 Burns in the ghostland pale,
 Where giant Algebar
 Holds on the endless trail

And though thy coming rouse
 The sleep-cry of no bird,
 The keepers of the house
 Shall tremble at thy word.

("A Northern Vigil," ll. 37-40; 45-48; 57-60)⁷⁸

This last, with its echoes of Poe's "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee," like Lampman's "The City of the End of Things," Scott's "Powassan's Drum" and "The Piper of Arll," contributes to the small but vital thread of the eerie in Canadian poetry, and ought not to be taken too seriously as an expression of Carman's philosophy. The taste for tales of the supernatural is as strong in Canada as in Scotland and was particularly prominent elsewhere in poetry during Carman's lifetime, for example, in the work of Walter De La Mare, Kipling, and even Hardy.

Yet the creation of a little superstitious frisson in the reader was not Carman's only motive for using supernatural figures in his poetry. He did not hesitate to use the gods, old or new, as symbols of the natural processes unfolding about him and in "Easter Eve" he provides an unusually direct statement of his approach:

If I should tell you I saw Pan lately down by the
 shallows of Silvermine,
 Blowing an air on his pipe of willow, just as the
 moon began to shine;
 Or say that, coming from town on Wednesday, I met
 Christ walking in Ponus Street;
 You might remark, "Our friend is flighty! Visions
 for want of enough red meat!"

Then let me ask you. Last December, when there was
 skating on Wampanaw,
 Among the weeds and sticks and grasses under the
 hard black ice I saw
 An old mud-turtle poking about, as if he were putting
 his house to rights,
 Stiff with the cold perhaps, yet knowing enough to
 prepare for the winter nights.

And here he is on a log this morning, sunning himself
 as calm as you please.
 But I want to know, when the lock of winter was
 sprung of a sudden, who kept the keys? ⁷⁹

As well as enabling him to escape from the here and now, myth and legend are useful devices by which Carman can indicate the quality of ecstasy he feels in the humblest of natural events.

In choosing to write chiefly of a man in a state of ecstatic communion with nature, Carman laid himself open to the same charges as Lampman faced: that his poetry lacks realism and it ignores the harsher aspects of life. These are criticisms which are perhaps more justly applied to Carman than to Lampman, but it is nevertheless true that the type of experience on which both chose to concentrate is the one which has dominated Canadian poetry from its beginnings. Sangster, no less than Scott, Carman and Lampman, felt in the wilderness a freshness of thought, a sense of communion with the fundamental realities of existence, which transcended normal existence. For Carman, however, it was possible to find this experience in more familiar landscapes.

It is in fact the security which Carman's familiarity with his own territory gave him which makes his poetry so effective. It is this which gives him the power to people his own country with myth and magic, and it is something which had not long been recognized in Canada. Such poems as "Spring Song":

Make me over, mother April,
 When the sap begins to stir!
 When thy flowery hand delivers
 All the mountain-prisoned rivers,
 And thy great heart beats and quivers
 To revive the days that were,

Make me over, mother April, ⁸⁰
 When the sap begins to stir!

(11. 1-8)

"The Joys of the Open Road":

Now the joys of the road are chiefly these:
 A crimson touch on the hard-wood trees ⁸¹

(11. 1-2)

and "An Autumn Song" -- "There is something in the autumn
 that is native to my blood" -- may seem trite today, but
 they express a feeling which was relatively new to
 Canadians. Carman is the first Canadian poet of any
 distinction who depicts a beneficent nature, one in which
 there is no fear, not even the slight fear that Lampman
 felt at the touch of cold:

Lovelier than ever now
 Is the world I love so well.
 .. Running water, waving bough,
 And the bright wind's magic spell

Rouse the taint of migrant blood
 With the fever of the road, --
 Impulse older than the flood
 Lurking in its last abode.

.

Now the yellow of the leaf
 Bids away by hill and plain,
 I shall say good-bye to grief,
 Wayfellow with joy again.

.

I shall lack nor tent nor food,
 Nor companion in the way,
 For the kindly solitude
 Will provide for me to-day.

.

Leave the latch-string in the door,
 And the pile of logs to burn;
 Others may be here before
 I have leisure to return. ⁸²

("At the Yellow of the Leaf," 11. 21-28; 37-40:
 49-52; 61-64)

As Canadians became ever more secure in their environ-
 ment this kind of poetry became increasingly appropriate

to their experience. As Daniells says, Carman's poetry "perfectly expressed the latent feelings of his contemporaries and satisfied their need for a simple, local, accessible ethos."⁸³ Whatever its limitations, this is Carman's contribution to the Canadian national identity and it is for this reason that he is not simply a prominent figure in Canadian literary history, but a poet worthy of attention in his own right.

Charles G.D. Roberts

Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, with whom this discussion of the Confederation poets ends, is, in some ways, the most important of the four, though, like Carman's, his poetry has suffered a decline in critical estimation. He is of fundamental importance to the development, not only of the Confederation School, but of Canadian literature as a whole. Roy Daniells' summary of Roberts in the Literary History of Canada is perhaps the most concise statement of the present-day attitude to Roberts' career:

Less and less, as time goes on, do we recover aesthetic satisfactions or aesthetic stimulus from Roberts' poems. But his symbolic stature increases. His true role can now be appreciated and a genuine admiration can be achieved for the spirit in which he conceived and carried it out. He was quite literally Canada's first man of letters and the knighthood he received in 1935 was not an inappropriate honour.⁸⁴ He had done something for the concept of the Dominion.

The title poem of Roberts' first book, Orion and Other Poems (1880) now can be seen as an entirely conventional poem on a classical theme: it has nothing to do with Canada, either in the subject or its treatment, and apart from the general competence of the verse, offers little of interest, in itself, to the student of Canadian poetry.

Yet, on its first appearance, it represented the initiation of Canadian poetry into the adult world of letters, and Archibald Lampman's excited response on his first reading of the poem has become, rightly, the representative example of the impact Roberts had on the literary world of his time. Though it has often been quoted, it is worthwhile giving Lampman's account of his reaction once again:

I sat up most of the night reading and re-reading Orion in a state of the wildest excitement and when I went to bed I could not sleep. It seemed to me a wonderful thing that such work could be done by a Canadian, by a young man, one of ourselves. It was like a voice from some new paradise of art, calling us to be up and doing.⁸⁵

The nationalist aspect of this response can not be too strongly stressed. Roberts' place in Canadian literature is assured, first of all by his contribution of a number of finely-crafted poems, but ultimately by his recognition of the opportunity he had to stimulate and encourage the writing of Canadian literature. The early recognition which Orion received from Matthew Arnold and Oliver Wendell Holmes, among others, confirmed his Canadian contemporaries in their admiration of his work, and prepared them to follow his example, but he himself, modestly, and with due acknowledgment of the achievement of others, set about living up to the role in which he found himself: that of the leading Canadian man of letters.

Paradoxically, it is Roberts' conscious effort to forge a national literature which has led to the decline in his status as a poet. The patriotic verses which resulted are not much appreciated today, and even the best of them, like

O Child of nations, giant-limbed,
 Who stands among the nations now
 Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,
 With unanointed brow, --

("Canada," ll. 1-4)⁸⁶

strikes at a chord which modern Canadian nationalists prefer to leave untouched. Yet one must recognize that this was not only an appropriate attitude to strike, it was one which was felt to represent the mood of the nation, or at least a mood which ought to be encouraged.

E.K. Brown, in his assessment of Roberts, declares that he was "Never a poet of philosophical ideas."⁸⁷ and that he lacked the clear programme that marked the political verse of Charles Mair.⁸⁸ The weakness which this contributed to his political and patriotic verses is also found in any of his poetry where he attempted to convey a philosophical idea which was beyond his capacity, and so rings hollow, or is merely trite. Perhaps in his political verses Roberts was led too often into this sort of trap, but it is one which he did not escape even in his nature verse. The often-repeated example:

Little brothers of the clod,
 Soul of fire and seed of sod,
 We must fare into the silence
 At the knees of God.

("Recessional," ll. 13-16)

is typical. His saving grace, however, was the vigour with which he presented his ideas, and, as E.K. Brown was quick to assert, "his note of intensity in urging pride in the nation's character and future was a more poetic service to Canada than the most carefully articulated programme could have been."⁸⁹

While admitting that Roberts lacked the ability to articulate a philosophical or political system in his poetry it is unfair to claim, as Brown does, that Roberts was also incapable of doing more than describing the surface of nature:

It would not be rewarding to linger over Roberts's interpretations of the inner meaning of nature. . . . God is in nature; and nature is good. Man is a part of nature; and has no quarrel with it. These simple, supremely optimistic notions, characteristic of Wordsworth's generation, and continuing on in the poetry of the American transcendentalists, are all that Roberts requires. It is typical of his temper and mind that these ideas are set forth obscurely, in a fashion which prevents the rapid reader from deriving anything beyond a vague notion that all is mysteriously well.⁹⁰

The implication of this statement is that without some clearly-articulated philosophy, poetry cannot do more than touch the surface of nature, and Brown says as much of Roberts' poetry: "Roberts is at his best when he deals with the surface. Nowhere in the whole range of his poetry is he better than in his pictures of rural New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."⁹¹

The sequence of sonnets from Songs of the Common Day (1893), with "The Tantrammar Revisited," from In Divers Tones (1886) are the crown of Roberts' poetic career. In these poems, as in Lampman's sonnets, the poet presents the countryside in its changing seasons, a rural world apparently untouched by industry; but, unlike Lampman's, Roberts' sonnets convey a sense of human activity and purpose in the landscape which is quite different.

Lampman's human figures, like the wagoner in "Heat" or the mower in "Among the Timothy," pass as anonymous background figures which point a perspective or set the stage; the meadows and fields are there for Lampman's con-

temptation alone. Roberts' field and ploughed lands are not there simply for his own amusement and spiritual refreshment; one feels they are productive farms which will go on existing when the poet has turned his back.

"The Sower," to give the clearest example, presents a farm labourer, not as an adjunct to the poem's imagery, but as the central figure: no less a part of the landscape, no more conscious of his place in it than Lampman's wagoner, and equally anonymous, but, in his participation in the on-going ritual of the seasons, a much more significant figure:

Alone, he treads the glebe, his measured stride
 Dumb in the yielding soil; and though small joy
 Dwell in his heavy face, as spreads the blind
 Pale grain from his dispensing palm aside,
 This plodding churl grows great in his employ; --
 Godlike he makes provision for mankind.⁹²

("The Sower," ll. 9-14)

It must be granted that the explicit statement in the last line is not new, and perhaps the moral is stated too emphatically, but Roberts makes subtle use of his diction and imagery to sustain the central idea and to give it depth. The use of the word glebe, for the field, suggests, as well as its root meaning, "a clod of earth," its later usage as land set apart for the church, by far the more familiar usage in Canada. The dumb footsteps and the blind grain suggest the prophecy that the eyes of the blind and the mouths of the dumb should be opened by the coming Messiah, while the act of sowing itself recalls the parable of the Sower. Thus the sower becomes a Christ-image, and the falling of the seed, not only a provision for the body, but a symbol of the Resurrection.

Elsewhere, in "The Winter Fields," Roberts makes similar use of Biblical imagery and diction to give a symbolic force to an otherwise simple landscape description:

Yet in the lonely ridges, wrenched with pain,
Harsh solitary hillocks, bound and dumb,
Brave glebes close-lipped beneath the scourge and chain,
Lurks hid the germ of ecstasy -- the sum
Of life that waits on summer, till the rain
Whisper in April and the crocus come.

("The Winter Fields," ll. 9-13,
Songs of the Common Day)

Here again we have the word glebe,⁹³ but even stronger imagery in the suffering "close-lipped beneath the scourge and chain" which suggests the flogging of Christ, and so makes of the promise of spring (the crocus itself an Easter flower) a Resurrection symbol.

It is not necessary to claim for Roberts a spirit of Christian mysticism in order to see that in these poems there is more than a superficial description of the landscape. In his sonnets, Roberts personifies nature more than any of the other Confederation poets except perhaps Carman, and even Carman's personification is less intense than this. Carman personifies the seasons ("Mother April," for example), but Roberts attributes human feelings to the land itself.

This is perhaps what gives Roberts' poetry its individual voice. It is certainly a trait which is prominent in his animal stories, but it is also noticeable that Roberts' landscape is, of all the Confederation poets', the one which shows most clearly the hand of man. The sense of activity, even in such a tranquil sonnet as "The Pea-Fields":

distant scene. It is enough."⁹⁴ reveals Daniells' discomfort when confronted with the type of philosophical speculation demanded by earlier critics like E.K. Brown, but it ignores the complex relationship of past and present in the poet's mind which is the true subject of the poem. Not only that, Daniells also ignores the complicated shifts of perspective between the scene as it is actually observed, from a distance, and its closeness to the poet in his memory. Such shifts of perspective are characteristic of Roberts' poetry and are of special interest when compared to similar effects in another medium.

Northrop Frye, in an essay on Canadian artists, noted that Tom Thomson (1877-1917) was "primarily a painter of linear distance."⁹⁵ Frye examines further the Canadian artists' concern with distance and the depth of field of their paintings,⁹⁶ but in this essay he simply observes the frequency with which Canadian artists persist in staring into the distance, beyond the foreground, regarding it, as Tom Thomson does, as an obstacle:

What is furthest in distance is often nearest in intensity. Or else we peer through a curtain of trees to a pool and an opposite shore. Even when there is no vista a long tree-trunk will lean away from us and the whole picture will be shattered by a straining and pointing diagonal.

This focussing on the farthest distance makes the foreground, of course, a shadowy blur: a foreground tree--- even the tree in "West Wind" -- may be only a green blob to be looked past, not at In fact, of all important Canadian painters, only David Milne seems to have a consistent foreground focus, and even he is fond of the obstructive blur.⁹⁷

This, more than any other comment, seems to provide a satisfactory explanation for the fascination of "The Tantramar Revisited". The far-off scene, the little,

detail as the figure of the sower is introduced. It is interesting to note that the flock of pigeons that "streams aloft," the only break in the horizon, graphically foreshadows the pattern of the sown seed as it falls from the hand. In the same way, the figures of the potato harvesters cease to stand on the ridge, "Black . . . against that lonely flush," but leap to the foreground as Roberts chooses them, the most distant figures in the scene, as the centre of the poem. The poem begins with a catalogue of scattered observations, the poet's eye following "straining and pointing" diagonals, underlined here to make them more readily observable:

A high bare field, brown from the plough, and borne
Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky
 Washing the ridge; a clamour of crows that fly
In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn
To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn;
A line of grey snake-fence that zig-zags by
 A pond and cattle; from the homestead high
 The long deep summonings of the supper horn.

("The Potato Harvest," Poems)

The eye comes to rest on the far point of the horizon, and there follow five lines of concentrated description, each object described in its relation to the others, so that the mind's eye of the reader tends to move in for a closer look:

Black on the ridge, against that lonely flush,
 A cart, and stoop-necked oxen; ranged beside,
 Some barrels; and the day-worn harvest-folk,
 Here emptying their baskets, jar the hush
 With hollow thunders. . . .

The last lines of the poem:

. . . Down the dusk hillside
 Lumbers the wain; and day fades out like smoke

draw the eye back, and restore the wider view before it too disappears.

Not just a trick of composition, the apparent shift of perspective in these poems and "The Tantramar Revisited" contributes a tension to the spatial element of the poem which underlines the tension between the scene as the poet sees and describes it, and the timeless one of which he is also aware. The device recalls the use which Keats made of it in such poems as "I stood tiptoe . . .," "Ode to Psyche," and, most notably, in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where the image of the little town:

thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell⁹⁸
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

(ll. 38-40)

for the moment brings to the foreground of the poem something that may not even be depicted in the urn. Like Keats's urn, Roberts' poems are "cold pastorals"; they evoke a time and place out of reach of the poet, and yet which, in imagination and memory, he can approach a little more closely.

Roberts, like the cattle in "The Pea Fields":

. . . scorning the poor feed their pasture yields,
Up from the bushy lots the cattle climb,
To gaze with longing through the grey, mossed rails.

(ll. 12-14, Songs of the Common Day)

seems forever staring into a world he longs to re-enter, yet which he fears to approach.

The mingled honey and salt of the old-time winds in "The Tantramar Revisited" is an apt metaphor for the bitter-sweet emotion of the sonnets as well, since each of them portrays a moment of time of mingled resignation and hope. "The Tantramar Revisited" encourages the reader to see the sonnets as both present observation and recollected experi-

ence, and explains the sense of timelessness which Roberts seems so anxious to convey.

Nature, in Roberts' poem, is not simply good; it is full of pain and suffering, even the mild suffering of the poet who dares not descend into his home valley for fear of seeing at work there the "hands of chance and change"; but beneath it all there exists a sense of patient endurance, most clearly seen in "The Sower" and "The Winter Hills," but also in "The Mowing" and "The Pea Fields," that is shared by man, animal and land alike: out of this patience, out of the mown grass and the sown seed comes springing "the spirit of June, here prisoned by his [the sun's] spell" ("The Mowing," 1. 13, Songs of the Common Day) which, if it does not rise again as new grain, still "May cheer the herds with pasture memories," (1. 14). If Roberts has no quarrel with this nature it is not because no quarrel is possible but because an act of resignation has been made; an act which has not been played out before us.

The patience and suffering of man and nature in Roberts' poetry is comparable to the endurance in the face of an indifferent nature which Duncan Campbell Scott portrays in such poems as "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris":

. . . We of the sunrise,
 Joined in the breast of God, feel deep the power
 That urges all things onward, not to an end,
 But in an endless flow, mounting and mounting,
 Claiming not overmuch for human life,
 Sharing with our brothers of nerve and leaf
 The urgency of the one creative breath

Persistence is the master of this life;
 The master of these little lives of ours;
 To the end -- effort -- even beyond the end.

Scott's consolatory vision of the end of the world, from the same poem, sums up not only his, but Roberts' philosophy of endurance:

Just as the fruit of a high sunny garden,
Grown mellow with autumnal sun and rain,
Shrivelled with ripeness, splits to the rich heart,
And looses a gold kernel to the mould,
So the old world, hanging long in the sun,
And deep enriched with effort and with love,
Shall, in the motions of maturity,
Wither and part, and the kernel of it all
Escape

(11. 271-279)

Roberts, even more than Scott, concerns himself with the annual prefiguring of this ultimate reward for the patient suffering of the world, although he does not state his belief as explicitly as Scott. Moreover, when one remembers that the sonnets of Songs of the Common Day were eventually printed as a sonnet sequence in Poems (1903) it becomes possible to understand their serenity of tone as part of their function as a unified vision of the world. As a sequence of poems, their Virgillian manner, as A.J.M. Smith saw it,⁹⁹ becomes explicable as appropriate to a Georgic cycle. As such, these poems have every right to represent only the ultimately beneficent face of nature.

For all that it is presented with classic smoothness of outline and recorded with objective serenity, Roberts' view of nature accounts for suffering in a way that Lampman's cannot and Carman's will not accept. For this reason, in spite of his weaknesses, his unsureness of diction and meter, and in spite of his frequent preaching manner, Roberts remains, in these few poems, a challenging poet, not one to be dismissed, as he has been by Roy Daniells and E.K. Brown. If nothing else, the "sobriety

and dignity" which A.J.M. Smith found in the sonnets¹⁰⁰ sets his work apart from the boisterous emotions of Carman, the often querulous escapism of Lampman, and the violence of D.C. Scott as a thoroughly individual response to the Canadian landscape and its challenge to the poet. Indeed, sobriety and dignity are qualities all too rare in Canadian poetry of the earlier generations, and their presence in Roberts' work are clear indications that Canadian poetry was approaching maturity.

The Importance of the Confederation School

The quality which the Confederation poets gave to Canadian poetry was a sense of permanence, of belonging. They did not write as newcomers exploring the country for the first time nor did they write for European readers who would be impressed by the strangeness of the wilderness, but for themselves and for each other with a lack of self-consciousness unknown before, except perhaps among the untaught poets.

They were as impressed by the contrast between the wilderness and civilization as their predecessors had been but they were more ready to acknowledge the contrast as a useful one and make it the centre of their poetry, as D.C. Scott did in "The Height of Land". The contrast had become naturalized in Canada itself and the Confederation poets were less anxious than their forebears that it should be overcome. One of the results of this lack of anxiety, however, was that the Confederation poets became identified with complacency and conservatism.

The narrowness of their early environment, in the charming "old-world, gentlemanly society" described by A.J.M. Smith,¹⁰¹ was certainly responsible for the conservatism which marks the work of the Confederation school, but to deny these poets, as Smith has done, the claim to be national poets because their work "ignored on principle the coarse bustle of humanity in the hurly-burly business of the developing nation,"¹⁰² is perhaps to apply to the writers of one age the critical standards appropriate to another.

Smith admits

. . . if their work was narrow, it was important, and they presented it with great variety, charm, and precision. In general terms, it was nothing less than the impingement of nature upon the human spirit.¹⁰³

but Smith, like many twentieth century critics, demands of the Confederation poets an open response to the challenge of urban and industrial life. To these critics it seems that the concentration of the Confederation poets upon nature prevented them from paying attention to a dimension of human experience which ought to have been their primary concern. This is one of the most serious criticisms which has been made of nineteenth century Scottish poets as well, and so it is worth while examining the question in some detail.

Duncan Campbell Scott spoke for the other Confederation poets as well as himself when he denied that their poetry ignored humanity. In a letter to J.E. Wetherell written in 1892 Scott complained of the "cant of the more careless critics to keep dinging away that all Canadian poets are nature poets," and explained, "It is inevitable that we

should deal with nature and somewhat largely, but I think it will be found that much of this work rises from and returns to man and does not exist from and to itself."¹⁰⁴

Of course most of what Scott and his contemporaries meant by poetry "rising from and returning to man" was different from what Smith and his contemporaries intended poets to consider, and involved a degree of airy moralizing which is not generally appreciated by modern critics. When they wrote of man, Scott and the other Confederation poets most often considered him as an individual and in his relationship to nature; social systems and their inherent evils were often hinted at but rarely subjected to a searching analysis.

Leo Kennedy, in an essay on Archibald Lampman, made perhaps the most reasonable explanation of what certain modern critics found wrong with the work of the Confederation poets. He directed his criticisms at Lampman in particular, but the comments may just as easily be applied to any of the Confederation poets:

If a poet is to limit his subject matter to one or two bald and unforgettable truisms, that we live, for example, and that we die, he must be able to contribute his own acceptable variations of these themes. If . . . he concentrates mainly on the phenomena of nature, it is not enough to see them with sobriety and poeticalness. He must wring out a meaning that is both personal and universal. Then, for a poet to lack active social virtue may be felicitous and even wise. It does not presume in him less virtue than is discovered in those writers who have a social outlook . . . But it does presume that he has within himself a sufficiency of strength, vision, and emotional depth. In fine, the narrower the scope he permits himself, the stronger must be his intensity, the more profound his feelings, the greater his ability to communicate his findings.¹⁰⁵

Clearly only the greatest poets are capable of satisfying this kind of demand, and while Kennedy denies that he is "abusing Lampman because his ideas are commonplace"

or "taking him to task because his verse does not reflect Canadian politics of the '90s,"¹⁰⁶ he evidently assumes that a breadth of range and a variety of poetic models is sufficient to compensate for the meagreness of Lampman's thought.

Yet one of the chief criticisms of the Confederation poets has also been that they are too imitative to be called national:

. . . most Canadian poets suffer from a parasitic dependence on the literature of other countries. Among the nature poets, it is obvious that the most widely-known -- Carman, Roberts and Lampman himself -- depend on a periodic saturation in the work of other writers. To read one of them through is like reading an anthology of romantic poetry in English in the nineteenth century. . . . If we overlook the imitative side of their work, and dress it up with the label "cosmopolitan," we cater to the persistent colonialism of Canadian poetry and Canadian criticism.¹⁰⁷

If one wishes to acquit the Confederation poets of the charge of colonialism it is possible to view the situation in terms of changes in fashion and "assimilated debt" as Malcolm Ross does in his introduction to Poets of the Confederation:

It is natural enough that our recent writers have abandoned and disparaged "The Maple Leaf School" of Canadian poetry. Fashions have changed. . . . But the changes have not really been ours -- at least we have not been the innovators. Our newest poets owe as much to Eliot, Auden, and Robert Graves as the Confederation Poets owed to the seminal writers of their day. The point is -- the debt is assimilated now (as it was then) and therefore is almost paid back. Then as now the feeling for place checks and balances the feeling for time. Then,¹⁰⁸ as now, voices are heard with individual accent. . . .

The truth is probably somewhere between these two positions. In order to be national poets must demonstrate a feeling for place but they must show a corresponding feeling for time as well. Though there were

certainly poets of considerable technical ability in the pre-Confederation era they lacked contact with contemporary developments in poetry. The old-fashioned quality of their verse masked, to a great extent, the real feeling for the landscape which they were trying to express. The apprenticeship of the Confederation poets to the various romantic poets was a useful and necessary step in the development of Canadian poetry, and it did not handicap them in any way when they made Canada their subject.

Northrop Frye stated that no Canadian author was a classic "in the sense of possessing a vision greater in kind than that of his best readers."¹⁰⁹ and this is certainly true of the Confederation poets, who offered little that was new in their response to the landscape, but their vision comprehended considerably more than that of any poets who had preceded them. They came close to attaining the status of a classic in terms of their national significance; their vision, while it was filled with the familiar themes and images, integrated them and related them to a native experience. Scott, standing on the height of land, Lampman leaning on a rail fence, Carman treading the open road, and Roberts musing over the Tantramars Marshes recorded their observations, both of the land and of their own emotions, as though the act of observation were an end in itself. Often their observation was influenced by the foreign poets they had read, but it was strongly rooted in their own lifetime's experience of the countryside. They may

have used words drawn from the vocabulary of Wordsworth and Keats, but it was unmistakably Canada and the Canadian soul they described. They stood on high ground, a little detached from their subject, reflecting, musing, with a depth of introspection which, if not unknown before them, had never before been given such accurate expression.

NOTES

1. Bernard Muddiman, "Archibald Lampman," Archibald Lampman, ed. Michael Gnarowski (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 68.
2. J.P. Matthews, Tradition in Exile, p. 113.
3. *ibid.*, p. 109.
4. Fred Cogswell, "Literary Activity in the Maritime Provinces 1815-1880," LHC, pp. 103-104.
5. *ibid.*, p. 104.
6. Matthews, p. 20.
7. Archibald Lampman, "Heat," The Poems of Archibald Lampman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
8. Daniells, LHC, p. 416.
9. Pelham Edgar, "Canadian Poetry," Twentieth Century Essays on Confederation Literature, ed. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1976), p. 121.
10. Matthews, Tradition in Exile, p. 100.
11. *ibid.*
12. Muddiman, p. 68.
13. Grieve, Contemporary Scottish Studies, p. 110.
14. E.K. Brown, "The Contemporary Situation in Canadian Literature," Canadian Literature Today, p. 12.
15. The Poems of John Davidson, ed. Andrew Turnbull, I (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), p. xxiii.
16. Sir Charles G.D. Roberts quoted by A.J.M Smith, "The Fredericton Poets," Twentieth Century Essays, p. 133.
17. A.J.M. Smith, *ibid.*, p. 131.
18. Claude J. Bissell, "Literary Taste in Central Canada During the Late Nineteenth Century," Twentieth Century Essays, p. 25.
19. Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Canadian's Home-Song," Duncan Campbell Scott: Selected Poetry, ed. Glenn Clever (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1974), p. 15. All quotations of Scott's verse are taken from this edition unless otherwise noted.
20. Joseph Howe, "Acadia," Nineteenth Century Narrative Poems.

21. Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, "The Tantrammar Revisited," Poems (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1903).
22. Bliss Carman, Low Tide on Grand Pré: A Book of Lyrics (London: David Nutt, 1893).
23. Susanna Moodie, pp. 24-25.
24. I.V. Crawford, "Malcolm's Katie," Collected Poems.
25. D.C. Scott, "At the Cedars," Poets of the Confederation, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960).
26. Frye, LHC, p. 824.
27. Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), pp. 146-147.
28. Melvin H. Dagg, "Scott and the Indians," Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1974), pp. 189-190.
29. G. Ross Roy, "Duncan Campbell Scott," Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 142.
30. Snow-snake is a game played by sliding wooden poles or spears along a shallow trench in the snow: the winning pole, or "snake" is the one which slides farthest. National Museum of Man, Ottawa.
31. G. Ross Roy, pp. 142-143.
32. Milton Wilson, "Scott's Drowned Poet," Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 135.
33. Milton Wilson, Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 136.
34. S.L. Dragland, Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 179.
35. Bernard Muddiman, Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 33.
36. Leo Kennedy, "Canadian Writers of the Past: Archibald Lampman," Archibald Lampman, ed. Michael Gnarowski (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 123.
37. Louis Dudek, "The Significance of Lampman," Archibald Lampman, p. 197.
38. A.J.M. Smith, Twentieth Century Essays, p. 134.
39. Duncan Campbell Scott, "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," Twentieth Century Essays, p. 114.
40. ibid.

41. Archibald Lampman, "Among the Timothy," The Poems of Archibald Lampman. All quotations of Lampman's verse are taken from this edition.
42. Margaret Coulby Whitridge, "Introduction," The Poems of Archibald Lampman, p. xxiii.
43. *ibid.*, p. xxiv.
44. Frye, LHC, p. 845.
45. Ralph Gustafson, "Among the Millet," Archibald Lampman, p. 144; E.K. Brown, "Archibald Lampman," On Canadian Poetry, pp. 93-94; W.E. Collin, "Archibald Lampman," Archibald Lampman, p. 134.
46. Letter from Duncan Campbell Scott to Ralph Gustafson, 17 July, 1945, Archibald Lampman, pp. 154-158.
47. Rupert Brooke, Letters from America, pp. 56-57.
48. D.C. Scott, Selected Poetry, p. vi. Brooke was introduced by John Masefield who had been inspired to write poetry by Scott's Labour and the Angel (1898).
49. William David Schaeffer, James Thomson (B.V.): Beyond the City (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 2.
50. D.C. Scott, Archibald Lampman, p. 157.
51. W.E. Collin, Archibald Lampman, p. 134.
52. John Sutherland, "Edgar Allan Poe in Canada," Archibald Lampman, p. 165.
53. *ibid.*, p. 166.
54. W.E. Collin, Archibald Lampman, p. 134.
55. See, for example, W.P. Wilgar, "Poetry and the Divided Mind in Canada," Masks of Poetry, ed. A.J.M. Smith (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 68.
56. W.E. Collin, Archibald Lampman, pp. 132-3.
57. This poem, written in 1899, may have been influenced by Lampman's poem.
58. Leo Kennedy, Archibald Lampman, p. 123.
59. Bliss Carman, The Poems of Bliss Carman, ed. John Robert Sorfleet (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 15.
60. L.A. MacKay, "Bliss Carman: a Dialogue," Masks of Poetry, p. 57.

61. For a full discussion of Carman's poetic virtues and vices see L.A. MacKay, "Bliss Carman: a Dialogue".
62. *ibid.*, p. 56.
63. James Cappon, Bliss Carman and the Literary Influence of His Time (Toronto: Ryerson, 1940), p. 249.
64. *ibid.*
65. John Robert Sorfleet gives a comprehensive summary of the development of Carman's philosophy in his introduction to The Poems of Bliss Carman.
66. Cappon, Bliss Carman, p. 236.
67. Songs From Vagabondia (1894); More Songs From Vagabondia (1896); Last Songs From Vagabondia (1900). All three published in Boston by Copeland and Day and in London by Elkin Mathews.
68. Cappon, Bliss Carman, p. 235.
69. Daniells, LHC, p. 414.
70. *ibid.*
71. Carman, More Songs From Vagabondia.
72. A.J.M. Smith, "Duncan Campbell Scott," Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, pp. 118-119.
73. A.J.M. Smith, Twentieth Century Essays, p. 130.
74. *ibid.*
75. Daniells, LHC, p. 415.
76. Carman, "Lord of My Heart's Elation," From the Green Book of the Bards (London: John Murray, 1903).
77. Carman, "The Marring of Malyn," The Poems of Bliss Carman.
78. Carman, "'A Northern Vigil," Low Tide on Grand Pré.
79. Carman, "Easter Eve," Poets of the Confederation.
80. Carman, "Spring Song," Songs From Vagabondia.
81. Carman, "The Joys of the Open Road," Songs From Vagabondia.
82. Carman, "At the Yellow of the Leaf," From the Green Book of the Bards.
83. Daniells, LHC, p. 415.
84. *ibid.*, p. 405.

85. E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry, p. 92.
86. Roberts, Poems.
87. E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry, p. 50.
88. *ibid.*, p. 52.
89. *ibid.*
90. *ibid.*, p. 50.
91. *ibid.*, p. 49.
92. Roberts, "The Sower," ll. 9-14, Songs of the Common Day (London: Longmans, 1893).
93. This line reads "Grave glebes" in Poems.
94. Daniells, LHC, p. 401.
95. Frye, The Bush Garden, p. 200.
96. *ibid.*, pp. 204-205.
97. *ibid.*, pp. 200-201.
98. John Keats, Selected Poems and Letters, ed. Douglas Bush (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959).
99. A.J.M. Smith, Twentieth Century Essays, p. 134.
100. *ibid.*
101. *ibid.*, p. 131.
102. *ibid.*, p. 139.
103. *ibid.*, p. 138.
104. Quoted by Gary Geddes, "Piper of Many Tunes: Duncan Campbell Scott," Duncan Campbell Scott: a Book of Criticism, p. 170.
105. Leo Kennedy, Archibald Lampman, pp. 121-122.
106. *ibid.*
107. John Sutherland, Archibald Lampman, pp. 168-169.
108. Malcolm Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, p. xi.
109. Frye, LHC, p. 821.

Chapter Eight: "Poetic Diction,"
 Archaism and the Twentieth Century:
 Hugh MacDiarmid and E.J. Pratt

Twentieth Century Scots Verse

The nineteenth century poets considered in Chapter Five all accepted the fact that Scots was in decline both as a literary and as a spoken language. Their writing, as Stevenson put it, was "an ambition . . . rather of the heart than of the head, so restricted as it [the language] is in prospect of endurance, so parochial in bounds of space,"¹ and the respect which Stevenson, Lang, and Murray commanded as writers was not sufficient to remove from the language the rustic associations it had acquired since the Middle Ages. In the second decade of the twentieth century, however, there began a period of resurgence in which Scots was revealed to possess a greater literary potential than the traditionalists had realised. This period, termed "La Renaissance écossoise" by Denis Saurat,² was characterized by a bold use of Scots words drawn from a wide range of vocabulary regardless of historical or geographical consistency, and was universal rather than parochial in outlook. Not content to restrict themselves to the traditional formulae of Scots verse, the new poets, Hugh MacDiarmid in particular, used the language with new vigour and precision, and their work conveyed a welcome sense of modernity.

The marked differences which can be observed between nineteenth and twentieth century Scots poetry can partly be explained by the widespread changes which were affecting

poetry during the turn of the century. Experiments begun in the nineties by the Decadents, the Counter-decadents, the Imagists and the Symbolists, partly inspired by their contacts with French poetry, were taking greater effect in the first decades of the twentieth century. T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound are two of the most notable examples of poets who looked to the city rather than the countryside for their subject, and repudiated "the whole Tennysonian stance, the poet as a public figure writing for the broad middle class and diluting his poetry until that class could take it in. . . . Poetry was not to be made easy for the relaxed general reader."³ Maurice Lindsay attributed the new literary climate to the effect of World War I, which removed

the whole worn-out nineteenth-century convention of poetry as a game to be played with archaic words no longer used in speech and concerned exclusively with harmless subject-matter isolated from the rawness of the life of those ordinary people whose⁴ problems and concerns the war exposed for all to see.

and Lewis Spence's opinion of the effect of the war agrees with Lindsay's:

[The War⁷ achieved what nothing else could have achieved, because it removed for a while large numbers of Scots from the Caledonian scene, and permitted them a view of a larger world; and this estrangement had the effect it ever has on the Scottish mind -- a marked quickening of the patriotic sense, mingled with a desire for new things.⁵

Thus, in Scotland, as in England, there were new attitudes to poetry which encouraged the repudiation of "poetic diction" and the adoption of language which was direct, un-sentimental, and, in many cases, vernacular.⁶

The importance of C.M. Grieve to twentieth century Scots poetry cannot be over-emphasized. Writing under the pseudonym Hugh MacDiarmid (since this is the name he is now

best known by, he will be referred to as MacDiarmid henceforward), he appeared at the forefront of the new poetry, initiating it and single-handedly dragging the rest of Scotland with him. Not only his command of the language but his wider range of subject and tone attracted interest and aroused new respect for Scots as a literary medium, but his use of language (and languages) in his poetry, particularly his later work, clearly conforms to a trend which had been set by Eliot, Pound, and Joyce, and many of his followers in the Scottish Literary Renaissance can be seen to be conforming to this trend as well. This does not mean that the Scottish poets were imitators; as Malcolm Ross says of the Confederation poets in Canada, "the debt is assimilated now . . . and therefore is almost paid back . . . the feeling for place checks and balances the feeling for time."⁷ If they took their cue from Eliot it was because they recognized the same deficiencies of nineteenth century poetry as Eliot, and resolved them by similar means, but they had their own peculiarly Scottish problems which they attempted to resolve with the use of Scots.

"Plastic Scots"

The two words which are most commonly applied to the diction employed by the Scottish Literary Renaissance poets, "plastic" and "synthetic" are excellent examples of the changes which occur in a word's connotations in a very short space of time. In 1925 Robert Graves wrote, "a lovely word to me, 'plastic'!" when referring to his taste in plastic art.⁸ Graves was thinking of the word in its

primary sense of capable of being shaped or modelled, the sense in which it was used when it was applied to Scots. It was intended to designate the flexibility and malleability of the new Scots. Similarly, synthetic referred to the practice of synthesizing unrelated dialect words into a new language. Both words have today acquired associations of artificiality and now may suggest worthless or second rate imitations of natural substances.⁹ In modern slang one might reasonably refer to nineteenth century Scots as the "plastic" diction because it is imitative, and MacDiarmid's as "original".

In the nineteen twenties, however, no disparagement was intended when modern Scots diction was referred to as "synthetic," although there was strong criticism of the synthetic method:

There can be no modern Scots literature if there is no modern Scots spoken language. The poetry in this consciously constructed Scots suffers, it seems to me, the disabilities of poetry composed in a poetic diction. The words -- often dialect words nostalgically relished -- come between the reader and the experience; they draw attention to themselves away from their object.¹⁰

It is interesting to compare this comment with that of Middleton Murry on the tendency of language to become less precise: "The writer is perpetually trying to make the language carry more than it will bear, incessantly doing a kind of exquisite violence to speech."¹¹ Poetry, after all, is dependent upon words; they are not incidental to the poem but they are the poem:

The fundamental difficulty . . . is that different aspects of a work of literature are never completely separable, for it is by means of language that they are realized and through language that they all impinge upon the critic's sensibility.¹²

Thus the spare, prosaic diction of Wordsworth in the Lyrical Ballads drew attention to itself away from the subject (itself often "unpoetical" enough to raise comment).

Geoffrey Leech suggests that "we may think of the successful poet as avoiding banality on two dimensions: the banality of the poetic conventions of the past; and the banality of the everyday usage of the present . . . there is rarely a firm balance between them."¹³ Archaism is one possible solution to the problem:

Archaic language is naturally invested with a dignity and solemnity which comes from its association with the noble literary achievements of the past. It also gives us a sense of cultural continuity. . . . We may deplore this use of the grandeur of old-fashioned language as a spurious emotion . . . but we still have to recognize that it exists, and that it has existed in a stronger form in the past.¹⁴

The twentieth century reaction against the banality of the recent past led to the rejection of "poetic diction": When archaic diction had become a mere mannerism, and incongruity between loftiness of tone and poverty of emotion (often found, for example in Victorian ballads and translations from German lieder) helped to bring it into disrepute.¹⁵

Lofty diction was replaced by more colloquial diction which, of course, ran the risk of succumbing to the banality of everyday usage. Scots poets, whose colloquial diction had been exploited in verse for a great many years, could not easily escape either form of banality, and so it is not surprising that in attempting to revive their language they should resort to the use of obsolete words. The difference between this type of archaism and the archaic usage of which both Maurice Lindsay and John Speirs disapproved is slight, but it can be illuminated by a closer examination of the nature of archaism.

Archaism

In his defence of "Plastic Scots" Douglas Young referred to the decline of Scots in the sixteenth century, the deceleration in the production of new words, and the consequent use of archaism:

In various languages, Latin and Greek for example, archaism has been a recurrent phenomenon and as a rule fruitful; in the time of Shelley and Keats and Coleridge and Beddoes English verse was notably archaistic with good effects. But archaism unaccompanied by neologism, the coinage of new words and usages, is a symptom of impoverishment.¹⁶

Disapproval of archaism is not a modern phenomenon. James Beattie, in his essay "On Poetry and Music as they Affect the Mind," censured poets who used uncommon words in imitation of Spenser because they were not the natural speech of the present day and were generally unintelligible to the average reader:

A mixture of these words, therefore, must ruin the pathos of modern language; and as they are not familiar to our ear, and plainly appear to be sought after and affected,¹⁷ will generally give a stiffness to modern versification.

This is substantially the same argument which Speirs presented one hundred and seventy-four years later.

Owen Barfield's study of poetic diction is not as critical of archaism. He points out that "the most characteristic phenomena of poetic diction, the most typical differences between the language of poetry and prosaic language, can be grouped under the heading of Archaism,"¹⁸ and for this reason, "to the average person, the phrase 'poetic diction' is probably synonymous with what the literary mean by 'Archaism'."¹⁹ Barfield makes a useful distinction between true archaism and conservatism:

mere confining oneself to a choice of words, a grammar or a set of mannerisms which has been for some time and is still in general literary use, is not archaism. . . .

This should merely be called conservatism, or even -- not to put too fine a point on it -- dullness.²⁰

True archaism, according to Barfield, implies, "not a standing still, but a return to something older . . . it generally means a movement towards a language at an earlier stage of its own development."^{20a}

Archaism, like the use of foreign or unusual words, is a literary device which depends for its effect upon the charm of the unfamiliar:

When the matter is low . . . a dead language, in which nothing is meant because nothing is unfamiliar, affords great convenience.²¹

Languages . . . are like wonderful musical instruments which hover around us invisibly all the time for us to make use of. . . . Indeed, when we have grown insensitive to the beauty of our own, any foreign language has an indescribable magic; we need only cast our faded thoughts into it and they come to life again like flowers put into fresh water.²²

This quality Barfield calls "strangeness" and he says of it that it may "produce an aesthetic effect, that is to say an effect which, however slight, is qualitatively the same as serious poetry," but cautions that this strangeness "must be felt as arising from a different plane or mode of consciousness, and not merely as an eccentricity of expression. It must be a strangeness of meaning."²³ This strangeness can help to overcome banality by providing a particular pleasure:

not, in so far as it is aesthetic, the pleasure of comparing different ways of saying the same thing, but the pleasure of realising the slightly different thing that is said. For outside the purest abstractions and technicalities, no two languages can ever say quite the same thing.²⁴

Modern linguistics, in attempting to distinguish between differences in style and differences in meaning, provides an example of this in terms of different levels of English:

To me, Professor Hockett's examples, Sir, I have the honor to inform you and Jeez, boss, get a load of dis immediately evoke two so different situations and contexts that I should hesitate before²⁵ regarding their information as approximately the same.

The second expression clearly arises from a different plane of consciousness than the first, and its use in a work of literature could only be justified if it were intended to convey that plane of consciousness.

As the Scottish vernacular became less and less common as a living vocabulary it became more attractive as a form of poetic diction:

. . . as it ceases to be spoken, it seems to become more classic in its recognition and use, and to be increasingly attractive to English ears.²⁶

Unfortunately it continued to carry with it associations of rusticity and informality. Far from being a language in which nothing was mean because nothing was familiar, the Scottish vernacular as it was used in the nineteenth century was both strange and familiar: both poetical and the language of the common people. By the time Scots had become obsolete enough to acquire the charm of archaism, much of it had become entrenched as a conservative poetic diction, or carried with it connotations as unacceptable to certain levels of poetry as Professor Hockett's second example.

There was, however, a level of Scots which was obsolete or becoming obsolete as a spoken language but which had never found its way into conventional literature. In the pages of Jamieson's Dictionary and Wilson's Lowland Scotch Hugh MacDiarmid came upon words which had just the quality of strangeness which Barfield described:

The Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking. . . . The vernacular is a vast unutilized mass of lapsed observation made by minds whose attitudes to experience and whose speculative and imaginative tendencies were quite different from any possible to Englishmen and Anglicised Scots today. . . .²⁷

Ronald W. Langacker warns the student of a foreign language that he must not explain foreign modes of expression by a different mode of perception, pointing out that if one were a native speaker these foreign expressions would lose much of their charm: "These ways of expressing yourself, being customary, would not strike you as poetic, as they would strike the speaker of English."²⁸ MacDiarmid's impression of Scots subscribes to this fallacy, but it emphasises the difference between MacDiarmid's attitude to language in poetry and that of the nineteenth century poets. His is a very different prescription from the familiar ideal that poetry should reflect the language spoken by living men, and it is even farther removed from the cherished familiarity of "oor Mither Tongue" which condemned so much Scottish verse to tedious repetition of clichés. Nineteenth century experiments in Scots consisted of attempts to reproduce the language as it was spoken around them, and since Scots was the language of "under-educated working folk"²⁹ it was restricted to themes for which this would be appropriate. Hugh MacDiarmid detached Scots from the necessity of regional or historical authenticity and insisted only that it conform to his own personal vision.

Geoffrey Tillotson reminds us that "All poets of a modern age wish to achieve a modern effect even if a modern archaic effect."³⁰ The conservatism of many of the nine-

teenth century poets in Scotland did not permit them to strive for modern effects with archaism, but the "consciously constructed" language of Hugh MacDiarmid was a re-discovery of archaism which successfully combined it with modern effects. This modernity, however, was not completely divorced from the traditions of even the late nineteenth century, and in many ways MacDiarmid is more of a traditionalist in regard to Scots than is often realised.

Hugh MacDiarmid and "Plastic Scots"

Hugh MacDiarmid's Scots verse presents a number of problems to the scholar. In the first place it is far more concentrated Scots than anything since the time of Burns and contains so many obsolete or obscure words that it is impossible to read several of the poems without the aid of a dictionary or a good glossary in the text. MacDiarmid himself occasionally adds to the difficulty by misusing familiar Scots words, like ayont in "The Watergaw," or supplying an idiosyncratic definition, like his definition of "peerieweerie" in "Moonstruck," which may mislead the reader who does not also refer to a good Scots dictionary. His abandonment of Scots in later life forces the critic to compare works in strikingly different forms of language in order to trace the development of themes and images in his whole work; the danger of discussing two MacDiarmids is not great, but it exists.

MacDiarmid's English work from 1930 onwards lies outside the chronological limits of the present study, and so references to it will, necessarily, be brief; but

MacDiarmid's attitudes to Scots and his technique in that language can be understood better against the background of his later performance. Analysis of his Scots poems in isolation from his English work can only illustrate the differences and similarities between MacDiarmid's practice and that of other Scots poets; comparison with his English poetry highlights the advantages and disadvantages it held for him.

In Lucky Poet, that fascinating and perplexing "autobiography," MacDiarmid recalled that, in spite of the omnivorous reading in his boyhood, the library in Langholm "was astonishingly deficient in Scottish books," and "It was not, indeed, until after I was twenty-seven that I made this good in my case and did a thorough course of reading in Burns, Dunbar, and the other Scots poets, and in Scottish history."³¹ Ignorance of Scots literature apart from Burns and Scott was balanced, however, by the "strong local spirit" in Langholm, and the young Christopher Grieve's awareness of the variety of Scots dialects round about him:

Still more important was the fact that we did not speak English, but a racy Scots, with distinct variations in places only a few miles away. Hawick Scots was strongly differentiated from Langholm Scots, though Hawick was only twenty miles away. Still more different was the speech of Canonbie, only six miles south of Langholm, where the people always used the Quakerish 'thee' and 'thou'. I early acquired an exact knowledge of these differences, and discovered in myself in high degree that passion for linguistics which is so distinctively Scottish . . . and so utterly un-English. . . .³²

In spite of his early fascination with Scots dialects, MacDiarmid did not, at first, regard the vernacular as an essential part of any revival of Scottish poetry. The vernacular in literature was represented by the Burns Clubs and restriction to the conservatism which MacDiarmid rejected:

London Burns Club were promoting what they called Vernacular Circles. Lewis Spence in Edinburgh, and others whom I knew were interested in that and they tried to get me to go in; instead of going in I said, No, I said, I don't think that is the right way at all -- all these people want to do is keep propagating this kind of rural, backward-looking, sentimental use of Scots. I want something quite different.³³

MacDiarmid's discovery of the potential of Scots came, not from reading poetry, but from several works on the Scots language which appealed to his sense of nationalism: W.A. Craigie's lecture, "The Present State of the Scottish Tongue," John Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language and James Wilson's Lowland Scotch provided him with evidence for regarding Scots as an independent language with a history and a grammar distinct from that of English, and provided him with collections of phrases as well as individual words which impressed him with the imaginative resources of Scots:

I fell in love with the Scots language and I tried to extend it . . . It was like a revelation when I wrote my first poem in Scots . . . I must have tapped some source deep in myself.³⁴

The obvious interpretation of this statement is that MacDiarmid felt some ancestral claim which the language made upon him, some remote kinship which he felt with the cast of mind suggested by these words, and this is a possibility which will be considered later, but it is also possible that it was simply the charm of rare and difficult words that attracted him. The "source deep within" himself may have been the same one which determined the writing of such English poems as "On a Raised Beach" where the technical terms of geology replace the Scots words of his earlier verse. In both cases the reader is sent to the dictionary as a necessary aid to understanding the poem.

Kenneth Buthlay describes the process as it applies to "Scots Unbound," but the description can be applied to most of MacDiarmid's poetry:

The reader has to do his homework with Jamieson and others at his elbow before he is in a position to appreciate this "exercise of delight in the Scots sense of colour" and, to a lesser extent, smell and taste. It is an "exercise" for the reader, too -- a kind of verbal gymnastics, not relished by everybody.³⁵

The difficulty of this type of poetry is, as MacDiarmid himself pointed out, a characteristic of modern literature: he found an example in the work of James Joyce³⁶ and noted that his followers in the Scottish Vernacular Revival were attempting to employ the same wide range of languages and factual knowledge in their work;³⁷ but for MacDiarmid the fascination with words which is revealed in his poetry is much more important than a merely topical device. For MacDiarmid it is evidently important to draw attention to the words, not, as John Speirs suggests, with the intention of drawing attention away from their object, but because, for Hugh MacDiarmid, the words are fundamental to the poem:

. . . like Mallarmé I have always believed in the possibility of 'un poésie qui fut comme deduite de l'ensemble des propriétés et des caractères du langage' -- the act of poetry being the reverse of what it is usually thought to be; not an idea gradually shaping itself in words, but deriving entirely from words -- and it was in fact . . . in this way that I wrote all the best of my Scots poems³

Naturalism, in such poetry, is of minor importance, and MacDiarmid quotes G.R. Elliott's The Cycle of Modern Poetry which blames Wordsworth for the condition of modern poetry: "She [poetry] is still caught in the round of naturalistic theory and emotion into which the magic of the greater poets of the past century conjured her; and that circuit, always limited enough, has now become . . .

'nasty, short, and brutish'" ³⁹ Neither the synthetic Scots he used, nor the technical diction he later employed were completely natural to MacDiarmid, but they fascinated him and served another purpose as well; they forced the reader to take his poems slowly, and with great attention.

Kenneth Buthlay pointed out that the use of an archaism like visiteth in an epigram which MacDiarmid (Grieve) published in the Scottish Chapbook of 1922, ⁴⁰ was far more artificial than MacDiarmid's use of words like yowdendrift in a slightly later poem. Owen Barfield's definition of archaism disagrees with this: visiteth has been in common literary use and so is not an archaism but an example of conservative diction; yowdendrift, which is not in common literary use, is either colloquial archaism (the use of an older word still current in folk speech) or literary archaism. ⁴¹ Nevertheless, Buthlay does point out another difference between the two types of word no longer current in everyday speech. Visiteth, if it is an archaism at all, is an invisible archaism; it has become so much a part of accepted poetic usage that it does not strike the reader as an odd or difficult word in a poem. Its use in everyday speech would be regarded as odd and affected, and would attract attention, but it could easily go unnoticed in a poem. Yowdendrift, however, had no currency in literature when MacDiarmid used it in "The Eemis Stane". It and other unusual Scots words attract the reader's attention, and prevent the careless reading which might be given to more conventional diction.

Indeed, in being forced to follow MacDiarmid through the dictionary in which he found the words, the reader may be approaching more closely to the poem as the poet understands it. Many poems betray the fact that they were "quarried" from the pages of Jamieson and Wilson, and later from text books on geology and physiology. The earlier Scots poems contain a high proportion of words from the beginning of the alphabet: "The Bonnie Broukit Bairn," for example, contains such words as broukit (the title phrase is an amalgam of two examples in Jamieson's Dictionary), crammasy, and clanjamfrie; later poems, like those in Penny-Wheep, contain clusters of words in the latter portion of the alphabet: oolin', stishie, wan-shoggin, thrawn, rawn, revelled, spauld, ringle-e'ed, and risp. Still others, like "Gairmscoile" contain long passages full of words beginning with the same letter: scaut-heid, skrymmorie, scansin'; rambailliach, roothewn, royat, renshels, rumgunshoch, rowtin'; dorbels, drob, drochlin, drutling, dorty, daunton, drotas. This could be intended for alliterative effect, but it does not seem to be consistent enough to make this the only reason. "On a Raised Beach," with its long catalogue of geological terms, is a familiar example of a similar technique in MacDiarmid's English poetry.

MacDiarmid's characteristic cataloguing has been remarked on by more than one critic. On one level cataloguing is a traditional part of poetry, not just of Scots poetry, and this is a defence which MacDiarmid makes of it in Lucky Poet,⁴² but in MacDiarmid's hands it frequently

has a numbing effect on the reader. Quoting from "On a Raised Beach" the six lines following "Diallage of the world's debate," David Craig asks:

Is further quotation necessary? Do the forced, limping rhythms and musty poetic-diction encourage us even to look up in a dictionary "auxesis," "futhore" and the rest?⁴³

Walter Keir said of MacDiarmid's "wearisome catalogues of facts and theories,":

What worries me also is the abstract nature of much of this later poetry, and the absence of immediated human reference, though paradoxically a fuller understanding of humanity, and a fuller life for humanity, are always MacDiarmid's ultimate aims.⁴⁴

and Kenneth Buthlay detected in MacDiarmid's later poetry signs of a crisis in his life which blunted his sense of rhythm. MacDiarmid, claims Buthlay, "realising he [had] lost something, proceed[ed] to undervalue it and, making a virtue of necessity, invest[ed] his capital elsewhere."⁴⁵

This is an extreme interpretation of a quality which Iain Crichton Smith also found in MacDiarmid's later work:

I believe that what happened to MacDiarmid is as follows. He began as the poet with both a masculine and feminine sensibility and eventually allowed the masculine elements in himself to dominate his work, therefore to a great extent becoming less human than he once was.

For what we find in the early MacDiarmid and miss later is a real tenderness, a real feminine love. It may be strange to say this about MacDiarmid whom one thinks of above all as masculine and a fighter. But I believe that he surrendered or lost a priceless thing when this disappeared from the poetry except now and again. It is for this tenderness and for a kind of hallucinatory quality which owes little to logic or reason that I above all value MacDiarmid.⁴⁶

The tenderness and hallucinatory quality of MacDiarmid's earlier Scots poems will be discussed below, but it is interesting to compare these comments on MacDiarmid's later verse to an observation made by Sydney Goodsir Smith:

An interesting aspect of MacDiarmid's composition in the two languages is that when using Scots he inclines to a strict verse form and generally uses rhyme; when using English he inclines, not exclusively, to free, rhythmic, declamatory, rhetorical, sometimes positively prose-like verse. This seems to argue that the Scots language may release in him a vein of poetry as song . . . whereas English prompts him to a magisterial, lecture-like delivery.⁴⁷

Smith is careful to point out that these are only generalities to which there are very great exceptions, but he goes on to wonder if there is not something in the Scots language which makes it

more apt for the succinct, telling, almost proverbial summing-up of an argument in a common, concrete, workaday phrase, whereas literary English, being bookish and removed from the common vernacular of the street, has become increasingly abstract and consequently feebler at the "nut-shell" phrase but more capable of enlarging on an abstract, rather vague intellectual idea.⁴⁸

This tendency to use English for vague, abstract ideas can be seen even in MacDiarmid's earliest work. "A Moment in Eternity," from Annals of the Five Senses (1923) contains passages in which MacDiarmid expresses a clear conviction of a knowledge he is incapable of expressing in completely concrete terms, and the result is a kind of "chopped prose" strikingly similar to his method in much later works:

I knew that a new light
 Stood in God's heart
 And a light unlike
 The Twice Ten Thousand lights
 That stood there,
 Shining equally with me,
 And giving and receiving increase of light
 Like the flame that I was
 Perpetually.
 And I knew that when the wind rose
 This new tree would stand still
 Multiplied in light but motionless,
 And I knew that when God dreamt
 And his creative impulses
 Ran through us like a wind

(Collected Poems, p. 4)

To echo David Craig, is further quotation necessary?

MacDiarmid's opinion of the state of the English language and its utter inability to function in vital literature is clear:

Those who are vitally concerned with the English language know that it has vastly outgrown itself and is becoming more and more useless for creative purposes. It has got away from its true background; the native genius of the language is no longer capable of vitalizing so enormous a development. It is suffering from a kind of Imperial elephantiasis.⁴⁹

So is his opinion of its prominence in the schools:

It must be remembered that even to this day, despite the long period of English ascendancy, the teaching of English in our schools requires the subjection of our children to a prolonged psychological outrage. They have to be compelled to learn a language that is not natural to them. They have to learn to twist their thoughts to fit an alien mould of speech. All this has a profound effect in discouraging or extirpating their creative powers.⁵⁰

In Lucky Poet MacDiarmid refers to Anne McAllister's study of speech defects in Glasgow school children⁵¹ to support these rather extreme remarks, but ignores her remarks on the ability of children to learn several different languages at an early age, her conclusion that children should be taught in the form of language which would best help them to communicate with others, and her further observation that only the children of below average intelligence showed significant speech disorder as a result of school English.⁵²

Of more interest than the basis of his prejudice against English is his statement in At the Sign of the Thistle:

Any language real or artificial, serves if a creative artist finds his medium in it. In other words, it does not depend at all upon any other consideration, but wholly upon that rara avis, the creative artist himself.⁵³

Consistency is not one of MacDiarmid's chief characteristics, and one which he dismissed, as Maurice Lindsay

recalled, "with the splendid, if not wholly convincing, gesture: 'Why should I be consistent? Only small minds feel a need for consistency.'"⁵⁴ Yet in one thing MacDiarmid seems to have been consistent; his treatment of the Scots language, even when he discarded it in favour of an idiosyncratic English, reveals that he regarded it as an instrument of a particular design and fit for a particular function. Whether his later adoption of English was the result of some personal inability to make use of this instrument, or the fact that his purposes had changed and it no longer suited him, the fact remains that MacDiarmid was limited in certain specific ways by the Scots language and chose not to expand those limits.

MacDiarmid's Early Scots Poetry

In spite of the cautious reminders of linguistics that all languages are suitable for all purposes, it is a feature of human nature that we tend to pick out qualities of various languages which make them particularly suitable for certain types of literature. So, in his examination of Gavin Douglas' translation of the Aeneid, Robin Fulton remarks on the ability of Scots to "describe certain types of bad weather":⁵⁸

Scots is vivid and particular in a way which English cannot be; the sheer physical force of the elements, the touch and colour of the landscape, the energy of wind and water, are alive in Scots vocabulary in a way which frequently shows the English equivalents to be quite pale. This is what makes Gavin Douglas' version of, say, the sea passages and storms, from Virgil so much more concrete and energetic than any English translation has done.⁵⁶

Hugh MacDiarmid, as might be expected, admired the quality of concentration in Scots: ". . . the Vernacular abounds

in terms which short-circuit conceptions that take sentences to express in English."⁵⁷ So, in comparing his method to that of Burns, MacDiarmid claimed that he tended to use a deeper Scots, rather than change to English, "when I want to clinch the matter -- when I rise to the height of my theme."⁵⁸ Enlarging on this practice, MacDiarmid contends:

I do not pass into English because Scots is inadequate, but I pass from dialect Scots little different from English into the real MacKay! -- phrases of pure Scots a man cannot come by unless he is thinking in Scots and has recovered for himself, and achieved a mastery of, the full canon of that magnificent tongue.⁵⁹

In this passage MacDiarmid is thinking of such words as yow-trummle, that evocative expression which conveys the whole atmosphere of the cold spell following sheep-shearing in a single action, the shivering of the newly-shorn sheep, as well as the pithy, down-to-earth emmlle-deuqs and no' to cree legs wi' which he gives as examples.⁶⁰ It is also significant, however, that he admits that this intensified Scots appears "most frequently when I am dealing with anything appertaining to Langholm or to my boyhood days,"⁶¹ and the time when "to speak English was to 'speak fine'."

From his boyhood MacDiarmid carried a class-consciousness in which he identified himself with the workers, and this carried over into his attitude to Scots which he clearly regarded as the language of the common man.⁶² In so far as this recognizes the popular roots of the language and its survival among the less educated (who do not "speak fine"), this is not a very different attitude from that of the nineteenth century Scots poets who valued the language for the contact it gave them with (as they would phrase it) the "sons of toil". The condescension which

one might read into their attitude can be as easily inferred from MacDiarmid's pronouncements on the working man, as his emphatic rejection of this possibility proves.⁶³

One would hardly expect it to be otherwise. In order to extend the language, one must begin with the language as it exists, and this is what MacDiarmid himself claimed he was doing in "The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle":

(To prove my saul is Scots I must begin
Wi' what's still deemed Scots and the folk expect,
And spire up syne by visible degrees
To heichts whereo' the fules ha'e never recked.

But aince I get them there I'll whummle them
And souse the cratur's in the nether deeps. . . .

("Sic Transit Gloria Scotia," ll. 21-27,
Collected Poems)

Some aspects of MacDiarmid's early poetry, notably the predominance of songs and ballads, can be attributed to this cautious beginning "Wi' what's still deemed Scots," but caution is not a usual characteristic of MacDiarmid's personality. It is more reasonable to suppose that MacDiarmid, while wishing to escape from the "rural, backward-looking, sentimental use of Scots," still could not avoid employing Scots for rural and, if not actually nostalgic, for archaic effects.

One cannot read the astonishing early lyrics ("Empty Vessel," "The Watergaw," and "The Eemis Stane," for example) without being impressed by their novelty and the poet's apparent freedom from the conventions of the past. The imagination which sees the planets as gossiping women or pebbles brings a freshness of imagery to the poems which cannot be ignored: the poet's cheerful audacity in linking

the cosmic to the commonplace sweeps away the tired images of conventional poetry like the "ashypit lassie" in MacDiarmid's "Cophetua":

Wi' a scoogie o' silk
 An' a bucket o' siller
 She's showin' the hail Coort
 The smeddum intil her!

Looking at the literal subjects alone, however, it becomes clear that the poems can be allied with a more familiar tradition. In "Empty Vessel" we have the ruined girl driven mad by the death of her child, a subject beloved of generations of Romantic and Victorian poets; "The Water-gaw" is another poem about loss, and it fastens on "the last wild look ye gied / Afore ye deed!" In spite of the charming conceit of "Wild Roses"

Wi' sae mony wild roses
 Dancin' and daffin'
 It looks as tho' a'
 The countryside's laffin'.

the final image of the girl:

Hoo I mind noo your face
 When I speired for a kiss
 'Ud gae joukin' a' airts
 And colourin' like this!

can strike the reader as insufferably coy. "Country Life," apart from its unfamiliar vocabulary, is a catalogue of rural details not unlike those of Charles Murray ("Winter," for example), while "Cophetua," "Supper to God" and "Crow-dieknowe" are unmistakable portraits of shrewd working folk who have no time for "Thae trashy, bleezin' French-like folk," even if they are God and his angels. The vividness and concentration of these poems are overwhelming; they are as different in their manner as possible from the "kailyard" sentimentality of the previous century, but they are, nevertheless, built upon the same foundation.

This is not, by any means, the full extent of MacDiarmid's subject matter in these early lyrics, but it is remarkable that all of the poems up to, and perhaps including, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle," have a rural setting, and how many were written to be set to music by MacDiarmid's friend and former teacher, F.G. Scott. The musical quality of these early lyrics is a further link with the traditional view of Scots as a language particularly suited to song. The influence of Scott on MacDiarmid's poetry warrants further study for which there is not space in the present discussion. His suggestions for the organisation and the conclusion of "A Drunk Man," especially giving Jean the last word, are significant. It is possible that Scott provided the structure for more than just "A Drunk Man"; their collaboration in song writing may have balanced MacDiarmid's tendency to write loose, formless, prose-like poetry, and it may be the lack of F.G. Scott's influence which allowed MacDiarmid's later verse to become so unmusical.

In discussing MacDiarmid's Scots prose Kenneth Buthlay made an interesting observation:

When he adopts a persona here it is generally that of a more or less simple-minded, under-educated, rusticated character, in keeping with the subject matter, which is worked up from local lore and legend. Otherwise the author speaks with the voice of his own boyhood, and again there is a simplification of attitude, a restriction of range that is reflected in the formal treatment and in the texture of the language, which is usually a rather thin, colloquial Scots -- accurately recorded but not deployed with any great distinction.⁶⁴

Prose is not MacDiarmid's medium, and so one would not expect to find his Scots prose of great technical interest; one does, however, notice a striking similarity between the persona he chooses in his prose and that of the lyrics.

The speaker of "A Drunk Man" is not simple-minded, nor is he under-educated: MacDiarmid, indeed, has to explain the speaker's ability to quote from a variety of foreign poets by praising the Scottish educational system, which otherwise is treated with scanty respect:

(Gin you're surprised a village drunk
Foreign references s'ud fool in,
You ha'ena the respect you s'ud
For oor guid Scottish schoolin'.

If the drunk man were meant to be MacDiarmid himself, such an explanation would be neither necessary nor accurate; the persona of the down-to-earth working man has worn very thin by the time MacDiarmid comes to write "A Drunk Man" but it is nevertheless there. Cruivie and Gilsanquhar with their lack of intellectual concern are his alter ego:

What are the prophets and priests and kings,
What's ocht to the people of Scotland;
Speak -- and Cruivie'll goam at you,
Gilsanquhar jalouse you're dottlin'!

.

And whiles I wish I'd nae mair sense
Than Cruivie and Gilsanquhar,
And envy their rude health and curse
My gnawin' canker.

Otherwise he is much like the homespun philosophers of the sentimental school, though intellectually their superior. His wife Jean keeps him firmly down to earth, and she is clearly the indomitable Scotswoman of tradition. The drunk man's dependence on her to keep his perspective on experience straight, his constant references to her and her ability to cut through confusion with a direct remark:

I'se warrant Jean 'ud no' be lang
In finding whence this thistle sprang.

("The Psychosomatic Quandary")

give him further credibility as a member of Scottish society, but they also help to relate him to a quite tra-

ditional view of that society. Jean is, in fact, a familiar figure in Scottish poetry, particularly in popular verse. She may be more of a creation of F.G. Scott than of MacDiarmid; certainly her last words came from Scott⁶⁵ but MacDiarmid accepted them, and so, implicitly, the social situation they imply.

The forceful directness of the drunk man's language is accounted for by the fact that he is a villager, an ordinary man on his way home from an evening in an ordinary pub. The hallucinatory quality of the poem stems from his drunkenness as much as from the snatches of ballads that rise to the surface of his consciousness and give form to the anxieties he expresses. Like any other Scots poet, like J.L. Robertson or R.L. Stevenson, MacDiarmid accounts for his use of Scots by setting the words in an appropriate context.

The lyrics are a different problem. In them MacDiarmid has either to accept the fact that the language will be regarded as rustic and colloquial, or attempt to elevate it, to make it achieve a higher tone than it normally was required to do. His solution was, as one would expect of a modern poet, to attempt to give a greater sense of conviction to the colloquial, to make it carry the weight of profound poetry, but without dissociating it from the rustic or archaic qualities it had always held.

There is no question that MacDiarmid's Scots provides him with a concentrated diction for which there is no exact equivalent in English. There is no question that a word for word "translation" of a MacDiarmid poem into English is weaker, but it is possible to translate the ideas into

English and find colloquial parallels for many. In his comparisons of English and Scots MacDiarmid consistently compared colloquial and archaic Scots with literary, one might almost say pedantic, English, and it is useful to examine some of MacDiarmid's diction for the extent to which he relied on the strangeness of a Scots word to give it poetic value.

"The Eemis Stane" contains several words which can be used to illustrate MacDiarmid's technique. First, consider the title itself: Jamieson defines Eemis as "variable, uncertain, what cannot be depended on," and gives the following:

3. It is also used in relation to an object that is placed insecurely, or threatens to fall; as, "That steen stands very eemis," that stone has not a proper bottom; Ang.

MacDiarmid's gloss, "ill-poised, insecure,"⁶⁶ is not dissimilar, but to a North American the phrase might be most vividly translated in a current colloquialism, by the phrase "teetering rock." Except that it conveys an additional suggestion of movement and has connotations of the comic strip Li'l Abner, "teetering rock" conveys the same information as "eemis stane".

In the same way, yowdendrift is no more than a slightly gentler form of the North American blizzard: in both the meaning can be given as "heavily falling snow driven by the wind," though the three syllables of the Scots word suggest a slower movement than the onomatopoeic blizzard. Indeed, yowdendrift may be a slightly misleading word: in its original usage it may have meant a sharper, swifter motion than the sound of the word now suggests.

Substituting teetering rock and blizzard for eemis stane and yowdendrift would make the poem sound coarser and more commonplace: the unfamiliarity of the Scots words gives them a charm which the more common words lack. Yet it is probable that to a Scot of the last century, such words were neither more nor less "poetical" than the alternatives suggested here. The difference here is clearly less a difference of meaning than a difference of expression.

MacDiarmid was not always careful to use (or to define) his Scots vocabulary with scrupulous accuracy, as his rendering of ayont as above in "The Watergaw" testifies. This particular case is an example of careless observation as well, for neither MacDiarmid's definition, nor the correct definition (beyond) properly describes the position of the rainbow which is seen against (forenenst) or below the rainfall, the sunshine refracted through the raindrops being the cause of the phenomenon.

On other occasions MacDiarmid gives a gloss which expands the meaning of a word. In "Moonstruck" we find the lines

An' the roarin' o' oceans noo'
Is peerieweerie to me;
Thunner's a tinklin' bell: an' Time
Whuds like a flee.

MacDiarmid glosses "peerieweerie" as "diminished to the merest thread of sound."⁶⁷ Jamieson gives several meanings for the word, among them "a slow-running stream," which would be an interesting contrast to "the roarin' o' oceans," and "a mysterious and hidden person," which has no connection with MacDiarmid's poem. It is also clear from Jamieson that the word can be used as an equivalent for the English "teeny-weeny," and it is likely that it is

from this usage that MacDiarmid derives the word as he uses it in "Moonstruck". Clearly the effectiveness of the word depends upon its unfamiliarity and its sound, which suggests other words such as peevish, and the onomatopoeic bird-call, peewit. The accuracy with which MacDiarmid used his Scots vocabulary is certainly no greater than Spenser's when he revived obsolescent English words for poetry.

The vocabulary which MacDiarmid used in his Scots poetry is vigorous and striking, but it is not primarily the vocabulary which frees it from the conventions of the past and gives MacDiarmid's early lyrics their characteristic flavour. It is the conjunction of stars and pebbles; the terse eloquence which makes sudden shifts in perspective from "A lass wi' tousie hair" to "Wunds wi warlds to swing," and the infinite tenderness of "The licht that bends owre a' thing," with its oblique suggestion of Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

. . . the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

It is this paring down to a few deft details, each with its wealth of suggestions, which gives the poems the hallucinatory quality which Iain Crichton Smith noticed. "Country Life," for example, derives its Breughel-like enchantment from the simple cataloguing which links "go-lochs on the wa'" and "A cradle on the ca'" with a variety of other objects so quickly that the mind cannot adapt to the swift changes of perspective, and is forced to see everything at the same size, with the result that the scene becomes slightly unreal. It is a baffling of the sense

of perspective similar to that practised by the Confederation poets in Canada, although they were less concerned with this type of technique than MacDiarmid.

MacDiarmid's concentration upon single images in other poems is peculiarly satisfying because it is given in an unusual vocabulary, one which strikes the reader as archaic and suited to the cryptic, ballad-like tone of the poem; but the charm of these poems initially springs from the poet's perception, the first glimmerings of which were visible in Northern Numbers in "Playmates":

Do you remember
That funny old spare star
On which we kept pet nations?

and in "Sonnets of the Hills V":

Schiehallion and Calvary are one
All men at last hang broken on the Cross.

Archaism and traditionalism can be used effectively to create vigorous and original poetry and so it is no disparagement of MacDiarmid to say that his use of Scots fundamentally conforms to the traditional stereotype of Scots as a rustic and archaic dialect. The breadth of his vocabulary and the wide range of his imagery tend to distract the reader from this fact, but his adoption of English in his later poems, particularly those in which scientific terminology is prominent, indicates that MacDiarmid found it impossible to reconcile Scots with his ambitions in abstract poetry on a larger scale than the miniature lyrics. Whatever the reason for this later development, it is clear that in failing to integrate science and poetry in Scots as he attempted to integrate them in English MacDiarmid left the status of the vernacular only a little higher than it had been before the war.

Ian Crichton Smith said of MacDiarmid's poetry that he would trade "whole swaths" of the later works for "The Watergaw," and that he felt the early lyrics were necessary while the later ones were not.⁶⁸ This is a matter of opinion upon which poetic theorists will tend to differ according to the demands of poetry in their generation. Traditionalists will tend to agree, as will those who admire the perfection of form in the lyrics and regret its absence in the later poems. Unquestionably MacDiarmid succeeded in one form of Scots and was less successful, even on his own terms (as his adoption of English demonstrates), in another. The question of the limitation of Scots to a strain of poetic archaism remained for his followers, those poets whose work lies outside the bounds of this thesis, to answer.

Canadian Poetry in the Twentieth Century

Though the popular verse anthologies and poets' corners of newspapers tend to emphasize the importance of the shorter lyric in Canadian poetry, it has always been evident that a significant number of Canadian poets, including the self-taught poets, attempted the longer verse forms. Many of their productions were pioneer epics which, as it has been demonstrated, were designed to glorify the struggles of the pioneers and to give Canada the tradition of heroic literature which it seemed to lack. There were also poets like Sangster, whose long descriptive poem, The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, gave the large territories of Canada a suitably broad treatment, while the verse dramas of Charles Mair did the same for Canadian history.

These long poems, though they were ambitious, were primarily backward-looking, imitating the poems of the eighteenth century and out of touch with the poetic standards of their own time. Nevertheless, they established the long narrative as a suitable vehicle for poetry on national themes. In contrast to the Scots who were restricting their national poetry to short lyrics and verse epistles, the Canadian poets were conscious of a need for a larger framework.

From the Confederation period onward, however, the larger forms began to be less popular. In Canada, as in Scotland and the rest of the English-speaking world, the twentieth century brought with it a reaction against "poetic diction" and the poetic standards of the past. Following in the wake of F.S. Flint, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and other experimenters, Canadian poets began to adopt vers libre, much to the distress of traditionalist critics like the literary editor of the Globe, who remarked, "We usually write in metre and dislike poetical as well as other kinds of Bolshevism."⁶⁹ Poets like Frank Stringer (Open Water, 1914) and Frank Oliver Call (Acanthus and Wild Grape, 1920) produced forceful arguments in favour of vers libre which far surpassed the quality of the poems designed to illustrate the theory, but their verse had, as Munro Beattie points out, the virtue of novelty, and "helped to clear away some of the literary clutter of the period."⁷⁰

Free verse and the debate surrounding it was, however, only a small part of a general resurgence of literary activity which followed the first World War. Encouraged by

a new tide of nationalism (partly arising from Canada's participation in the war), four magazines were established which were to encourage and promote Canadian literature. The Canadian Bookman (1919-1939) embarked on a programme of "boosterism" which was soundly, though with limited success, attacked by the Canadian Forum (1920-). The Canadian Historical Review (1920-) laid "the basis . . . for a really informed sense of national identity to replace merely sentimental patriotism,"⁷¹ while The Dalhousie Review (1921-) and the other university quarterlies supplied the informed discussion otherwise lacking in Canadian literary life.

Out of this climate of discussion and debate emerged the young poets of the Montreal Group, A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, Leo Kennedy, and A.M. Klein, some of whom became noted critics of the Confederation school. Their magazines, the McGill Fortnightly Review (1925-1927) and the Canadian Mercury (1928-1929) became a forum for verse that was decidedly "post-Eliot."⁷²

In spite of their scorn for "boosterism" and literary nationalism in general, these poets produced poetry which, in the modern manner, expressed the same sense of awe which Mrs. Moodie, Charles Sangster, and Duncan Campbell Scott had tried to express in more conventional poetry:

far voices
and fretting leaves
this music the
hillside gives

but in the deep
Laurentian river
an elemental song
for ever

a quiet calling
of no mind
out of long aeons
when dust was blind
and ice hid sound.

only a moving
with no note
granite lips
a stone throat.⁷³

The difference is chiefly one of fashion. The poets of the Montreal Group and their contemporaries imitate even more quickly than the Confederation poets the popular modes of their time, and give the impression of being increasingly up-to-date. The stronger sense of political radicalism, the political and social satire which were becoming more frequent in their poetry, are all typical of the new mood in poetry elsewhere in the world, but no less important was the new tendency to brevity and sparseness of line.

Among the "literary clutter" cleared away by the younger poets of the twentieth century was the long narrative poem. Appreciation of long poems had begun to wane among nineteenth century writers and critics such as Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) who stressed the emotional intensity of poetry and so narrowed his idea of poetry that he could claim "that the phrase, 'a long poem,' is simply a flat contradiction in terms."⁷⁴ Poe went on to contend:

In regard to the "Iliad," we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can only say that the work is based on an imperfect sense of art. The modern epic is, of the suppositious ancient model, but an inconsiderate and blindfold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poems were popular in reality -- which I doubt -- it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.⁷⁵

Poe's reason for believing the Iliad to be a series of lyrics was, one may be sure, wishful thinking, and his opinion of modern epics similarly biased, but it is true that since his day the long epic poem has dwindled in popularity and, with it, a great deal of the elevated diction which had been necessary for it.

Following this trend Canadian poets moved away from traditional poetic diction towards a colloquial diction which did not draw attention to itself but to its subject which was often expressed in a single, telling image; brevity and spareness of diction became the most prized qualities of poetry.

Compared to Scottish poets of the 1920s, the Canadians seem much more responsive to the trends of modernism. They seem to have avoided the "Georgian" manner, perhaps because Georgianism was so similar to the manner of the Confederation school, and perhaps because, lacking the Scots' resources in a distinctive form of language, they were compelled to pay more attention to matters of form and subject. Canadian poetry in the 1920s was consciously cosmopolitan and only incidentally nationalist. Canadian nationalism was too easily confused with colonialism and the poetic manner of the "Maple Leaf School" of the nineteenth century to appeal to the young poets of the twentieth century. For these poets, the most patriotic thing they could do was to bring their nation's poetry into closer contact with the rest of the world.

Similarities between Scottish and Canadian poetry during the twenties are difficult to find and can generally be explained in terms of general tendencies of poetry of

the period rather than any circumstances peculiar to the two nations. Scottish poets with nationalist sentiments tended to concentrate on subjects and forms quite different from those which absorbed similarly-motivated Canadian poets. Yet, at a time when most poets were writing finely-drawn, terse lyrics and deft satire, the Newfoundland poet, E.J. Pratt, began to produce an astounding series of long verse narratives of epic deeds on a gigantic scale. Utterly unlike any poet in his own country and writing against the literary current of his own time, Pratt is surprisingly similar to the radical Scots poet Hugh MacDiarmid in several significant ways, though some of the characteristics they shared were not to become apparent in MacDiarmid's writing until the thirties.

E.J. Pratt, like Hugh MacDiarmid, was not content with painting lyric miniatures but preferred the large canvas in which he could develop the universal scope of his themes. His favourite subject was the dramatic confrontation of titanic forces: giant whales and their hunters; battles between the great monsters of a prehistoric age; the conquest of the Canadian Shield by the railroad builders; and, like MacDiarmid, he brought to his poetry a scientific and technical vocabulary which contrasts both the rural atmosphere of the nineteenth century lyricists and the colloquial directness of more modern poets.

Like MacDiarmid, Pratt was a dictionary-hunter: Northrop Frye recalls that, in an effort to find a monosyllable to suggest the hardness of rock, Pratt "ransacked a department of geology until he extracted the word 'schist'."

The results of this quarrying often ended up in long catalogues which impress the reader with their sheer exuberance and prodigality:

Just in from dry Allahabad,
 Farinaceous lions had
 Spied, upon an oozy bank,
 Five hundred head of walruses,
 Their hides of rubber steaming rank
 With odours oleaginous
 Fifteen miles farther down the Coast,
 An angry and conglomerate host, --
 Inflammatory Bengalese,
 Starved with cherry bark and peas;
 With salicaceous jaguars,
 Leguminous leopards full of beans
 That murmured in their jugulars, --
 Swooped, with the speed of peregrines,
 Upon the red substantial meals
 Of dolphins hot and blubberous 77

Pratt's use of unusual vocabulary is usually comic: "The lumbering polysyllables of 'The Great Feud' remind us of Wyndham Lewis's remark that writers, unless they are bluffing, use their full vocabularies only for comic purposes."⁷⁸ Unlike MacDiarmid, who was largely self-educated, Pratt was a graduate in theology and psychology who received a Ph.D. in 1917. The casual ease with which he filled his poems with technical language contrasts ^{with} the more self-conscious practice of MacDiarmid who seems to have had the disproportionate fondness for hard facts and harder words which is often characteristic of the self-taught man. Iain Crichton Smith noticed this aspect of MacDiarmid's work when comparing him to T.S. Eliot:

Now let no-one under any circumstances believe that I consider a university training obligatory for a poet. . . . On the other hand I often feel that in comparison for instance with the mind of Eliot the mind of MacDiarmid is untrained, and sometimes it seems to me irresponsible. . . . Eliot too had certain things he felt like saying but he developed a prose style for them. . . . he made the distinction between the things he could say in prose and the things he could say in poetry. I feel that MacDiarmid might have done better to make the same distinction.⁷⁹

Like Hugh MacDiarmid, Pratt's poetry is founded on an encyclopedic course of reading, but where MacDiarmid tended to include wholesale quotation from the works which impressed him, Pratt's sources were always transformed by the workings of his powerful and individual wit before they emerged in his writing.

Significantly, Pratt's first success in poetry, The Witches' Brew,⁸⁰ was a burlesque of many of the concepts which had appeared in sobre prose in his theses on demonology and Pauline eschatology as well as in the epic, "Clay," which he destroyed.⁸¹ Though his allusions to works as disparate as Milton's Paradise Lost and Byron's The Vision of Judgment, Faust and The Waste Land⁸² are primarily comical, "his consistent use of this technique to add resonance to the literal surface of the verse does suggest that The Witches' Brew might have been an early and comic reaction to The Waste Land."⁸³ In any case, the allusions are clearly there to add depth to the mock-epic quality of the poem, not to demonstrate the breadth of the poet's knowledge.

The subject of The Witches' Brew, an experiment to test the effect of alcohol on the cold-blooded brain by making all the fishes in the sea drunk, is an unusual one for a Methodist minister to choose, especially during the Prohibition era; the list of the brands of alcoholic drink that went into the brew is wildly incongruous with the image of Methodist sobriety:

Budweiser, Guinness, Schlitz (in kegs)
Square Face Gin and Gordon's Dry,
O'Brien's, Burke's and Johnny Begg's,
Munich, Bock, and Seagram's Rye,
Dewar's, Hennessey's 3 Star,

In course of which they hoped to find
 For their black art, once and for all,
 The true effect of alcohol
 Upon the cold, aquatic mind.

(11. 5-12)

Gusto, mirth, and high spirits were also to be important features in Pratt's narrative poems. The inebriation of the fishes is a jubilant one quite in contrast with the weary state of MacDiarmid's Drunk Man:

I amna fou' saw muckle as tired -- deid dune.
 It's gey and hard wark coupin' gless for gless
 Wi' Cruivie and Gilsanquhar and the like,
 And I'm no' juist as bauld as aince I wes.

("A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle," 11. 1-4)

Indeed, it is the difference between the response of the cold-blooded creatures and that of the warm-blooded Tom the Cat from Zanzibar to the brew that is the central issue of the poem, and which results in the wholesale slaughter on which Tom embarks in the end. Johnny Walker remarks on the cat's rampage and his disappearance, tail blazing with sparks, into the northern reaches of the world's oceans:

All we discerning spirits know
 It's just the way a man would go
 Grant the night and grant the liquor.

(The Witches' Brew, p. 30)

The cold-blooded creatures are incapable of sin:

Since time began the Devil saw
 No way to circumvent the sea.
 The fish transgressed no moral law,
 They had no principles, no creed,
 No prayers, no Bibles, and no Church,
 No Reason's holy light to read
 The truth and no desire to search.
 Hence from Dame Nature's ancient way
 Their fins had never learned to stray.
 They ate and drank and fought, it's true,
 And when the zest was on they slew;
 But yet their most tempestuous quarrels
 Were never prejudiced by morals;

As Nature had at the beginning
 Created them, so they remained --
 Fish with cold blood no skill had trained
 To the warm arts of human sinning.

(pp. 20-21)

This is a point of contrast which Pratt was to make several times in poems like "The Great Feud" and "The Shark,"⁸⁹ but which he always makes secondary to the relish with which he portrays the literal action of the narrative.

This taste for violent effects, whether comic or savage, often contrasts MacDiarmid's drier humour, but, as it will be demonstrated later, many of the effects which Pratt achieved spring from similar impulses to those which reached a slightly different end in MacDiarmid's work. Pratt's tendency to use broader effects should not blind the reader to the underlying seriousness of his work, just as the seriousness with which MacDiarmid treated many of his political and social themes should not distract the reader from the jocular side of his work. Pratt's wit is less acerbic, less aggressive than MacDiarmid's; the outrageous situations he presents thought-provoking only as a by-product of the laughter they are primarily intended to stimulate. Now and again, however, MacDiarmid reaches a similar level of fun:

(I kent a Terrier in a sham fecht aince,
 Wha louped a dyke and landed in a thistle.
 He'd naething on ava aneth his kilt.
 Schönberg has nae notation for his whistle.)

("The Drunk Man," Collected Poems, p. 77)

The broad effects, particularly of violence and savagery, which are so characteristic of Pratt's work are appropriate to the life-and-death struggles between massive forces he chose to portray in the poems following The

Witches' Brev. Titans, which appeared in 1926, consisted of two long poems: "The Great Feud," which told of a pleistocene battle between the animals of the land and those of the sea; and "The Cachalot," the story of a great whale, in which the whale is victorious in its battle with a giant squid, but falls victim to the greater might of the whaler. In these two poems, both marked by a glorification of the size and strength of the titanic protagonists, there lies the theme which is central to Pratt's entire work: that the fierceness of the battle to maintain life in spite of great and cruel odds can be glorious in defeat as well as in victory.

The viciousness of the battle between land and sea animals in "The Great Feud" is balanced by the magnificence of their self-sacrifice:

Such acts of valour as were done
Outshone the white flame of the sun; --
Such hopeless sacrificial deeds
And feats of strength as might belong
To men or gods, when weaker breeds
Wrecked their bodies on the strong.

("The Great Feud," Poets Between the Wars,
p. 24)

The cause of the battle, the hatred of a "female anthropoidal ape" for

An alligator that had torn
And eaten up her youngest born.

(Poets Between the Wars, p. 8)

and all question of the justice or injustice of the struggle are lost in the exuberant descriptions of the power that is unleashed in it. The desperate fight for survival, whoever the fighter, is the subject of the poem.

Soo too the very size of the cachalot invites admiration. The might of all nature is suggested by Pratt's glorification of the cachalot's hugeness:

But huge as was his tail or fin. . . .
 He was more wonderful within.
 His iron ribs and spinal joists
 Enclosed the sepulchre of a maw.
 The bellows of his lungs might sail
 A herring-skiff -- such was the gale
 Along the wind-pipe; and so large
 The lymph-flow of his active liver,
 One might believe a fair-sized barge
 Could navigate along the river;
 And the islands of his pancreas
 Were so tremendous that between 'em
 A punt would sink; while a cart might pass
 His bile-duct to the duodenum
 Without a peristaltic quiver.

(Titans, p. 11)

One notes here as well as the obvious use of mechanical imagery such as "iron ribs and spinal joists" and the "bellows of his lungs," a more interesting and complex image in the metaphor of the sepulchre for the cachalot's mouth. In this image Pratt recalls the old Christian idea that the story of Jonah and the whale could be seen as a "type," or foreshadowing of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish representing Christ's three days in the tomb.

Against the power of this beast the giant squid has no chance of survival. He is aware of the cachalot's approach, feeling

. . . a deep consonant that rides
 Below the measured beat of tides
 With that vast, undulating rhythm
 A sounding sperm whale carries with him.

(Titans, pp. 13-14)

but this warning note cannot save him:

It was the challenge of his foe;
 The prelude to a fatal hour;
 Nor was there given him more than time,

From that first instinct of alarm,
 To ground himself in deeper slime,
 And raise up each enormous arm. . . .

(Titans, p. 14)

The grand battle which follows foreshadows the whale's battle with the whalers; the battle in which the victor becomesthe vanquished. In both cases, however, the defeated one impresses the reader with the strength of his resistance and the indomitable will to live which gives grandeur to the struggle.

This aspect of Pratt's titanic duels is given clearer expression in "The Truant," from Still Life and Other Verse (1943), and though this work belongs to a period outside the scope of the present study, it illuminates what might otherwise appear to be a repellent fondness for violence and power for their own sake.

"The Truant" portrays the confrontation between man, "A bucking truant with a stiff backbone," (Poets Between the Wars, p. 34) and "the great Panjandrum" who rules the strictly ordered dance of the mechanistic universe. The Master of the Revels reports the truant's offences:

He has adjured his choric origins.
 And like an undomesticated slattern,
 Walks with tangential step unknown
 Within the weave of the tengential pattern.
 He has developed concepts, grins
 Obscenely at your Royal bulletins,
 Possesses what he calls a will
 Which challenges your power to kill.

(Poets Between the Wars, p. 34)

To the Panjandrum's command to scrap and burn the truant's concepts and denials, the Master of the Revels replies:

"Sire,
 The stuff is not amenable to fire.
 Nothing but their own kind can overturn them.
 The chemists have sent back the same old story --

'With our extreme gelatinous apology,
 We beg to inform your Imperial Majesty
 Unto whom be dominion and power and glory,
 There still remains that strange precipitate
 Which has the quality to resist
 Our oldest and most trusted catalyst.
 It is a substance we cannot cremate
 By temperatures known to our Laboratory.'"

(ibid.)

Man's own defiance of the power he calls "a rain / Of
 dull Lucretian atoms crowding space" (p. 37) ends with a
 daunting catalogue of lost but undefeated causes:

"We who have learned to clench
 Our fists and raise our lightless sockets
 To morning skies after the midnight raids,
 Yet cocked our ears to bugles on the barricades,
 And in cathedral rubble found a way to quench
 A dying thirst within a Galilean valley --
 No! by the Rood, we will not join your ballet."

(p. 38)

In this glorification of the will to live, as well as
 in his acceptance of the harshness of nature, Pratt is
 most akin to D.C. Scott, but he is much more interested in
 the moment of crisis than in its origins or its consequen-
 ces. Part of this is the legacy of Pratt's Newfoundland
 childhood and his early experience of the indifferent
 cruelty of the sea. Disasters at sea had no moral pur-
 pose in themselves but they called up acts of heroism
 among men which were to inspire Pratt all his life.⁹⁰

Newfoundland did not join Confederation until 1949,⁹¹
 and so, strictly speaking, Pratt did not have a "Canadian"
 childhood, but to deny him the status of a Canadian poet
 in the thirties because of this technicality would be an
 absurdity comparable to Hugh MacDiarmid's denial that
 Edwin Muir was a Scot because he was an Orcadian.⁹² Indeed,
 the isolation and cultural differences between Newfoundland

and the rest of Canada are comparable to the differences between Orkney and Shetland and the Scottish mainland, but all three island communities have long historical connections with the countries they are now united to. Moreover, both Muir and Pratt were consciously committed to the larger political unit and regarded themselves, particularly as writers, as Scot and Canadian.

Pratt's early experience of the terror and violence of the sea, was, like the early Canadian poets' experience of the harshness of the new landscape, a central influence on his poetry, and his response, even more decidedly than that of the earlier poets, was to accept the conditions imposed by nature as obstacles to be overcome in a struggle which was itself part of man's reasons for being. One can see here some similarity to the attitude expressed by D.C. Scott in "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" where persistence is advocated as the great answer to the riddle of life:

Why are there tears for failure, or sighs for weakness,
While life's rhythm beats on? Where is the rule
To measure the distance we have circled and clomb?
Catch up the sands of the sea and count and count
The failures hidden in our sum of conquest.
Persistence is the master of this life;
The master of these little lives of ours;
To the end -- effort -- even beyond the end.

(11. 216-223)

One cannot help wondering if either of these poets had been influenced by the other. Even the sleep of Akoose and the sleep of the dinosaurs seen together as a moment in eternity at the end of Scott's poem has something of the scope of vision that Pratt so often brings to his poetry.

Yet the cosmic scope which Pratt gave his narratives is greater than that of any other Canadian poet up to that time and, though many other poets had attempted extended narratives, Pratt's were the first in which the diction and the events of the narrative were evenly balanced. Con-
 temptuous of what he termed "O thouing,"⁹⁸ Pratt used a colloquial, casual-sounding diction to restrain descriptions of larger-than-life events, but, at the same time the events he describes demand a broad treatment. In spite of its extraordinary hyperbole, the language is so free from formal poetic diction that one is given a sense of understatement rather than overstatement.

Pratt's later poems, like The Titanic (1946), Brebeuf and His Brethren (1940), Dunkirk (1941), and Towards the Last Spike (1956) are more serious epics, less likely to burst into comic extravagance, but they are based on similar dramatic confrontations of men with forces they must dominate with either physical or spiritual strength. Their themes are drawn from modern and historical events, and from 1940 deal specifically with Canadian history, but they lose none of the sense of cosmic force which pervaded the earlier narratives.

Pratt's taste for the enormous and unfathomable bears a strong similarity to MacDiarmid's love of "giantism" in the arts, and they share an ability to reduce the cosmos to human proportions: MacDiarmid's treatment of the planets as gossiping women in "The Bonnie Broukit Bairn" has its parallel in Pratt's "The Depression Ends":

For high above the table head
 Shall sway a candelabrum where,
 According to the legend, dwelt a
 Lady seated on a chair
 With Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta,
 Busy braiding up her hair.

(Collected Poems, p. 64)

Both poets, ultimately stand for the broad gesture, the triumphant blow of effective rhetoric against the careful delicacy of the miniature lyric, but this is not to say that Pratt does not also share MacDiarmid's ability to portray more delicate matters: "The Child and the Wren" is a delightful treatment of a subject which could all too easily be made sentimental, and yet it is, in its own minor way, yet another tale of human persistence triumphing over nature:

It took three weeks to make them friends --
 The wren in fear the maid molest
 Those six white eggs within the nest
 She built up at the gable-end.

What fearful language might be heard
 (If only English she could speak)
 On every day of that first week,
 All from the throat of that small bird!

The scolding died away, and then
 The fear was followed by surprise
 At such sky-blue within the eyes,
 That travelled from the girl to wren.

But that third week! I do not know --
 It's neither yours to tell nor mine --
 Some understanding glance or sign
 Had passed between them to and fro;

For never was her face so flushed,
 Never so brilliant blue her eye
 At any gift that I could buy,
 As at the news when in she rushed

To tell us that the wren had come,
 With flutter and hop and gurgling sound,
 From gable to tree, to shrub, to ground,
 Right to her hand to get a crumb.⁹⁴

According to Sandra Djwa, Pratt believed in "research" but denied influences. Bearing this in mind it is diffi-

cult to discuss the sources of Pratt's poetry, particularly in those areas where it bears a similarity to that of Hugh MacDiarmid. Yet, in order to account for the resemblance of poetry by two widely-separated poets whose awareness of each other's work can only be suspected, it is necessary to look for some third poet, or group of poets, whose work might have suggested the directions followed by Pratt and MacDiarmid. In this case, a tentative solution might be found by a comparison with John Davidson.

Pratt's use of technical vocabulary, particularly in "The Truant" and the much later Towards the Last Spike, is reminiscent of John Davidson's practice in adapting the language and concepts of science to poetry. Davidson's description of "The Crystal Palace," for example, employs the vocabulary of paleontology to give a vivid visual impression of the structure, but also to point out its incongruity:

So sublime! Like some
Immense crustacean's gannoid skeleton,
Unearthed, and cleansed, and polished! Were it so
Our paleontological respect
Would shield it from derision; but when a shed,
Intended for a palace, looks as like
The fossil of a giant myriapod! . . . 96

("The Crystal Palace," Poems, p. 427)

In the poem "Snow" Davidson analyzes the melting of a snowflake under a microscope, and the result is a miniaturized version of the great martyrdoms Pratt celebrated in his poems:

Once I saw upon an object-glass
Martyred underneath a microscope,
One elaborate snow-flake slowly pass,
Dying hard, beyond the reach of hope.

Still from shape to shape the crystal changed,
 Writhing in its agony; and still,
 Less and less elaborate, arranged
 Potently the angle of its will.

Tortured to a simple final form,
 Angles six and six divergent beams,
 Lo, in death it touched the perfect norm
 Verifying all its crystal dreams!

("Snow," III, ll. 5-16)

Davidson, too, made references to evolution in "Thirty Bob a Week" which are comparable to Pratt's images of the unquenchable life-force:

I woke because I thought the time had come;
 Beyond my will there was no other cause;
 And everywhere I found myself at home,
 Because I chose to be the thing I was;
 And in whatever shape of mollusc or of ape
 I always went according to the laws.

("Thirty Bob a Week," ll. 73-78)

The final image of "Thirty Bob a Week" is strikingly similar to the dogged heroism of "many and many a one" of Pratt's own creations: the cachalot, the squid, the tyrannosaurus rex (from "The Great Feud"), and the truant all "fall, face forward, fighting, on the deck," while "The Runnable Stag" seems to be the prototype of all of Pratt's doomed but courageous animals.

MacDiarmid's debt to John Davidson was clearly acknowledged, and was perhaps even greater than he realized:

Mr. Maurice Lindsay and others have commented on the fact that I have been greatly influenced by John Davidson in my poetic development. That is true and I have gladly admitted it, and in this connection said . . . that Davidson is 'the only Scottish poet to whom I owe anything at all, or to whom I would be pleased to admit any debt'. . . . Davidson stood out head and shoulders above all the Scottish poets of his own time. He alone had anything to say that is, or should be, of interest to any adult mind.⁹⁷

The fondness of all three poets for technical and arcane vocabulary is perhaps a reflection of the growing dissatisfaction with traditional poetic diction felt by

many poets around the turn of the century, but other characteristics which they share, such as their choice of unconventional subjects, particularly scientific theory, and their discarding of lyric poetry in favour of discursive and epic genres seem to point towards a common or mutual influence.

Yet there is a sharp difference between Pratt's technique and that of Davidson or MacDiarmid. Davidson and MacDiarmid are primarily polemical writers whose work often adopts the rhetorical techniques of the Kirk and Hyde Park Corner. The poet's own voice breaks through the poem, arguing, explaining, sometimes hectoring the reader:

-- Every man who havers about honest toil
 And believes in rewards and punishments,
 In a God like Public Opinion
 Or conformable to human reason,
 And the sanctity of the financial system,
 All that appeal to the Past or the Future,
 Or think that two and two make four,
 Or that they can judge 'twixt virtue and vice,
 Health and disease, sanity and insanity,
 Or that thought can be its own judge. . . .

(Hugh MacDiarmid, "Ode to All Rebels,"
Collected Poems, p. 245)

Even when the poet is not speaking in his own voice the hectoring tone is clear:

'But this be sure of: every horn and hoof,
 And every insect, feather, fur, and fin
 Of use to Man survives while Man survives.
 One gallant race besides, the Simian stock,
 To which I have the honour to belong,
 Of no utility for draught or food,
 The science and the vanity of Man
 Will foster to the end; because by it
 He swears when he propounds his progress vast
 From sarcoïd origins and new-beloved
 Hypothesis of Evolution.'

(John Davidson, "The Testament of an Empire-
 Builder," ll. 106-116)

Pratt's poetry, in contrast, owes its narrative strength to the oral traditions of the Newfoundland outports, and the poet keeps himself firmly detached from the story he tells. Pratt is much less interested in making his ideas implicit in the narrative: his choice of theme and the characters he portrays reveal his philosophy but only rarely, as in "The Truant," does a figure step forward to make a statement of faith. The monologue, dramatic or otherwise, which is so prominent in the work of Davidson and MacDiarmid, is rarely used by Pratt. Indeed, Pratt, the ordained minister, is less of a preacher than the two Scots who rejected the church of their childhood.

In this Pratt is most clearly a Canadian, particularly a Canadian of the twentieth century for whom the pronouncement of solutions to the world's ills would be unthinkable. Though he portrays men and animals at moments of crisis when choices are limited and action is imperative, he recognizes that the simplicity of the final act of decision cannot be carried over into normal life. Like D.C. Scott poised at the height of land, the riddle of life seems extraordinarily simple to Pratt, considering humanity poised between life and death, but neither he nor Scott offers to explain this clarity of vision to those who do not possess it.

The presence of the wilderness, as previous chapters have demonstrated, has made Pratt's kind of vision important to the Canadian sense of national identity. In Pratt's own experience it was the sea that presented the

terrifying and inexorable force with which men had to come to terms. In "The Drag-Irons," Pratt tells of the death of a sailor who, having spent all his life at sea

Would hardly scorn to take before he died
His final lap in Neptune's whirligig.

But with his Captain's blood he did resent,
With livid silence and with glassy look,
This fishy treatment when his years were spent --
To come up dead upon a grapnel hook.

(Collected Poems, p. 57)

The resemblance between this image and MacDiarmid's "The Diseased Salmon," in which the fish reminds the poet of the appearance of a dead face, is remarkable, but even more remarkable is the contrast: it is not death, not even death by drowning that is feared in the Pratt poem, but the insult that the captain suffers in being dragged up from the sea, while in MacDiarmid's poem the speaker fears to see his own face in the vision conjured up by the fish:

I'm gled it's no' my face,
But a fozie saumon turnin'
Deid-white i' the blae bracks o' the pool,
Hoverin' a wee and syne tint again i' the churnin'.

Mony's the face'll turn,
Like the fozie saumon I see;
But I hope that mine'll never be ane
And I can think o' naebody else's I'd like to be.

(Collected Poems, p. 24)

Both poets treat their subject ironically, with wry humour, but Pratt's is an image of death in harmony with nature, MacDiarmid's an image of diseased nature imitating death.

Pratt often shows disharmony in nature. It is no refuge and in it are balanced nobility and savagery such as Canadian poetry had never seen before his time, except in the poems of Duncan Campbell Scott. One thinks of

Pratt's "From Stone to Steel," which, in its evocation of the lurking savagery in man recalls MacDiarmid's "Gairms-coile":

The snarl Neanderthal is worn
Close to the smiling Aryan lips,
The civil polish of the horn
Gleams from our praying finger tips.

(Penguin Book of Canadian Verse, p. 128)

Yet this is the lesson which Canadian poets have, for generations, been learning: that accepting nature and rising to meet its challenge brings its own peace and its own victory even in death and defeat. Whatever Pratt may have learned from John Davidson was thoroughly transmuted by the facts of his own nationality and it is this which distinguishes his work from MacDiarmid's, whatever their similarities might be.

NOTES

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6. Holloway, Pelican Guide, p. 75.
7. Malcolm Ross, Poets of the Confederation, p. xi.
8. Robert Graves, Poetic Unreason and Other Studies (London: Cecil Palmer, 1925), p. 272.
9. Young, "Plastic Scots," p. 28, complained that "synthetic" was taken to mean "ersatz".
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11. J. Middleton Murry, The Problem of Style, p. 101.
12. Spencer and Gregory, Linguistics and Style, p. 62.
13. Leech, p. 24.
14. *ibid.*, p. 14.
15. *ibid.*
16. Young, "Plastic Scots," p. 11.
17. Beattie, Essays, p. 525.
18. Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), p. 152.
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20. *ibid.*, p. 158.
- 20a. *ibid.*, p. 163.
21. Samuel Johnson, The Lives of the English Poets, II (London: Methuen, 1896), p. 57.
22. Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, quoted by Forster, The Poet's Tongues, p. 3.
23. Barfield, p. 171.

24. *ibid.*, p. 172.
25. Enkvist, p. 20.
26. G.H. Reid, Past and Present or Social and Religious Life in the North (Edinburgh, 1871) quoted by Duncan, p. 92.
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28. Langacker, p. 42.
29. Buthlay, p. 70.
30. Geoffrey Tillotson, Augustan Studies, p. 56.
31. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, pp. 15-16.
32. *ibid.*, p. 16.
33. The MacDiarmids: a Conversation - Hugh MacDiarmid and Duncan Glen (Preston, Lancashire: Akros, 1970), n.p.
34. MacDiarmid, quoted by Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid (Harlow, Essex: Longmans, 1976), p. 7.
35. Buthlay, p. 68.
36. MacDiarmid, At the Sign of the Thistle (London: Stanley Nott, /1934/), p. 11, n.
37. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, p. 358.
38. *ibid.*, p. xiii.
39. MacDiarmid, At the Sign of the Thistle, p. 14.
40. Buthlay, pp. 27-28.
41. Barfield, p. 158, see also p.339 above.
42. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, p. 111.
43. David Craig, "Hugh MacDiarmid," Hugh MacDiarmid: a Festschrift, p. 95.
44. Walter Keir, "Hugh MacDiarmid," Hugh MacDiarmid: a Festschrift, p. 18.
45. Buthlay, p. 93.
46. Iain Crichton Smith, The Golden Lyric (Preston, Lancashire: Akros, 1967), pp. 17-18.

47. K.D. Duval, "Hugh MacDiarmid's Three Hymns to Lenin," Hugh MacDiarmid: a Festschrift, p. 80.
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49. MacDiarmid, At the Sign of the Thistle, p. 181.
50. *ibid.*, p. 180.
51. Anne McAllister, Clinical Studies in Speech Therapy (London: University of London Press, 1937).
52. *ibid.*, pp. 79, 76.
53. MacDiarmid, At the Sign of the Thistle, p. 89.
54. Maurice Lindsay, "Angry Influence; MacDiarmid in the 1940s," Hugh MacDiarmid: a Festschrift, p. 209.
55. Robin Fulton, "Douglas and Virgil," Studies in Scottish Literature 2, p. 126.
56. Robin Fulton, "Two Versions of Ulysses' Last Voyage," Studies in Scottish Literature 2, p. 255.
57. Quoted by Albert Mackie, "Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Language," Hugh MacDiarmid: a Festschrift, p. 181.
58. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, p. 22.
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60. David Murison, "The Language Problem in Hugh MacDiarmid's Work," The Age of MacDiarmid, ed. P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), p. 89 points out that MacDiarmid is following one of Jamieson's errors, "cree legs wi'" for "creel eggs wi'".
61. *ibid.*
62. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, p. 17.
63. MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet, p. xxiii, p. 3.
64. Buthlay, p. 78.
65. Maurice Lindsay, "Talking with F.G. Scott," Saltire Review I, 3, p. 53.
66. MacDiarmid, Selected Poems (London: MacMillan, 1934).
67. *ibid.*
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69. Beattie, LHC, p. 725.

70. *ibid.*, pp. 726, 727.
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75. *ibid.*, p. 353.
76. The Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt, edited, with an introduction by Northrop Frye, 2nd ed. (Toronto: MacMillan, 1958), p. xvi.
77. Pratt, "The Great Feud (a Dream of a Pleistocene Armageddon)," Titans, (London: Macmillan, 1926).
78. Frye, The Bush Garden, p. 182.
79. Iain Crichton Smith, The Golden Lyric, p. 12.
80. E.J. Pratt, The Witches' Brew (London: Selwyn and Blount [1925]).
81. Frye, The Bush Garden, p. 174.
82. Sandra Djwa, E.J. Pratt: the Evolutionary Vision (Vancouver: Copp Clark, 1974), pp. 44-45.
83. *ibid.*, p. 45.
84. *ibid.*, p. 35.
85. "The Kelligrews Soiree," The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs.
86. "I'se the B'y that Builds the Boat," The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs (Toronto, 1973).
87. Munro Beattie, "E.J. Pratt," LHC, p. 744.
88. Pratt on "Tam O'Shanter," quoted by Djwa, p. 37.
89. Djwa, p. 34.
90. Djwa, p. 20, refers to Pratt's Memories of Newfoundland, pp. 56 and 57, for examples of the disasters at sea which influenced Pratt's poetry.

91. The phrase "enter Confederation" is typical Canadian usage. It is not normally referred to as "the Confederation".
92. MacDiarmid, The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry, p. xvi.
93. Frye, Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt, p. xiv.
94. Pratt, "The Child and the Wren," Poetry of Our Time, ed. Louis Dudek (Toronto: MacMillan, 1966), p. 199.
95. Djwa, p. 8.
96. John Davidson, "The Crystal Palace," Poems, p. 427. All further quotations of Davidson's verse are taken from this edition.
97. Hugh MacDiarmid, "Essay," John Davidson: a Selection of his Poems, ed. Maurice Lindsay (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 47.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that Scottish and Canadian poets have frequently been good and original, even if, to borrow a phrase from Oscar Wilde, the parts that were good were not original and the parts that were original were not good. Too easily satisfied with easy effects, too intent on reproducing the sensations they derived from the poetry of a past age, Scottish and Canadian poets not only failed to give expression to their own experience but often showed that their experience had been coloured by what they had read.

None of these defects is directly attributable to the absence of national identity, national language, or the adoption of an alien cultural standard. Indeed, they are all too characteristic of a poetry which has been created with a definite model in mind, a model which, despite its virtue in providing a tradition for the apprentice poet, discouraged him from extending his range of subject and form. Scottish and Canadian poets have had all too clear an idea of their nationality and frequently all too little contact with living poets of a higher order than their own.

This particular problem was aggravated, especially in Scotland, by the popular belief in untutored genius, a legacy of the same spirit of Romanticism which gave rise to the concept of nationalism itself. The image of the "natural" poet who expressed the national spirit in his writing tended to dominate Scottish and Canadian literature at the expense of the poets who attempted a more sophisti-

cated, perhaps cosmopolitan verse. Poets who consciously adopted national themes and forms were encouraged, particularly in Scotland, to adopt a naive persona as well. To this extent, then, it is possible to attribute several of the faults and failings of Scottish and Canadian poetry of the nineteenth century to a sense of nationalistic self-consciousness.

Nationalism cannot be entirely blamed for the mediocrity of much Scottish and Canadian poetry. In Canada in particular isolation from the mainstream of literature and the lack of educational facilities in the early years of the colony were responsible for the clumsiness of the poetry which was produced. There were, too, increasing opportunities for working-class poets to find publishers, a phenomenon which occurred in many other countries as well as in Canada and Scotland. The very publishers and booksellers so often blamed for failing to promote national poetry in fact published a great deal of inferior material because they were so eager to publish the work of national poets that they let their nationalism distort their critical judgment. Yet a common attitude to literature and its role in the maintenance or development of a national spirit persists among Scottish and Canadian poets and critics, and is perhaps the strongest point of similarity between the two countries.

This attitude is complicated by a sense of competition, sometimes a sense of inferiority, towards another country. Poets had to decide whether they were writing for their immediate neighbours, with the risk of being provincial, or whether they were writing for a wider audience, with

the risk of losing contact with their own background. Critics, too, had to decide whether to adopt different standards for works of importance to the nation, or take the risk of ignoring work of national significance because they failed to conform to a foreign standard.

The Literary History of Canada, which has been an indispensable tool in preparing one half of this study, offers a modern solution to the problems of nationalist critics. Though it is a very fine net and one early reviewer complained that many of the nonentities surveyed by it would have slipped through a coarser mesh,¹ these minor authors are always kept in their proper place in the perspective of over-all development. As Northrop Frye reminds the reader:

Its authors have completely outgrown the view that evaluation is the end of criticism, instead of its incidental by-product. Had evaluation been their only guiding principle, this book would, if written at all, have been only a huge debunking project, leaving Canadian literature a poor naked alouette plucked of every feather of decency and dignity.²

As it is, the Literary History of Canada is a study of tendency rather than achievement, and, of itself confirms the tendency of Canadian literary criticism to become more interesting and valuable as it becomes more historical in its outlook.

Scottish critics, who have a longer and more illustrious history to consider, can more easily avoid paying disproportionate attention to the minor poets of the nineteenth century. They may, however, be inclined to pay less attention to the continuity of tradition which can be traced through the work of Victorian Scots, unsatisfactory as it may be, to the more exciting creations of Hugh MacDiarmid.

That astonishing similarities in the failure of Scots and Canadians to produce vital poetry in the last century have been blamed on such different factors as the destruction of a national language and the lack of an indigenous culture makes one suspicious of both theories. It compels one to look closely at the work of the better poets in order to determine the qualities which enabled them to succeed where others failed. In the present study it was found that, although nationalism was often a strong force in the life of the greater poet, the difference between his work and that of his less successful countrymen corresponded to changes taking place in literature and society which led to new expectations of poetry, not just in his own country, but throughout the English-speaking world. This is as true of Canadians, with their concentration upon the interpretation of the landscape, as it is for the Scots, with their preoccupation with language.

Scots, as a literary language, had fallen into a serious decline by the nineteenth century. Only recently, in the hands of Hugh MacDiarmid and the other poets of the Scots Literary Renaissance, has it seemed to begin its recovery from this decline, but, as the study of Hugh MacDiarmid's use of the language reveals, its revival is inextricably linked with new attitudes to subject and form. The Canadian experience, which has also allied changes in diction to a new approach to subject and form, has provided a useful comparison. It has made it clear that, even where there is no great discrepancy between the languages of the public and the private side of life, there may still be a disjunction of poetry and experience.

Most people conduct their emotional life in one language and their intellectual life in another, in the sense that different registers can be regarded as different languages. Succeeding generations of poets have reacted in different ways to this aspect of language, at times wishing to make their diction correspond to the language of ordinary men, at other times preferring to make a clear distinction between the language of poetry and the language of everyday life. One of the greatest problems faced by the nineteenth century Scots poets was that their readiness to portray everyday life tended to make their verse commonplace. The revolution which Hugh MacDiarmid brought about in Scots poetry was, in large part, achieved not by abandoning the commonplace, but by setting it in an unusual context, either of language or of ideas. The simple lines of "Empty Vessel," with their rapid shift of perspective from the plight of a bereaved girl to the music of the spheres is a fine example of the second method; the long catalogue of geological terms in "On a Raised Beach" an example of the first. In "On a Raised Beach" and in most of his Scots lyrics, MacDiarmid made skilful use of an advantage which had been recognized by even the most minor of Scots poets: the fascination which unusual vocabulary could lend even the most humdrum subject matter.

Canadian poets, lacking any clearly identifiable national language, had at least the strangeness of their landscape and the pioneer life to rely upon. Their commonplace was unusual and exciting to friends in Britain, as Neil Munro's boyish enthusiasm for the writings of William Henry Drummond reveals:

Canada was genuine; the moose, and the wapiti, and the bear were not mere beasts of myth like the dragons of our coinage; the trapper was still in Ungava, and the red canoe was yet upon the waters.³

The temptation, for Canadian poets, was to exaggerate the wildness and the foreignness of their environment, just as Scottish poets were tempted to exaggerate the pawky wit and domestic virtues which were the accepted features of the national character. Both tendencies led to a disjunction of life and the poetic image of life; a dependence upon literary models rather than first-hand observation. To compound the problem, nationalistic self-consciousness often led poets to adopt a few clearly national types of subject-matter of form and led critics to welcome them too eagerly as examples of a living spirit of nationalism.

The result, in both Scotland and Canada, of the quest for national characteristics in poetry was the creation of verse which had little contact with the reality of the nation, and a uniformity of manner which hindered the development of individual poetic voices. Continually looking backward, either to their own past or to that of the mother country, Scottish and Canadian poets not only lost touch with their own present, but with contemporary standards of poetry throughout the English-speaking world.

Perhaps because their image of national poetry was less firmly fixed than that of the Scots, Canadian poets were the first to begin to break away from the stultifying effects of reliance on the past. The Confederation poets in particular enabled Canadians to loosen the grip of the amateur and the untutored peasant poet. These were educated men whose education, though not foreign, had exposed

them to recent developments in poetry. Perhaps the dead hand of a national past weighed less heavily on them than on those who found clear national models in Burns and Fergusson, but they were fully aware of the traditions of poetry and of the value of tradition as their creative, rather than sentimental, use of nostalgia shows.

To compare the poetic activity in Canada during the era of the Confederation poets with that of Scotland at the same time is to realize how isolated and inbred Scottish poetry had become. Charles Murray and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts are almost exact contemporaries and their mature lives cover the same period - Roberts dying one year after Murray. They were similar in becoming popular as writers, though only Roberts made writing his profession. Duncan Campbell Scott, born two years before Murray, outlived him by four years; like Murray he distinguished himself in his non-literary career, but, unlike Murray, his poetry too achieved distinction. Comparing the work of these poets one cannot help but be impressed with the solidity and seriousness of the Canadian work compared to the triviality of much of Murray's. In his facility he resembles Bliss Carman, but even Carman has a less "popular" flavour about his work than does Murray. None of these poets is particularly modern, though D.C. Scott experimented with some novel metres; the Canadians tended to ignore the war, and so at least in his war poetry Murray is more timely, but Murray's character sketches and landscape lyrics (especially the early ones) are so traditional that they appear to be much more old-fashioned than the work of the

Canadian poets. The Canadians are frequently timeless: Murray is often out-of-date.

There are Scottish poets contemporary with the Confederation poets who are not handicapped by the same triviality of manner as Murray, but they are not writers in Scots. Indeed, the only serious poet to come out of Scotland while the Confederation poets were flourishing in Canada was John Davidson. The others were older poets, Blackie, Selkirk, W.C. Smith, whose work fitted into older moulds; or as in the case of William Renton, achieved interesting effects in poems which were flawed by carelessness. Robert Louis Stevenson and Andrew Lang produced work with a cosmopolitan flavour but they were writers of light verse; their virtuosity was admirable but it did not advance the cause of Scots verse as a vehicle for profound thought.

John Davidson and Hugh MacDiarmid were the two Scots who stepped furthest beyond the bounds of the naive and amateur school of poetry. Though both betray the faults of self-educated men; a love of hard facts, hard words, and impressive erudition almost for their own sake; they are poets who speak, not to the average man, but to the discriminating reader.

This survey ends at a crossroads, or a turning point, in the history, not only of Scottish and Canadian, but of world literature. Poetry was entering the phase known as "modernism" when the breaking down of traditional forms and traditional patterns of language by writers like Eliot, Pound, and Joyce would carry forward the tendency to abandon traditional poetic diction in favour of colloquialism evi-

dent in the livelier poets of the nineteenth century. The later Hugh MacDiarmid, the poets of the Scots Literary Renaissance, and the Montreal Group represent the Scottish and Canadian developments which occurred after this turning point. They are, as the Montreal poet F.R. Scott asserted, "all post-Eliot,"⁴ and belong to a different literary climate from that which existed before the first World War.

In recent years the publication centenaries of the Confederation poets have begun to be passed and their work has undergone the full cycle of critical response, from initial enthusiasm through a phase of neglect and disparagement to the present phase of reconsideration and re-evaluation. Hugh MacDiarmid, whose work is so much closer to our own time, has scarcely begun to enter the second phase of critical re-assessment; the centenary of Sangschaw is still forty-five years away, though much of his early work is contemporary with the mature work of the Confederation school. While it is possible to see the Confederation poets and the earlier work of MacDiarmid and others of the Scots Literary Renaissance in a clear historical perspective, the poetry of the nineteen thirties and later is still too closely allied to recent developments to permit the reader to evaluate fully its writers' contribution to national and international art.

On an international scale only Hugh MacDiarmid has achieved any significant critical attention. His direct influence on other poets both within Scotland and in the larger world of poetry remains to be seen. What is certain is that his role as a promoter of Scottish nationalism has

been virtually ignored by non-Scottish writers on nationalism. One can search through the standard works on nationalism without finding a single reference to MacDiarmid while even passing references to modern Scottish nationalism are rare. On the other hand, Canadian nationalism, both in reference to relations with the United States and Quebec separatism is a popular topic for discussion.

Though any direct solution of the conflict between nationalist and internationalist claims on poets and critics still remains to be found, it has been possible to see that the achievements of the greater poets in Scotland and Canada have come out of contact with poetry beyond the bounds of the nation supplemented by a strong and secure sense of place. The familiarity of the Confederation poets with the Canadian landscape could not have been given full expression without the poets' devoted apprenticeship to the great and near-great poets of Britain and the United States. Similarly, Hugh MacDiarmid's radical experiments with language could not succeed without both his childhood experience of the regional dialects of the Borders and his early efforts to conform to the poetic manner of the Georgian poets. The fact that poets in both countries ceased to look only backward and began to look outward and forward was as important to the development of their verse as any conscious sense of national purpose, and their command of language had, in general, less to do with nationalism than with a freer attitude to poetic diction throughout the English-speaking world.

Northrop Frye's comment that Canada had produced no author who was a classic in the sense "of possessing a

vision greater in kind than that of his best readers"⁵

recalls T.S. Eliot's remarks in "What is a Classic?":

The classic must, within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language. It will represent this at its best, and it will also have the widest appeal: among the people to which it belongs, it will find⁶ its response among all classes and conditions of men.

Eliot goes on to assert:

No modern language can hope to produce a classic, in the sense of which I have called Virgil a classic.⁷ Our classic, the classic of all Europe, is Virgil.

Without wishing to take up all of Eliot's arguments in support of this position, one can see that it is possible to define a classic in such a way that the literatures of Scotland and Canada can only hope to be seen to have produced one when their languages are as dead as Virgil's Latin. But Eliot makes a distinction between Virgil, a universal classic, and the classic which is only such in its relation to the other literature in its own language. Both may be characterised, not only by the comprehensiveness of which he wrote in the first passage quoted, but by "maturity of mind" which, Eliot claims, needs a consciousness of history which includes a history other than that of the poet's own people to be fully alive.⁸ A corresponding maturity of language occurs "at the moment when men have a critical sense of the past, a confidence in the present, and no conscious doubt of the future."⁹

Comparing these comments on the classic to the Plamenatz definition of nationalism: "a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage,"¹⁰ one can see how impossible it is that a classic should flourish in a climate of defensive nationalism. To this one might

add Kenneth Clark's observation of the internationalism of the mediaeval church in contrast to the present day:

It couldn't happen in the Church, or politics, today: one can't imagine two successive archbishops of Canterbury being Italian. But it could happen - does happen - in the field of science; which shows us that where some way of thought or human activity is really vital to us, internationalism is accepted unhesitatingly.¹¹

Yet one can expect to find minor classics within the framework of a nation: works which are important within a language group or geographical boundary because they help to establish "the character of the people" and give them that sense of identity which permits them to enter confidently into their relationships with other people. It has been with this expectation that the present study has been conducted. The extent to which the "classics" of Scottish and Canadian national poetry which have been considered here have influenced or will influence the development of greater works on an international scale remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. Douglas Grant, quoted by William Walsh, Commonwealth Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 66.
2. Frye, LHC, p. 822.
3. Neil Munro, "Introduction," Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond, p. xv.
4. F.R. Scott, New Provinces, p. xi.
5. Frye, LHC, p. 821.
6. T.S. Eliot, "What is a Classic?", On Poetry and Poets (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), p. 69.
7. *ibid.*, p. 73.
8. *ibid.*, p. 62.
9. *ibid.*, p. 57.
10. Plamenatz, p. 27.
11. Kenneth Clark, Civilisation: a Personal View (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and John Murray, 1969), p. 35.

Appendix A: The Scottish Origins
of "Farewell to Nova Scotia"

One of the strongest connections between Scotland and Canada is found in the folk songs which were brought by the colonists and which inspired the creation of new songs. This oral tradition lies beyond the bounds of this thesis but in the course of research the source of a Canadian folk song, "Farewell to Nova Scotia" was discovered in a poem printed in Alexander Whitelaw's anthology The Book of Scottish Song (1834). The results of a comparison of the various editions of the original poem, "The Soldier's Adieu" by Robert Tannahill with the Canadian folk song were published in the Dalhousie Review 58, number 3. A copy of this article is provided.

Appendix B: Attitudes to the English Language

That a sense of linguistic inferiority is not unique to the Scots is easily proved by an examination of attitudes to the English language maintained by writers and critics of the centuries up to and including the eighteenth century. It can be seen that the self-consciousness felt by the London Scots of the Augustan era was, in great measure, also shared by their English contemporaries.

As with the other European languages, English had, until quite late in history, been considered unfit for serious discourse which was usually conducted in Latin. English was considered to be an insular speech, not equal to French as an international language, and was little studied by foreigners. John Dennis remarked in his *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) that

. . . At the same Time, that the French has been growing almost an universal Language, the English has been so far from diffusing itself in so vast a manner, that I know by Experience, that a Man may travel o'er most of these Western Parts of Europe without meeting with Three Foreigners, who have any tolerable knowledge of it.¹

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries English had been considered deficient in the range of its vocabulary; the dominant concern among writers and critics had been the best method of extending it: during the later sixteenth century, as heightened literary activity began to achieve the desired range in vocabulary, there came a demand for greater regularity and control in the language and it was this demand which continued to be made in the following centuries.²

Moreover, English was felt, by its very nature as a modern language, to be inferior to the language of the classics:

Latin is but a corrupt dialect of Greek; and the French, Spanish, and Italian, a corruption of Latine; and therefore a Man might as well go about to persuade me that Vinegar is a Nobler liquor than Wine, as that modern Compositions can be as graceful and harmonious as the Latine it self.³

English was not only a modern language, but it was not even derived from Latin, as Italian and French, but from a "barbarous" Germanic tongue to which it owed the characteristics which were considered to be its chief defects; its monosyllables and its consonantal roughness. Compared to the even balance of vowels and consonants in Greek and Latin, English seemed a particularly harsh language. Even Latin, "where the vowels and consonants are mixed in proportion to each other," as Dryden described it,⁴ was considered to be inferior to the richness of Greek. In contrast to this evenness of vowels and consonants Dryden found that

The English has yet more natural disadvantages than the French; our original Teutonic, consisting most in monosyllables, and those encumbered with consonants, cannot possibly be freed from those inconveniences. The rest of our words, which are derived from the Latin chiefly, and the French, with some small sprinklings of Greek, Italian, and Spanish, are some relief in Poetry, and help us to soften our uncouth numbers . . .⁵

It is not surprising that Dryden called consonants "the dead weight of the mother tongue".⁶ This Germanic element gave English a compensating power in the "capacity for vigorous expression,"⁷ and the English monosyllables, non-euphonious as they might seem to be, resulted in a flexible language in which new expressions could easily be built up;

but the Germanic quality of the language was, nevertheless, a defect to be overcome, and any practice which accentuated this quality was one to be avoided.

Addison disapproved of the habit of using contractions which "very much untuned our language, and clogged it with consonants -- as 'mayn't, can't, shan't, won't,' and the like,"⁸ and he expressed some surprise at poets who persisted in shortening words such as walked and drowned into walk'd and drown'd "because the want of vowels in our language has been the general complaint of our politest authors, who nevertheless are the men that have made these retrenchments . . ." ⁹ while Swift considered that

This perpetual Disposition to shorten our Words, by retrenching the Vowels, is nothing else but a Tendency to lapse into the Barbarity of those Northern nations from whom we are descended. . . .¹⁰

Swedish, Danish and German were all examples of northern languages which, like English, lacked the softening influence of Latin: Scots, if it were recognised as an independent language and not just as a corruption of English, would still be thought to suffer from this barbarous defect of harshness.

One could minimise consonantal harshness by the judicious use of foreign borrowing and careful phrasing, but there was a more serious difficulty to overcome: English was a changing language of which it was believed that it would never achieve the stability and permanence of Latin and Greek:

Poets that lasting marble seek,
Must carve in Latin, or in Greek:
We write in sand, our language grows,
And, like the tide, our work o'erflows. ¹¹

The Augustans found Chaucer scarcely intelligible and even Shakespeare was becoming difficult to understand. Geoffrey Tillotson, in his examination of Augustan attitudes to language, quotes Atturbury, a friend of Pope, who, on reading some unfamiliar passages in Shakespeare, complained, "I protest to you, in an hundred places I cannot construe him, I dont understand him. The hardest part of Chaucer is more intelligible to me than some of those Scenes."¹² Pope himself, in the Essay on Criticism, gives an excellent summary of the contemporary view of modern languages:

Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost, who stays till all commend.
Short is the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that golden age appears,
When patriarch-wits survived a thousand years:
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all even that can boast;
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.¹³

French and Italian had become stabilised much more quickly than English. Dryden remarked that "It wou'd mortify an English man to consider, that from the time of Boccace and of Petrarche, the Italian had varied very little: And that the English of Chaucer their contemporary is not to be understood without the help of an Old Dictionary."¹⁴ One of the solutions proposed for this problem was the institution of an academy, as in France, to regulate the language. Defoe, in 1697, had suggested the institution of an Academy and had, indeed, belonged to a society which had attempted to refine and correct the language, but had given up in the face of the magnitude of the task:

We want indeed a Richelieu to commence such a work: For I am persuaded, were there such a Genius in our Kingdom to lead the way, there wou'd not want Capacities who cou'd carry on the Work to a Glory equal to all that has gone before them. The English Tongue is a Subject not at all less worthy the Labour of such a Society than the French, and capable of a much greater perfection. . . .¹⁵

This complaint sounds remarkably similar to that raised by John Ramsay of Ochtertyre when he considered the obstacles to be encountered in the creation of a Scots prose in the eighteenth century.

The numerous pleas for an Academy indicate how seriously the most astute English minds were concerned with the improvement of the language, a concern summed up by Dr Johnson in the Preface to his Dictionary: "We have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language."¹⁶ The idea of an Academy was not entirely approved and was never adopted, but its function was taken over by such publications as Johnson's Dictionary and the many grammars which appeared during the Eighteenth century. Instead of trying to fix the language, the object began to be to control it in order to prevent needless change. Again Dr Johnson gives us the keynote: "to enchain syllables and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength."¹⁷ He also said:

If the changes that we fear are thus irresistible, what remains but to acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses of humanity? It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure.¹⁸

As Geoffrey Tillotson points out, it is a measure of the success of the Augustan writers in palliating what they could not cure that we "can still read the writings of Swift and Pope -- I mean skim along the surface, of

course -- almost as effortlessly as their first readers."¹⁹
The development of Scots might have proceeded upon similar lines had historical circumstances differed, but the decline of Scots as a language suitable for all forms of discourse cannot be blamed on deliberate prejudice.

NOTES

1. John Dennis, Critical Works, ed. E.N. Hooker (Baltimore, 1939), I 204, quoted in Donaldson, p. 106.
22. Donaldson, pp. 8-9.
3. Dryden, The Works of Virgil (1697), quoted in Donaldson, p. 80.
4. Dryden, Dedication of the Aeneis (1697), quoted in Donaldson, p. 77.
5. Dryden, Preface to Albion and Albanis (1685), quoted in Donaldson, p. 94.
6. Dryden, Essays, quoted in Tillotson, p. 103.
7. Richard Flicknoe (1653), quoted in Donaldson, p. 42.
8. Addison, The Spectator, 135.
9. *ibid.*
10. Swift, A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue (1712). . . ed. Herbert Davis with Louis Landa (Oxford, 1957), p. 14, quoted in Donaldson, p. 31.
11. Edmund Waller, The Works of Edmund Waller (1729), quoted in Donaldson, p. 20.
12. Tillotson, p. 226.
13. Pope, "Essay on Criticism," (ll. 474-483), in Bate, Criticism: the Major Texts, p. 179.
14. Dryden, The Epistle Dedicatory to Troilus and Cressida (1679), quoted in Donaldson, p. 123.
15. Daniel Defoe, An Essay upon Projects (1697), quoted in Donaldson, p. 17.
16. Samuel Johnson, Preface to the Dictionary, quoted in Tillotson, p. 227.
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.*
19. Tillotson, p. 227.

Appendix C: Snow and Night Scenes
in David Gray's The Luggie

David Gray's The Luggie¹ can not be called a great achievement, even when one considers the handicaps of illness, isolation and poverty which the poet had to struggle against in order to produce the poem which is, essentially, his life's work. Nevertheless, the poem is a remarkable one and has its own merits which seem to survive almost in spite of the poet's efforts, for even in its own time (1861) The Luggie was an old-fashioned piece, firmly rooted in the descriptive tradition established by James Thomson's The Seasons one hundred years earlier. It is typical of the many poems which, in spite of their individual merits, could not be considered in the main body of the thesis.

This stream, "called by that slightly ridiculous name,"² which Gray chose as his subject, flows near the poet's home and carries associations with his boyhood. The primary image is the comparison of the Luggie's flow to the moods of the poem which praises it:

if this lay
 Could smoothly flow along and wind to the end
 In natural manner, as the Luggie winds
 Her tortuous waters, then the world would list
 In sweet enthrallment, swallowed up and lost . . .

(11. 7-11)

The image of the winding river serves as a continuous reference to which the poem's narrative digressions may be related, and the poem has a surprising thematic complexity beyond its nostalgic and elegiac mood; however, the charm of The Luggie does not lie in its structure but rather in the note of fresh enthusiasm which David Gray brings to his subject, especially to his descriptions of the weather.

The earth is cherished, for beneath the soft
 Pure uniformity, is gently born
 Warmth and rich mildness fitting the dead roots
 For the resuscitation of the spring.

(11. 163-166)

The image of resurrection here has special meaning, for the poet has underlined the whole idea of snow with the idea of his own mortality from the beginning of the passage:

Once more, O God, once more before I die,
 Before blind darkness and the wormy grave
 Contain me, and my memory fades away
 Like a sweet-coloured evening, slowly, sad --
 Once more, O God, thy wonders take my soul.
 A winter day! the feather-silent snow
 Thickens the air with strange delight . . .

(11. 79-85)

Every facet of nature is more beautiful and experienced more intensely because the poet realizes how briefly he can enjoy it, but the snow is in some way the most precious to him.

The word "delight" occurs again in lines which express most vividly the poet's attitude to the snow:

Out in the snowy dimness, half revealed
 Like ghosts in glimpsing moonshine, wildly run
 The children in bewildering delight.

(11. 106-108)

The children can possibly be seen as Gray's younger brothers and sisters, but they are also symbols of himself as a child. The "bewildering delight" is both the "delight" of the snow (as in line 85) which bewilders the children, and their own delight which bewilders the observer. It is clear, however, that the poet himself has not lost the childlike power of delight, and is as bewildered by it as the children:

I have not words to speak the perfect show;
 The ravishment of beauty; the delight
 Of silent purity; the sanctity
 Of inspiration which o'erflows the world,
 Making it breathless with divinity.

(ll. 185-190)

The sense of breathless anticipation which accompanies a heavy fall of snow is admirably captured. The children seemed to move soundlessly through the snow, and their movement is echoed by the "songless birds" that "Flit restlessly about the breathless wood" (l. 176). In these passages the slow, formal, ponderousness of Gray's diction is no handicap, but serves to heighten the effectiveness of his description:

Softly -- with delicate softness -- as the light
 Quickens in the undawned east; and silently --
 With definite silence -- as the stealing dawn
 Dapples the floating clouds, slow fall, slow fall
 With indecisive motion eddying down,
 The white-winged flakes -- calm as the sleep of sound,
 Dim as a dream.

(ll. 112-118)

The echoing, repetitive effect of "softly/softness" (l. 112) and silently/silence (ll. 113-114), imitates the slow movement of the snow, as does the repetition of slow fall (so placed in the sentence that it seems the "floating clouds" are falling), giving the passage both "indecisive" motion and definiteness. The images of dawn and dream, tending to act in opposition to each other, give a timeless quality to the passage.

The snow is not only thought of as dream. It is also an enchantment. The birds fly about the woods "Waiting the sudden breaking of the charm" (ll. 177) and the stream seems "Charmed in its course" (l. 159). Into this mood of hushed tranquility there comes a startling

scrap of realism: "The housewife's voice is heard with doubled sound" (p. 13, l. 4) and one is vividly reminded of the peculiar sound a voice takes on at such a time.

One cannot imagine Gray's predecessor James Thomson being as enchanted with the snow. Compare Thomson's

Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,
In one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man.

(Winter, ll. 238-240)

with Gray's

All around
Is loving and continuous deity;
His mercy over all His works remains.
And surely in the glossy snow there shines
Angelic influence -- a ministry
Devout and heavenly that with benign
Action, amid a wondrous hush lets fall
The dazzling garment on the fostered fields.

(ll. 196-203)

The image called to mind here is of a breathless audience awed by the latest flourish of a brilliant magician. It is a weakness of Gray's art that one can not be sure this image was intended.

There are many other interesting aspects of description, such as the bleak late winter when the hills "Shine tawdry, crawled upon by the blind rain" (l. 307), and that striking touch of earthy realism:

While grandfather over the well-watched fire
Hangs cowering, with a cold drop at his nose.

(ll. 233-234)

but more striking still is a recurring image in The Luggie, the wintry night sky.

Here Gray seems to achieve an unusual intensity and compression. In, for example:

the moon
 Sharpens her semicircle; and the air
 With bleakly shivering sough cuts like a scythe

(11. 253-255)

the moon embodies the scythe of the cutting wind. Earlier, in these lines

The rimy moon displays a cold blue night
 And keen as steel the east wind sprinkles ice.
 Thicker than bees, about the waxing moon
 Gather the punctual stars.

(11. 207-210)

he juxtaposed the idea of ice and stars. The comparison with bees weakens the effectiveness of the colder imagery, but it does suggest stinging, as the "keen as steel" suggests the later scythe imagery.

It is interesting to place these passages beside a comparable one set in the spring:

First night of May! and the soft-silvered moon
 Brightens her semi-circle in the blue;
 And 'mid the tawny orange of the west
 Shines the full star that ushers in the even!

(11. 482-485)

Here it is not just that a softer scene is described; there is no sense of atmosphere, of the temperature or sensation of the air as there was in the winter lines. It is entirely conventional and lacks the tactile immediacy of the preceding lines.

There are, in fact, no such night pieces for spring and summer as there are for autumn and winter, reinforcing the impression that Gray, like so many other Scottish poets, was writing more from his own experience and less conventionally when he wrote of the bleak seasons. Certainly he reaches a pitch of intensity in these lines which (whatever one may think of the quality of the lines) is exceeded only in his description of the snow:

O Autumn nights!
When skies are deeply blue, and the full moon
Soars in voluptuous whiteness, Juno-like,
A passionate splendour; when in the great south
Orion like a frozen skeleton
Hints of his ancient hugeness and mail'd strength.

(11. 611-616)

It is in this affinity for cold, rough weather, and Gray's keen enjoyment of the snow that we find a point of comparison with the Canadian poets who were to come not long after him: men like Charles G.D. Roberts who took the Canadian literary world by storm with his Orion.

NOTES

1. David Gray, The Luggie and Other Poems (Cambridge:
2. J.H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland (London: Unwin, 1903), p. 600.

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The following list does not include standard reference works such as the Dictionary of National Biography. The list of Canadian poets is not restricted to native Canadians but includes immigrant poets as well. For practical reasons, reprint editions of books available only in Canadian libraries have been used, although the earlier edition has also been examined. In such cases both editions are included in the bibliography.

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Linda Christine Craig

The Scottish Origins of "Farewell to Nova Scotia"

Since Helen Creighton discovered "The Nova Scotia Song" in the nineteen thirties its origin has been unknown.¹ Better known now as "Farewell to Nova Scotia", the song has always seemed to be "so typical of the seaman's love of home and pull toward the sea"² that it has, not unnaturally, been thought of as a sailor's song, and it has become, over the past forty years, something of a Nova Scotia anthem. It is, in fact, derived from "The Soldier's Adieu", attributed to the Scottish weaver-poet, Robert Tannahill (1774-1810). There is abundant evidence of this derivation in the similarities between the two songs, but it is fortunate that there is also an early example of a similar adaptation of "The Soldier's Adieu" in the form of a chapbook ballad entitled "I'm Grieved to Leave My Comrades All".³ Itself of great interest to the student of chapbook printers and collectors, this song may have had some influence on the development of "Farewell to Nova Scotia" and is therefore a necessary part of any discussion of that song's origins.

"The Soldier's Adieu" has a rather complicated history of its own since the first printing, in a Glasgow newspaper of September, 1808, has apparently been lost and there are slight but significant variations in the editions which are available.⁴ Alexander Whitelaw, who was given the song by the poet's brother, believed that he had printed it for the first time in his 1843 edition of *The Book of Scottish Song*, but David Semple, in his 1876 edition of Tannahill's works, provided a slightly different text, along with the information that he had seen the 1808 printing. Semple pointed out that the first stanza of the song also appeared in A.P. Ramsay's 1838 edition of Tannahill's works.⁵ Keeping in mind that there are variations in these editions, it is possible (for most of this discussion) to use the earliest complete text, that of Alexander Whitelaw, for comparison with the Nova Scotia song which, as I will show later, bears traces of more than one edition.

"The Soldier's Adieu" is a pleasant, neatly-finished piece of work in eight-line stanzas rhyming abab cdcd, a form which invites the major change which occurs in both the chapbook version and "Farewell to Nova Scotia" where each of these stanzas is divided in two. Each version, according to the taste of the adaptor, has a different stanza as the chorus: the chapbook version uses the stanza beginning "I'm grieved to leave my comrades all," (hence the title) while the Nova Scotia song uses the four lines beginning with "Adieu, dear Scotia's sea-beat coast," which has become "Farewell to Nova Scotia, the sea-bound coast". Along with this change in structure there are other modifications which consist of abridgments and variations of diction which generally preserve the sense of the original.

The first stanza, which is usually the most accurately transmitted stanza in any folk song, is a good example of the type of change which takes place between the literary song and its folk adaptation. Thus,

The weary sun's gane doun the west,
 The birds sit nodding on the tree,
 All Nature now inclines for rest
 But rest allow'd there's nane for me,⁶

becomes awkward and loses its graceful meter in the chapbook version:

The sun was wading in the west
 The bird sat chattering on ilka tree
 All nature seem'd to be at rest
 But their [sic] no rest provided for me.

Comparing this to the same lines in "Farewell to Nova Scotia" it is easy to see that the people who made this version were thinking of a rhythm similar to that of the chapbook version—a rhythm most evident in the words "was setting" (compare the chapbook's "was wading") and "on ev'ry tree" (compare "on ilka tree"):

The sun was setting in the west,
 The birds were singing on ev'ry tree,
 All nature seems inclined for rest,
 But still there was no rest for me.

Similarly, the opening lines of the second stanza of "The Soldier's Adieu"

I grieve to leave my comrades dear,
 I mourn to leave my native shore,
 To leave my aged parents here,
 And the bonnie lass whom I adore

lend themselves to the repetitive

I'm grieved to leave my comrades all,
 I'm grieved to leave my native shore
 My aged parents whom I loved so dear
 And the bonny lass that I adore

of the chapbook version, and in "Farewell to Nova Scotia" become

I grieve to leave my native land
 I grieve to leave my comrades all,
 And my aged parents whom I always held so dear.
 And the bonny, bonny lass that I do adore.

As with all folk songs, there are several versions of the Nova Scotia song, but the first two stanzas have suffered the least change from the form of "The Soldier's Adieu", and therefore the versions which Helen Creighton collected show the greatest agreement with each other here. The inversion of the first two lines of the second stanza, which is the most significant difference from the Scottish original, is found in all versions where this stanza appears. There is only (as far as I know) the one example of the last two lines being lengthened to fit the melody, but no important words have been added in this case. Not unexpectedly, there are more versions of the following stanza, partly because they were less easily remembered (coming later in the song), and partly because they had to be adapted to suit the Nova Scotia setting, but fortunately there are none which depart significantly from the model of "The Soldier's Adieu".⁷

Returning to "The Soldiers Adieu" we find that the last four lines of the first stanza,

The trumpet sounds to war's alarms
 The drums they beat, the fifes they play—
 Come, Mary, cheer me wi' thy charms,
 For the morn I will be far away,

are echoed by the closing quatrain of the following stanza:

But tender thoughts maun now be hushed,
 When danger calls I must obey,
 The transport waits us on the coast,
 And the morn I will be far away.

"I'm Grieved to Leave My Comrades All" condenses these lines to that the two quatrains become one:

Hark the trumpet sounds the wars alarm;
 The trumpets sound we must obey;
 Our foes do appear on fair England's coast,
 And to-morrow from you I'll be far away,

and the same abridgment appears in the Nova Scotia song:

The drums they do beat and the wars do alarm,
 The captain calls, we must obey,
 So farewell, farewell to Nova Scotia's charms,
 For it's early in the morning I am far, far away.

In the same way the final stanza of "The Soldier's Adieu",

Adieu, dear Scotia's sea-beat coast!
 Though bleak and drear your mountains be,
 When on the heaving ocean tost
 I'll cast a wishful look to thee!
 And now, dear Mary, fare thee well,
 May Providence thy guardian be!
 Or in the camp, or on the field,
 I'll heave a sigh and think on thee,

is contracted by the chapbook writer who makes nonsense of it with his change of setting:

Adieu to England's seafaring boast
 Tho' dark and dismal thy mountains be
 But while on the dreary ocean I'm tost
 I'll give a sigh and a wish for thee.

Evidently only the first part of each stanza was remembered with any accuracy, as well as part of the last line which was combined with the others to give the new line, "I'll give a sigh and a wish for thee." The

Nova Scotia song not only makes the same contraction, using some of the same words in the last line, but makes a more successful change of setting:

Farewell to Nova Scotia, the sea-bound coast
 Let your mountains dark and dreary be,
 For when I am far away on the briny ocean tossed,
 Will you ever heave a sigh and a wish for me?

These structural similarities might suggest that the chapbook version of "The Soldier's Adieu" was the means by which the song came to Nova Scotia. The similarities in diction, especially in such phrases "give a sigh and a wish for" and "my aged parents whom I always held so dear", certainly support this idea, but there are traces of diction which could not have come from the chapbook but only from one or another of the editions of "The Soldier's Adieu". For example, we must look to "Adieu, dear Scotia's sea-beat coast" rather than "Adieu to England's seafaring boast" for the opening of the Nova Scotia song's chorus, and, while the chapbook provides the word "seems" in "All nature seems inclined for rest", ("Farewell to Nova Scotia", 1.3) the word "inclined" appears to have come from the Ramsay edition of 1838, or from David Semple's 1876 edition. If the close proximity of the words "dark" and "dreary" in the chapbook is evidence that this is the source of the Nova Scotia song's line "Let your mountains dark and dreary be", so the line "Farewell, farewell to Nova Scotia's charms" seems to echo, not merely by accident, "Come, Mary, cheer me wi' thy charms" of the Whitelaw edition.

Any or all of these correspondences may be coincidental. Certainly the structural changes common to the chapbook version and the Nova Scotia song are not unusual. They are, indeed, just what one would expect to find in a folk adaption of a song with the structure of "The Soldier's Adieu". Nevertheless, it is probable that more than one version of the song, possibly including this chapbook version, was circulating in Canada in the nineteenth century, and that more than one version, including at least two of the formal editions, was involved in the development of "Farewell to Nova Scotia".

An interesting parallel to the Nova Scotia song can be seen in "On the Banks of Jeddore" which was found by Marius Barbeau in Beauce County, Quebec, in the nineteen forties.⁸ This song has long been recognized as a close relative of "Farewell to Nova Scotia" by its chorus,

I'm grieved to leave my native shore,
 I'm grieved to leave my parents all,
 My aged mother I adore,
 And the bonny wee lassie on the Banks of Jeddore,

which can now be seen as an adaptation of lines from "The Soldier's Adieu". Apart from these lines there are only three others which correspond to anything in either "Farewell to Nova Scotia" or its predecessors. The first line, "Nova Scotia is a free-born coast," has an obvious link with Nova Scotia's "sea-bound coast", and so suggests that "On the Banks of Jeddore" was influenced by the Nova Scotia song, but the first line of stanza three, "The waning sun has set in the west," is closer to "The weary sun's gane doun the west," ("The Soldier's Adieu", 1876 ed.) than to the opening of "Farewell to Nova Scotia", "The sun was setting" Though "The signal beckons me away" (1.10) recalls "The captain calls, we must obey" and similar lines from the earlier versions, the correspondence is not close enough to be of much value. Evidently an interweaving of various traditions similar to that which led to "Farewell to Nova Scotia" has resulted in the quite different song, "On the Banks of Jeddore".

"On the Banks of Jeddore" marks the point at which "The Soldier's Adieu" exerts the least influence. Compared with it, the changes which appear in "Farewell to Nova Scotia" seems very slight. Nevertheless, they are important changes, and some of them are responsible for giving this song a poignancy not found in any other version. It is in the lines of the chorus and the simple "Farewell, farewell to Nova Scotia's charms" that we see the contribution of the Nova Scotian singer, for "Mary" of "The Soldier's Adieu" has almost disappeared and her place has been taken by the native land—by Nova Scotia herself.

"Mary" remains, a shadowy figure—the "bonny, bonny lass that I do adore"—but she is just one, among parents and comrades, that the sailor leaves behind in Nova Scotia. All these are implied in the farewell to "Nova Scotia's charms", but it is in the last line of the chorus, "Will you ever heave a sigh and a wish for me?" that this mysterious blending of sweetheart and native land becomes most apparent and most effective.

Though the question may be addressed to the "bonny lass", its context suggests that it is addressed to Nova Scotia's "sea-bound coast", and to the "dark and dreary" mountains. Even the work "let" is ambiguous. "Let your mountains dark and dreary be" can mean "Though your mountains . . ." as in "The Soldier's Adieu", but it can also mean

that the speaker expects or wishes the mountains to be dark and dreary with sorrow at his absence. This second reading of the chorus reinforces the image of a personified Nova Scotia sighing for her exiled son—an image undercut by the knowledge that mountains never will heave a sigh and a wish for him.

"Farewell to Nova Scotia" achieves an intensity which is completely absent from "The Soldier's Adieu", partly as a result of the compression and simplification of the song in its transmission through the media of folk memory such as the 1825 chapbook, and partly through such changes as the ones I have described which are the result of the song's transfer from Scotland to Canada in the hands of skilled folk artists. In this transfer it has received a fine ballad conclusion which is not found in any other version of "The Soldier's Adieu":

I have three brothers and they are at rest,
 Their hands are folded on their breast,
 But a poor simple sailor just like me
 Must be tossed and driven on the dark blue sea.

Unlike the stanzas which are derived from "The Soldier's Adieu" and which are relatively standardized, this stanza, which identifies the speaker as a sailor, is the finest example of a number of versions which vary considerably in quality. In putting this stanza at the end of her composite version of "Farewell to Nova Scotia" Helen Creighton demonstrated her feeling for the original song, since this restored the stanzas almost to their original order and set the only stanza which does not belong to "The Solider's Adieu" on its own.

Wherever it comes from, this concluding stanza mutes the martial glamour of "The drums they do beat, and the wars do alarm" in the melancholy recognition that, in war or in peace, it is the sailor's fate to be driven from home, "on the briny ocean tossed", and that, in some way, his exile is permanent. This fatalism is quite different from the mood of either of the antecedent songs I have been considering, and it alters the tone so that, in spite of its undoubted debt to Robert Tannahill's "The Soldier's Adieu", it is, essentially, a new song.

NOTES

1. Helen Creighton, *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1950), p. 264.
2. Letter received from Dr. Helen Creighton, January 13, 1978.
3. Edwin and Emma; to which are added, *The Meeting of the Waters. I'm grieved to leave my comrades all, I Hue' a Wife o' my Ain* (Stirling: Printed by W. MacNie, 1825), with sixty-eight other chapbooks in a privately-bound volume in the University Library, St. Andrews, Scotland.

4. This research has raised some questions about Tannahill's authorship and the original text of "The Soldier's Adieu" which I hope to take up in a future publication.
5. Alexander Whitelaw, *The Book of Scottish Song* (London: 1843), p. 15; David Semple, ed., *Poems and Songs and Correspondence [of Tannahill]* (Paisley: 1876), p. 249; P.A. Ramsay, ed., *The Works of Robert Tannahill* (London and Edinburgh: [1879?], p. 98. Another edition which has the same first stanza as Ramsay and Semple is *The Songs of Robert Tannahill Complete*. (Glasgow: George Cameron, 1859), p. 64.
6. Semple, 1876.
7. The other variants are of interest, particularly in relation to "The Soldier's Adieu", and I hope to discuss them in a future publication.
8. Marius Barbeau, et. al., *Come A-singing! Canadian Folk Songs*. Anthropological Series No. 26 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada Bulletin No. 107, 1947).

"The Soldier's Adieu"

(Whitelaw, 1843)

The evening sun's gane down the west,
 The birds sit nodding on the tree;
 All nature now prepares for rest,
 But rest prepared ther's none for me.
 The trumpet sounds to war's alarms,
 The drums they beat, the fifes they play,—
 Come, Mary, cheer me wi' thy charms,
 For the morn I will be far away.

Good night and joy, good night and joy,
 Good night and joy be wi' you a':
 For since it's so that I must go,
 Good night and joy be wi' you a'!

I grieve to leave my comrades dear,
 I mourn to leave my native shore,—
 To leave my aged parents here,
 And the bonnie lass whom I adore.
 But tender thoughts maun now be hush'd,
 When danger calls I must obey,—
 The transport waits us on the coast,
 And the morn I will be far away.
 Good night and joy, etc.

Adieu, dear Scotia's sea-beat coast!
 Though bleak and drear thy mountains be,
 When on the heaving ocean tost,
 I'll cast a wishful look to thee!

And now, dear Mary, fare thee well,
 May Providence thy Guardian bel
 Or in the camp, or on the field,
 I'll heave a sigh, and think on thee!
 Good night and joy, etc.

"The Soldier's Adieu"
 Air— "*Good night and joy.*"
 September, 1808.

(Semple, 1876)

The weary sun's gane doun the west,
 The birds sit nodding on the tree,
 All Nature now inclines for rest,
 But rest allow'd there's nane for me:
 The trumpet calls to War's alarms,
 The rattling drum forbids my stay;
 Ah! Nancy, bless thy soldier's arms,
 For ere morn I will be far away.

I grieve to leave my comrades dear,
 I mourn to leave my native shore,
 To leave my aged parents here,
 And the bonnie lass whom I adore.
 But tender thoughts must now be hushed,
 When duty calls I must obey;
 Fate wills it so that part we must,
 And the morn I will be far away.

Adieu! dear Scotland's sea-beat coast!
 Ye misty vales and mountains blue!
 When on the heaving ocean tost,
 I'll cast a wishful look to you.
 And, now, dear Nancy, fare-thee-weel!
 May Providence thy guardian bel
 And in the camp, or in the fiel,
 My constant thoughts shall turn to thee.

I'm Grieved to Leave My Comrades All
 (Chapbook, 1825)

The sun was wading in the west
The bird sat chattering in ilka tree
All nature seem'd to be at rest
But their no rest provided for me.

Chorus

I'm grieved to leave my comrades all,
I'm grieved to leave my native shore
My aged parents whom I loved so dear,
And the bonny lass that I adore.

Adieu to England's seafaring boast
Tho' dark and dismal thy mountains be
But while on the dreary ocean I'm tost
I'll give a sigh and a wish for thee.
I grieve to leave, etc.

Hark the trumpet sounds the wars alarm;
The trumpets sound we must obey;
Our foes do appear on fair England's coast,
And to-morrow from you I'll be far away.
I grieve to leave, etc.