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DOCUMENTS
Canadian Literature and Culture at Western: The Story of a Course

by Donald Hair

When David Bentley asked Dick Stingle and me to write a piece for *Canadian Poetry* about our experiences of teaching with James Reaney, who died in June 2008, we said, of the Canadian Literature and Culture course, that the story of its creation and its classroom realization needed to be written, because the course was, in 1970, groundbreaking, and a landmark in the evolution of the teaching of Canadian literature, certainly at the University of Western Ontario if not elsewhere. What follows is an attempt at the writing of that story, from the point of view of one member of the teaching team. It is largely documentary. Difficult to convey are the feelings that accompanied the facts below: feelings of a great opening out, of a melting away of the constraints on the understanding of our literature, of an exhilarating freedom to explore and discover, of an increasingly expressible recognition of ourselves and our nature—in short, a "jail-break / And recreation," to borrow metaphors from Margaret Avison's "Snow."

The course, officially called "Canadian Literature and Culture," was first offered in the 1970-71 academic year. The first members of the teaching team, in addition to Jamie, were Ron Bates, Stan Dragland, Jim Good, Ernie Redekop, Dick Stingle, and Tom Tausky. The same team taught the course in 1971-72.

I did not join the team until the third year (1972-73), but I had prepared myself to teach material about which I knew little by sitting in on all the classes in 1971-72. The members of the teaching team in that third year were, in addition to myself and Jamie, Stan Dragland, Jim Good, Bruce Lundgren, Dick Stingle, Tom Tausky and Joe Zezulka. I was on sabbatical in 1973-74, and returned to the course in 1974-75, when the teaching team consisted of Jamie, Bruce Lundgren, Catherine Ross, Dick Stingle, Ross Woodman, and myself. In 1975-76 that same team continued in the course, minus Jamie, who was touring the country with the NDWT Company's production of *The Donnellys*, an epic journey he recounts in *14 Barrels from Sea to Sea.* Jamie returned to the team in 1976-77, along with Lundgren, Ross and Stingle, but left it again in 1977-78, when the team

was reduced to three: Hair, Stingle, and David Bentley. In 1978-79 Hair and Lundgren taught the course by themselves, and in 1979-80 the team teaching method was abandoned altogether, when for the first time since its inception one section of the course, taught by an individual instructor, was offered. In the early 1980s Bentley, Lundgren, Stingle and myself each taught the course, or one term of the course, on our own. John Orange had already been doing that at one of the affiliated colleges, King's, which offered English 138 from the early 1970s on.

The early success of the course depended to a large extent on the unique way in which we practised team teaching in the 1970s. (Here I am repeating a paragraph from the earlier piece on Reaney in *Canadian Poetry.*) Elsewhere, team teaching really meant serial teaching: in any given course, an instructor would deliver several lectures on a topic or text and then disappear; then another instructor would come in and lecture on another text, and so on. With us, the whole teaching team, which might consist of up to eight instructors, was present in every hour; we each lectured on some aspect of the text (alone, in pairs, in threes, and sometimes in symposia), so that every hour involved a number of voices with their different ways of reading the text; and as we became familiar with each other's approaches, we began responding to each other's analyses, and invariably carried on a debate about the text over coffee after class. The whole experience was scary—this baring of one's academic soul to one's colleagues—and exhilarating, because we learned so much from each other. Never had literature come alive as much as it did in those classes. The method favoured the sense of discovery that we all had in exploring our literature and culture, and along with that sense went feelings of excitement, of pride, of rootedness that can come only from material recognizably "ours."

One example of the way in which the team worked is the class for February 11, 1975. Jamie had scheduled a "panel discussion on French Canada," and to prepare for it he sent round a memo: "I thought (talking it over with Catherine [Ross] and Don [Hair] last Tuesday) that we might each choose a favourite image from a work not taught by us—if you see what I mean—and discuss; also choose a slide to talk about. And if this is not enough I think we can also muster a debate—Which is preferable—English Canadian Culture or French Canadian Culture? Don Hair and J. Reaney take the French side; Ross Woodman, Catherine [Ross] and Bruce [Lundgren] take the other side. We can talk this over on Monday [the day before the scheduled panel]."

How exactly did the course come into being? Since it was first offered in the 1970-71 academic year, it would have been proposed, and formally

considered and approved by various committees, in the preceding two years, but existing minutes are frustratingly spotty on English 38 (as it was then numbered). The first documentary evidence of the course is in the minutes of the Department of English at the end of the 1968-69 academic year, when (on 2 May 1969) a new English 38 was approved as one of seven "general" (as opposed to "honours") courses. The then- (and still-) current buzzword was "interdisciplinary," and the members of the department apparently looked on the new course as moving in that desired direction, because at that same meeting they passed a motion stating "that we favour the kind of interdisciplinary course (for example, Canadian Literature and Culture) which can be offered by the English Department, making use of whatever resources are available on or off campus." This was essentially a motion to go-it-alone, bypassing, at least for the time being, the administrative delays and stumbling blocks that were inevitable when two or more departments jointly offered a course. The proposal then went forward for approval to faculty and senate committees before being added to the calendar for the 1970-71 academic year. In the meantime, the department's existing committee on the general (three-year) program was, in the fall of 1969, folded into the parallel committee on the honours program to become the Committee on Undergraduate Studies. Its first chair, Gerry Parker (who would subsequently write a study of Reaney's drama), reported at a meeting on 5 February 1970 that the committee was "currently discussing new course outlines" without specifying which ones. A month or so later James Reaney was appointed chair and chief examiner of the course, and the lecture-tutorial method was set: "English 38 will have a lecture section of more than 200 students, and seminars of twenty students each" (Department of English minutes 31 March 1970). Not mentioned was the fact that the lecture section would have a team of teachers, each of whom would not only lecture but also conduct two tutorials. There were no teaching assistants. These arrangements inevitably raised questions about cost, because seven full-time members of the department were assigned to one class. Would not a single instructor plus teaching assistants have been cheaper? Perhaps, but if one looks at the student-teacher ratio (forty students to each instructor), it was considerably higher than in all our honours courses at the time, and we were getting (to use one of the political catchphrases of that period) "more bang for our buck."

Committee and departmental minutes do not record the informal discussions—in offices, over coffee or lunch, in private conversations—that led to the proposal for the course. My understanding is that Canadian Literature and Culture had its principal origin in conversations among James

Reaney, Dick Stingle, and other colleagues (including me, though my memories of such conversations have faded), and the motive was dissatisfaction with the way in which Canadian literature was then taught: as an adjunct to American literature, and without any reference to our literature in French. That was the pattern in both our honours and general courses at the time: the honours course, English 438, was (in the official calendar description) "American and Canadian Literature (English-Canadian)," and the general course—the old English 38—was "Literature of the United States and Canada (English)." The situation was the same at other universities.

Though the new English 38 was to be exclusively (and inclusively) Canadian, and though it was to be "interdisciplinary," the actual choosing of texts and the actual shaping of the course seem not to have been discussed in detail until the spring of 1970, six months before it was to be offered for the first time. The earliest document we have is one kept by Dick Stingle and annotated by him: a memo from Jamie to the first members of the teaching team. It is undated, but the year can only be 1970: "Could we meet at 10:30 in U.C. 379 on March 20," Jamie writes, "to discuss the new course in Canadian literature and culture which I gather we will be teaching together next year." He then provides a "suggested book list," and then a "suggested shape of the course."

He wanted to start with two accounts of growing up in this country, one anglophone, one francophone. The English one would be Emily Carr's *The Book of Small*; the French one would be Roquebrune's *Testament of My Childhood*. "The souls of two nations when very young," Jamie explained. Dick has underlined "very young" and put a question mark over it: just how early were those accounts?

The next section would deal with aboriginal experience: "Indian material connected with *Corn Goddess* [the proposed text was *The Corn Goddess and Other Tales from Canada*, ed. Diamond Jenness. Ottawa, 1960] & Ryga's play [*The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*] to show what has happened to the Indians."

Beyond that, he wanted to have texts from every region of the country. He also wanted to explore the chief kinds of literary texts written in this country, especially those which seemed to define our experiences in relation to our geography, history, and patterns of settlement. Here is his list:

> "The narrative tradition": Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie*, Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike*, Birney's *David*. A "couple more?" Dick asked.

"French Canadian Poetry up to Nelligan—in translation [the text was John Glassco's collection, *The Poetry of French Canada in Translation*] plus Gelinas' play—*Bousille and the Just.*" Dick's question: "where is parallel with Eng. Canadian?" The answer lay in Malcolm Ross's edition of *Poets of the Confederation*, a New Canadian Library collection which became one of our standard texts. The four poets in that collection were D.C. Scott, Lampman, Carman and Roberts. The early French poets in Glassco's collection were Falcon, Riel, Fréchette, Crémazie, and Nelligan.

"The Montreal Group—Klein, Scott, Layton, Cohen." The texts were two collections edited by Milton Wilson in the New Canadian Library series: *Poets Between the Wars* and *Poetry of Mid-Century.*

"The novels as listed above in which we move from a pastoral society, from the 19th century depression *The Drylanders* to the teeming cities of Roy's Montreal and Wiseman's Winnipeg." Those novels were Ringuet's *Thirty Acres*, Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Duncan's *The Imperialist*, Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*, Ross's *As For Me and My House*, Roy's *The Tin Flute*, and Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*.

"Eskimo material in here because of Carpenter, McLuhan, Innis' field approach." The Eskimo text was "to be selected." It would eventually be *Unikkaatuat*, edited by Nuligak *et. al.*

"The Thinkers—Frye, McLuhan and Bucke." The Frye text was *The Modern Century*; McLuhan's was *The Gutenberg Galaxy*; and Bucke's was *Cosmic Consciousness*, to show students a local work (produced in London Ontario in the nineteenth century) with international ties (primarily to Whitman but also to Carlyle).

"Modern French and English poets." The French poets included (over the next several years) Brault, Chamberland, Chapman, De Grandmont, Des Rochers, Giguère, Grandbois, Hébert, Lapointe, Lasnier, Major, Miron, Pilon, Préfontaine, Saint-Denys-Garneau, Savard, Trottier, and Vigneault. The English poets were (again over several years) Acorn, Atwood, Avison, Birney, Cohen, Jones, Layton, Livesay, Macpherson, Mandel, Newlove, Nowlan, Page, Purdy, Reaney, Smith, Souster, and Webb.

"The Blais novel." It was *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel.*

Jamie listed other texts not mentioned in his "suggested shape of the course": Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, Galbraith's *The Scotch*, and Orlo

Miller's *The Donnellys Must Die*. He also listed "two films. Possibly *The Drylanders*, *Nanook of the North.*"

Then came suggestions for the kinds of cultural connections that made up the dynamics of the course: "I'd like to use visual and music with each lecture [Dick has underlined "each" and written "bit impossible?" but it proved not to be so]. For example, the group of seven (Lawren Harris) were influenced by Bucke. A slide of Harris' *Two Suns* shows this. Pratt and Haliburton lead to actual performances of East folk songs. Avison is like Glenn Gould. I have the music for the Pierre Falcon Seven Oaks ballad [which Jamie himself had translated] in the French Canadian collection. Readings of the plays and the narrative poems."

Jamie has appended a note written in longhand: "I have a lot more ideas which I'd like to mull around a bit. I need your advice and help not only on shape of course & content, but also how the lectures might work out. When we meet I'll have some more material. J.R."

The prescribed texts for the first year of the course were those specified in Jamie's memo. The first two lecture hours in September 1970 were taken by Jamie and Dick, who lectured on Carr's *The Book of Small* and Roquebrune's *Testament of My Childhood.* The story of student reaction to those first two hours has become part of the lore of the course: the students had barely had time to buy the texts, let alone read them, and at the end of the second hour they found themselves two books behind already. There was a near-revolt. But the course survived, and changes in the prescribed texts brought it closer to its original aims.

Eli Mandel's collection of essays, *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, became our chief source for texts by thinkers who would provide the historical and economic and cultural references we attached to every work we taught, but it was not used until the third year the course was offered. That fact only proves once again something that every teacher knows: that one needs to have about two years' experience of a new course before one can confidently say what works and what doesn't. The first two years led to other changes of prescription as well. Roy's *Street of Riches* replaced her *The Tin Flute*; Ostenso's *Wild Geese* replaced the Grove novel; and Carr's *Klee Wyck* replaced *The Book of Small*. Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* became our chief account of immigrant experience, and we paired it with Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. *Emily of New Moon* replaced *Anne of Green Gables* and proved to be a more complex novel, and more rewarding to study. Most importantly, Richardson's *Wacousta* and *The Canadian Brothers* came to be central in defining the English-Canadian

experience in our country. The parallel French text was De Gaspé's *Canadians of Old* (in Roberts' translation).

The range of texts we taught in the 1970s was wide: Atwood's *Surfacing* and *Lady Oracle*, Blaise's *Lunar Attractions*, Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* and the other two novels in that trilogy, Davies' *Fifth Business*, Dewdney's *Wind Without Rain*, Elliott's *The Kissing Man*, Engel's *Bear*, Findley's *The Wars*, Frye's *The Educated Imagination*, Gélinas' *Tit-Coq*, Gotlieb's *Sunburst*, Hardin's *Esker Mike and his Eskimo Wife Agiluk*, Horwood's *White Eskimo*, Laurence's *A Bird in the House*, Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town,* Maillet's *La Sagouine*, McLuhan's *War and Peace in the Global Village*, Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Roberts' *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* and *The Last Barrier*, Salutin's *1837* and *Les Canadiens* ("assist, Ken Dryden"), Seton's *Two Little Savages*, *Stories from Atlantic Canada* (a collection edited by Kent Thompson), Tremblay's *Les Belles Soeurs* and *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, and all three plays in Jamie's *The Donnellys* trilogy, produced and published while the course was evolving.

At the end of the third year Jamie, in a memo dated "II. 8. 73," had the "English 38 teachers" start thinking again about "course revision": "I think we should start next Monday after class over coffee informally discussing what changes we want to make; then the next Monday after that we should have a more formal meeting with John Orange [who was teaching the course at King's College]."

"Just going down the list I really do want to see two different plays. This may mean another Gélinas; does anyone know about a Tremblay in translation? Have read the New Press series of Quebec plays and am passing them around—but the terrible difficulty is that they are expensive. The English play could be Herbert's *Fortune & Men's Eyes* which I've given to Tom [Tausky] to look at or it could be—I'm sending away for *Lulu Street* by Ann Henry, am passing around *Buffalo Jump* and all the Theatre Co-op plays are on order at the library and can be available in a [sic] two days if you ask for Catalogue assistance. But please bring suggestions. The problem is that not only does the thing have to be a play it has to be something that doesn't teach itself and this means a fairly thick dianoia. *Captives of a Faceless Drummer*?"

"B. Fiction.—am happiest here—really want to have another year with everything except Haliburton for which Don has suggested *Wacousta* and I'm getting tired of Ringuet. Blais' *Mad Shadows* is in paper-back again; we could put on other numbers of the Carrier trilogy, we could try a Leacock, we should look at *Atlantic Anthology* which does Maritime short sto-

ries, and also give heed to Ron Smith. Instead of Ringuet you could have Ferron's *Tales from the Uncertain Country.*"

"C. prose—The Carr I love and the Mandel *Contexts* must stay. Miller must go—it's just barely possible to substitute Tiger Dunlop's *Account of Upper Canada* (q.v. in McClelland library) but maybe we should let the Davies stand for our region with *Wacousta* doing Windsor and let it go at that; we should always be trying for a local thing though. Moodie is okay by me; the eskimo stories must go, there is an eskimo autobiography *I, Nuligak* which Tom [Tausky] and I have read, also what other Indian things have you come across—*I Am an Indian* worked all right with me. Have we had it with Roquebrune? Stan [Dragland] has suggested *White Nigger*—okay, in paperback edition; does *Street of Riches* do for the Canayen childhood? Well."

"D. Then in the poetry Atwood is okay; I think we should always try to do *one* Pratt narrative each year and this could be very easily *Brébeuf and His Brethren* in a 95 cent Macmillan paperback. The really tempting Toye-Weaver Canadian anthology with French and English poems bits of prose, short stories, well illustrated with biogs is on its way; might do instead of the Glassco or most of the anthologies. *The Blasted Pine* has been mentioned; one bread an[d] butter anthology is Smith's *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*—it does the Canayens in French and we could mimeo translations; unfortunately his *Modern Canadian Verse* does not contain Chamberland. *15 Canadian Poets*—okay? We need something that reaches into the past and then another book that gives us the twentieth century. Well, those are my thoughts—*Two Little Savages* is worth a try some time; please canvass me in writing or tongue with new ideas to give us all some sort of warning before our meetings. This goes for John Orange too, - James Reaney."

Dick Stingle responded to Jamie's request, and on 16 February 1973 sent round a memo with the subject heading "Prolegomena to this and that":

"I asked members of my tutorials what they liked most of the titles on the course and what they disliked. First was a frenzied outburst in praise of Eskimo and Indian things, and a request for Indian legends followed. *Fifth Business* was praised, and I was asked why there were not more gripping novels of that sort on the syllabus, and why were we ignoring Margaret Laurence. They disliked Haliburton. In both sections, girls asked that *Anne of Green Gables* by re-instated. In terms of the paucity of Maritime works on the proposed list, this strikes me as a good idea, or perhaps MacLennan's *Each Man's Son* could plug the gap."

"I was assured that not only my students but hordes of others found *Contexts* merely an interruption. 'Oh, not one of those essays again," they said, was a deafening chorus. If we are to keep *Contexts*, more appropriate connections with the works must be established. Why can't we revive *The Imperialist* to go along with Grant's essay, for instance."

"Jamie's use of the anthology on the proposed list seems fine to me, and we could flesh out the French poetry by mimeographing a poem by Crémazie and/or Fréchette. The omission of *Thirty Acres* leaves a hole, in my opinion."

"I have read *Buffalo Jump* and it is an exasperating botch of a very promising subject. But, oh God, can't we find a play other than Hébert's!"

"*The Kissing Man* strikes me as a very perceptive and complex work which would work well. It could, perhaps, turn out to be one of those 'gripping' novels so much in demand."

We did teach *The Kissing Man*, which is set in Strathroy, Ontario, but after all our searching for plays we ended up, in 1973-74, with only one, Gélinas' *Tit-Coq*.

But a list of texts still does not define the character of the course. How we related those texts does. We proceeded on the assumption that the primary mode of existence of any country is in the images and patterns created in and by the minds of its inhabitants, and that the country's literature, drawing upon its history, its painting, its aboriginal myths, its narratives of immigration and settlement, reveals such shapings: in map-making and totem-carving, canoe routes, the building of forts in relation to water and bush, the "circuits" of Methodist preachers or the "clockmaker" Sam Slick (who doesn't actually "make" clocks), and (crucial for our country) railway building. Essay topics, final examination questions, and first and final hours when members of the teaching team gave overviews of the course as a whole—all those defined the links that make up our culture. In the paragraphs that follow I define some of the organizing patterns and images that came to be central to the course.

First of all, baseland and hinterland. We borrowed those terms from W. L. Morton's 1961 essay, "The Relevance of Canadian History," one of the *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* provided in Eli Mandel's 1971 collection. Settlement of the country, he pointed out, was on coasts and rivers, while the Precambrian Shield remained unchanged and unchangeable. Hence, said Morton in a sentence we often quoted, "The line which marks off the frontier from the farmstead, the wilderness from the baseland, the hinterland from the metropolis, runs through every Canadian psyche." And not just anglophone ones: in our literature in French there was *le pays d'en*

haut, with all its terrors and attractions. For both baseland and hinterland evoked in Canadians a double attitude: the hinterland has, in the words of Northrop Frye, "endless resources for killing man [and] nothing to respond to his moral or intellectual feelings," (189) but it is also the place of testing and renewal. And while the baseland, with its farms and forts, cities and railroads, may be the centre of civilization, it can also be a prison from which one has to escape. Hence the defining Canadian journey, from baseland to hinterland and back again, with inner change corresponding to the outer action, as in Atwood's *Surfacing* or Engel's *Bear.* The baseland-hinterland distinction helped us to organize the poetry as well, with a baseland poet like Lampman (in "Heat," for instance) also writing a brief hinterland epic like "At the Long Sault: May, 1660," or a hinterland poet like D.C. Scott looking in two directions from "The Height of Land." In this same context, Margaret Atwood's evocative phrase, the "bush garden" (from *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*) was a related organizing image.

As an example of the connections we made using the baseland-hinterland distinction, here is part of Dick Stingle's "first hour" remarks in September 1977:

"The encounter with the hinterland has been made by successive waves of European immigrants to this country, and almost always that encounter has inspired ambivalent responses. Perhaps the least ambivalent was that of the *coureurs de bois* who took to the freedom of *le pays d'en haut* as a liberation from the set routines and responsibility of farm and manor house in New France. So popular was the lure of *le pays d'en haut* that the French authorities had to try to license the number of *coureurs de bois*, in order to keep back men for farm labour. This side of Canadian experience we may find expressed in the image of the wide horizon in paintings by Jean-Paul Lemieux, in the image of wide expanses of snow in so much of our…painting, our films and our literature. That *pays d'en haut* is not only geographic, either. Our artists have associated it with distant time as well. [In an interlinear note Dick has written words from our national anthem: *O Canada, terre de nos aïeux.*] Emily Carr identifies the hinterland in space and time in the lines and art forms of the Indian."

"De Gaspé and Richardson show a similar concern with the wildness of their Indian characters, a wildness which is sometimes dangerous and frightening but sometimes imaginative and creative. [Interlinear note: "Certainly, French Canadians have identified the old heroic life with the land & their very history. *O Canada, terre de nos aïeux.* Some wanted English version to drop 'native land' but French here 400 yrs and some English in Nova Scotia over 220—my own for example.] A nineteenth-

century French Canadian poet, Fréchette, celebrated the heroic life in the vast spaces of Canada in 'The Discovery of the Mississippi.' Des Rochers has lamented the loss of that life in 'I am a Dwindled Son' and in a novel written in 1938, *Thirty Acres*, the main character is aware that he has lived an incomplete life because he never went to the *chantiers*, the lumber camps which are the later versions of the world of the *coureurs de bois*. This version of rock and bush is familiar to English Canadians as well. [marginal note: Purdy's 'Transient' riding the rails across the vast landscape; A.J. M. Smith's 'The Lonely Land']."

"The Loyalists who began the English-speaking colonies which later became parts of Canada were Americans who had faced the wilderness in their old home, had experienced its attractions and terrors and then repeated the experience in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Upper Canada. 19C English Canadian poets like D.C. Scott and Lampman wrote poems of the hinterland and Scott focussed those poems on Northern Ontario and the Indians in such poems as 'The Height of Land.' E. J. Pratt has found the heroic theme in the struggle by those building the CPR against the dragon of the pre-Cambrian shield of northern Ontario. Birney's 'Bushed' shows how terrifying the image of the bush can be. It has created a word in the Canadian language. We find that nature in de Gaspé and Richardson again allied with the Indians. Some have rejected the hinterland. Mrs. Moodie was horrified, but her sister Catherine Parr Traill studied local flora, published [her work] and became one with the landscape. Margaret Atwood has written of the struggle in Mrs. Moodie's head, and the main reason Margaret Laurence moved to Lakefield near Peterborough was to be in the town of Mrs. Traill."

Animals were also central to the course. Jamie had promoted the teaching of Ernest Thompson Seton's *Two Little Savages*—in his view, what the boy scouts ought to have been before Baden-Powell got hold of them and dressed them in caps and short pants—and Seton's assertion that "we and the beasts are kin" from the preface to *Wild Animals I Have Known* was a quotation that we often used. The Canadian animal story is distinct from the English, where, in Margaret Atwood's memorable phrase, the animals are really "Englishmen in furry zippered suits" (73), and from the American, which is usually a hunting story, with the animal at the end of a gun or harpoon. The Canadian animal story is an attempt to see things from the point of view of the creature itself, on the assumption that humans and animals alike share the physical basis of life and are both engaged in a struggle for survival, animals by instinct, humans by education. That is what Roberts meant by "kinship," a word we focussed on when we taught his

animal stories and *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, and a concept we expanded on when we explored the totems in Carr's paintings and in *Klee Wyck* and when we discussed the symbolic animals in Findley's *The Wars,* Engel's *Bear*, Laurence's *A Bird in the House*, Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades*, and a whole host of poems. If we were still teaching the course today, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* would be a wonderful novel to study in this context.

We are a northern people, occupying (barely) a vast northern landmass, so, not surprisingly, snow was a central image and winter a defining season. Both turned up often enough in the fiction we taught, most memorably in Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir!,* but even more frequently in poems which seemed to capture our experience of winter: Avison's "Snow," Giguère's "Polar Seasons," Hébert's "Neige," Page's "Stories of Snow," Souster's "The six-quart basket" (which became the epigraph for Margaret Avison's collected poems), and Vigneault's "Mon pays, c'est ne pas un pays, c'est l'hiver." Snow, we discovered, had a lot to do with seeing. There were plenty of examples of snow's "starry blur," and yet that blur was paradoxically revelatory, showing in black and white the essential shapes of the landscape. Then there are all those white spaces in Canadian paintings: seemingly blank, they paradoxically create room for the mind and imagination.

The characterization of the hero, or the nature of heroism, is part of every country's culture. We soon discovered from our literature that, in spite of the concern with *gloire* and *brillants exploits* in the French words of our national anthem, heroism in this country was more likely to be defined by endurance and sheer survival, and the hero was likely to be not a single figure but a group, a collective hero like Brébeuf's "brethren" or "the breed" who built the CPR in Pratt's poems, or the "comrades of Daulac" in Lampman's "At the Long Sault: May, 1660." Their motivation was perhaps best defined by Alden Nowlan's characterization of his everyman, Private MacNally in "Ypres: 1915": he maintains a "stubborn disinclination" to give up his "God damn trench."

Heroes may be central to any culture, but Canadian literature is full of marginal figures as well, outsiders who, precisely because they are marginal, can stand apart and see society as it actually is, without its obscuring myths and catchphrases and hypocrisies. The range of such figures was wide, from an outsider like Haliburton's Sam Slick, whom his creator uses to attack and instruct the "Blue Noses" to an immigrant like Mrs. Moodie, repelled even by the Loyalists whom others would celebrate. Then there were the alienated or dispossessed figures, like Bérubé in Carrier's *La*

Guerre, Yes Sir!, La Sagouine in Maillet's wonderful monologues, the women in Tremblay's *Les Belles Soeurs,* Robert Ross in Findley's *The Wars*, the poet in Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," and the Donnellys in Reaney's trilogy. The father of all these alienated figures, one might argue, is Richardson's Wacousta, and our first English novelist's skilful manipulation of the conventions of romance grounded that character type in the Canadian imagination. In North America as a whole, Canadians are the marginal figures and therefore useful in understanding American society as it actually is. To see, McLuhan argued in *War and Peace in the Global Village*, we need an anti-environment: "One thing about which fish know exactly nothing is water."

We taught a great many texts that dealt with closed and open spaces, particularly in the literature of Québec, where the manor house could often be a prison and the church a building whose stained glass windows had to be smashed. A related topic was the family, the "precious family. Another of the good Lord's great inventions," says one of Tremblay's characters—another prison which one either escaped from or remade.

And then there was history itself, which could both constrain and motivate. We made much of the parallel between the motto of Québec ("Je me souviens") and the motto of Ontario ("Ut incepit fidelis, sic permanet"), and we assigned a great many essay topics, and constructed a great many examination questions, which were some variation of those mottoes: "the handing on of tradition from one generation to the next," "the relation between past and present," "the narrative and thematic functions of memory." A related topic was the function of story-telling, though we noted wryly the differences between the two linguistic groups in this country: francophones can never forget their history; anglophones can never remember theirs.

Perhaps it is inevitable in any literature that writers—poets especially—explore the powers of language itself. Words create; words destroy: those are major themes in Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike* and Reaney's *Handcuffs,* and in shorter poems like F. R. Scott's "Laurentian Shield," Major's "My Word is Green," Newlove's "The Pride," Jones's "Portrait of Anne Hébert," and Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." A related topic was letters of the alphabet—a topic I chose when I was (in the final hour of the class in April 1976) summarizing what I saw as a central concern of the course. (In that same final hour, Catherine Ross talked about boats and journeys by water, Ross Woodman talked about animals, Bruce Lundgren discussed maps, and Dick Stingle chose "North and South.") We had taught Klein's "Krieghoff: Calligrammes," a good poem for an interdisci-

plinary course because it draws together poetry and painting, and in that poem Klein explores the powers of calligraphy: the letters A, V, H, J, Q, Y, and B, each of them an abstract, expand to become figures in a Québecois landscape. So letters can be powers, an idea Chamberland, drawing on the example of the Maoist poster, uses in "Time of Hatred," where letters and words are weapons and the poet is engaged in a mental fight. Emblematic images too can be powers, like the arrows in Smith's "Swift Current," the sticks and stones of Reaney's first play in *The Donnellys* trilogy, and the objects in Saint-Denys Garneau's "The Game" and in Reaney's *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*.

Throughout our exploration of all these patterns and images, we were aware of a paradoxical fact: they were and were not unique to Canada. That binary intrigued us all, and it was perhaps best defined by Dick Stingle in his remarks in the first class of September 1975.

"One of our concerns in this course will be with the relation between the universal and regional, between those qualities in a work which speak to everyone and those particular scenes and characters which are true to one place. Indeed, we should see that it is by looking with energy at the particulars that the artist reveals what is universal in them. Thomas Hardy said that a poet *must* express the emotions that are universal to *all* men through the ideas of his own time, and one could add, the places, physical and historical, of his own time. Canadian writers, like American ones, had greater difficulties than writers of their own tradition who had stayed at home in Britain and France. Mrs. Moodie came to Canada with the ideas and literary forms of Romanticism only to confront a nature in Peterborough that was not beneficent or sublime, but swampy and full of mosquitoes. Later poets like Lampman and Scott tended to write for two landscapes as Morton says—the art of the baseland (pastoral & kind) & the art of the hinterland—wild and primitive. [Catherine] Ross [who at the time was just completing her doctoral dissertation] is doing valuable work in showing how Isabella Valancy Crawford was probably the most successful of our nineteenth-century writers in bringing together her knowledge of Christianity, Dante, English Romanticism, Norse sagas & Canadian scenes, frontier experience, a nature of violence & Indian myths. Roberts' 'Tantramar Revisited'—of course [defines itself in relation to] 'Tintern Abbey'—that is what English-speaking people were reading but [Wordsworth's does not have] the grimness of the Canadian version."

"In novels too, the problem exists from *Wacousta* on. Some critics have noted that Callaghan's novels, though presumably set in Toronto, do not have recognizable details of that setting, a setting which could be Minne-

apolis or Cincinnati. There is, however, a whole group of novels about the Prairies—*Grain*, *Settlers of the Marsh*, *As For Me and My House*, *The Viking Heart*, *Wild Geese*, the Mitchell stories—which, though varying in detail, are recognizably of a place. On this course, we shall find this true of *The Kissing Man* (Strathroy) and *Sticks & Stones* (Biddulph township north of this city). Margaret Laurence and Gabrielle Roy are no less universal in Neepawa and St. Boniface, Manitoba. And Michel Tremblay will, as he claimed on CBC a week or so ago, be able to speak to all of us because he speaks the particulars of the characters and landscape of east-end Montreal."

"Margaret Laurence's novel *A Jest of God* was set in Manitoba. When the Americans filmed it, she accepted the change of title to *Rachel, Rachel* & the shift of setting to New Jersey. She told me that though it was a good film she came to regret the changes. The central character in the novel was located in the Scots Presbyterian [tradition] that continues in the United Church, & the figure in the movie [belongs to] another church. We talked about the CBC production of *A Bird in the House*. It was a very sensitive production which made all the more incredible the section in which the camera came to a close-up of the sign for the Manawaka United Church, and swept through the church to the pulpit & up to the minister—who was dressed in an Anglican surplice and stole! The producer and director & certainly the designer probably knew the latest fads in St. Tropez, but they didn't know the country they lived in."

"Of course *mere* detail is nothing, and I feel myself that the production of [Ann Henry's] *Lulu Street* a week of so ago on CBC was a perfect example. The setting was Winnipeg in the General Strike of 1919, there were many references to specific people, and yet the stock characters creaked, the plot sagged, & vision disappeared. The experience did not become universal because the creative *pressure* was not there."

"Our visual artists have been most effective in uniting [the regional and the universal], but we shall hope to show that many of our writers have achieved much, and only now are we beginning to recognize that."

In addition to the team teaching and the lecture-tutorial format, there was another arrangement which was crucial to the success of the course. It was "The Third Hour." That hour was in fact a fourth hour, dedicated to visiting writers and lecturers, films, and even drama workshops. Initially Jamie envisaged that extra hour as a kind of forum where everyone interested in the literature and culture of our country could come together. In a memo to "all members of the English Department" dated 30 September 1971, he invited everyone to the lectures in Middlesex College Theatre and

to the "free hour" on Tuesday afternoons. "During the year," he announced, "such writers as Doug Jones, F.R. Scott, Earle Birney, Bill Howell, Roch Carrier will be speaking and reading. We're hoping to hear from Wm Hart [a member of Western's Department of Visual Arts] on Emily Carr. These events will be more formally announced. Informally something will always be going on that hour to do with some aspect of our country: films with discussion, and this coming Tuesday, October 5, Catherine Ross will give a talk illustrated with her own slides on 'Exploring Ontario Images': she and her husband visited the Isabella Valancy Crawford country this summer and this resulted in some rare photos of Crawford's embroidery sculpture. Also visited were Petroglyph Park and, closer to home, railway crossings in London, Ontario." On the course outline for 1972-73 Jamie provided a more elaborate description of "The Free Hour": "Every Tuesday at 2:30 we plan to hold in Middlesex College Theatre a FREE hour during which poets will read, authors will discuss their work, films will be shown, all with opportunity for discussion from the audience; a great variety of topics concerning the culture of our country have been handled in this hour during the past two years (tapes played and discussed, slide lectures, panel discussion by the teaching team, papers by graduate students, interviews with collectors of Canadiana) and this is a part of the course in which participation is particularly enriching and vital." In a memo from that same time (September 1972) Jamie looked back on the two preceding years: "what we have built up in the past is a feeling that there is one hour each week…in which students and staff can come together for a look at some aspect of our country's imaginative development. This coming Tuesday, 26 September, we will, in connection with our study of Pratt's *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, be hearing from Wilfrid and Elsie Jury. Famous for the discovery and restoration of such sites as Fort Ste. Marie and the Naval Establishment at Penetanguishene, Wilfrid Jury has much to tell us of some extremely important Ontario traditions—those of Huronia."

Records for the Third Hour are spotty. They are non-existent for the first year of the course and incomplete for the second. Nonetheless, a partial list for that second year indicates the range and richness of that extra hour: Selwyn Dewdney talked about Indian pictographs; Flip Cranston, one of our instructors in film, discussed Norman McLaren; Betty Bandeen and John K. Elliott, then editor of the *London Free Press*, related their experiences of growing up in Elgin County; Bill New of the UBC English Department lectured on modern Canadian poetry; poets Bill Howell, Mar-

garet Atwood, Earle Birney and David McFadden read; and Roch Carrier paid a memorable visit and read from *La Guerre, Yes Sir!*

Like the prescription for the course as a whole, the Third Hour too came in for re-thinking, and a memo from Jamie dated 31 July 1974 indicates that the NFB films did not generate much discussion. It also specifies the division of labour in the teaching team:

"Re: the tentative fall schedule," he writes. "We can discuss the pro's and con's of this at our first fall meeting, but this will get you started; I've asked Don Hair to line up a speaker for each month in the Third Hour: Dewdney on Tuesday, 17 September; Alice Munro for 15 October; Jim Good on November 19 and W. E. Collin on 3 December. Don and I went ahead with people in the community because I've had so little time to get things rolling in May as I should. I suggest four other speakers for the New Year—James Polk Anansi Press editor and the author of a recent book on Canadian Wilderness literature; Margaret Avison, Phyllis Webb, Sheila Fischman. They would have to [be] spaced out a month or thereabouts and please suggest other names for our fall meeting; the Third Hour has been in difficulties…and so for other Tuesday afternoons I hope to schedule National Film Board films without discussion—just a sweep through. However, for the first Tuesday in January I think we should get the film of Gelinas' *Tit-Coq* again. Sorry this has been so late and leaves so much to the fall, but writing a play has not been conducive to figuring out schedules some how or other. James Reaney"

"P.S. Bruce seems to be happy with sound; Don Hair has kindly consented to deal with Third Hour speakers, but please delegate—particularly the film schedule; could Catherine take care of slides? J*"

Between 1972-73 and 1979-80 we had an impressive array of Third Hour guests. Among the poets who read were Margaret Avison (our first writer-in-residence, in 1972-73), Milton Acorn, Douglas Barbour, Earle Birney (also writer-in-residence), Elizabeth Brewster, Paul Chamberland, Don Coles, David Godfrey, David Helwig, George Johnston, Robert Kroetsch, Irving Layton, Dennis Lee, Dorothy Livesay, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Jay Macpherson, Eli Mandel, Anne Marriott, John Newlove, b p nichol, Alden Nowlan, P. K. Page (on several different occasions), Al Purdy, Joe Rosenblatt, Peter Russell, A. J. M. Smith, Raymond Souster, and Phyllis Webb. Alice Munro was our writer-in-residence in 1974-75, and read for us on four different occasions between 1973 and 1979. Other short story writers and novelists were Margaret Atwood, Alice Boissonneau, George Bowering, Robertson Davies, Selwyn Dewdney, Chester Duncan, George Elliott, Marian Engel, Timothy Findley, Elisabeth Harvor, Hugh Hood,

Harold Horwood (also writer-in-residence), Margaret Laurence (our second writer-in-residence, in 1973-74), Hugh MacLennan, Alistair MacLeod, Ray Smith, and Adele Wiseman (who spoke not about her fiction but about her mother's dollmaking). Then there were the playwrights: Herschel Hardin, George Ryga (Jamie interviewed him by telephone), and Rick Salutin; John Van Burek, who translated Tremblay's plays, and John Glassco, who directed and produced them at the Tarragon Theatre; Paul Thompson of Theatre Passe Muraille; and, of course, Jamie himself, who not only talked about his Irish research on the Donnellys but also involved our students in two of his drama workshops, one on *The Canadian Brothers,* one on *Wacousta.*

There were others whom we invited and who could not come, among them Anne Hébert, Gabrielle Roy, and George Grant. I had gracious letters of refusal from all of them.

We had some speakers who were specialists in either English- or French-Canadian literature. Among them were Bill New, Eli Mandel (whose lecture was on a binary we sometimes used in the course, "Primitive and Sophisticated in Canadian Literature"), Stan Stanko (the papers of Martha Ostenso were in his possesssion), W. E. Collin (retired from Western's French Department and the author of *White Savannahs*), David Beasley (biographer of John Richardson), Carl Klinck (on his new book on Robert Service), Robin Mathews (activist for the hiring of Canadians in Canadian universities, a hot issue at the time), and Huguette Paquet and Jack Warwick of our French Department on "*Terroir* and *pays d'en haut*: two versions of the land." Two of our students were also featured in the Third Hour: David Ring, who worked at the Van Egmond House, spoke on life in the Huron Tract; and Dennis Kucherawy, a graduate of the Canadian Literature and Culture course, spoke on his interview with Michel Tremblay—an interest which had been spurred by the course itself.

Immensely important to the Third Hour were the speakers who were not writers or literary critics, speakers from other disciplines. Donald Creighton, for instance, was genuinely pleased to be asked to address a literature class rather than his usual audience of historians. The geographer John Warkentin was twice our guest, and spoke about the prairie landscape and the settlement of Manitoba. Then there were the archeologists: Wilfrid and Elsie Jury, already mentioned, and Selwyn Dewdney on Indian pictographs, and Roman and Joan Vastokas, who spoke on the Peterborough petroglyphs. In March 1975 D. C. Williams, at that time Western's president but a psychologist by training, spoke about his collaboration with Marshall McLuhan. We invited art historians like Russell Harper and Peter

Mellen, and Bill Hart of our own Department of Visual Arts was a frequent guest; he spoke on Emily Carr, A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, and the Ursulines in Québec. There were musicologists, like George Proctor of our own Faculty of Music, who spoke on French-Canadian folk songs, and John Beckwith, Jamie's collaborator, on "Earlier Canadian Music." Edward Moogk from the music division of the National Library talked about early Canadian recordings, and Ed Manning about his collection of such records. Marion MacRae spoke on Ontario architecture, Edith Fowke on folklore in Canada, and Peter Rowe and Robert Maclean on filmmaking.

We relied heavily on NFB films, and that rich collection provided visual and aural images for the texts we were teaching. There were films on writers and poets on the course (Frye, Klein, Carrier, Cohen), films on painters (Carr, Krieghoff, Lemieux), films on regions of the country (the Prairies, the Maritimes, Québec, Labrador), and films retelling our history, from *Heroic Beginnings* (narrated by Donald Creighton) through the war of 1812-14, the rebellion of 1837-38, to John A. Macdonald and Louis Riel. (After we had listened to a lot of NFB soundtracks we began to wonder if there were any birds in this country besides loons.) We turned to the CBC for a piece on Michel Tremblay and to McGraw-Hill for one on McLuhan. And—our local concerns again—we screened films made by Jack Chambers.

Local concerns were crucial to the feelings the course generated: that all the prescribed texts mattered because they were ours and made articulate our experiences. When I first joined the teaching team in September 1972, Jamie's plan for the first classroom hour was to have each member of the team give a "testimonial" to answer the questions: where are you from? What has Canadian literature done for you? I testified that I am from Brooke Township in Lambton County, and I started with John Kenneth Galbraith's description of Elgin County which could apply equally well to Brooke: "a flat uninteresting country." No picturesque cottages nestling in green valleys, but houses and barns imposed on a landscape defined by a grid pattern which ignored creeks and rivers—and the Great Brooke-Enniskillen Swamp, which (until it was at last drained in the 1870s) was a hinterland, and the scene of experiences not unlike those in *le pays d'en haut:* a great-uncle of mine had worked during the winter in the lumbercamps in that swamp. Canadian literature showed me the significance of his experience.

Jamie continued that focus on the local with a continuing series in the Third Hour: a series called the "sense of place." They were talks about the

various counties in Ontario by people who had grown up in them. I have already mentioned Betty Bandeen and John K. Elliott on Elgin County, but we also heard from Jim Woodruff on Lincoln County, Jim Good (a member of the teaching team) on Waterloo County, and Catherine Eddy (one of our graduate students) on Frontenac County. In a memo of March 2, 1972, Jamie announced "an illustrated talk" by another graduate student, Lorna Harris, "on two Ontario temples: a church on Lake Simcoe built by her grandmother—Gothic Revival St. George's—and not very far away David Willson's Sharon Temple—a unique building raised to house the festivals of a nineteenth-century Quaker sect who inhabited the townships north of Newmarket in York County—the Children of Peace. These people along with their leader, David Willson, are important in the history of Ontario not only politically and with regard to original architecture, but also aesthetically for community produced hymns and music as well as painting."

Our "sense of place" also found expression in the 35mm slides we used to accompany the lectures. We gradually built up our own slide library, with purchases from various sources in Ottawa, but for local subjects we did our own photography. I remember a trip to Thamesville to gather images for the teaching of Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business*, and another to Strathroy for Elliott's *The Kissing Man*. One of the earliest of those expeditions yielded pictures which became central to our teaching of *The Donnellys* trilogy. Stan Dragland remembered that day in the first issue of *Brick* magazine in April 1977: "In 1970," he wrote, "not long after I arrived in London Ont, Jim Good, Richard Stingle and I went out to take some pictures of Donnelly country with James Reaney. Jim and I were photographers. Some pictures we took as they presented themselves to us: thorn and apple trees at the foot of the 50-acre Donnelly [farm]; the sunset reflected in a window of the [Cedar Swamp] school where the Vigilantes met [the red glow of the sunset made the window look as if it were engulfed in flames]. Other pictures James Reaney gave us: the gravel at the edge of the Roman Line leading up to the railway crossing where Brimmacombe was murdered, two handfuls of Donnelly soil [held by Jamie himself], bricks on the wall of the Lucan Orange Hall. All closeups." That focus was crucial. Dragland defines "a discovery he [Jamie] made long ago about how to really live any place where you live: look closely, look hard." For Jamie was always challenging students—and colleagues—not to be sleepwalkers through life. That metaphor for him meant driving down the 401 and seeing the passing landscape as only a blur. "Until you can name every tree, every weed and grass," he would say, "you don't really know the

country." That was one reason for the centrality of a "sense of place" in the course.

Another is suggested in Catherine Ross's statement introducing her talk (on October 5, 1971) on "Isabella Valancy Crawford country": "I think I'll take as a starting point for this thing the feeling the early settlers had (and we share) of imaginatively still living somewhere else. In distinction to their sense of thinness of life in Canada, the lack of ghosts, the absence of history, etc. the experience we got from the trip we took last summer is the sense that people actually did live here, that Ontario is a place with its own history and its own ghosts—petroglyphs, serpent mounds, Crawford, Stricklands, Moodie, etc." For the "sense of place" was a reaction against Birney's line that "it's only by our lack of ghosts / we're haunted" and a commonsense answer to that frequently asked but not very productive question, who are we? "I have always been impatient with the search for Canadian identity," Dick Stingle said in the first classroom hour in September 1972, "since it seems obvious to me that we are here, we exist and we have hundreds of years of history." English 138 was a vigorous assertion of that position: we are here; we exist; we have our own literature and culture.

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