

Composing a Book: Denise Levertov, Margaret Avison, and *The Dumbfounding*

by David A. Kent

The friendship between American poet Denise Levertov and Canadian poet Margaret Avison extended over thirty-five years, from 1959 until Levertov's death in 1997. Although they spent time in one another's presence on perhaps only half a dozen occasions, their relationship was founded on mutual professional respect, an evident congeniality, and shared values of spirituality and aesthetics; it was also sustained by intermittent correspondence. In the later 1960s, for example, Avison expressed her sympathy with Levertov's political opposition to the Vietnam War, and she contributed a poem to *In Celebration: Anemos* in 1983, a collection of poems in honour of Levertov's sixtieth birthday. In turn, Levertov dedicated her poem "Caedmon" to Avison, published it as a broadsheet, and then permitted it to be reprinted in a collection of essays and appreciations I edited in 1987. Levertov also taught Avison's poetry to her creative writing students, both at Berkeley in 1969 and twenty years later at Stanford University. In her essays and lectures, Levertov occasionally cited Avison as a "convinced and fervent" Christian poet ("The Sense of Pilgrimage" 83) or as "that profound Canadian poet" ("Some Affinities of Content" 3). But Denise Levertov is particularly important with respect to the commissioning, creation, and publication of Avison's second volume of poetry, *The Dumbfounding* (1966). During her short period as poetry editor for Norton, not only did Levertov solicit this collection from Avison but she also played a crucial part in preparing it for publication. This essay considers what we might understand about Levertov's role in that process.

First, let me highlight a few details of their initial meeting and ongoing friendship. Levertov met Avison at a reading Levertov gave in Toronto on 28 November 1959 as part of the Contact Poetry Readings series (1957-1962) held at the Isaacs Gallery on Bay Street. The series was organized by Raymond Souster, Kenneth McRobbie, and Avrom Isaacs. The Levertov reading took place at 8 p.m. on a Saturday night, and the admission price was fifty cents. A letter Levertov wrote less than a week later (Levertov to Mr. Dwyer, 3 December 1959: University of Manitoba) indicates

that the “high-spot” of her trip to Toronto was meeting Avison, whose work, she states, she had “long admired,” presumably from Avison’s earlier appearances in such American publications as *Poetry* (Chicago) and *Origin* and possibly from conversations with Cid Corman, who was in communication with both women poets. A few days after meeting Levertov, Avison confided to her friend Frederick Bock how “likable” she had found Levertov to be (see Bock to Avison, 11 December 1959: University of Manitoba). Evidently the two had established an immediate bond. Bock was himself to read his poetry at The Poetry Center in New York on 7 April 1960, and for a time Avison planned to attend. Bock even wondered in a letter if Avison would be staying with Levertov while in New York (22 March 1960: University of Manitoba). A later letter, however, implies that she did not make that trip (Avison to Levertov, 6 June 1960).

The first correspondence that I have seen between Avison and Levertov is from six months after the Toronto reading (i.e., May 1960), and it is clear from Avison’s remarks that Levertov has been encouraging her about her writing and has mentioned a prospective reading in New York. Avison must have responded positively since, a month later, the invitation arrived. Avison sent Levertov a copy of the just-published *Winter Sun* in September and received a letter of praise in reply. In February 1961 Avison gave her reading at The Poetry Center at the YM-YWHA (located at Lexington Avenue and 92nd Street) in what was termed the “Introduction” series. Her co-readers that night were Ed Dorn and Theodore Enslin (two months later Enslin was reading in Toronto). Levertov felt that the New York reading was an important career move for Avison. In a letter to Enslin (2 May 1960?), the youngest of the three poets, she had asked him to be ready to step back if some funds became unavailable. She described Avison as “rather older” (she was 42 in 1960) and as someone who would not likely “have another chance” like this one again. Levertov evidently saw herself acting like an American agent or publicist for Avison, someone seeking to promote her work and name more widely in the United States, and she apparently saw the New York reading as Avison’s break out appearance before an American audience. The reading went well, and the professional relationship was firmly established. At Christmas 1962, Levertov sent Avison a copy of her new book, *The Jacob’s Ladder*.

The next encounter between Avison and Levertov was in the summer of 1963 when, as the only two women poets present, they took part in the Vancouver Poetry Conference with Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, and Allan Ginsberg. After it concluded, Avison told Levertov she was “overwhelmed” at how “good” it had been, and she hoped that “con-

tact” and “community” could be continued (Avison to Levertov, 29 August 1963). The next year Levertov became poetry editor at Norton in New York and soon invited Avison to contribute a manuscript for publication. The available correspondence for the years 1964 to 1966 is as yet incomplete. There are some letters Avison sent to Levertov in Levertov’s archive at Stanford University, but Levertov’s letters to Avison during this period are not currently part of Avison’s archive at the University of Manitoba, although later letters from Levertov have been deposited there. Nevertheless, from what is now available we can partially recreate the process whereby *The Dumbfounding* came into being and at least speculate about other aspects of that process.

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In late May, 1964, Avison accepted Levertov’s invitation and asked for a deadline; she was concerned about how long she would have to put together a manuscript (Avison to Levertov, 26 May 1964). In July, 1964, Avison wrote to confirm that she did have poems to offer for publication, enough, she hoped, for a book-length manuscript. The batch of poems reached Levertov shortly afterwards in “terrible condition, badly typed, on onion skin paper. Just a mess,” as Levertov told me in an interview (10 March 1991, Stanford University). Some intense work must have occupied the remaining weeks of that summer since, less than a month later, Avison is confessing that she was embarrassed by her dependence on Levertov’s editorial help and by the fact that she had not initially sent her more poems to consider or from which to select. Levertov had clearly gotten quickly to work. In August, Avison sent along the last page of what she termed her “revisings.” In September, 1964, Avison then sent six new poems, but none of these appears in *The Dumbfounding*, in part because Levertov seems to have already forwarded the manuscript, probably with a reader’s report, to Peter Jacobsehn, the publisher, for his evaluation.

As *The Dumbfounding* was not published until 1966, obviously the remainder of the process did not move nearly so rapidly, though it is not always clear what the impediments were. The contract for the book, for instance, was sent to Avison early in 1965, but she did not immediately sign it. She was inexperienced in these matters and appears to have taken the contractual language too literally. Since the contract stipulated that the finally revised manuscript was due 31 August 1964, and she knew that that date had long since passed and would therefore be inaccurate, she at first declined to sign. In any event, Avison may have been having second

thoughts about poems in the existing manuscript because she next offered Levertov three additional new poems to consider (these, discussed below, were accepted). She also suggested that she would be prepared to travel to New York if that would facilitate finalizing the selection. In March, 1965, Avison requested to be sent the revised manuscript because she was eager to see what she termed its “final shape” (23 March 1965). Had Jacobsehn returned the manuscript to Levertov after giving a provisional acceptance but wanting more work done on it? The parcel with the revised manuscript reached Avison in April, 1965. For some reason Avison was still unsure about Levertov’s final selection since she asked Levertov to provide her with a list of poems that were definitely being included and a list of those that were being excluded. She was also still wondering if she should travel to New York so that they could work together on identifying these two groups of poems. Unfortunately, little more about *The Dumbfounding* is revealed by the available correspondence. There is, furthermore, a large gap in the correspondence between the spring of 1965 and the publication of the book in 1966. Obviously, a consensus was reached, but there is no record of Avison’s ever having travelled to New York for direct consultations. What we may surmise is that Levertov’s role in selecting and arranging the poems in *The Dumbfounding* was formative and that she seems to have been largely responsible for the book in the form and shape we have come to know.

Arranging lyric poems in collections, as Levertov seems to have helped Avison to do in *The Dumbfounding*, has received some critical attention and reflection. Twenty years ago Neil Fraistat published two important books. One, *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, was an anthology of critical essays about the ordering of poetic collections throughout literary history. The other book, *The Poem and the Book: Interpreting Collections of Romantic Poetry*, out of which the essay collection had grown, was a monograph about the ordering of poetry collections by English Romantic poets such as Keats, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Byron. While doing his research, Fraistat coined the phrase “contextural poetics” to describe this critical approach. This kind of poetics, he said, concerns itself with the “contextuality provided for each poem by the larger frame within which it is placed, the intertextuality among poems so placed, and the resultant texture of resonance and meaning” (*Poems in Their Place* 4, 3). It was soon evident to him that concern with structure in lyric collections reaches back to antiquity, to Horace and Ovid, and forward to such Renaissance writers as Spenser (e.g., *The Shepherdes Calendar*), Herbert (*The Temple*), and Jonson (*The Forest*). Calen-

drical, liturgical, and numerological devices are additional ways of serially organizing individual poems, and Fraistat identifies other unifying techniques, too, including the use of titles, epigraphs, voice, poetic or prose links, and the use of plot or argument. The cohesiveness of lyric collections will, of course, vary, and often the continuities are “more likely to be associative than causal—and the discontinuities may sometimes be sharp.” In Romantic collections, for example, he found the opening and the closing of volumes to be especially important, “positions most conspicuous to the reader” (*The Poem and the Book*, 13, 37), though centerpiece lyrics are frequently significant as well.

Do we have any evidence for Avison’s concern with the ordering of lyrics in her collections of poetry, what Fraistat called ‘contextual poetics’? Avison’s only published volume prior to *The Dumbfounding* was *Winter Sun* (1960), and she has often recalled that she organized this volume while holding a Guggenheim fellowship and living in Chicago during the fall and early winter of 1956 and 1957. Mia Anderson’s study of *Winter Sun* skillfully discloses the subtle and complex interconnections of image and theme in this collection. A later article by Margaret Calverley focuses on the grouping of the four sonnets in the volume. Little else has been written about the form and structure of this volume. A glance at the table of contents does show paired poems (e.g., “Apocalyptic” adjacent to “Apocalyptic I, II, and III,” and “Extra-Political” beside “Intra-Political”), the placement of the long poem “The Agnes Cleaves Papers” at the conclusion of the book and the positioning of “The Swimmer’s Moment” at the centre, so there would seem to be some signs of conscious planning. Avison’s own practice of approaching a new book of poetry, however, was intuitive and arbitrary, at least on first reading. In fact, on the inside flap of the cover for *Winter Sun* is the following statement that appears to speak against too much premeditated arrangement: “The author has arranged her poems for readers who like to skim through a book when they first take it up, since she herself approaches a new book of poetry in this way and would rather find her own groupings than have the poems already grouped for her.”

Following the publication of *The Dumbfounding*, though, her own collections display an increased awareness of organization and structure. For example, *sunblue* (1978) begins with a series of ‘sketches’ and concludes with two more; it contains two sequences of poems with the titles of “Light” and “Embezzler”; and it has a roughly chronological shape, beginning with poems in spring and ending with poems about Christmas. At one hundred and eighty-five pages in length twice the size of most lyric collections, *No Time* (1990) is notable for two sequences of elegiac poems, one

starting the volume (“The Jo Poems”) and the second occurring at the end of the first half (“My Mother’s Death”). The remaining lyrics (one hundred and seventeen) do feature meditations on scripture and mortality, poems dedicated to friends and fellow writers, poems with humour, wit and devotion, but no over-arching shape is discernible in this massive collection. *Not Yet But Still* (1997), on the other hand, is the first collection by Avison to have separately-titled sections (seven in all) that gather poems thematically and which is marked by patterns of recurrent images and key terms.¹ *Concrete and Wild Carrot* (2002) is a short collection that begins in spring, is sprinkled with poems for friends and with devotional lyrics, has a sequence (“Other Oceans”) at its centre (34-45), and dramatically ends with a poem of exhortations. Joan Eichner and Stan Dragland have been warmly acknowledged for their editorial help in the publication of Avison’s most recent volumes, including the three volumes of the collected edition (*Always Now*, 2003-2005), though the ordering of poems in this edition has been determined by the individual volumes reprinted in it. Her latest collection, *Momentary Dark* (2006), is distinguished by an epigraph from Kipling and a dedication “for the Pearl poet.” This volume features the interweaving of characteristic concerns (the urban and natural worlds, the marginalized, the importance of attentive listening in prayer life, celebrative devotional lyrics, retrospective poems on childhood, and so on), but a new and prominent theme is home, in its many senses. The book concludes with “Shelters,” an extended meditation on home dedicated to her late sister Mary, but the question of home (and “the final harvest,” 11) pervades much of the collection.

In the case of Denise Levertov, according to Paul Lacey, the first collection of poems by Levertov that shows evidence of special care in arranging the lyrics is *With Eyes at the Back of our Heads* (1959). As a result of this kind of attention, Levertov felt that “both individual works and groups of poems could throw light on one another and themes and counter-themes could weave larger patterns.” He quotes Levertov as stating the following about this early period in her development: “I realized that a book of separate poems can in itself be a composition, and that to compose a book is preferable to randomly gathering one” (*This Great Unknowing* 65-66). As a result of this dawning awareness, Lacey observes, from “*The Sorrow Dance* on, her common way of ‘composing’ her books was to organize her poems into subsections, often headed by a title, phrase, or image from a poem” (66). While her two earlier books, *The Jacob’s Ladder* (1961) and *O Taste and See* (1964) are not subdivided, they are nevertheless “composed” in the manner of which Levertov had begun to become conscious.

Levertov's editing of Avison's manuscript for *The Dumbfounding* thus occurred during the period when she herself was realizing the importance of composing a book of lyrics. We should therefore expect that *The Dumbfounding* reflects some elements of Levertov's earliest principles of ordering.

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The first evidence for Levertov's influence on *The Dumbfounding* is the title. *The Dumbfounding* is the only book of poems by Avison in which there is a title poem—that is, the only collection whose title is taken from a poem that is included in the book.²

All Avison's other collections feature titles that attempt to express a primary motif or dominant theme or concern. *Winter Sun*, for example, points to a kind of climate and metaphysic she felt characterized the poetry of that volume. Levertov's own collections, in contrast, often feature a title poem. Moreover, the positioning of the title poems in both *The Jacob's Ladder* (1961) and *O Taste and See* (1964) is revealing when compared with what occurs in *The Dumbfounding*. In all of these cases the title poem appears just following the half-way point of each collection: page 37 of a 70 page collection, page 53 of an 83 page book, and page 58 of the 90 page *The Dumbfounding*. In other words, Levertov positioned Avison's "title" poem where she positioned her own in the two books she had most recently published. In effect, each of these collections rises steadily toward its climactic title poem and is, in turn, followed by a denouement of sorts. Furthermore, in her Stanford course on poetry, Levertov's lecture notes on Avison contain the following remarks about "The Dumbfounding": "one of the clearest most accessible; at once part of the Donne-Herbert-Vaughan-Hopkins Tradition...a tradition in which a central concern with the human place in the scheme of things, with man's conversation with God...gives rise to a grainy, tensile language—& at the same time this poem, The Dumbfounding, demonstrates the original and specifically Avison voice. (Read)."³ Given this view, it seems likely that Levertov chose "The Dumbfounding" as the title poem for Avison's collection. She felt, as she later told her students, that it was definitively Avison in manner and voice. Interestingly, in a recent interview with Don Martin, Avison herself describes "The Dumbfounding," one of a flood of poems written following her conversion experience in 1963, as a crucial articulation: "an attempt to state in simple, real terms how the mystery of the gospel now newly enveloped me" (69).

In addition possibly to designating a title poem and its position, further evidence of Levertov's influence on the composing of *The Dumbfounding* is found in the decision to include five poems that had already been published in *Winter Sun*. Early in the process Avison stated that she hoped that it would not be necessary to "extract" poems from *Winter Sun* for the new book (Avison to Levertov, 23 July 1964). However, Levertov had herself reprinted poems from *Overland to the Islands* (1958) in *The Jacob's Ladder*, so she saw no reason not to choose the following poems from Avison's first volume for reprinting in the Norton collection: "Thaw" (another poem highlighted in the Stanford lecture notes), "From a Provincial" (first published in *Kenyon Review*, 1956), "Meeting Together of Poles and Latitudes" (first published in *The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse*, 1958), "The Artist," and "The Swimmer's Moment." The first four of these poems are gathered in a group near the conclusion of *The Dumbfounding*, while "The Swimmer's Moment" appears on almost the same page as it does in *Winter Sun* (though the length of the second collection makes its position in the first book relatively earlier). Furthermore, we must infer, because Levertov was seeking to introduce Avison's poetry to Americans through this Norton publication and presumably because American readers would not be familiar with *Winter Sun*, Levertov insisted on including her favourite poems from the first book, or at least poems she thought best represented Avison's art and reflected her important preoccupations. When Avison's close friend Frederick Bock received his copy of *The Dumbfounding* after publication, he immediately (and perceptively) asked Avison if the reprints from *Winter Sun* were "really your choices of the best from the first book?" (Bock to Avison, 22 June 1966).

Levertov also did not accept for inclusion in *The Dumbfounding* the six poems Avison had sent her in September, 1964: "Holiday Plans for the Whole Family," "The Valiant Vacationist," "Perspective," "The Local & the Lakefront," "Graduate Christian Fellowship Camp 1964," and "To a Man Who Wants." "Perspective" had already appeared in *Poetry* [Chicago] in 1947; A. J. M. Smith reprinted it twice (*The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, 1960, and *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, 1967); and it was evidently a favourite of Avison's as it was reprinted in *Quarry* (1969) and included in her *Selected Poems* (1991) and in volume 1 of *Always Now* (2002), her collected edition. Like "Perspective," "The Valiant Vacationist" was an earlier poem (first published in *The Canadian Forum* in 1944 but never again reprinted), and that fact may have played a role in Levertov's rejection. The other three poems in this group have never appeared in print. Levertov also turned down a poem titled "The Fifth Pusher," and at

one point in the negotiations Avison hoped that “The Valiant Vacationist” might take its place. Avison told Levertov in September of 1964 that the final selection for the book should reflect a “balance that is whole, representatively inclusive” (Avison to Levertov, 15 September 1964), so she may have felt that “The Valiant Vacationist” would be a kind of balancing poem for the dominantly devotional tenor of the collection.

The choice of poems for *The Dumbfounding* certainly involved Avison, perhaps increasingly so as the process wore on. For example, Avison sent three new poems to Levertov in January, 1965, and all of these were included in the larger, revised manuscript that was eventually published: “Until Silenced,” “Once,” and “Janitor Working on Threshold.” By that time, too, Avison was acknowledging that Levertov had been correct in rejecting “The Fifth Pusher.” To confirm that Avison’s preferences are indeed represented in the final version of the manuscript, the ordering of several of the poems placed just past the centre of the collection (“First,” “Person,” “The Dumbfounding,” and “Searching and Sounding”) repeats exactly the ordering Avison had used in grouping the poems she typed in 1963 and send to her friend Margaret Clarkson (York University Archives). In March, 1965, when Avison asked to see the manuscript again, she says she wants to see its “final shape” (Avison to Levertov, 23 March). This version must have been close to the completed form of *The Dumbfounding*, though Avison’s request to have a list of included and excluded poems still suggests some continuing uncertainty on her part.

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What is this ‘final shape’ of *The Dumbfounding*? In general terms, at its centre are the poems Avison wrote after her conversion experience in January, 1963. These explicitly Christian poems number about half the total number of poems in the entire collection and comprise a witness Avison now felt compelled to make. They begin to appear, at first sporadically, on page 24 with the series “Ps. 19,” “Controversy,” and “A Story.”⁴ In terms of the whole volume, two longer poems act as frames for the central devotional poems (46-66): “The Earth that Falls Away” (38-45) and “Of Tyranny, in One Breath,” a translation from Hungarian (67-72). The poems in the opening part of *The Dumbfounding* lead quietly toward the poetry of Christian witness by first exhorting readers to open their senses and imaginations, “letting the ear experience” (“Pace”) while thought (“Twilight”) or intellect recedes. Elsewhere readers are told to “Feel / it” (“Two Mayday selves”) or to “Smell the leaf-acid / in the new sky” (“In Time”). These

poems echo an imperative Levertov had recently voiced in her collection *O Taste and See*, a book Avison was reading in 1964 (Avison to Levertov, 24 July 1964). As Audrey Rogers phrases it, Levertov's "O Taste and See" (the title poem of her book) is a "warm invitation to engage life at every level" (75), an invitation Avison is reiterating in the opening movement of *The Dumbfounding*. There is more evidence of mutual indebtedness between Avison and Levertov at this time. The next grouping of poems, which forms a bridge to the religious lyrics, touches on the theme of mourning and brokenness, perhaps the necessary preliminary to receiving or encountering the divine. It was during the summer of 1964 that Levertov was working on a series of poems that would appear in *The Sorrow Dance* (1967), poems about the death of her sister Olga. She must have sent these poems to Avison because Avison praises them in a letter to Levertov (15 August 1964). The experience of bereavement would also have resonated deeply with Avison at this time since her own father had died in 1963.

In the letter of 15 August Avison also wonders if an "axis" will emerge from the group of poems she has put together. The word "axis" may have been one Levertov used to describe one of her principles of ordering lyrics. In relation to this idea, I asked Levertov in a letter (13 November 1996) whether it was accurate to say that she characteristically arranged poems in thematic clusters and sought out connectors for linking them. She replied (15 January 1997): "I don't remember what the principles of arrangement were [for *The Dumbfounding*]. But yes, your surmise re 'clusters and connectors' sounds like my method in regard to my *own* books." Of course, Levertov was writing more than thirty years after her work on *The Dumbfounding*, so it is understandable that she did not recall specific details about her editorial work with Avison on that book. Nevertheless, Avison's book does show some signs of this influence in its arrangement of poems.

One example of "connectors" in *The Dumbfounding* occurs when the word "absorbed" occurs near the conclusion of "A Child: Marginalia on an Epigraph" and the very next poem is titled "The Absorbed," a poem Levertov particularly admired. Also, the central poems of witness often feature exhortations and assertions such as the following: "Gather. Be glad." ("Branches"); "Let Love's word speak plain" ("Miniature Biography of One of My Father's Friends Who Died a Generation Ago"); "His new creation is / One, whole, and a / beginning" ("First"), and so on. These poems have their own connectors. For example, the poems "Person" and "...Person, or A Hymn on and to the Holy Ghost" are placed on facing pages, and the "outcast's outcast" in the last stanza of "The Dumbfounding" leads

directly into the harrowing experience described in “Searching and Sounding.” Here the speaker is taken into the wilderness, to “the place / of jackals” (61), to “dryness, famine, / of howling among the tombs” (62) before being gathered up “once more” (62). Following the long translated poem on tyranny, the volume winds down over the concluding twenty-four pages as it had begun, with shorter, occasional lyrics about urban sights and trees seen by an inveterate city walker as Avison was, some oddities for inclusiveness (“In Eporphyrial Harness” and “Bestialities”), the four poems from *Winter Sun*, all finally ending in a note of celebration: “The beauty of the unused” (“Unspeakable”). Such is the general shape of *The Dumbfounding*.

In her acknowledgements for *Always Now* (1.254), Avison makes the following short comment on the connection between Levertov and *The Dumbfounding*: “The late Denise Levertov, at Norton’s request for six manuscripts, sought out mine (*The Dumbfounding*).” In fact, as I have tried to demonstrate, Denise Levertov played a very substantial role in the publication of Avison’s *The Dumbfounding*. As Avison seems to have taken a somewhat more assertive role as the process unfolded, we may say that the undertaking should be described, finally, as a collaborative effort. At the same time, the initiative to produce the collection and many of the crucial decisions during the preparation of the collection seem to have been Levertov’s, and Avison evidently accepted the terms of their relationship. The last reference to the manuscript prior to publication in 1966 that I have so far read occurs in a note of 2 October 1965 when Avison mentions a card she has just received. Something Levertov has said gave Avison “confidence.” She goes on to say, “I appreciate your choosing—and also the firm sense of friend’s voice.” This comment sounds very much like an endorsement of the “final shape” of the manuscript as it went into production and a thank you to Levertov for the help she had given in bringing it to completion.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Margaret Avison for permission to quote from her letters to Denise Levertov (also Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries). I wish to thank Paul Lacey, too, for permission to quote from Denise Levertov’s lecture notes about Avison as well as her letters to Theodore Enslin (Fales Library, New York University)

and to Mr. Dwyer (from a copy in the McRobbie Papers, University of Manitoba Archives): copyright The Denise Levertov Literary Trust, Paul A. Lacey, co-trustee. Every effort has been made to locate the copyright holders of Frederick Bock's papers but, as yet, I have been unsuccessful. I have also quoted in this essay from Bock's letters to Avison held by the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, by the York University Archives, and by the University of Manitoba.

Notes

- 1 In an interview with Sally Ito (2001), Avison says her "topical arrangement" of *Not Yet But Still* (1997) was "a mistake, I now think" (172).
- 2 I am here leaving aside the egregious error in the title on the cover and jacket of the first printing of *Winter Sun*. Published in England by Routledge and Kegan Paul, Avison saw no proofs for this book (Avison to Levertov, 19 September 1960). The title of this collection appeared as *Winter Sun and other poems*; it was corrected in the reprinting of 1962 (*Winter Sun. Poems By Margaret Avison*).
- 3 I am grateful to the late Denise Levertov for allowing me to transcribe her Stanford lecture notes on Avison.
- 4 In his review of *The Dumbfounding*, Richard Tillinghast noted the placement of Avison's explicitly religious poems in the "middle of the book, so that one discovers them gradually, coming to see her Christianity as a natural part of her love and tenderness towards the world" (266).

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