

5

INTRODUCTION

A long-time member of the editorial advisory board for *Canadian Poetry*, Douglas Lochhead embodied both sides of the Canadian literature spectrum. As a published poet, he produced nearly thirty collections of poetry in a career that spanned more than fifty years. He was a finalist for the Governor-General's Literary Award for poetry for *High Marsh Road* in 1980, as well as a founding member of The League of Canadian Poets, which today boasts more than 600 members.

But Lochhead was also committed to the study of Canadian literature, and contributed significantly to our understanding of the discipline through his bibliographic work, particularly his important *Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies* (1972) and his *Checklist of Nineteenth Century Canadian Poetry in English: the Maritimes* (1987); he also established the Canadian literature in English and nineteenth-century bibliography collections at Massey College. Equally important are his numerous editorial projects, including the twenty-one volume "Literature in Canada" series for University of Toronto Press, of which he was General Editor and, along with Raymond Souster, his *100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada* (1974). He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1976, and justifiably so.

Also worth remembering is Lochhead's contribution to the intellectual and cultural life of Atlantic Canada. In his fifteen years as the Davidson Chair of Canadian Studies at Mount Allison, he wrote several volumes of poetry, mentored students, taught courses, edited books, published important literary criticism, and directed the university's Canadian Studies program. From 1987 until his retirement in 1990, Lochhead served as the University's first writer-in-residence. A few readers may recall that he was also one of the co-founders of *Maritime Art Magazine* in 1940. What's more, in a 1988 interview with Laurel Boone, he declared himself "a confirmed [Atlantic] regionalist" even though he had been born in Ontario. He lamented at the time that the "quality of writing" by Atlantic authors was underrepresented in larger Canadian anthologies, and that the region's writers were "either ignored or not known."

Despite Lochhead's dedication to correcting this cultural shortcoming, not much has changed in the last thirty years in terms of Atlantic representation on the national stage and, to some extent, the region's literary treatment of its poets. Maritime writers are still underrepresented in larger, national anthologies, despite an increasing number of them either winning or being finalists for major awards; instead, the majority of their contribu-

tion comes via the large number of regional anthologies that now litter our tourist shops and airport bookstores. Furthermore, very little of our scholarly treatment of Atlantic-Canadian poetry finds its way into larger, national studies, unless it is an historical nod to the work of some of the region's earlier poets, such as Oliver Goldsmith, Charles G.D. Roberts or Bliss Carman. Equally telling is that while there are now a handful of solid, critical studies on Atlantic-Canadian literature, not one of them is devoted solely to an analysis of the region's verse writers.

Given the long and rich literary tradition of poetry that exists in the region, it is hard to imagine such a dearth in critical studies. To name just a few of the award-winning modern and contemporary Atlantic verse-writers that have emerged since the Confederation Group: Alfred G. Bailey, Fred Cogswell, Kay Smith, Elizabeth Brewster, Alden Nowlan, John Thompson, Anne Compton, Herménégilde Chiasson, Serge Patrice Thibodeau, M. Travis Lane, Sue Goyette, Anne Simpson, Brian Bartlett, Don Domanski, Rita Joe, George Elliott Clarke, John Smith, Brent MacLaine, Milton Acorn, John Steffler, Mary Dalton, Carmelita McGrath, and, of course, Lochhead himself. Some, like Nowlan and Clarke and Steffler, have received limited scholarly treatment. But even articles on these poets only begin to scratch the literary-critical surface. Particularly missing are studies on the region's women poets and ethnic voices, as well comparative engagements with the region's Acadian verse-writers.

It is therefore hoped that this special issue might succeed as a catalyst for further and broader studies on maritime poets. Susie DeCoste's piece on Nova Scotia's Rita Joe argues that much of the existing scholarship on Joe has been largely framed through a Eurocentric lens of critical analysis, and suggests instead for the need to study Joe's poetry through indigenous critical frameworks. Matthew Cormier's more literary-historical piece attempts to re-situate Ronald Després's place within the Acadian Renaissance of the 1970s by suggesting that he played a more pivotal role in the community's transition from early Acadian literature to its modern, nationalist period than previous Acadian scholars have credited him with. Similarly, David Hickey's engaging study of the cosmological implications in the work of Prince Edward Island poet, John Smith, represents the first full-length critical treatment of this important, but neglected island writer. Finally, Rob Winger's examination of what he calls the "positive capability" operating within the poetry of New Brunswick's John Thompson casts light on a provocative, yet little known aspect of Thompson's ghazals. The issue is rounded out by David Creelman's thoughtful review of two recent books dedicated to the poetry of M. Travis Lane, as well as Benoit Doyon-

7

Gosselin's reflective piece on the merits of Monika Boehringer's *Anthologie de la Poésie des Femmes en Acadie* (2014).

As Gwendolyn Davies points out, Lochhead—along with Fred Cogswell and Malcolm Ross—“began a process of identifying a rich literary tradition in the region by their recovery of texts and by their analyses of their importance.” This special issue of *Canadian Poetry* is meant to recognize Douglas Lochhead's many creative and critical contributions, and to serve as a continuation of the literary-critical engagement with Atlantic-Canadian literature that he helped inspire and cultivate over a long and illustrative career.

Works Cited

Boone, Laurel. “Confessions of an Unrepentant Generalist: An Interview with Douglas Lochhead.” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 13. 1 (1988). <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/8080/9137>

Davies, Gwendolyn. “The Three Wise Men of Maritime Literature: a Personal Tribute.” *Acadiensis*. Volume 30, Number 1 (Autumn 2000). <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/10768/11525>

Thomas Hodd