

Book Reviews

Charles Sangster. *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay and other poems. Hesperus and other poems and lyrics.* Introduction by Gordon Johnston. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972. Paperback \$4.50.

Isabella Valancy Crawford. *Collected Poems.* Introduction by James Reaney. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972. Paperback \$3.95.

These two volumes constitute the welcome beginning of a valuable new series entitled "Literature of Canada: Poetry and Prose in Reprint." Douglas Lochhead is the general editor, and as he explains in a properly succinct "Preface" (included in each volume), the purpose of the series is to make available literary materials hitherto inaccessible to most readers but significant to an understanding of this nation's "culture and traditions." These initial volumes are well suited to this end: Sangster is undeniably one of the most important of Canada's pre-Confederation poets, while Crawford is presently being hailed as one of the best of our post-Confederation nineteenth-century poets. Both now have reputations which need to be tested thoroughly, and these reprints of their work in such reasonably priced paperbacks will facilitate that testing process.

The photo-reprint process is particularly suited to this series because it allows the integrity of the original volume to be retained insofar as the considerable limitations of the modern paperback form will allow. The paraphernalia of the original volumes has been reproduced: title pages, tables of contents, dedications, even addenda. The reader is consequently permitted to experience each volume as an artifact recovered from an earlier age. This immediately draws him closer to the artist being read.

James Reaney, in his introduction to the Crawford collection, successfully intensifies this effect. Not only does he retain J. W. Garvin's "Word From the Editor" and Ethelwyn Wetherald's "Introduction" from the original 1905 edition, but he also reprints three contemporary reviews of Miss Crawford's first volume of poetry, *Old Spookses' Pass, Malcolm's Katie, and other poems.* In addition, Reaney includes in his "collage" several eyewitness narratives concerning the Crawford family, and its spatial and temporal environments. These tactics, reinforced by the vibrant, infectious enthusiasm of Reaney's idiosyncratic prose style and critical attitude, bring his subject vividly alive to the reader. He apprehends emotionally as well as intellectually the nature and force of Crawford's cultural shock as she attempted to reconcile her artistic avatars, Dante and Tennyson, to the uncivilized nineteenth-century Ontario landscape. Reaney does not pretend that Crawford was successful, but he does argue con-

vincingly that her struggle is still potentially instructive to Canadians.

Reaney's enthusiasm has sometimes been regarded as excessive, but in this instance it is ideally suited to the needs and aims of his office. It is especially effective when measured against the dry and cautious reticence of Gordon Johnston's introduction to the combined Sangster collections.

In part, the difference in the two introductions is dictated by the difference in the two poets being discussed. Miss Crawford is in several respects a more exciting writer than her older colleague. Still, Johnston engages in too many half-hearted and half-uttered apologies for his subject. It would appear that he lacks confidence in the literary and cultural worth of Sangster, and his lingering attempts to anticipate and obviate arguments against that worth serve only to implant these arguments more firmly in the reader's mind. Sangster has, admittedly, many deficiencies, but then so has Crawford — yet Reaney manages without denying these facts, to convince the reader that worth remains in spite of the drawbacks. Johnston does argue with some conviction that Sangster's narrative "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay," possesses greater coherence than critics have thus far acknowledged. Beyond this, however, he spends more time delineating obvious faults than outlining virtues. Furthermore, Johnston's presentation is impeded by a prose style which is often pallid and pedantic.

If this series is to thrive in terms of reader response, and thereby fulfill its avowed aims, the reader will have to be led carefully to a realization of the potential worth and enjoyment of the materials reprinted. It is unlikely that the materials alone will be able to accomplish this task, and so the introduction must help. There is no need to be dishonest, or uncritical, but there is a need to provide proper transitions into the past without losing the advantages of present perspectives. In the Crawford volume at least, the "Literature of Canada" series proves that it can accomplish his feat.

CHARLES R. STEELE

Alden Nowlan, *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*. Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1973. pp. 143. \$6.75.

Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien is Alden Nowlan's first novel, and in one sense it is the archetypal "first novel," journeying back into the past and boyhood of Kevin O'Brien. Nowlan, however, denies the conventions of such first novels; Kevin O'Brien does not review the past so much as relive it. The scene of his youth is one of those Maritime towns which exists apart from the mainstream of Canadian life, and:

For the returning native Kevin O'Brien Lockhartville is not fixed in present time as other places are. What happens to him there is almost independent of calendars, so that there are frequent moments when it is as if he were a ghost returning to the past to spy upon one or another of his former selves. (p. 3)

It is in the reconciliation of time, and the exorcism not of the ghost of the past, but that of the present that *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien* presents its greatest challenge, both to the reader and to Alden Nowlan. The reason for this lies in the structure of the novel, for *Various Persons* is essentially episodic in structure; more a series of interrelated reminiscences than a novel as such. Kevin confronts the various personae which he was in order to establish the Kevin which he has become. Nowlan's novel thus presents, as the title implies, a series of Kevin O'Briens, each one the product of time, family or the unique environment of Lockhartville. Nowlan attempts to maintain Kevin's detachment by the use of a rather awkward third-person narrative which is interspersed with fragments of Kevin's unfinished autobiography. The detachment is not fully achieved, for Kevin gives lie to Thomas Wolfe's dictum. He can go home again, and the novel is caught in an uneasy tension between a technique which is detached and a character who cannot be. Each of the incidents (or chapters, if we must consider the work as a novel) forces Kevin to become again, intellectually and emotionally, the young man or boy he was. It is here that Nowlan's power of evocation is strongest, for although Kevin can make intellectual rationalizations, the past is still an emotional trap and Kevin can think:

What a clumsy liar I am! Those people weren't like that; Kevin O'Brien was never like that; that wasn't at all the way that it happened. (p. 117)

It is only in the final chapter that Kevin can make a tentative resolution of the past and the present, of the various people who were and are Kevin O'Brien. He can never be free; past and present, man and mask must be accepted, and the book ends with Kevin's laughter, a laughter which is indicative not of any insight, but of an emotional and intellectual distancing.

Without wishing to cavil over the use of the term novel, one is still left with the feeling that *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien* might be better considered as a collection of related short stories. Connective tissue which might have joined the various segments is needed, and chapters such as "The Coming of Age" (which appeared in Helwig and Marshall's *Fourteen Stories High*) or "His Native Place" are adequate as short stories, but suspect as a part of the novel.

Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien is, finally, a disappointment. As a book of tales, it is no real advance on Nowlan's admirable first book of stories, *Miracle at Indian River*; as a novel, it lacks a sense of unity which would have drawn Nowlan's "various persons" together.

GRANT MCGREGOR

Fraser Sutherland, *The Style of Innocence: A Study of Hemingway and Callaghan*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972. pp. 120. \$4.50.

Patricia A. Morley, *The Immoral Moralists: Hugh MacLennan and Leonard Cohen*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972. pp. 144. \$2.75.

Comparative studies, whether they deal with different literatures or with writers in the same literary tradition, can be very useful once they go beyond simply imposing mechanical patterns of similarity or establishing arid parallels. Of their value, Anthony Thorlby says in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* (18, 1969): "To see another example of the 'same' thing, which being another work of art is of course not the same but only 'comparable' is to take the first step towards recognizing what is in each case good, original, difficult, intended."

The two comparative studies reviewed here do avoid, at least in intention, the probing of parallels as an end in itself. In Fraser Sutherland's *The Style of Innocence*, the unoccurring question of how much Callaghan is his own master in relation to Hemingway is raised once again. Sutherland compares the lives, the thematic concerns, and the styles of the two writers, and concludes that though they belong to the same school "of modern realistic writing begun in America . . . by Mark Twain" (p. 37), the differences are tangible enough to indicate that Callaghan stands on his own feet.

The first part deals in rapid succession (through thirty-two pages) with the first meeting of the two writers, the eventful summer of 1929 in Paris, their childhood, religious upbringing, and critical reputation. Sutherland shows that one of the main differences between them is that Callaghan chooses love and fame, whereas Hemingway sacrifices love for fame; and one of the basic and richly consequential similarities is their explosive pride. Since such a short space is allotted the various themes of the first part of the book, Sutherland should have concentrated on these points, paying less attention to the pedestrian similarities and differences: both had early success with short stories; both had a period of drought (or "fallow," as Callaghan prefers to see it) following their creative spells; and, unlike Hemingway, Callaghan made no sudden break from *The Toronto Daily Star*.

In his analysis of the themes and techniques of Hemingway and Callaghan, Sutherland gives some interesting insights particularly in the chapters comparing their moral vision, their uses of irony, and their aesthetic principles by which they sought the oneness of art and life. But the comparison does not always convince. In the first place, the author concerns himself more with Callaghan's work, making only incidental and brief comments on Hemingway's (the subtitle "A Study of Hemingway and Callaghan" is thus misleading). Also, he approaches and leaves his points with a rapidity which creates an irritating assertiveness.

The lively and robust style makes this a readable book. However, the reader does stumble over such critical pronouncements as "One advantage of being bad in a shorter as opposed to a longer genre is that it inflicts less pain" (p. 53); and, when pointing out that only one of Callaghan's three novellas ("In His Own Country") is worth reprinting, he states: "one out of three is not such a bad average" (p. 53).

The Style of Innocence is a worthy contribution to the question of Callaghan's relationship with Hemingway, both for its

fresh observations and for bringing together the comments of earlier critics. It is unfortunate that Sutherland did not give himself (or was not allowed) enough space in which to make use of his obvious familiarity with, and genuine reading of, these two important novelists.

Under the paradoxical title of *The Immoral Moralists*, Patricia Morley compares the moral preoccupations of two writers a generation apart, Hugh MacLennan and Leonard Cohen, whom the pure-minded but unperceptive reader finds immoral — hence the title. She concludes that they are both puritans. Puritanism, she observes, has both negative qualities (e.g. guilt feelings, obsessive compulsion to work, sexual repression) and positive qualities (e.g. guilt is balanced by belief in the opportunity for forgiveness and the certainty of God's mercy; industry, competence, practicality, courage, high value of the intellect). This comparison of MacLennan and Cohen, however, is just a secondary theme. The central thesis, more sociological than literary, requires juxtaposing these writers "in order to highlight cultural changes in Canada in the last twenty-five years" (p. ix). Critics have suggested that the Canadian imagination is informed variously by the garrison mentality, by the French-English factor, by the preoccupation with survival, and by an inherent puritanism. It is the latter, Patricia Morley affirms, which pervades the Canadian ethos.

The problem with this book is that much of the material included is not firmly under the control of the stated main thesis. In fact, its centrality appears to be the study of puritanism in the works of MacLennan, with appended chapters dealing with sexual permissiveness in the contemporary society ameliorating the negative connotation of puritanism and insisting on the morality of Cohen's vision of life. The tenuous coherence is further underscored by the leaping from discipline to discipline. The Preface states: "this para-literary study . . . cuts across such related disciplines as religion, history and literature". The unevenness of style and approach partly contributes to the muddle: there are the fine, perceptive thematic analyses of the novels; the well-researched, though slightly laboured, chapter on historic Puritanism; and the uneasy, week-end-magazine treatment of the "Sexacola" culture. Perhaps the various themes here (the comparative study of MacLennan and Cohen, puritanism in MacLennan's novels, puritanism and the Canadian imagination) might better have formed the basis for separate books or papers.

Patricia Morley begins by taking MacLennan to task for the totally negative meaning which he chooses to associate with the word puritanism in his essays. This is justifiable if the essays were all he had written. But with a novelist, it is unfair to separate the essayist-reformer (who must necessarily chastise the negative aspects) from the novelist whose wider and ironic vision encompasses both the virtues and the vices. The author's early acknowledgement that the ideals and values of puritanism are "evidently cherished by MacLennan and affirmed by his novels" (p. 26) underlines the unfairness of her considering novelist and essayist separately.

In the thematic analysis of the novels, she points to MacLennan's ambivalence towards puritanism, an ambivalence which gives a strange tension to the novels. This ambivalence (if indeed it is) does not imbue MacLennan's vision with any hesitancy, vagueness or indetermination, as Patricia Morley herself shows in her explanation of MacLennan's attitude to sex and work: he is clearly for unselfish expression of man's sexual nature, but he is against mechanical sexuality; he celebrates work when it is done in a spirit of joy and self-fulfilment, but sees work undertaken in a martyr spirit as negative and morbid. These contraries are certainly present in MacLennan's novels and are reflected in the general grouping of his characters into positive and negative camps. They provide the conflict necessary for the progression of the plot, but are so clearly posited that they rob the novels of any animating tension, making them unstrung fables where character and plot are subservient to the moral theme.

Patricia Morley is at her best when she analyzes MacLennan's death-rebirth theme, which, she shows, underlies all of his fiction. His death-rebirth pattern is a humanistic version, closely resembling the Christian cycle of death and resurrection. However, MacLennan's humanism is different from Christian humanism: he objects "to the word 'sin', because of its associations with guilt, which he sees as a neurotic fear or death-force" (p. 133).

The comparative analysis of the two novelists is revealing. Cohen's rejection of MacLennan's body-soul dualism constitutes the main difference. There are several common grounds: both have an ethical emphasis, a sense of spiritual dedication to one's work, a profound respect for the intellect, a celebration of sexuality, and in both nationalism is linked to their general idealism and moral stance. Patricia Morley puts them both in the puritan mould, and given her definition of puritanism, MacLennan fits easily, but Cohen is forced into the mould. What the similarity boils down to is not that they are both puritans, but that they are both moral rather than amoral writers. The sureness with which Patricia Morley postulates the nature of Cohen's moral vision does surprise, particularly since this reviewer suspects Cohen of often being tongue-in-cheek.

The Immoral Moralists is a valuable work for its perceptive reading of the novels of MacLennan and Cohen. But, on the whole, it attempts too much and claims too much.

VICTOR J. RAMRAJ

Michael Manheim, *The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press; Burns & MacEachern Ltd., 1973. pp. 198. \$9.25

Michael Manheim's study of the history plays shows how Shakespeare and his audience of the 1590's came reluctantly to accept the necessity for compromise in kingship — compromise between the medieval view of the king as "God's sole deputy in the earthly kingdom, inherently possessed of all Christian vir-

tues," and the new Machiavellianism which the author identifies as "the chief cultural force affecting political life and attitudes of the age." Such a compromise, he argues, became inevitable once the king, through human weakness (or, in the case of Henry VI, through simple virtue), proved incapable of controlling the schemers and power-seekers who on all sides threatened the stability of the state. This is not new ground, nor does the author have anything original or precise to say on the nature of either the old Christian or the new Machiavellian order. While allowing in a work of this kind a greater degree of vagueness and generalization than the new historicism would approve, the reader is nevertheless faced throughout the book with claims and assumptions that are not, and one feels cannot be, substantiated.

It is Manheim's contention that audiences responded to the (largely unexplained) crisis of the nineties and the erosion of the Christian ideals of kingship with "incessant vacillation and uncertainty," and his main concern, as expressed in his introduction, is with "the manipulation of audience sympathies toward the monarch." While rejecting the "topical allegory" approach, the author assumes nevertheless a close identification between the audience and the matter of the plays. Such an assumption is not strengthened by the terms in which it is presented: we hear of "passions seething mightily" in the audience, of their "suffering at having in their hearts deposed a king." This is difficult to accept, not so much because of the inflated tone or the lack of documentation, but because Manheim's audience has at all times an unconvincing homogeneity more suggestive of private theory than of the farmers' sons and templars, stinkards and sweet courtiers, noted by Dekker. The reader in search of ascertainable fact must go to Harbage or to Bevington's *Tudor Drama and Politics*, a work which exerts considerable influence on the present study, and which presents a rather less sensational picture.

The difficulty with such theories is that we do not really know why audiences react, how their "sympathies" are engaged, or even whether they *can* be "manipulated" in the deeply serious way Manheim claims. That he is uncertain himself is apparent from the numerous instances throughout the book of phrases like "seemed unquestionable," "undoubtedly struck home," "in all likelihood," etc. — phrases which seriously weaken the author's main contention and limit the usefulness of the book. The treatment of individual plays is uneven: there is much wearisome plodding through *Henry VI*, and the account of *Richard II* is straitjacketed by the "reversal of sympathies" theory; on the other hand there are valuable comments on the transitional nature of *King John*, and an excellent chapter on *Henry V*. One wonders, however, why there is virtually no discussion of *Henry IV*. The reason given, that the problem of the weak king and the coming to terms with English Machiavellianism does not shape *Henry IV* as it does the other plays, is tenuous.

If, indeed, "order is no more than the semblance of order, and the perfect king is that king who makes the greatest number of people believe he is the perfect king," then both parts

of *Henry IV* would seem indispensable to the argument. One wonders also why an author who feels that "criticism which ignores or distorts the chronology of events can frequently be misleading" should begin with *Richard II*, go back to *King John*, then forward to *Henry V*. We are asked to accept, by way of explanation, that "I am hardly doing more than rearranging for convenience' sake groupings which other interpreters have created for convenience' sake." Shakespeare's manipulation of his audience remains a matter of conjecture; Manheim's manipulation of his reader is often all too apparent.

A. F. BELLETTE

Books Received

- ARRAHAMS, PETER, *This Island Now*, London: Faber & Faber, 1973. pp. 255. 75 p.
- AMANUDDIN, SYED, *Poems of Protest*, Sumter: Poetry Eastwest, 1972. pp. 32. \$2.00.
- AMANUDDIN, SYED, *System Shaker: Plays*, Sumter: Poetry Eastwest, 1972. pp. 40. \$2.00.
- BARTHOLOMAY, JULIA A. *The Shield of Perseus: The Vision and Imagination of Howard Nemerov*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972. pp. 168. \$6.00.
- BENECKE, INGRID, *Der Gute Outlaw. Studien Zu einem literarischen Typus im 13 und 14 Jahrhundert*. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1973. DM34.
- BROOKE, NICHOLAS, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies*, London: Methuen, 1973 (reprint of 1968 ed.) pp. 214. £1.00.
- CARRUTH, HAYDEN, *From Snow and Rock, from Chaos*. New York: New Directions Paperbook, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973. pp. 60. \$2.50.
- CHANDRA, G. S. SHARAT, *Reasons for Staying*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1971. (Limited edition).
- DEWART, EDWARD HARTLEY, *Selections from Canadian Poets*, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973. pp. 304. \$3.95. Cloth ed. \$12.50.
- DUNCAN, ROBERT, *The Opening of the Field*. New York: New Directions Paperbook, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973. pp. 96. \$3.40.
- GALLOWAY, DAVID, ed., *The Elizabethan Theatre III*, Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973. pp. 149. \$7.95.
- HALTER, PETER, *Katherine Mansfield und die Kurzgeschichte*, Bern: Francke Verlag, 1972. pp. 199. Sfr. 36.—
- HAMBURGER, MICHAEL, ed., *East German Poetry: An Anthology*, Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke Irwin & Company Limited, 1973. pp. 213. \$8.65.
- HARLOW, GEOFFREY, ed., *The Year's Work in English Studies. Volume 51 1970*. New York: Humanities Press. pp. 483. \$9.75.
- HENRI, ADRIAN and DUNN, NELL, *I Want*. London: Jonathan Cape, Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972. pp. 109. \$6.00.
- HOLBROOK, DAVID, *Dylan Thomas: The Code of Night*, London: The Athlone Press, 1972, pp. 271. £3.00; New York: Humanities Press Inc. \$10.50.

- JONES, D. G. *Butterfly on Rock*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970. pp. 197. \$8.50 cl. \$3.50 pb.
- KENNEDY, JUDITH M. and REITHER, JAMES A., eds., *A Theatre for Spenserians*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973. pp. 144. \$10.00.
- LAUGHLIN, J. ed., *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 26*. New York: New Directions Paperbook, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972. pp. 184. \$3.15.
- NOWLAN, ALDEN, *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*. Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1973. pp. 143. \$6.75.
- PLATZ, NORBERT H., *English Dramatic Theories*. Volume I. From Elyot to the Age of Dryden 1531-1668. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1973, pp. 142. DM8.
- RAJAN, BALACHANDRA, ed., *The Prison and the Pinnacle*, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973. pp. 163. \$8.50.
- ROTHSTEIN, ERIC, ed., *Literary Monographs*, Volume 5. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973. pp. 212. \$10.00.
- SECRETAN, DOMINIQUE, *Classicism: The Critical Idiom*, John D. Jump, general ed., London: Methuen, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973. pp. 85. £1.10, paperback 50p.
- THORPE, MICHAEL, *Doris Lessing* [Writers & their Work No. 230] Harlow: Longman (for the British Council), 1973. pp. 37. 20p.