

**CANADIAN LITERATURE**  
**Unit 1**  
**English Canadian Literature**

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## British Immigrants in the Canadian Mosaic

Majority of the immigrants who reached Canada with hopes of better living conditions and a bright future were those forced to leave their motherlands due to various reasons. While the Loyalists from the thirteen colonies of America sought to escape from the bad political situation in their country, it was poverty that prompted the Irish and the Scots to migrate to the Canadian soil. The Jews and fluverites were racially persecuted, and this paved the way for their immigration. Canada was a country of great significance to the English, French and other Europeans as they regularly fished off the banks of Newfoundland. The rivalry between England and France in Canada, in the name of colonial expansion was in fact an extension of the on-going war between the two countries on the European mainland. Their colonial rivalry ended with the division of Canada into the English-speaking territory and the French-speaking territory in 1791.

The French-Canadians and the English-Canadians have been considered the "Two Founding Races" of Canada (Metcalfe 346). From the anthropological point of view, this classification is erroneous as both these groups come under the Caucasoid sub-population of human species. After the Norman Conquest of Britain in AD 1066 by William, Duke of Normandy, there had been a mixing of English and French populations. The differences between the English and the French are basically cultural and not racial.

### **II.2.1 The English**

Traditionally, the phrase "English-Canadian" had been used to refer to Canadians who are of British descent, but now it often refers more to language than ethnicity. As the immigrant population is being increasingly assimilated into the mosaic of cultures in Canada, the term "English" is at times applied to all Canadians outside Quebec, even to immigrants whose native tongue is not English. The English were the first among the Europeans to reach the Canadian shores after the Norse seafarers who had settled in Iceland and Greenland during the ninth and tenth centuries. John Cabot's voyage to Newfoundland in 1497 laid the foundation for English claims to Canada, and it inspired a series of explorations. When he started to sail from Bristol, he was granted the charter or right to "conquer, occupy and possess" (McGhee 96) any country or town he discovered and to obtain title and dominion to these places on behalf of the King of England. The authority to engage a representative to occupy a land on their behalf was based on a religious theory of ownership and title to land, which had developed through the Middle Ages, and refined during the Crusades. According to this doctrine, the World was the property of the Christian God, who had bestowed his stewardship to the Pope of the Christian Church, who in turn divided it among the Heads of European Churches. Heathens and infidels, thus, had no right to possess land and their lands were forfeited to the Christians who could take them by force or guile.

English mariners are said to have fished in the Canadian waters even before Cabot's expedition. British merchants financed several voyages at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the harbor of St. Johns is recorded as

the favorite site for fishing vessels, as early as 1527. For over four centuries, Europeans have sought to open a sea-route across the northern edge of the North American continent. The first of such voyages was that of Martin Frobisher between the years 1576 to 1578. His expedition grew out of the rapid expansion of English sea power and oceanic trade during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. As her father Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome, England was no longer bound by Papal dictums. So the authority over the discovered lands was vested with the sovereign. During Sir Humphrey Gilbert's visit to claim the land for Queen Elizabeth I in 1583, he found a makeshift town that served the Devon fishermen. In 1610, John Guy from Bristol founded the well-known English settlement at Cupers Cove which later came to be known as Cupids. From this time onwards, English settlers steadily grew in number till they outnumbered the Irish immigrants.

Another favorite route for the immigrants from England to Canadian soil was through the Northwest Passage to Hudson Bay. Henry Hudson entered the inland sea, now called Hudson Bay, in 1610. When the Hudson Bay Company was established in 1670, lots of English traders and employees were recruited from among the urban unemployed. Many Englishmen based in the company's forts on the bay conducted explorations into the land.

People of English descent came through the American colonies as well. Those who came from the thirteen colonies of America were mostly Loyalists who had left their homes during and after the American War of Independence. These people who supported the Crown and fought against the revolution were

dispossessed of their property at the end of the war. So they fled to Canada as refugees and settled in Nova Scotia, the Bay of Fundy and Upper Canada. Here their fellow brethren from England, who were struggling through high unemployment and depressed wages due to the Napoleonic wars, later joined them.

### **II.2.2 Migration and settlement**

In the early phase, the motives of the immigrants were largely financial. But during the later period of settlement in the Prairie West, the immigrants were attracted by the offer of free land. As England was the imperial centre of British Canada, many English officials and soldiers reached Canada as public servants. But many of them decided to stay back even after retirement. The imperial authorities with the hope of reproducing, at least in part, the hierarchical structure of society in England with the aristocracy at the topmost level, encouraged ex-officers and members of the gentry with generous grants of land, to settle in Canada. Speculative companies like the Canada Company acquired vast areas of land to bring in suitable settlers from England. On the other hand, parishes in England sent to Canada, poor people who were struggling due to crop failures and economic recession. They possessed none of the attributes or skills needed for nation-building. After Confederation, children with poor economic backgrounds were given free passage to Canada. Thus, between 1867 and 1920, thousands of British children, majority of them English, settled in Canada. Between 1890 and 1914, with the opening of Prairie provinces, there was a still larger influx of English settlers. However, the

number of English immigrants did not rise significantly until after the Second World War.

English settlement was heavy in Newfoundland, British Columbia, the Maritime provinces and later in Ontario. Wherever they settled, except in Quebec, they tried to quickly assimilate into the local community, because there was no need to learn a new language. It was the flow of refugees from the American colonies that led to the creation of New Brunswick from the Western part of Nova Scotia. Upper Canada, or today's Ontario, was the chief destination for the English and Scottish-Irish settlers in Canada in the nineteenth century. After the fall of Quebec to the British in 1759, a British community established itself in Quebec City. Even in Montreal, the largest city in Canada, for many years, the English-speaking population was largely in control of business houses. The economic dominance of the Anglophone community and its failure to get integrated with the Francophone, produced widespread dissatisfaction among the French in Quebec. This gave rise to the 1837 rebellion, after which many English-Canadian Montrealers left Quebec. Those who decided to continue living there learnt French in order to be part of the dominant society.

The colony of British Columbia was established in 1858 by Governor James Douglas as a way of asserting British sovereignty in the face of a massive flow of American miners to the Canadian mainland. Over half the people with British ancestry in British Columbia had direct family ties for two generations with the British Isles.

The first wave of English immigrations contributed greatly to the farming population in the rural areas, and to the skilled artisan population in the towns. But those who came after the Second World War were mostly professionals, technicians and individuals concerned with the arts in various ways. A large number of English settlers reached Canada in separate batches. According to the 2001 Canadian census, about 29.17% of the total population (which roughly comes to around 59,78,875 people) have indicated that they are English-speaking.

The private schools in Canada are based on English public schools. The Anglican Church is the largest of the institutions transplanted from the motherland without any changes. Fifty percent of the Canadians of English origin stick to it; the rest belong to the united Church and other Protestant groups, while a small minority are of Roman Catholic faith. The workers from England brought with them their own traditions of trade unions and social democracy.

### **II.2.3 Contributions**

War has played a significant role in shaping an English-Canadian identity. As Canada was a part of the British Empire, the English-Canadians rendered military service wholeheartedly with a genuine sense of duty and loyalty. However, at present, there is some kind of an identity crisis, at least among some of the English-Canadians, due to the increasing American cultural influence combined with diminishing British influence.

The British have entered into every level of Canadian life. They occupy prominent positions in government and share control of Canadian business

along with the Scots. It is not fully true that writers of English origin, like Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Robertson Davies and Carol Shields, alone strengthen English-Canadian literature given the plural cultural matrix of Canada. Added to that is the presence of writers whose ancestors had migrated to Canada from Germany, or the Ukraine who now write in English. In its earlier days, literature was humorous, ironic and self-deprecating as in the works of Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Stephen Leacock. *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery of Prince Edward Island is English Canada's well-known contribution to general popular culture. The ironic but affectionate observations of small-town Canadian life that appeared in the works of Stephen Leacock reappeared in the successful television sitcom *The Beachcombers* in the 1970s. Canadian humour has taken a broader form in the comedy of SCTV, like the *Trailer Park Boys* and the *Red Green Show*. Still later, literature has come to uphold the notion of personal and collective survival. Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, a seminal book on Canadian literature published in 1973, argues that much of Canadian literature (both English and French) is linked thematically to the idea of survival. The same theme is sounded again in more recent literary works such as Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi*, winner of the 2002 Booker Prize. In the 1970s, Margaret Laurence in *The Stone Angel* and Robertson Davies in *Fifth Business* explored the changing world of small-towns in Manitoba, and Ontario respectively. Hugh McLennan's *Two Solitudes* describes the painful separation of English and French-speaking populations in Canada. Overall, works like these gave



Canadians access to literature, thereby helping them form an awareness of their own society. However, from 1970 onwards, writers make it a point to turn the attention of readers to immigrant experiences as well.

The English have set an indelible mark in the non-fictional streams of Canada too. Journalist Pierre Berton has tried to popularize Canadian history through his books, with special emphasis on the story of English Canadians. Critics and philosophers like Northrop Frye and John Ralston Saul have tried to analyze the Canadian experience in their works. In the early years of the twentieth century, painters such as A. Y. Jackson and the Group of Seven which included Lauren Harris and A. Y. Jackson, captured images of the wilderness that forced English-Canadians to discard their conservative and traditional views of art. In British Columbia, Emily Carr tried to create an awareness and appreciation of First Nations cultures through her paintings of aboriginal villages. The acrylic paintings of Lauren Harris are highly iconic for English-Canadians.

Notable English-Canadian personalities include Laura Secord, one of the earliest national heroes; Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada's first Prime Minister; Tommy Douglas, the politician instrumental in the creation of Canada's universal healthcare programme; Emily Carr, the post-impressionist artist, and Frederick Banting, the co-discoverer of insulin.

Anyone who reads the history of immigration of the English-Canadians will see how their socio-political as well as cultural and literary activities permeated into Canada. It is the English people's sense of being part of the

dominant culture, that has enabled them to find their own place in the Canadian setting and contribute to its multifaceted growth.

#### **II.2.4 The Scots**

Scottish Canadians or Scots-Canadians are citizens of Canada whose ancestry originates in the Northwest European country of Scotland. Although considered Anglo-Canadians, they have always regarded themselves as a separate group of people. The connection between Scotland and Canada dates back to the seventeenth century. One of the earliest Scottish colonies was established in 1621, when Sir William Alexander was granted a charter for Nova Scotia. He established small settlements on Cape Breton and the Bay of Fundy. As they did not develop well, Scottish claims were surrendered to France in 1632, and the Scots who inhabited those colonies migrated to New France. Around 1720, people were recruited from Scotland by Hudson's Bay Company for service in the West. Apart from them, soldiers from the Highlands of Scotland moved to Quebec in 1759. They were members of the British Army that defeated the French in the Seven Years' War. The Scottish merchants who reached Quebec at the same time dominated the fur trade.

#### **II.2.5 Migration and Settlement**

From 1770 onwards, Scots started migrating in large numbers to Canada. During 1770-1815, about fifteen thousand Highland Scots reached Canada, settling mainly on Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Upper Canada. They were mostly Gaelic-speaking Roman Catholics. They lived in agrarian communities and their use of Gaelic made it the most common European

language spoken in Canada during the nineteenth century. In 1821, the Earl of Selkirk brought a few Highlanders to the Red River Colony. All these people preserved their Highland traditions and remained a distinctive ethnic group for many years.

After 1815, Scottish immigration swelled and Scots from the Lowland area were encouraged by the British Government to join the Highlanders in Canada. The Scots comprised 14% (which roughly comes to 1,70,000 people) of the total British migration during 1815-1870. The immigrants of this period represented a cross-section of Scottish society. Most of them were artisans and farmers. There were also businessmen and professionals like teachers and clergymen. The newcomers were mostly Presbyterians, who spoke chiefly English. They lived in communities and were active in establishing schools that offered training for the talented.

Patterns of Scottish immigration have changed considerably during the latter part of the nineteenth century. When population pressures in the Highland regions of Scotland eased, the Highlanders no longer migrated to Canada. Similarly, urbanization and industrialization in the Scottish Lowlands improved the financial condition of the Scots there and the percentage of immigrants to Canada fell correspondingly. Though the industrialized cities stood as the chief source of attraction to the migrants, many of them moved to the agricultural areas in Western Canada. A significant amount of native-born Scottish population can be found in the Maritime Provinces, Newfoundland, and Quebec. They are also widely distributed among the remaining provinces and

territories in both rural and urban communities. As per the 2001 census, there are about 41,57,210 Scots in Canada, which comes to around 14.03% of the total population.

### **II.2.6 Contributions**

Since 1870, Scottish immigrants have preferred Ontario and Western Canada to Quebec and the Atlantic region as areas for settlement. Wherever they are, they are involved in every aspect of Canada's development as explorers, educators, businessmen, politicians, artists, etc. The first two Canadian Prime Ministers, John A. MacDonald and Alexander MacKenzie were born in Scotland. The Scots dominated the fur trade, timber trade, banking and railway management. About 50% of the industrial leaders in the latter half of the nineteenth century were of Scottish descent. Other notable personalities of Scottish descent include, William Lyon MacKenzie King, the longest serving Prime Minister of Canada; Alexander MacKenzie, explorer of the Canadian Northwest; Norman McLaren, film animation pioneer; James Naismith, inventor of the basket ball; Agnes Macphail, the first woman to sit in the Canadian House of Commons; and Tommy Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan and the first leader of the New Democratic Party. Timothy Findley, one of the leading writers of fiction in Canada, who was awarded the Governor General's award for his third novel, *The Wars*, has Scottish ancestry on his father's side and Irish lineage on his mother's side.

The history and culture of the Scots developed quite differently from that of the English, Welsh and Irish people. This distinctiveness gives them a

feeling of cultural superiority. Like most of the other ethnic groups in Canada, the Scots too have got increasingly assimilated into Canadian society. Still, they are aware of their distinctive heritage which they want to preserve at any cost. Like others, they have tried to focus on a few highly visible symbols of their origins, such as clans, tartans and Highland dancing. The number of Gaelic speakers has declined in Canada as in Scotland itself. But a few thousand people, mainly in Cape Breton, try to keep the language alive in Canada.

The pattern of Scottish migration cannot be explained regionally or chronologically. Though in Canada they have never been an insignificant group, they have always found themselves in an ambivalent position. They have shared a part of the dominant British culture, but were insistent on maintaining their cultural identity. This cultural closeness to the English got them incorporated to the dominant society. But it is their Scottish background that has provided them with skills and aspirations well-suited to a developing country. Their influence has made Canadian culture British, rather than English, with distinctive Scottish patterns in moral attitudes such as Sabbath observance and temperance. Like other immigrant groups, they contribute constructively, to the country's diverse multicultural society, as well as its social and economic growth.

### **II.2.7 The Irish**

The Irish people or people of Irish descent, living in Canada are referred to as Irish-Canadians. The first recorded Irish presence in Canada dates from 1536, when Irish fishermen from Cork travelled to Newfoundland in connection

with the fishing industry. It is said that there were Irish monks in the medieval period who pioneered navigation between the islands of the far North Atlantic who kept records of directions and distance to various destinations. Their offshore navigation must have been guided primarily by crude astronomical observations like direction of the wind and wave, and colour and temperature of water. The presence of Irish immigrants in Quebec from the early times is evident in some of the place names like Trou de St. Patrice, an anchorage used since 1689. As early as 1720s, English captains recruited Irish labor. Some of them remained in Newfoundland, and before the end of the eighteenth century they began to dominate the resident population in St. John's, south along the southern shore of Cape Race, and in most of the southern Avalon Peninsula. Many historians have discovered that the Irish brigade was in service of the French Army in New France from 1755 to 1760. The oppressive policies adopted by Britain in Ireland might be the driving force behind their determination to fight for France against Britain. The Irish were truly determined to be free at any cost and fighting for France might have appeared to them the best way to gain freedom. However, the first significant group of Canadian settlers from Ireland were Protestants, largely of Scottish descent, from Ulster, and they settled in Central Nova Scotia in the 1760s. Subsequently, many others came due to the efforts of Alexander McNutt.

The unfortunate division of Ireland made the Irish helpless in the face of its serious problems. Poverty induced by the Napoleonic wars, religious persecution meted out to the Irish Catholics at the hands of the Protestants

along with their political subordination, forced many of the Irish to migrate. As the fare to Canada was cheaper and manageable when compared with that to New York, many of the Irish decided to migrate to Canada.

Another event that triggered off mass-migration was the failure of the potato crop in 1845. The resulting famine (1845-49) pushed most of the Irish peasants to the edge of starvation. The unhygienic conditions of the timber ships on which they sailed to Grosse Isles, an island in present-day Quebec, resulted in the death of thousands of immigrants due to typhoid.

### **II.2.8 Migration and Settlement**

A significant number of native Irish Catholics came to British colonial Canada in the late 1700s. Early Irish-Canadians settled in Newfoundland, Halifax and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, where they engaged in agriculture, boat building, shipping and fisheries. Those who settled in Newfoundland were at first forced to return to Ireland during winter. By 1836, there were 14,000 Irish-Canadians in Canada. The presence of Irish-Canadians in Nova Scotia from the time of its takeover by the British in 1749 has been recorded. Halifax was founded in 1749. Early in the history of Halifax, there was an Irish town with St. Peter's Church at its centre. After the American War of Independence, a good number of Irish Catholic Loyalists came to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Those who reached Nova Scotia later got integrated in the Nova Scotia community.

The destitute immigrants from Ireland who ran away to Canada to escape hunger and poverty due to the "Great Famine" came from land estates

in counties such as Sligo, Galway, Clare and Cork. Most of them settled in Upper Canada, now known as Ontario. They chose rural areas for their settlement. But there too they had to taste the sour fruits of racial discrimination and religious persecution due to the long-standing feeling of anti-Irish racism among Canadian Protestants. Later generations of these poor immigrants rose to prominence in business, law, arts and politics. The French-Canadians in Lower Canada adopted the Irish children, who were left orphans by the death of their parents in Grosse Isles during their transit. The Protestants enjoyed greater freedom when compared to Catholics; and this made them acceptable to the dominant society. Due to the efforts of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, however, Catholics were accepted as a minority group, which enshrined educational rights for them in the Canadian Constitution. In 1867, with the formation of Canadian Confederation, he came to be hailed as the father of the Confederation.

The Irish provided Canada with cheap labor. As land for timber operations was cheap, the Irish spread throughout the countryside. It is said that the native Irish got the most remote and least arable land when compared to other immigrants. Those who reached Ontario in the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries served as missionaries, soldiers, geographers and fur trappers. After 1763, Protestant Irish too migrated to Upper Canada. Those who were driven to Canada after the War of 1812 obtained work on projects in canals, roads, railroads and timber industry. Settlement schemes offered cheap or free land to the farmer families.



The immigrants who reached Montreal during the 1840s were hired as labourers to build the Victoria Bridge. Those who reached New Brunswick settled in the Miramichi River Valley. They were better educated and were financially in a better condition. Some immigrants settled in agricultural lands in the Miramichi River Valley, St. John River and Kennebecasis River Valleys. In Newfoundland, Irish Catholics settled in cities like St. John's, while British Protestants settled in small fishing communities. Newfoundland is one of the few places outside Ireland where a majority of population speak Irish language as the first language. Newfoundland Irish is its own distinct dialect. It is perhaps the only place outside Europe with its distinctive name in Irish language: "Talamh an Eisc" or "The Land of Fish". In Prince Edward Island, Irish immigrants constituted one quarter of the original population. The Irish in Nova Scotia are of Presbyterian Ulster–Scottish descent. Those settled in the Prairies have got integrated in the community. Many of the original settlers in the Red River Colony were staunch Irish Loyalist Protestants. They clashed with the Catholic Metis under the leadership of Louis Riel. The small groups of Irish immigrants that reached Canada during the second half of the twentieth century are professionals unlike the pioneers.

Immigration from Ireland to Canada was not significant until the 1840s. Historical records show that during the period 1825-1869, about 7,35,000 Irish people reached Canada. Census and shipping records show that between 1851 and 1921 about 3,15,000 people from Ireland migrated to Canada. On an average, from 1870-1978, Irish immigration constituted 4.1% of the total

immigration. According to the 2001 census, by Statcan, the official statistical office of Canada. the Irish constitute 12.9% of the total Canadian population. It roughly comes to around 38,22,660 in the whole of Canada. Ontario has the largest Irish population and Nunavut has the lowest. Today, the impact of the heavy immigration from Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is evident in every field. Irish contribution to the overall development of Canada cannot be neglected. In the year 1998, in recognition of their immense contribution, the Ontario legislature had proclaimed 17th March as Irish Heritage Day.

### **II.2.9 Contributions**

During the War of 1812, Irish-Canadians made significant contributions to the defense of Canada. They helped in building canals, bridges and railroads in the country. With the co-operation of the Catholics in Quebec, they built St. Patrick's Basilica in 1847, Loyola College in Montreal in 1896 and St. Mary's Hospital in 1920. Similarly, St. Michael's College and St. Joseph's College of the University of Toronto bear testimony to their cultural self-development. St. Patrick's Day parade that attracts over 6.00,000 people annually dates back to 1824.

Guy Carleton, an Anglo-Irishman, defended Canada against American attack when he was the Governor-General in 1775. Lester B. Pearson, St. Lawrent, and Brian Mulroney, Prime Ministers of Canada, have Irish blood in

them. Francis Collins, a Roman Catholic Irish-Canadian, made significant contribution to Canadian journalism by publishing a newspaper, *The Canadian Freeman* that reported the proceedings of the House of Assembly in York and Ontario. He is honoured even today for setting a precedence for a free press in Canada. The founder of Canadian liberalism, William Baldwin, is also an Anglo-Irishman born in Ireland. Louise Crummy McKinney was Canada's delegate to the League of Nations. Emily Ferguson Murphy, the first female magistrate in the British Empire, became instrumental in making the Supreme Court rule that a woman is a legal person.

Frances (Moore) Brooke (1724-1789) was the author of the first English novel in Canada, *The History of Emily Montague*. Marshall McLuhan, who has authored enormously influential books, was of Scots-Irish descent on his father's side and of Irish-Canadian descent on his mother's side. Brian Moore is a distinguished playwright and novelist. James F. Kenney, with an outstanding achievement in Irish scholarship by writing *The Sources for Early History of Ireland*, is also an Irish-Canadian. Pdraig O Broin, one of the finest Irish language poets in modern times, is widely remembered for his works, *Than Any Star* and *No Casual Treasures*.

Today Irish-Canadians are making memorable contributions in the field of performing arts. Loreena McKennit is a popular harpist, singer and composer. She is known for her Celtic compositions. John McDermott is a Scots-Irish singer whose songs figure among the top hits. There are also fine Irish Canadian politicians and businessmen and also religious, social, and

educational leaders who have contributed tremendously towards the creation of a just, peaceful and prosperous country. It is the rich cultural heritage that has prompted all these milestone makers to do their part in the development of their foster mother. At the time of immigration, the Irish were reluctant to speak French for fear of being assimilated into French culture and losing their Irish identities. They had already lost their Gaelic which made them vulnerable. They were sure that they could not be assimilated by the English culture due to their religious belief. It led them to adopt an uncomfortable Anglophone-Roman Catholic position, which was not acceptable to either the French or the English Canadians. But now historians feel that it is the dilemma which they had faced during the period of immigration that had brought out the best in the Irish immigrants.

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## III.2 ENGLISH CANADIAN LITERATURE

### III.2.1 Early Phase

From the beginning, the notion that Canadian literature in English is the result of the merging of two main streams in the English language - British and American - has been asserted. However, any new literature will soon develop a

tradition and pattern nurtured by its nationalism. Canadian literature is no exception with its steady evolution in socio-political, demographic, ethnic, geographical terms. Over the past one hundred and fifty years, there has been a constant attempt to impose a cold uniformity on it, though untenable. W.H.

New remarks :

Snow, North, Wilderness: these stereotypes of Canada suggest a fierce uniformity - but even from earliest times, such generalizations have been inaccurate. To read Canadian Literature attentively is to realize how diverse Canadian culture is - how marked by politics and religion, how influenced by differences of language and geography, how preoccupied (apparently) by the empirical world, but how fascinated by the mysterious and the uncertain. 'Apparent' is important: illusion is everywhere. For repeatedly Canadian history has designed images of continuity and order, which the social realities touch, but only sometimes reconfirm. (2)

Even the earliest English Canadian literature should be read with this inevitable difference and variety in mind.

For our purposes, a good starting point to understand the early phase of Canadian literature can be 1867. Canada became a Confederation in 1867. Canadian Confederation came into existence only in 1867. There were only outposts and colonies till then. The centres of power were far away. The writing was definitely affected by this. No genuine literary work came out. Imitations of what was fashionable in London, Paris or later in Boston and

Philadelphia were the order of the day and the themes centred round exile. However the felt need for contact with the centres of power prompted reportorial writing - documentary records, chronicles, journals and letters.

During 1800 - 1867 there were a few English poets, but not of great originality who could stand the test of time. However some of the poets and their works are relevant for a historical overview.

Peter Fisher (1782 - 1848), *The Lay of the Wilderness* (1833)

Jay Mackay, *Quebec Hill*, (1797)

Oliver Goldsmith (1794 - 1861), grandnephew of the English author of *The Deserted Village*. He wrote *The Rising Village* (1825)

Alexander Mac Lachlan (1818 - 1896), *The Emigrant and Other Poems*, (1861).

However, it must be said that there was no worthwhile play written during this period.

The only worthwhile novelist was Frances (Moore) Brooke (1724 - 1789). She published *The History of Emily Montague* in 1769. She was the eldest of three daughters of a Lincolnshire clergyman who used the pseudonym Mary Singleton, and edited a weekly periodical *The Old Maid* in England, in 1755 and 1756. She was also a journalist. She wrote light operas and an epistolary novel, *The History of Julia Mandeville* in 1763. Easily *The History of Emily Montague* is her best work, which may be of interest even for the contemporary reader.

The novel is hinged on three sets of lovers. The main characters are Col. Ed Rivers, a showy gentleman farmer. He comes to Canada since he cannot

have an estate of his dreams in England. Emily Montague is a polished, serious girl living in Quebec. She yearns to marry 'the civil but cold' Sir George Clayton who agrees to do so. But Ed and Emily fall in love. Later Ed refuses to marry her. Finally Emily is ready to receive Sir George. At the same time in England, Ed is having an affair with a rake, Jack Temple. In Quebec, Emily's friend Bell is toying with many hearts. Finally she falls for Captain Fitzgerald. Everything is revealed through letters and settled in England. It is a sort of an Arcadian novel.

Two other noteworthy writers of this period were Susanna Moodie (1803 - 1885) and Catherine Par Traill (1802 - 99). The former's important works are *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) and *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush* (1853). They contain sketches interspersed with some poems. The experiences of a pioneer settler are recorded in an artistic way. Mrs Traill wrote more than thirty works. The significant among them are *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1854) and *Canadian Wild Flowers* (1868). Mrs Traill gives a true feel of the land in all her works. Susanna's language is flowery whereas Catherine's is plain and direct. In early Canadian writing, their works do have an important place.

### **III.2.2 Poetry**

The latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a phenomenal rise in the number of poets. A group of poets - Sir Charles G.D. Roberts (1860 -1943), Bliss Carman (1861 - 1929), Archibald Lampman (1861 - 1899) and Duncan Campbell Scott (1862 - 1947) are brought under one umbrella. They are the Confederation



Poets. Note that all these poets were born around 1860. To some extent they were all influenced by the late - Victorian romanticism of Tennyson and the American Transcendentalists. They also shared a concern for the vanishing old ideals and the hold of technology.

To the Confederation group of poets sometimes the following writers are also included : Isabella Valancy Crawford (1850 - 1897), Wilfred Campbell (1858 -1918) and George Frederick Cameron (1854 - 1885). In Lampman and others there was an Arnoldian tinge, but there was also a sense of joy.

### **Roberts, Sir Charles G.D. (1860 - 1943)**

Born in Douglas, New Brunswick. First collection of notable poems *Orion* (1880). He became the editor of the Toronto periodical *The Week* in 1883, but soon resigned. Then he taught in King's College Windsor, New South Wales from 1885 -1895.

In 1886 he published *Earth's Enigmas*, a collection of animal stories. From 1897 - 1925 he was in USA and England. During the First World War he was with the British forces. He was elected to the Canadian Royal Society in 1890 and was knighted in 1935. Usually Roberts is referred to as the Father of Canadian Literature. He inspired poets like Archibald Lampman. He used in his writings the maritime environment and the wilderness of New Brunswick very imaginatively. Nature is divine for him. He advocates the kinship of all living things.

His best poetry was published during 1880-1897 - First Period

*Orion and other Poems* (Philadelphia, 1880)

*In Diverse Tones* (Boston, 1886)

*Songs of the Common Day* (London, 1893)

1897 - 1925 - Second Period

*New York Nocturnes and other Poems* (Boston, 1898)

*The Book of the Rose* (1903) and *New Poems* (1919)

1925 - 1941 - Third Period

*The Iceberg and other Poems* (1934)

*Canada Speaks of Britain and other poems of the War* (1941)

His collection of poems are *Poems* (1901) and *Selected Poems* (1936).

His best poems were published during the early part of his career. Roberts used classical subjects. In technique he was close to Tennyson and Arnold. *Orion and Other Poems* prove this point. In *Divers Tones* he writes in an elegiac vein.

One of his well known poems "Canada", a patriotic poem exhorts the people to draw courage from the British and French heroes. The sonnets in *Songs of the Common Day* are the best among his poems. In the second stage he moves to cityscape pieces, philosophic poems, and love poems. Critics have perceived a decline after that. In the last stage he uses modernist techniques. Some of the most anthologized pieces are "The Tower", "The Mowing", "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night", and "Ice."

### **Carman, Bliss (1861 - 1929)**

Bliss Carman grew up in Fredericton. He had a difficult life. He could not complete his advanced studies due to his parents' illness. For two years (1890

- 1892) he had a job in a New York journal. He moved in and out of Canada and lived most of the time with his cousin and poet Sir Roberts. Later he lived with Dr. and Mrs. King of Connecticut.

As a poet, Carman was very popular. He published most of his poems in periodicals. His first and perhaps best book is *Low Tide on Grand Pre* (N.Y., 1893). His Vagabondia series is also quite famous. Another series of poems is the *Pipes of Pan*. He is a master of light verse; Carman presents a carefree world and his landscape remains simple and pastoral. Late - Victorian readers liked him much. He has romantic and transcendentalist inclinations as well. Unlike Roberts, Carman gives importance to feelings rather than thoughts. His poems appear to be a string of melancholic dreams.

One has to read especially read poems like the “Eavesdropper”, “Lord of My Heart’s Elation”, and “The World Voice”. In the murmur of the sea he hears,

Some endless story of a wrong

The whole world must deplore (ll 3 - 4)

In the mountain wind he hears ‘of an old sorrow of the hills’. And all through the day he felt ‘the echo of an ancient speech’ ringing in his listening ear. At the end he feels that everything he heard was his own heart in the sea’s voice.

This simple disarming candour loaded on every rift with sorrow is vintage Bliss Carman.

**Lampman, Archibald (1861 - 1899)**

Archibald Lampman hailed from a Loyalist family. He grew up on the borders of wilderness. But he soon moved into the urban circle. He spent his childhood in the Rice Lake district. He had a chance to meet Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill. Though he joined Trinity College he did not have a good time. Later he worked as a school teacher and civil servant. His married life too was not a cup of joy. However he found solace with the members of the Ottawa Literary and Scientific Society with whom he could share his intellectual and national interests. He could strike a friendship here with two other poets Wilfred Campbell and Duncan Campbell Scott.

As a naturalist poet Lampman learned to employ vivid yet simple images and diction, to build poems out of the sounds, the motion and even the colours of wilderness. A poet in the Romantic tradition, Lampman saw himself as being a manifestation of Keats, even saying 'I have an idea that he has found a sort of faint reincarnation in me' but his importance lies in his attempts to capture a uniquely Canadian landscape, for he believed that 'climate and scenic conditions have much to do with the molding of national character'. (Brown, Russell and Donna Bennett, ed., 177)

Lampman was wary about urbanization. Still he thought the Confederation would pave the way for progress and balanced development. He died rather young at thirty seven due to heart disease.

His major works are :

*Among the Milletts* (Ottawa, 1888)

*Lyrics of the Earth* (Boston, 1895)

Some of his poems were published posthumously by D.C.Scott and E.K.Brown. Lampman always looked for an intense experience of nature in search of external truths in the vein of the Romantics. Unlike Roberts, Lampman always believed that changes were only superficial. He is often rated as the best of Confederation Poets.

Some of his typical poems are “Heat”, “Outlook”, “Storm”, “In November” and the like.

His overriding hope and trust in nature reverberates even in a short poem like “Outlook”. At the outset he affirms,

“Not to be conquered by these headlong days,

But to stand free: to keep the mind at brood

On life's deep meaning, nature's altitude

Of loveliness, and time's mysterious ways;” (ll.1-4)

He exhorts men to tower above weariness “to clear the haze

Out of our eyes, considering only this,

What man, what life, what love, what beauty is,

This is to live, and win the final praise.” (ll. 5 - 8)

He pleads everyone to get over setbacks and weariness, even agony. What is needed, according to him is patience to receive ‘great voices from life’s outer sea’ and ‘glimpses of eternity’.

There is certainly an Arnoldian touch tinged with the romantic. Perhaps therein lies the strength of his poetry.

**Scott, Duncan Campbell (1862 - 1947)**

Duncan Campbell Scott was born and brought up in Ontario and Quebec. He had a liking for the natives, frontier lumbermen and the French-Canadian people. Like other Confederation poets he had a strong love of the Canadian landscape and its people. He was also influenced by the late romantic and Victorian poets. Without any university education, thanks to the kindness of the then Prime Minister he got a small job in the Department of Indian Affairs. For more than fifty years he served there. He, finally, reached the highest position there. His association with Archibald Lampman gave him the confidence to write. He started writing by the mid '80s.

His collections of poems are:

*The Magic House and other Poems* (1893)

*Labour and the Angel* (1898)

He published a collection of short stories, *In the Village of Viger* in 1892.

Scott along with Lampman and Wilfred Campbell wrote a column, "At the Mermaid's Inn" for the *Toronto Globe*. They used this column to express their views on the Canadian cultural milieu and develop their own literary theories. He was distinguished from other Confederation Poets for the way in which he depicted the First Nations People. Scott was also good enough to encourage and plead for new talents and movements.

Some of his absorbing poems are mentioned below:

"At the Cedars", "The Piper of All", "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon", "The Forsaken", and "The Height of Land".

“At the Cedars” delineates the life struggle and belief of the lumberman, Isaac Dufor. The lot of lumbermen is brought out with concern and involvement. This sort of sympathy marks out Scott. A group of lumbermen attempted to clear the crammed and jammed logs in the bend at Cedars. In a sudden onrush of logs Isaac Dufor was caught napping. He could not reach the shore unlike others. Still he managed to leap ‘on a log in the front of the rush’. Everyone cheered him but fate designed another trap for him. He was pushed up into the air by a log from the bottom:

And when he was there

In the air,

Kissed his hand

To the land;

When he dropped

My heart stopped

For the first logs had caught him

And crushed him

When he rose in his place

There was blood on his face

(ll. 42 - 52)

A berry picking girl who saw Isaac in a trice launched her canoe only to be sunk by the birch that cracked like a shell. The narrator reminds his friend/colleague, Baptiste of Isaac’s two daughters. None can miss the empathy with which the poet makes the narrator unfurl the story of the

lumberman. In spite of the tragedy the poet underscores the value of belief and hope through the acts of Isaac.

Duncan Campbell Scott beckons you to go on an exploration of his poetic world.

### **Crawford, Isabella Valancy (1850 - 1887)**

Isabella Valancy Crawford migrated from Dublin to Paisely in Canada West. She had a tragic experience. All her siblings except one brother died. Her father was a doctor but a drunkard, who died in 1875. Crawford had to take care of herself and her mother.

She had no formal schooling. She was taught Latin and French at home. She loved Horace and Dante and had a passion for writing right from the beginning. With an intention to write she moved to Toronto in 1876 with her mother. She wrote for newspapers and periodicals but she could not make any money. She published a collection of poems on her own, *'Old Spookses' Pass'*, *'Malcolm's Katie'* and *other Poems*.

She died at the age of thirty six. John Garvin edited her poems and published them in 1905 as *The Collected Poems of Valancy Crawford*

As already pointed out, Crawford's inclination was to charge her creative energy with the spirit of the Classics and contemporary French and English Literature. She used native mythology and imagery and had Pre - Raphaelite leanings.



She so imbues nature with life that her settings often become animistic, and her poems have a quality so sensual that some modern critics have offered Freudian interpretations. She shows a remarkable control over a wide range of forms, including long narrative poems, such as her famous 'Malcolm's Katie', song - like lyrics, poems in the dialect, and dramatic monologues, and in poems such as 'Gisli, the Chieftain'; several of these poems are interwoven. Her vision is repeatedly one of the world forces in opposition. (Brown, Russell and Donna Bennett, 142)

Often in her poems she subtly brings in a universal collision between darkness and light. Her 'mythopoetic' qualities are praised by James Reaney and Northrop Frye.

To enter the poetic world of Crawford you may read a few of the poems suggested here: "A Battle", "The Dark Stag", "Gisli, the Chieftain", "Said the Canoe" etc. Isabella Valancy Crawford was a highly underrated poet during her times. But now a lot of research is done on her works. Those who are interested in her works can refer

(i) *The Isabella Valancy Crawford Symposium* (1979), a collection of papers presented at the University of Ottawa in 1977

(ii) Lynne Suo's 'Annotated Bibliography on Isabella Valancy Crawford' in *Essays in Canadian Writing* (Spring 1977)

### **Campbell, Wilfred (1858 - 1918)**

Wilfred Campbell was born in Berlin, Canada West. He spent his childhood days in little Ontario towns. He underwent a classical education in

Wycliffe College, University of Toronto and in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After that he worked as a priest till 1891. Then he turned to writing. Along with that he served as a civil servant.

His important volumes of poems are *Lake Lyrics* (1889) and *The Dread Voyage* (1893). He also published a number of other volumes of poetry and three novels. He contributed to the column 'At the Mermaid Inn' in the *Toronto Globe* and edited the first *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1913)

Campbell could combine primitive religion, new ideas on myths, Indian heritage, evolution theories and liberal theology to generate a complex Canadian poetic imagery essentially based on nature. Now he is known for his simple, lyrical, nature poetry. Many think he lacks the intensity of Roberts and Lampman. In his days his poems were frequently anthologized. But now he lacks readership.

Even a casual reading of a few poems of Campbell would reveal his poetic strength. A few poems are suggested for that purpose: "Indian Summer", "The Winter Lakes", "Morning Shore", "At Even" etc.

See the simple but telling details given in a sweet short poem, "Indian Summer":

Along the line of smoky hills  
The crimson forest stands,  
And all the day the blue-jay calls  
Throughout the autumn lands.  
Now by the brook the maple leans

With all his glory spread,

.....

.....

Throughout the long, still autumn day

Wild birds are flying south. (l l. 1-6,11-12)

The landscape is brought to life with all details of sight, sound and feeling. The same is true of his poems in general.

### **Cameron, George Frederick (1854 - 1885)**

Frederick George Cameron was born in New Glasgow, New South Wales. He studied law at Boston University. He was a great lover of classics. In 1882 he entered Queen's University, Kingston. He became the prize poet in 1883. He was soon made the editor of the *Kingston News*. He has only one collection of poems, *Lyrics on Freedom, Love and Death* (Kingston, 1887).

Though his name is sometimes clubbed with Confederation Poets his poetic interests are different. His concerns are classical culture and political issues with an international bearing. There is also a touch of pessimism in all his poems.

### **Modernist Movement**

Modernism brought radical changes in poetic techniques. Symbolism, use of myths, revival of forms of classicism, metaphysical poetic techniques, imagist techniques etc became part and parcel of modernism. In Europe

Modernism came to the fore during 1900-1920. In Canada, Modernism showed its presence only in the late 1930s. F.R.Scott and A.J.M.Smith, while working together in *Mc Gill Fortnightly Review*, published in it poems incorporating modernist techniques employed much earlier in Europe and even America, but with the significant difference that they tried to locate it in Canada. Smith, Scott, Klein and Kennedy, called the Montreal Group together with E.J.Pratt and Robert Finch from Toronto endeavoured to take Canadian poetry to different heights. They could not publish much due to depression. Still one important collection of poems, *New Provinces* was published. It initially ran into some publication difficulty due to Smith's controversial Preface in which he allegedly belittled the earlier Canadian Poets. However Modernist Poets came to lime light only by the late 1940s or even 1950s. These poets will be dealt with in the 'Modern Phase'.

### **III.2.3 Drama**

Much before the discovery and colonization of North America by Europeans an indigenous drama flourished. It was relatively rich and complex. In Canada the various First Nations communities like the Inuit, the Ojibwa, the Plain's Indians, the Iroquois etc had a kind of theatre with playing and audience areas. As Benson and Conolly observe:

Their shamans, or mystics, were gifted actors who used masks, stage props, and voice projection (including ventriloquism) to perform with great skill spirit plays and spirit dances celebrating initiation, purification, death and resurrection. Ritualistic performances were

designed to benefit the community -- by influencing the weather, or curing illness, for example -- and the community assisted the shaman by participating in song, chant and dialogue. (1)

However, after colonization, no worthwhile theatre came into vogue in Canada. It is surprising that even during the first half of the twentieth century nothing significant happened. Of course dramas were staged in different parts of Canada by visiting drama companies from Britain and USA. No English Canadian theatre as such gained in stature or strength at least till 1950. But then the Little Theatre Movement, Workers' Theatre Movement, Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) etc gave some encouragement for the growth of drama.

John Coulter who moved to Canada from Ireland and England in 1936 staged some notable plays in the DDF. *The House in the Glenn* and *The Drums Are Out* are two of them. But the themes were Irish. Two other plays *The Family Portrait* (1938) and *Holy Manhattan* (1940) had fairly good Canadian productions. Much later in the 1950s he wrote three plays on a Canadian subject with focus on Louis Riel the Métis leader from Manitoba. It is a trilogy comprising *Riel*, *The Crime of Louis Riel* and *The Trial of Louis Riel*.

However, the formation of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission in 1932 gave a fillip to "the creation of a national character and identity for Canadian drama". (Benson & Conolly, 59). From 1939 there was a steady growth in radio dramas. But very few texts are extant.

Only in the post-1950 period English Canadian drama came of age. Playwrights like Robertson Davies, James Reaney, George Ryga, David French,

Sharon Pollock, Tomson Highway and many more charted the future of Canadian Drama.

### III.2.4 Fiction

English Canadian fiction began to take a Canadian national identity and concern only from the first decade of the twentieth century. As already pointed out in the earlier section there were some fictional and non-fictional works by pioneer settlers, especially women. However, from 1900 onwards there was a steady growth on the English Canadian fictional front. Many good writers came on the scene. Still there were only a few authors before 1914. Even a liberal list may not have many, except the following : William Kirby's historical romance, *The Golden Dog* (1877) ; James de Mille's utopian fantasy, *Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888), Sara Jeannette Duncan's ironic political novel, *The Imperialist* (1904) and Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912).

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a remarkable growth in fiction. It may be interesting to note that a host of prairie realists rose to prominence in the western plains. A few whose works are still read and studied seriously are Maria Ostenso, *Wild Geese* (1925); Robert J. Stead, *Grain* (1926); and the works of Frederick Philip Grove. Grove began his Canadian career with a book of essays, *Over Prairie Trails* (1922). Then he came out with two massive novels, *Settlers in the Marsh* (1925), and *The Master of the Mill* (1944).

His novels show a strong impact of European naturalism. But he could also portray the struggle of the prairie farmers against their fears and the land fairly well. Side by side, he could also map the shift from the agrarian to the industrial taking place in Canada in some detail and with laudable accuracy and involvement. At the same time Morely Callaghan, the Toronto based novelist was writing absorbing novels such as *Such Is My Beloved* (1934), *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1937).

With the 1940s the very direction of Canadian fiction dramatically changed by the imaginative and daring work of Sinclair Ross and Hugh MacLennan. Ross's *As for Me and My House* and MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* heralded a new era in Canadian fiction.

To give a feel of Canadian fiction some of these authors shall be introduced.

### **Duncan, Sara Jeannette (1861-1922)**

Jeannette Sara Duncan was born in Brantford, Canada West (Ontario) as the daughter of a Scottish father and Ulster mother. After starting as a teacher, she turned to journalism and worked for the *Washington Post*, the *Toronto Globe*, the *Montreal Star*, and the *Week*. In 1888 she went on a world tour with her friend Lily Lewis. Everard Cotes whom she met in Calcutta became her husband. He too was a journalist. She contributed to the *Indian Daily News* edited by her husband. She spent almost three decades in India with intermittent stay in England. All the time she was not very happy. She always cherished a nostalgic affection for Canada. She died in England.

All her earlier works were journalistic. Her early novels delineate her Indian experience. It also shows her understanding of the Anglo-Indian society, particularly because of her long stay in Calcutta and Shimla. *The Simple Adventures of Memsahib* (1893), *Vernon's Aunt* (1894), *The Story of Sonny Sahib* (1895), *His Honour and a Lady* (1896), *The Path of a Story* (1899), reveal her Indian experience in great measure. Her best novels on Canadian themes are *The Imperialist* (1904) and *Cousin Cinderella or A Canadian Girl in London* (1908)

In *The Imperialist*, which she considered her best work, she presents the community life of Brantford where religion and politics vie for each other. Advena Murchinson, the heroine is a passionate intellectual and to some extent Duncan's autobiographical replica. The elder Murchinsons are also similar to Duncan's own parents. Though overtly it is a simple novel presenting idealistic challenges inlaid with the love theme, the novelist seems to be bent on the protagonist's success in converting her fellowmen to the imperialist fold. In *Cousin Cinderella* the novelist has a slightly different agenda. Here international recognition of Canada is her concern. A brother and sister are persevering to project Canada in London. Both these novels show Duncan's patriotic fervour.

However at the end of her career she again turned to the Indian theme - *Set in Authority* (1906) and *The Burnt Offering* (1909). She tried to rework the international theme in her final novels, *His Royal Happiness* (1914), *The Clear* (1922) and *The Gold Cure* (1924).



Duncan wrote some short stories and plays too. For more information on Duncan's works and her life you may refer : Tausky, Thomas E. *Sara Jeannette Duncan : Novelist of Empire* (1980) and Fowler, Marian. *Redney* (1983) which is a biography.

### **Leacock, Stephen (1869 - 1944)**

Stephen Leacock was born in Swanmore, England. He migrated to Canada along with his parents in 1876 and grew up in Ontario. In spite of his early family problems, he could rise in the academic world as an economics and political science teacher. He worked in McGill University for a long period. Out and out as a writer he is humorous. The influence of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain is very evident on his writings. Leacock's best books are *Sunshine Sketches* and *Arcadian Adventures*.

*Sunshine Sketches* is a regional idyll of Mariposa, a small Ontario town. It highlights the simple, good-natured follies of the people there. Leacock has an amazing ability to laugh at and with the people. *Arcadian Adventures* is planted in an American city. It is more critical and political. But he is humorous even in his scathing attacks and that is his strength. He has also a light but razor edged style to suit his light humorous quill.

The following books may be of help to understand Leacock more:  
Curry, Ralph.L. *Stephen Leacock: Humorist and Humanist* (1959) and Davies, Robertson, *Stephen Leacock* (1970).

### **Grove, Philip Frederick (1879 - 1948)**

Grove's autobiographical details have raised a lot of speculation and have become even a source for novelists like Robert Kroetsch who works in the idea of a student faking his own death in *Gone Indian* (1973) and David Williams' subtle handling of a meeting between Greve and Andre Gide in *The Eye of the Father* (1985) reinventing the artist figure. Greve was forced to leave Germany due to some contingencies, moved to the United States where his wife caught up and they moved to the Canadian prairies. Greve became Grove and then a successful prairie novelist (See Spettigue). All his early works deal with prairie life and at a later stage with Ontario. He is a thoroughbred realist. He unfailingly shows an enquiring mind. He displays uncanny precision in giving relevant landscape details. He catches the pulse of the northern milieu in works like *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) and *The Turn of the Year* (1923). His potential as a watcher and avid recorder of the Prairie is well shown in his works like *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), *Our Daily Bread* (1928), *Yoke of Life* (1930) and *Fruits of the Earth* (1933).

Pioneer experience is given an epic sweep and mythical height in Grove's works. The central staple of his novels is the struggle of the Prairie settlers. He also evinces abounding sympathy with the toiling, suffering women. *Settlers of the Marsh* came under fire for the uncustomary way in which he depicted the touchy issue of abortion. Another pet theme seems to be change; change of seasons, landscape, lifestyle and all related aspects. Later on in his Toronto novels, *Two Generations* (1939) and *The Master of the Mill* (1944) his focus shifts to the sweeping social and technological changes. He

gives the impression that the Canadian family is more disrupted by these swift but inescapable changes rather than the taxing demands of pioneer life.

For a deeper understanding of Grove you may refer :

Sutherland, Ronald. *Frederick Philip Grove* (NCL, 1969); Spettigue, D.O. *Frederick Philip Grove* (1969).

### **Morely Callaghan**

Callaghan was born in Toronto in 1903. He spent all his life there. He studied at the University of Toronto. Though he was a lawyer, he never practised. Callaghan worked as a cub reporter with the *Toronto Daily Star*. Ernest Hemingway working there at that time got interested in Callaghan's stories. He encouraged him to continue writing. Callaghan's first novel *Strange Fugitive* (1928) was published by Scribner's thanks to Hemingway's good offices. A collection of stories *A Native Argosy* (1929) was also published by Scribner's. He wrote interesting memoirs and short stories. The most productive period of his career was 1930-1937. During this period he published seven novels : *It's Never Over* (1930), *No Man's Meat* (1931), *A Broken Journey* (1932), *Such Is My Beloved* (1934), *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1935), *Now That April Is Here and Other Stories* (1936) and *More Joy in Heaven* (1938).

For about ten years he did not write any novel. It was a dry period, when he worked as a journalist and script writer. However, he published five more books in his later years: *The Loved and the Lost* (1951), *Morely Callaghan's Stories* (1959), *A Passion in Rome* (1961), *A Fine and Private Place* (1975) and *Close to the Sun* (1977)

By the sheer volume of his writing he is a formidable novelist. In terms of his unconventional themes and debatable stance too he is an important Canadian novelist to be studied seriously. At a deeper level his novels and short stories are concerned with man's imperfect condition everywhere. In his early novels he thought of Marxism and social realism as the remedies. But in the later half of his career, he thought Christian humanism could be an answer. In his short stories the conflict between the individual and an impersonal society becomes more intense. In spite of critical reservations about the quality of his novels, his writings, as a whole, is charged with passion and hence a rare beauty.

Among his novels the most talked about are *Such Is My Beloved*, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* and *More Joys in Heaven*. George Woodcock remarks :

(They) have an economy of form and a lucidity of expression and feeling that make them the best of all Callaghan's works, and perhaps the best novels written in Canada during the 1930s. They were written after Callaghan had come under the influence of the French theologian, Jacques Maritain, then teaching in Toronto and they show the way in which ideas can in fact influence form. For they are moralist novels that bear a generic resemblance to the *recits* (or novellas) of French writers like Gide and Camus (98).

In all the three novels he brings in the effects of depression. Callaghan's contemporary novelists used to offer political solutions to the depression ills and consequent moral malaise. But Callaghan seems to take refuge in the

religious and spiritual. His characters have only a dark, clipped vision about their 'spiritual future'. Still, Callaghan is a distinguished writer among the 1930s novelists.

In *Such Is My Beloved* Callaghan raises a crucial issue. There is economic depravity, on which is contingent moral degradation. There are two fallen prostitutes whom a Roman Catholic priest wishes to rehabilitate. But his bishop and respectable Catholic citizens vehemently oppose it. The moot question raised by Callaghan in such novels is which one is worse, the immorality of the poor and the weak or that of the self-righteous clergy and the upper class of the society. *Such Is My Beloved* should serve as an entry to the fictional world of Morely Callaghan

You could also refer to Conron, Brandon. *Morely Callaghan* (1966) and Hoar, Victor. *Morely Callaghan* (1969).

### **Sinclair Ross**

Born in 1908 at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Sinclair Ross grew up in farms. After his high school, he was with the bank which he continued till his retirement. He worked in various small towns in Saskatchewan. Later he worked in Winnipeg and Montreal.

Ross has a substantial body of writing. Most of his writings saw light only after 1940. Still he is on the threshold of the Second Phase of Canadian Literature. His major works are : *As for Me and My House* (1941), *The Well* (1958), *Whir of Gold* (1970), *Sawbones Memorial* (1974)

His short stories published during 1934-1972 came out as *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories* (1968) with an Introduction by Margaret Lawrence and *The Race and other Stories* (1982) introduced by Lorraine McMullen.

*As for Me and My House* deserves serious attention. It gives Canadian novel a different direction and a new dimension, in terms of Ross's handling of theme, style and narration. The protagonist Philip Bentley, the vicar, is 'an unfulfilled artist'. His unnamed wife, Mrs. Bentley records his whims and fancies as diary jottings. She performs the role of the narrator 'invisibly'. Bentley's case study as a frustrated artist performed by Ross through Mrs. Bentley is a new road in narration.

The novelist makes the issue more problematic by subtly suggesting that Mrs. Bentley herself is aberrated due to bouts of psychological depression caused by her unfounded fears and depressions. The implied suggestion is that the narration itself may be inauthentic. The novelist raises his work to a different level by delicately analyzing the intriguing relationship between the individual and the prairie landscape. Besides, he makes it a simmering autobiography of the narrator Mrs. Bentley. Steve, their adopted son, Judith, the church singer; later a member of the house in more than one sense, Paul Kirby; a friend -- all, complicate matters.

Mrs. Bentley's symbolic dreams as well as her act of naming Judith who she thinks is the illegitimate son of Philip and her near success in making the reader believe in her story speaks of Ross' craftsmanship. Ross heralded modernism in Canadian fiction. The novelist by assigning the job of narration to

an inauthentic narrator that too in first person complicates matters. Thereby he makes the whole terrain of the novel dense and complex. The author is indirectly 'ordered' to discern and organize the meaning, which is a new challenge, a new experience.

The significance of the work could be summed up in the words of Paul Denham:

There are some very good reasons why the novel has come to be so important to the Canadian tradition. It is a study of the failed artistic imagination, and of an eroding puritanism; it is also . . . a good example of Frye's concept of the garrison mentality, in its exploration of the peculiarities of the Canadian experience of nature and its relation to civilization. It is, then, a powerfully mythical novel in which many of the characteristic themes and attitudes of Canadian literature are sharply focused. (116).

Ross could not achieve such perfection in his succeeding novels though he experimented with multiple points of view. Still he demands close study. For further reading refer Chambers, Robert D. *Sinclair Ross and Ernest Buckler* (1975) and McMullen, Lorraine. *Sinclair Ross* (1980).

### **MacLennan, Hugh (1907-1990)**

Hugh MacLennan was born in Glace Bay and grew up in Halifax. He was educated at Dalhousie University, Oxford and Princeton. He began his career as a teacher. He also tried to write, but initially he could not make any mark. The American writer Dorothy Duncan encouraged him to write. In 1936 he married her. She asked him to give up international themes and to treat national issues.

It had an immediate impact. The result was MacLennan's successful first novel *Barometer Rising* (1941). Like Ross's *As for Me and House*, this MacLennan novel is also a path breaker as far as Canadian fiction's development is concerned. Most of his other works came out in the Modernist period. Some of his other works are: *Two Solitudes* (1945), *Return of the Sphinx* (1967), *The Precipice* (1948), *Each Man's Son* (1951), *The Watch That Ends the Night* (1959), *Voices in Time* (1980)

Among these *Barometer Rising*, *Two Solitudes* and *The Watch That Ends the Night* are reckoned by many as MacLennan's best novels. In *Barometer Rising*, he deals with the Halifax explosion of 1917. Lot of his boyhood experiences are imaginatively used in this novel. The Great War is employed to perceive a new Canadian sensibility - neither colonial, nor regional but national.

MacLennan held fast to this in his succeeding novels too. Like Morely Callaghan, MacLennan also saw a fallen world. But he did not want to leave it there, on the other hand he wanted to rebuild it. In *Two Solitudes* he effectively exposes the gap between the French and English cultures in Quebec. Here also MacLennan voices his nationalist concern.

*The Watch That Ends the Night* is a good study of the impact of Depression on the people in the 1930s. Unlike his other novels it has also a personal layer. His experiences with Dorothy provided him a lot of material to be put in this novel. Dorothy's persistent struggle with heart disease ended in 1957. *The Watch That Ends the Night* came out in 1959. MacLennan with great



feeling put in his recent painful experiences; perhaps the end point of a long chain of aching experiences into this novel. MacLennan by his very first novel *Barometer Rising* lifted Canadian fiction to loftier heights. This brief introduction to a few early Canadian writers may help everyone, especially a beginner, to kindle an interest in Canadian Literature.

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### III:3 THE ENGLISH-CANDIAN LITERATURE: MODERN PERIOD

#### III.3.1 INTRODUCTION:

One of the problems faced by Canadian writers has been the inability to write creatively, innovatively and distinctly due to lack of culture and history. Therefore, creative writers had begun to use the yardstick of British and American writers to structure their literary efforts—be it fiction or poetry. Certain social conditions, however, paved the way for the growth and development of a Canadian identity. This newfound identity became the foundation for the emergence of a true Canadian literature in the modern era.

Earlier the Great War of 1914-1918 and the Great Depression (1929-1930) had made Canadian writers realize the nature of conflict, distress, sacrifice and tragedy. Along with these social conditions, another dimension that added to the writers' awareness of nationalism was the election of William Lyon Mackenzie King who was the prime minister for the longest period in the history of Commonwealth. The 1930s was also a time when new political parties, such as the Social Credit Party of Alberta and the Co-operative Commonwealth -- the CCF -- were founded in 1932 and 1933 respectively. These political parties of the west increased provincial awareness but what jolted the Canadians was the rise of the fascist party and the economic control by the United States. The first world war, thus in a way brought a great sense of nationalism into the Canadian minds.

The literary works of 1930s consequently began to adopt the techniques and notions of realism in their works. The literary output too increased enormously. In the period from 1920-1940, around 700-750 works of fiction were published. Literary works dealing with the life in the prairies unlike the past moved away from romanticizing and described the veracity of lives on the prairies. The earliest prairie novel had been Arthur Stringer's trilogy: *The Prairie Wife* (1915), *The Prairie Mother* (1920) and *The Prairie Child* (1922). Other such novels were *Neighbours* (1922) and *The Smoking Flax* (1924) by Robert Stead. Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese* (1925) and Frederic Philip Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* (1933) firmly established the characteristic realist novel. Yet, works like, W.O. Mitchell's *Who has Seen the Wind* (1947) did display the romantic tradition. The story based once again in the prairie setting was a symbol of a youngster's attempt to comprehend a spiritual experience. In the same period also came up historical novels by Thomas Raddall. Works such as *His Majesty's Yankees* (1942) and *The Nymph and the Lamp* (1950) set a new trend of popularizing history. Even before these works of Thomas Raddall and W.O Mitchell another trend had been set in Canadian writing. This was the publication of *Jalna* which was a series consisting of 16 volumes. Mazo de la Roche, the author covers in these volumes the wealthy Whiteoak family history and the story is based partially on Roche's own experiences. The first book in the series was published in 1927.

Yet another trend that developed in Canadian writing during this period was the use of landscape as portrayed in the works of Raymond Knister. He was

a pioneer in the modern realist style and his novel, White Narcissus (1929) as well as his poetry collection however have not been merited with a great deal of attention. The trend of realism was well grounded in 1930s by Morley Callaghan. Later novels of Callaghan too depicted more and more this sense of hopelessness and despair. The onset of the Great Depression, just after World War I, recorded the frustration and bleakness experienced by writers, leading to a total break of romantic tradition.

The trend that eventually established the theme of social realism forcefully were the works of Morley Callaghan. His early novels such as *Strange Fugitive* and *A Broken Journey* had also in a way being fatalistic like Philip Grove's short fiction 'Snow' portraying how characters became victims of fate. One stark realist work that came out in this period was that of Irene Baird. Baird's *Waste Heritage* (1939) was a novel of social protest and was also more modern in adopting a documentary mode of narration. Just after World War II writers began to explore the fragmented and disillusioned lifestyles. One of the characteristic novels of 1940s was Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House*. The novel deals with the life of a prairie cleric and displays the hardships and tribulations the young couple go through during the bleak period.

This period also used some extremely experimental plot and narrative techniques. One such example is Howard O'Hagan's Tay John (1939) which is a novel that concentrates on the blending of myth and realism. Tay John is based on an Indian legend of a golden-haired child who materializes from the grave of

a pregnant woman. The child later disappears into the earth. As already mentioned F.P. Grove was another innovator of the traditional plot structures. His The Master of the Mill (1944) is a novel set in the future dealing with the intricacies of life in an industrial society and revolving around the problems of living in an era of automation. The narrative method is intricate, revolving around the central character's flashbacks, a manuscript, the memories, and the reminiscences of other characters. Yet another novel of Grove, namely, In Consider Her Ways (1947) is based on the world of ants and the ant characters in the work are conceived to parody humanity. The use of imagery on a grand scale and the use of lyricism was first attempted in By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept (1945) a novel by Elizabeth Smart. The novel though published in 1945 in England did not get recognition until 1975 when the North American edition was printed. Another trend of experimentation was the use of myth and allegory, which can be seen in Sheila Watson's novel, The Double Hook (1959).

#### LITERATURE AFTER WORLD WAR II:

The period after World War II gave rise to the popularity of the Canadian novel and works by Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies and Leonard Cohen began to be acclaimed in UK and US. The Canadian government too enhanced recognition for the creative writers, by setting up the Canada Council. The Canada Council not only funded Canadian writers but it also popularised Canadian literature as well as recognised writers by giving them awards and

grants. Among the first few novelists, the position of Ethel Wilson is significant. In the span of ten years, she had published four novels and two novelettes. Wilson's style was simple and lucid yet it had a strong notion of space. Her novels set the tone of Canadianness by its keen description of Canadian life and people. Her most popular novel, *Swamp Angel* (1954) is the story of Maggie Lloyd who quits her married life to lead an independent and unfettered life.

By 1960s, the Canadian novel had moved out from the disillusionment and despair of the war and period of depression. This was a period, which saw the growth of literary works by writers such as Margaret Laurence, Robertson Davies and Mordecai Richler. The novels, in this period, had still not gained a sense of freedom and many of the works, nonetheless, portrayed conservative, traditional attitudes of the Canadian society. One good illustration of such a work is Margaret Laurence's *Stone Angel*. Another significant writer who began in 1950s and continued until 1980s was Robertson Davies. Davies had begun his career as a dramatist and journalist. His works such as *Tempest-Toss* (1951), *Leaven of Malice* (1954) and *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958), depict the pretentiousness, greediness and duplicity of life.

The 1970s established the reputation of writers such as Alice Munro, Rudy Wiebe, Robert Kroetsch, Jack Hodgins, Timothy Findley and Margaret Atwood. Writers such as Rudy Wiebe and Timothy Findley began to experiment with the forms and techniques of the novel. Rudy Wiebe's *Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) as well as Findley's *Not wanted on the Voyage* (1984) use innovative techniques of narration and narrators who are different from the

usual milieu. Their attempts to accommodate Canadians from different spheres and walks of life give a new dimension to Canadian literature making it more open and plural in its approaches. At the same time, this does not mean that the Canadian novel was a totally new product. It still very much followed the standard structure of the classic novels and like earlier works attempted to critique the Canadian society. Writers such as Margaret Atwood began to see their roles as responsible and conscious citizens actively participating in creating awareness of Canadian issues. Similarly, writers such as John Metcalf utilized phases of madness to depict the social concerns of the society. The new works also began to adopt ideas from the concepts of Marshal McLuhan and Harold Innis as well as began to nurture the sense of the past in the narratives.

The works also more and more were a reflection of the geographic and ethnic diversity of the country while portraying a sense of regionalism. Some illustrations of these are *Manawaka* of Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro's *Jubilee*, and Matt Cohen's *Salem*. Another popular theme that emerged in Canadian novels was the conflict or relationship between the urban and rural or city and town. Juan Butler's *Cabbagetown Diary*, (1970), and John Buell's *The Pyx*, (1959) were urban novels while Margaret Laurence's *Stone Angel* (1964) and Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are* (1978) were portraying town life. In this phase of Canadian writing, the protagonist moved from a patriarchal representation of a strong, self-reliant masculine adventurer to a man who was more meditative, caring and immature. One such early portrayal is that of Philip Bentley, in *As For Me and My House*. Similar representations can be

noticed in the characterization of David Canaan, the perturbed artist-hero of Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952); and George Stewart, the erudite-hero of MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959). Some of the works too portrayed an antihero who was a ruthless cad. One such example is Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.

The status of women also became a central concern of Canadian literature and more and more women began to pursue literary pursuits. Alice Munro with her linked stories and the bildungsroman form emerged as an important writer of the period. Feminist concerns and writers such as Margaret Laurence, Carol Shields, Marian Engel also increasingly influenced women writers, and Aritha Van Herk began to explore issues of feminist concern in their works such as *Hand Maid's Tale* (1985), *Small Ceremonies* (1976), *Bear* (1976), and *Judith* (1978) respectively. These works critiqued the male, gave positions that are more open to women, depicted the patriarchal power relationships and hinted at radical solutions of bonding with women. Some of the writing of this period was also political satires. The post 70s was a time when the novel began to become postmodern. Examples of this include George Bowering's *Burning Water* (1980), Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* (1977). Postmodern trends in Canadian writing had an emphasis on using the historical past and modifying the same as observed in the works Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977) and Margaret Atwood *Alias Grace* (1990). On the other hand, David Godfrey's *The New Ancestors* (1970), Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear*, (1973) and Jack Hodgins' *The Resurrection of Joseph*



*Bourne* (1979), drew from myth and background of oral literatures such as African, Native American, and Irish respectively. These writers used the structures of other sub-genres such as gothic romance or the western. Illustrations of these are Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976), and Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* (1969). Parallel to these literary developments other bodies of literature too such as pulp fiction, children's literature and popular fiction were burgeoning.

### **MARGARET LAURENCE: (1926-1987)**

Margaret Laurence (Jean Margaret Wemyss) was born in the prairie town of Neepawa, Manitoba in 1926. At a young age, she suffered the loss of her parents Verna Simpson Wemyss, and Robert Wemyss. Her aunt and her maternal grandfather nurtured Laurence. Her aunt, a teacher and librarian influenced Laurence's love of literature and of writing. Laurence had decided early in life to become a writer. Her first professional writing was in 1943, when she worked for the summer as a reporter for the local newspaper. In 1944, when she was studying at Winnipeg's United College (University of Winnipeg) she began to publish her stories and poems in Vox, the College newspaper. After graduation, she took up the job of a reporter for the Winnipeg Citizen. She, then married Jack Laurence, a civil engineer and in 1949, she along with her husband left for England and then subsequently moved to the British Protectorate of Somalia. During this period, Laurence wrote the novel, *This Side Jordan* (1960) and a number of short stories on African subjects that were later combined in to the collection, *The Tomorrow Tamer*

(1963). *This Side Jordan* received the Beta Sigma Phi award for the best first novel by a Canadian writer. This was followed by a critical study of Nigerian literature, *Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists 1952-1966* (1968).

The Laurences returned to Canada in 1957 but Margaret Laurence separated from her husband and moved to England, in 1962. During her stay there, she published her first four Manawaka books, *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966), *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969), and *A Bird in the House* (1970). Laurence, in 1966 was awarded her first Governor General's Award for fiction for the novel *A Jest of God* which was also adapted to the screen with the title, *Rachel, Rachel*. The critical acclaim and commercial success of her Manawaka novels, along with her essays and articles firmly established Margaret Laurence as one of the most important literary figures in Canada. Laurence in 1971 was named a Companion of the Order of Canada.

On her return to Canada in 1970s, Laurence completed *The Diviners* (1974), her fifth book in the Manawaka series. She was awarded the Governor General's Award for the second time as well as the erstwhile Molson Prize. She, subsequently, in 1976 published her book of essays, *Heart of a Stranger* (1976). Margaret Laurence died on January 5, 1987. She had also written stories for children; they are *Jason's Quest* (1970) *The Olden Days Coat* (1979), *Six Darn Cows* (1979), and *The Christmas Birthday Story* (1980). Posthumously her memoirs, *Dance on the Earth* (1987) was published.

**MARGARET ATWOOD: (1939- )**

Margaret Atwood is in a way the voice of Canada. She is a critic, poet and a fiction writer. She has about 40 books of different kinds—short fiction collections, novel, poetry collections, critical essays, social tracts and children's books. Her works have been translated and published in about 22 languages. Atwood was born in Ottawa in 1939 and spent much of her childhood in the Northern Quebec wild regions where her father, an entomologist conducted insect research for about eight months. Atwood spent much of her time in the wild reading books and began to write at the age of six. Much of her earlier work were poems and plays. In 1961, Atwood completed her bachelor's degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto. At the same time, she published a collection of poems, *Double Persephone* which was awarded the E.J. Pratt medal. She later won a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and enrolled at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts for her masters program. She graduated in 1962 and continued her studies at Harvard for a doctorate degree. She, however, did not complete her studies and at this point of time published her second volume of poetry, *The Circle Game*. This book won the Canadian Governor General's Award for poetry in 1966.

Margaret Atwood is a strong feminist writer dealing with the issues of victimization and marginalization of women in her novels. Some illustrations of such novels are *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), and her acclaimed *Alias Grace* (1996). Other novels include *Surfacing* (1972), *Life Before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981),

*The Robber Bride* (1993), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), and *The Penelopiad* (2005). In later years Atwood has been the recipient of various awards such as Ms. Magazine, Woman of the Year (1986) and YWCA Women of Distinction Award (1988).

Atwood being a social activist penned her involvement with Amnesty International in the work, *True Stories* (1981) a book of poetry and the novel, *Bodily Harm*. Atwood has been teaching at many universities in Canada, the U.S. and Australia. And has been an assistant professor of English at York University in Toronto. Atwood was a Writer-In-Residence at various universities such as the University of Toronto, University of Alabama at Tuscalossa, New York University and Macquarie University, Australia and Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. Margaret Atwood has also been consciously advocating for the rights of writers. She was the president of the Writers Union of Canada (1981-82) and president of International P.E.N. in Canada (1984-1986).

**Robertson Davies** (1913 - 1995). Davies is acknowledged as an outstanding essayist and brilliant novelist. His *Eros at Breakfast*, a one-act play won the 1948 Dominion Drama Festival Award for best Canadian play. *at Breakfast and Other Plays* and award-winning *Fortune, My Foe* were published in 1949; *At My Heart's Core*, a 3-act play based on the Strickland sisters, appeared in 1950.

His first 3 novels, later known as the Salterton trilogy, were *Tempest-Tost* (1951), *Leaven of Malice* (1954)-which won the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour - and *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958). "In 1970 Davies drew on Jungian psychology (a preoccupation which replaced his earlier interest in Freud) to

produce his best novel to date, *Fifth Business*. The novel casts characters in roles that roughly correspond to Jungian archetypes to show Davies's belief that things of the spirit are more important than worldly concerns. He built on the success of *Fifth Business* with 2 sequel novels (the 3 later known as The Deptford Trilogy): *The Manticore* (1972), a novel cast in the form of Jungian psychoanalysis which won the Governor General's Award for fiction, and *World of Wonders* (1975). A seventh novel satirizing academic life, *The Rebel Angels* was published in 1981 and *What's Bred in the Bone* in 1985. In 1983 Davies published *The Mirror of Nature*, an examination of 19th-century melodrama. Other novels include *The Lyre of Orpheus* (1988), *Murder and Walking Spirits* (1991) and *The Cunning Man* (1994). Published posthumously in 1996 *The Merry Heart* is a selection of speeches, reminiscences, parodies, book reviews and essays.” ([www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com))

**George Bowering** (1935 - ). Bowering is one of the foremost Canadian writers of his generation. He had, with Frank Davey, David Dawson, James Reid, and Fred Wah studied the new poetics of Creeley, Duncan and Olson, and founded the poetry newsletter *Tish*. But this does not mean that he is an imitator of the Black Mountain School of poetry.

“A prolific writer, whose poetry, both lyric and extended, seeks to capture flux in the rhythms of its open structures, and whose fiction seeks to subvert realist conventions through self-conscious textual invention, Bowering has published over 40 books. A witty sense of play animates his vision in them

all. His poetry includes *Rocky Mountain Foot* (1969) and *The Gangs of Kosmos* (1969), for which he won his first Gov Gen's Award; *The Catch* (1976), *Selected Poems: Particular Accidents* (1980), *West Window* (1982), *Kerrisdale Elegies* (1984), *Delayed Mercy and Other Poems* (1987) and *Urban Snow* (1991).” His *A Short Sad Book* (1977), *Burning Water* (1980), a novel about George Vancouver's voyages of discovery, for which he won his second Governor General Award, and *Caprice* (1987) are outstanding achievements.

His most recent publications include the historical metafiction *Shoot!* (1994), and his collection of short fiction in 10 years, *The Rain Barrel* (1994). He has also published 5 collections of critical essays: *A Way with Words* (1982), *The Mask in Place* (1983), *Craft Slices* (1985), *Errata* (1988), and *Imaginary Hand* (1988). *Burning Water* remains his finest novel, not least for the way it insists on the emotional integrity of its characters even as it simultaneously insists that we read them as fictional constructs. Similarly, *Kerrisdale Elegies*, a sharp and witty but finally profoundly moving homage and critique of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, stands as Bowering's finest extended poem.

([www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com))

**Timothy Findlay** (1930-2002). His first two novels, *The Last of the Crazy People* (1967) and *The Butterfly Plague* (1969), were rejected by Canadian publishers and were eventually published in Britain. This all changed, however, with *The Wars* (1977). Published to great critical acclaim, Findley's third novel went on to win the Governor General's Award for fiction and was adapted for

film in 1981. Since then he has published five more novels, each helping to establish his reputation as one of Canada's most popular and beloved novelists. Famous Last Words (1981) became another bestseller for Findley. Set during World War Two, this complex and thrilling novel of political intrigue has Hugh Selwyn Mauberley as one of its central characters.

The fifth novel by Timothy Findley, Not Wanted on the Voyage (1986), remains one of his most popular books ever and is a creative retelling of the biblical story of Noah and his wife and their journey on the ark. Findley's next novel, The Telling of Lies, was published in 1989 and went on that year to win the prestigious Edgar Award for mystery writing. This success was followed by another bestseller, *Headhunter* (1993), a dark and futuristic novel in which the protagonist, Lilah Kemp, accidentally releases Kurtz from page 92 of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and then must try to track and recapture Kurtz before he wreaks too much havoc on the city of Toronto.

Findley's 1995 bestselling novel, *The Piano Man's Daughter* (1995), is set in Ontario and spans from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. It is a remarkably moving and memorable family saga that asks profound questions about the nature of time, family, history, and madness. This was followed in 1996 by the novella *You Went Away*. In the spring of 1997, Findley's two collections of short fiction, *Dinner Along the Amazon* (1984) and *Stones* (1988) were supplemented by a third, entitled *Dust to Dust*.

*Pilgrim* (1999) tells the story of a seemingly immortal man winds up in a Swiss psychiatric hospital in 1915. His doctor is none other than Carl Jung, and he must grapple with the startling content he finds in his patient's journal. Findley's final novel, published in 2001, is *Spadework* and it is a mystery novel. (www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com)

**Carol Shields** Carol Warner (Shields), the vibrant and much loved Canadian writer was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1935. She began writing early as her parents and teachers encouraged her. After finishing high school in Oak Park she went to Hanover College in Indiana and then to the University of Exeter. While in England, she met Donald Shields who was on a graduate fellowship there whom she married. In 1968, the couple moved to Ottawa and Carol Shields published her first volume of poetry *Others* in 1972 and two years later another volume *Intersect*. When Shields finished her MA thesis on Susanna Moodie, she realized that much of the material that she had was too speculative to use in a thesis and she utilized it to write her first novel *Small Ceremonies* (1976). This novel, which explores the genre of biography and its limitations, paved the way for later works like *The Stone Diaries*. *Small Ceremonies* won an award from the Canadian Authors' Association. In 1975, she spent a year in France where she wrote her next novel, *The Box Garden* in which the principal character is the sister of the protagonist in *Small Ceremonies*. Her third novel *Happenstance* was published in 1980 and was followed by *A Fairly Conventional Woman*. Both the novels centre on a period of separation that the Shields couple had to undergo and their different



experiences. These companion novels were later republished together in 1991 as *Happenstance*, the two parts of which are called *The Husband's Story* and *The Wife's Story*. *Various Miracles* (1985) is a collection of short stories and Shields experimented post-modern techniques in her next novel *Swann* (1987). *Swann* was shortlisted for the Governor General's award and won an Arthur Ellis Award for the best Canadian mystery novel.

Another collection of short stories *The Orange Fish* (1989) followed *Swann*. *A Celibate Season* (1991), a novel co-authored with Blanche Howard further explores the theme of *Happenstance*. *Departures and Arrivals* (1990) and *Anniversary* (1998) co-authored with Dave Williamson are her important plays. *The Republic of Love* (1992) is a romantic story about two people caught up in the meaninglessness of modern life who gravitate towards one another and of their experiences of companionship. *The Stone Diaries* (1993) is acclaimed to be her best novel, in which she uses many realistic devices like photographs, a family tree, letters, recipes, newspaper clippings and even chronological chapter headings. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize and the Governor General's Award and was short-listed for the Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. *Larry's Party* (1997) was nominated for several awards including the Giller Prize and the novel went on to win the Orange Prize for fiction.

*Dressing Up for the Carnival* (2001) is a collection of diverse short stories of Shields. With Marjorie Anderson she edited two collections of essays by Canadian women writers namely, *Dropped Threads: What We Aren't Told*

(2001) and *Dropped Thread 2: More of What We Aren't Told* (2003). In 2001, she published her much acclaimed biography of Jane Austen for which she won the Charles Taylor Prize for literary non-fiction. Shields' final novel *Unless* (2002) achieved both critical acclaim and popular success and was nominated for the Booker Prize.

In 1998, she was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Officer of the Order of Canada, and in 2002 she entered the highest level of that Order as a Companion. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, Carol Shields succumbed to illness in her house in British Columbia. By the time, she had served as professor of English and creative writing in several Canadian Universities (most extensively at the University of Manitoba and as Chancellor of the University of Winnipeg). Shields' success is undoubtedly linked with what broadcaster Eleanor Wachtel has called her "particular kind of humanity." She was never a militant feminist writer but was always interested in the lives of women.

**Alice Munro** Alice Munro, the three time winner of the prestigious Governor General's Award for fiction is popularly known for her short stories that investigate the undercurrents of human relationships through the ordinary events of daily life. She has been popularly called "the Canadian [Chekhov](#)." Alice Munro was born in Wingham, Ontario on July 10, 1931. In 1951, she married James Munro and in 1963, they moved to Victoria and started Munro's Books, which remains one of the best bookstores in Vancouver Island.

She began writing in her teens and published her first story in 1950 while studying in Western Ontario University. Alice Munro has so far published one

novel, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), and a few collections of short stories like *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1976), *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Friend of My Youth* (1990), and *Open Secrets* (1994). In 2006, she announced her retirement from writing and published two books, *Carried Away: A Selection of Stories* and *The View from Castle Rock*.

The reputation of Alice Munro as a brilliant short story writer goes beyond the borders of Canada. With one novel and a few short stories, she has established herself as a pioneering voice among Canadian fiction writers. The strength of her fiction arises partially from its vivid sense of regional focus—most of her stories being set in Huron County, Ontario. It is sometimes remarked that Munro's fiction is nearer to autobiography than fiction and her themes have often been the dilemmas of adolescent girls coming to terms with families and small towns.

Three of Munro's story collections, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, and *The Progress of Love* have won the Governor General's Award for fiction, and *Who Do You Think You Are?* was also short-listed for the Booker Prize. In 1995, *Open Secrets* received the W.H. Smith Award. Stories by Alice Munro have also been among the most popular ever published in prestigious periodicals like *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. She is also the recipient of the Canadian Booksellers Association International Book Year Award for *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971),

The Canada-Australia Literary Prize (1977), and the first winner of the Marian Engel Award (1986).

**Rudy Wiebe** Rudy Henry Wiebe is one of Canada's most known authors and one of the most widely critiqued. He was born on October 4, 1934, in an isolated farm community of about 250 people in a rugged but lovely region near Fairholme, Saskatchewan. Wiebe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956 and in the same year, his short-story "The Power" was chosen by Earley Birney to appear in *New Voices: Canadian University Writing of 1956*. His M.A. thesis was the manuscript of his first novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962). Many conservative ministers and Mennonites in small towns objected to the novel's frank and at times unflattering portrait of community life, and there was considerable opposition to the book. As a result, Wiebe had to resign his position as the editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. *First and Vital Candle* (1966), *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), *The Scorched-wood People* (1977), *The Mad Trapper* (1980), *My Lovely Enemy* (1983), *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994) and *Sweeter Than All the World* (2001) are Wiebe's important novels.

Rudy Wiebe, the two time winner of the Governor General's Award for fiction (for *Temptations of Big Bear* in 1973 and *Discovery of Strangers* in 1994) is quite renowned as a novelist with nine novels to his credit, starting with *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) till *Sweeter Than All the World* (2001). However, he has made his mark in different other genres as well; has authored a play, several non-fictional pieces and a considerable number of short stories

and essays on a variety of distinctly Canadian subjects ranging from issues related to Mennonite settlers to First Nations people. *Far As the Eye Can See* (1977) is the only play by Wiebe, aptly called the master of 'giant fiction'. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (1998) which he co-authored with Yvonne Johnson, is one of the most popular non-fictional works in Canadian literature. Wiebe has so far published four volumes of his short stories, which are: *Where Is The Voice Coming From?* (1974), *Alberta/A Celebration* (1979), *The Angel of the Tar Sands and Other Stories* (1982) and *River of Stone: Fictions and Memories* (1995). *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (1989), a series of essays on the Arctic landscape, exemplifies Wiebe's versatility. *Chinook Christmas* (1992) and *Hidden Buffalo* (2003) are Wiebe's contributions to Children's literature. Wiebe's essays on a wide variety of subjects have been published in various journals and magazines. His latest work is a memoir *Of This Earth: A Mennonite Boyhood in the Boreal Forest* published in 2006.

Wiebe was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2001. For thirty years, Wiebe had been teaching literature and creative writing at colleges and universities in Canada, the United States of America and Germany. At present, retired from teaching, he continues to reside in Edmonton with his wife and children. His former students include such accomplished writers as Myrna Kostash, Aritha van Herk, Thomas Wharton and Katherine Govier. Artistically and intellectually, Wiebe is adventurous and rigorously exploratory. Each successive major work sees him striving to move beyond his previous restraints

and to negotiate a new relationship with his readers. He has experimented with a variety of styles and innovative narrative techniques and has moulded the English language into new, powerfully expressive shapes that reflect the rhythms, lexical features and syntax of other languages.

**Jack Hodgins** Born in 1938, Jack Hodgins, one of the most admired Canadian novelists and short story writers grew up in Merville, Vancouver. In the University of British Columbia, Hodgins took a course in creative writing taught by Earle Birney the renowned poet and Chaucer scholar. This was a remarkable experience, which validated Hodgins' dreams of becoming a published writer.

Hodgins has never extensively departed in his fiction from the setting of Vancouver Island, the fairly circumscribed region where he was born and spent his childhood and young manhood. His first volume of short stories—a group of loosely linked stories—*Spit Delaney's Island* was published in 1976 and his first novel, *The Invention of the World*, the best known of Hodgins' longer fictions and the most representative of his writing came out just a year later. The publication of *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* (1979) marked a turning point in Jack Hodgins' career and confirmed him as one of the most important new Canadian writers of the 1970s. *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* won the 1979 Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction. *Barclay Family Theatre* (1980) is a collection of short stories and in 1983 he published a collection of excerpts from unpublished and unfinished works entitled *Beginnings: samplings from a long apprenticeship: novels which were imagined, written, re-written, submitted*. *A Passion for Narrative* (1994) is a successful guide to writing

fiction. *Left Behind in Squabble Bay* (1988), a children's book and *Over Forty in Broken Hill* (1992), about his own travels in Australia are some of his popular works. He also published a few more novels *The Honourary Patron* (1987), *Innocent Cities* (1990), *The Macken Charm* (1995) and *Broken Ground* (1998). *Broken Ground* contains the most powerful descriptions of the First World War since Timothy Findley's *The Wars*. *Broken Ground* is set in 1922 on a Vancouver Island soldiers' settlement and details the lives of the people there and of the soldiers who are unable to escape the haunting memories of their experiences overseas.

Jack Hodgins's fiction has won the Governor General's Award, the President's Medal from the University of Western Ontario, the Gibson's First Novel Award, the Eaton's B.C. Book Award, the Commonwealth Literature Prize (regional), the CNIB Torgi award, the Canada-Australia Prize, the Drummer General's Award, and the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and has twice been long-listed for the IMPAC/Dublin award. In 1999, Hodgins was elected to the Royal Society of Canada. In 2004, he received an honorary D.Litt from the University of Victoria. He is the 2006 recipient of the Terasen Lifetime Achievement Award for an outstanding literary career in British Columbia and the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Literary Excellence. Some of his short stories have been televised or adapted for radio and the stage. A few of the stories and novels have been translated into other languages, including Dutch, Hungarian, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Russian, Italian, Polish, and Norwegian. Jack Hodgins was a Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa

and then worked in the Department of Writing at the University of Victoria, and was a full professor at the time he retired.

**Sandra Birdsell** Sandra Birdsell was born in Manitoba Winnipeg as the fifth of the 11 children of her Russian Mennonite mother and Métis father. Like most of her fictional characters, Birdsell has always lived on the prairies, settling first in Winnipeg and later Regina. Her fiction investigates the lives of small-town characters, especially women. In addition to fiction, Sandra Birdsell has written plays, radio dramas, and scripts for television and film. She has taught creative writing and served as writer-in-residence at universities across Canada

Sandra Birdsell's first novel, *The Missing Child* (1989), is set in Agassiz, which is on the verge of being flooded by a melting underground glacier. This resonant, multi-voiced novel, which combines a naturalistic narrative with moments of magic realism, was awarded the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada first novel award. In *The Chrome Suite* (1992), middle-aged scriptwriter Amy Barber reconstructs the events of her past in an effort to understand her feelings of dissatisfaction with her life, as she drives from Toronto back home to Manitoba

Sandra Birdsell draws on her own Russian Mennonite heritage in *The Russländer* (2001). This epic family story is set in the chaotic and violent upheaval of early-20th-century Russia. The life-changing and devastating events are remembered from a child's perspective, that of Katya Vogt, an elderly woman now living in Winnipeg. Birdsell continues the Vogt family saga in her *Children of the Day*. Sara Vogt lives in rural Manitoba, the wife of Métis



Oliver Vandal and a mother of 10 children. The novel takes place during one day, in June 1953, a day when internal and external pressures build and threaten to destroy this family. As in her other works, it is Birdsell's careful attention to specific details and individual voices that once again allows readers to connect with and care about these characters in this particular place and time.

In *The Russländer* (2001), Katherine (Katya) Vogt is an old woman living in Winnipeg, but the story of how she and her family came to Canada begins in Russia in 1910, on a wealthy Mennonite estate. Here they lived in a world bounded by the prosperity of their landlords and by the poverty and disgruntlement of the Russian workers who toil on the estate. But in the wake of the First World War, the tensions engulfing the country begin to intrude on the community, leading to an unspeakable act of violence. In the aftermath of that violence, and in the difficult years that follow, Katya tries to come to terms with the terrible events that befell her and her family. In lucid, spellbinding prose, Birdsell vividly evokes time and place, and the unease that existed in a county on the brink of revolutionary change. *The Russländer* is a powerful and moving story of ordinary people who lived through extraordinary times.

*Children of the Day* is set in Manitoba in June 1953, this is the story of a single day in a large rural family. Sara is Mennonite and Oliver is Métis - and their marriage is volatile. Seen through the eyes of many of their ten children,

Children of the Day loosely follows her previous novel *The Ruslander*, and is based in part on the true story of Sandra Birdsell's own family.

**Aritha Van Herk** Aritha van Herk, the much-acclaimed Canadian writer was born in 1954 in Wetaskiwin, near Edmonton, Alberta to Dutch immigrant parents. Van Herk grew up bilingually, speaking English and Dutch and was educated at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton where she studied Canadian literature and Creative Writing with Rudy Wiebe as her mentor. She was a voracious reader right from the early days of her career and 1977, as a graduate student at the University of Alberta, van Herk transformed a short story into a novel *When Pigs Fly*—a reflection of her own realistic experiences in a farming community—for her Master's thesis with Rudy Wiebe as the supervisor. The novel later retitled *Judith* won the Seal Books First Novel Award, focusing national and international attention on her. Her second novel, *The Tent Peg* (1981), is one of the few fictional works about the Canadian north written from a woman's perspective. It is the story of a young woman, a camp cook, who infiltrates an all-male geologist's camp in the northwest territories of Canada.

In 1986, she published *No Fixed Address: An Amorous Journey*, which was nominated for the Governor General's Award for fiction. The novel is about a woman on move, challenging the boundaries of the male dominated space. *Places Far From Ellesmere: A Geografictione* (1990) examines the conjunction of geography, autobiography and reading from the perspective of Anna Karenina, Tolstoy's tragic heroine. *Invisible Ink: Cryptofrictions* (1991),

best exemplifies the author's continued interest in ficto-criticism. *A Frozen Tongue* (1992), is a collection of van Herk's essays and ficto-criticism. *Restlessness* (1998) explores the melancholia of travel and the temptations of homesickness. In 2001, she published *Maverics: An Incurable History of Alberta*. It represents a foray outside her own specialization in contemporary literature and creative writing. It won the Grant Mac Ewan Author's Award for Alberta Writing in 2002.

Aritha van Herk lives in Calgary and continues active work in education, culture and international discourse. She is a Professor and currently teaches Creative Writing at the University of Calgary. All her works feature strong women who try to escape from the roles that the patriarchal society has assigned them. Her novels set out to question and to trouble gender stereotypes. Besides, the search for a place that can be called "home" is a significant theme in most of her works in which the Canadian wilderness plays a metaphorical role.

#### **CANADIAN POETRY:**

After World War II, new movements as well as new journals in poetry increased. One of the new works was John Sutherland's poetry magazine *Northern Review*. Other new magazines that came up were *Fiddlehead* from Fredericton, *Tamarack Review* and *Here and Now* from Toronto, and *Contemporary Verse* from Vancouver. Old journals such as *The Canadian Forum* too continued and thus helped in the growth of new poets. Along with old established writers such as Patrick Anderson, P.K. Page, Louis Dudek, and Irving

Layton, new poets such as Anne Wilkinson, Wilfred Watson, Robert Finch, A.G. Bailey, Elizabeth Brewster, Fred Cogswell, Miriam Waddington and Roy Daniells began to make their mark in this period.

In the beginning of the 70s “Canadian poetry” became a writing that tried to question the issues of Canadian identity and nationalism. Along with the emergence of the poetry of Margaret Atwood, Dennis Lee, Leonard Cohen, and others there was also an explosion of poetry publishing due to the establishment and development of Canada Council for the Arts. During this period, the poetry that was both oppositional to and celebratory of the traditions of Canadian poetry emerged. A good example of this kind of poetry is the work of Earle Birney, whose poem “David” is a classic of Canadian modernism and yet maintains a traditional attitude. The poets of this period established a central set of poetic and cultural concerns. A period of Canadian modernity set into the poetic forms. Poets such as A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott worked to re-envisage Canada’s distinctive landscape as a way of expressing a greater independence for the Canadian nation that had still not freed itself from the shackles of British policies. On the other hand, one must understand that the poetry of this period was not a homogenous mass and the pattern of poetry was a collection of different poetic and cultural ideas. There is a school of thought which says that Canadian poets are not very much anxious about the “question” of Canadian identity as much as their desire to explode the very notion of a Canadian poetry, attempting to think through every imaginable way of conceiving what Canada might be. Along with this type of growth, poetry

was also influenced by Canada's changing demographics and increasing racial and sexual identities.

A.J. M. Smith's introduction to the first edition of The Book of Canadian Poetry (1943) was an influential work delineating the beginnings of modern Canadian poetry. He described two schools of Canadian poetry-the nationalist and the cosmopolitan-and praised the cosmopolitan school as the better of the two and as the true source of modernism in Canada. Yet another group that began the trends of modern poetry was the Montreal group with poets such as Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, Louis Dudek, P.K. Page, and Miriam Waddington. These poets began little magazines and presses, for poetry publications. Smith and Scott themselves both profited from this endeavour and Smith went on to publish his first book, *News of the Phoenix*, in 1943, while Scott published Overture, in 1945.

#### **EARLE BIRNEY: 1904-1995**

Earle Birney was born in 1904 and raised in Calgary. Being an only child, much of his time was spent in reading. He also spent considerable time in the wilderness learning to climb mountains, hunt fossils, and cutting trails. After high school, he went to the University of British Columbia where he graduated in English. By the time of his graduation, he had held various jobs such as a house painter, a salesman and a writer.

In 1926, he went to Toronto for his masters where the Marxist Leninist ideology influenced him. Although Earle Birney registered for his doctoral program at

Berkeley in 1927, he did not complete it and began to teach in the English Department at the University of Utah. In 1934, he went to London on a Royal Society fellowship. Later by working as a tramp freighter, he crossed the Atlantic and went to London, where he worked for the Independent Labour Party and spent time at British Library. From here he travelled to Norway to meet Trotsky and then to Berlin. In Berlin, he was arrested by the Gestapo for not saluting a Nazi parade. He came back to Canada in 1936 and completed his doctorate at the University of Toronto.

From his early days, Birney had written poems and when Ryerson Press published *David and Other poems* (1942), he was awarded the Governor General's medal. He later served in the Canadian army and over the course of his commissions in England, Belgium and Holland, he produced his best poetry. He took up a professor's post at British Columbia University and served there from 1946 onwards. His works include a black comic novel, *Turvey* (1949) and numerous volumes of poetry. Few worthy of mention are *Now is Time* (1945), *Strait of Anian* (1948), *Near False Creek Mouth* (1964), and *The Mammoth Corridors* (1980). In 1965, he once again moved to Toronto where he took up the position of writer in residence. His other publications during this period were *Rag & Bone Shop* (1970), *What's So Big About Green?* (1973), *The Bear on the Delhi Road* (1973), *The Rugging and the Moving Times* (1976) *Big Bird in The Bush* (1978, short stories), *Copernican Fix* (1985), *Ghost in the Wheels* (1977) and *Last Makings* (1991). He died in 1995.

## **AL PURDY: (1918-2000)**

Al Purdy along with Milton Acorn, Alden Nowlan and Patrick Lane formed a group of important Canadian poets. These poets had little formal education and hailed from Canada's working-class culture. Al Purdy grew up in Trenton, Ontario and was educated at Albert College, Belleville, but did not attend university. During the Depression, he undertook a number of manual works and during World War II he served in the RCAF and later on in 1950s, he worked as a casual labourer in Ontario. By the early 1960s, Purdy was an established poet and was able to support himself by doing poetry-reading sessions and free-lance writing. He also took up the post of writer-in-residence at various colleges. Being an extensive traveler much of his writings are endowed with a breadth of vision--*North of Summer* (1967), (based on a trip to the Arctic), and *Hiroshima Poems* (1972) (based on a trip to Japan). He also indulged in writing in different genres like radio and TV plays, book reviews, travelogues and feature writing. It is, however, for his poetry that he is recognized in Canada. The evolution of his verse shows an interesting progression from the conservatively traditional lyrics of his first collection, *The Enchanted Echo* (1944), to the open, colloquial and contemporary style of his later years.

Purdy is a poet who had a great passion for reading and he tried to get into his poetry a sense of Canada's past and the changes that were part of the Canadian atmosphere. Some examples of this type of historical documented poems are 'The Runner', 'The Country North of Belleville', 'My Grandfather's Country', 'The Battlefield of Batoche' and the long verse cycle for radio that

he wrote about the Loyalist heritage, 'In Search of Owen Roblin' (1974). Some of the recognized and successful Purdy's poetry collections are *All the Annettes* (1962), *The Cariboo Horses* (1965, awarded the Governor General's Award), *Sex & Death* (1973), *The Stone Bird* (1981) and *Piling's Blood* (1984). In 1993, Purdy published his autobiography, *Reaching for the Beaufort Sea*.

#### **THE CANADIAN SHORT STORY:**

Raymond Knister's anthology that was published in 1928 was the first step in establishing the genre of the Canadian Fiction. In the introduction to the volume, Raymond Knister (1899-1932) apologized for the lack of originality in the works of writers and pointed out the commercialized structure of Canadian literature. Some of the significant works in the anthology were E.W. Thomson's 'The Privilege of the Limits' (1891), the earliest story in the collection; Stephen Leacock's 'The Great Election in Missinaba County' from *Sunshine Sketches* (1912); and a story by Charles G.D. Roberts, 'A Gentleman in Feathers' (1924). A much more effective writer of the period was Morley Callaghan. Callaghan's stories were simple, lucid and unemotional. In most of his stories, emotions are poignant but are understated. A majority of the stories are also works depicting the experiences of the impoverished rural masses. A little later the scene of the short story was strengthened by the middle aged Ethel Wilson (1888-1980) whose stories did not receive great acclaim. Her most popular works are the collections, *Mrs. Golightly and Other Stories*, (1961). Some of her stories such as 'The Window', and 'I Just Love



Dogs' have multiple narrations and are emotionally taut. Her stories also have different settings such as Egypt, Central Europe, etc.

A writer who follows in the footsteps of Callaghan is Hugh Garner (1913-79). His stories appeared in Canadian magazines such as *The Canadian Forum*, *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night*, and *The Canadian Home Journal*. Almost all his short stories were delightfully successful owing to his ability as a good storyteller. Garner was seen as a writer who exposed the injustice, tyranny and cruelty of modern life. His stories dealt such as 'Another Time, Another Place, Another Me', 'Hunky' dealt with the working class while stories like 'How I Became an Englishman', and 'The Stretcher Bearers' were portrayals of the Spanish Civil War. Some of his other stories, namely, 'A Trip for Mrs. Taylor' 'Our Neighbours the Nuns' described life in the city.

A much earlier writer who still deserves to be mentioned in this section because of his trend-setting concept of realism is F.P. Grove. Frederick Philip Grove (1879-1948) though a well-known novelist was not perceived as a great short story writer. His best work was 'Snow' and this particular story is one of the finest illustrations of the Canadian geography, the harsh landscape, the indomitable nature, the smallness and insignificance of humankind. Moreover, the story influenced a number of writers in the later period such as Sinclair Ross and W. O. Mitchell. F.P. Grove also penned *Over Prairie Trails* (1922), a collection of seven sketches set in the region of Manitoba. Most of Grove's stories appear in *Tales from the Margin* (1971), based on a manuscript

collection made and titled by Grove himself in 1929. Although a little younger to Grove, Sinclair Ross's short stories were published only in the 60s. The two collections published were *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories* (1968) and *The Race and Other Stories* (1982). In Ross's writing, the prairie becomes a character and the stories constantly reveal the conflict between man and nature. Many of his stories are also about failing human relationships and the inability of man to overcome fate. His best-anthologized short stories are 'The Lamp at Noon', 'A Field of Wheat', and 'The Painted Door'. His stories unlike his novel are more conservative in plot and structure.

Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) was born in England and he produced some short stories that examine the human victory under great stress and tribulation. His best work is 'The Bravest Boat', which is anthologized frequently. Another realist short fiction writer of this period was W.O. Mitchell (b.1914). One well known short story of his is 'The Owl and the Bens'.

The short story in the 1960s moved away from the realist tradition and began to combine realism with other forms such as myth and allegory. One good illustration of this is Hugh Hood (b.1928) whose stories in *Flying a Red Kite* (1962) are emblematic. The stories fuse a sense of symbolism into common things such as the red kite in the story, 'Flying a Red Kite'. Hugh Hood's other works are, *Around the Mountain* (1967), a sequence of stories set in Montreal and a set of cyclical stories, namely *None Genuine Without This Signature* (1980) and *August Nights* (1985). Another experimental writer of the period was Ray Smith (b. 1941). His collections *Cape Breton is the Thought Control*

*Center of Canada* (1969) and *Lord Nelson's Tavern* (1974) are collections that use innovative forms of narration. His stories also have a strong sense of the colloquial and are tinged with humour. Yet another significant writer of the period is John Metcalf (b.1938), who came to Canada, from England in 1962. His three collections *The Lady Who Sold Furniture*, (1970); *The Teeth of My Father*, (1975); and *Adult Entertainment*, (1986), have not been greatly received. He is known for his position as an editor and anthologist, of the series *New Canadian Stories* and *Best Canadian Stories*.

Blending a mosaic of American, Canadian and French-Canadian are the works of Clark Blaise (b.1940), His collections, *A North American Education* (1973), *Tribal Justice* (1974), and *Resident Alien* (1986) contain stories that document haunting memories, conflicting relationships and lustfulness. A contrast to these realist writers is the work of Margaret Laurence (1926-1986). Laurence's collection *The Tomorrow-Tamer* (1963) is not generally part of the canon due to the alienness of location and experience. Her second collection, *A Bird in the House* (1970), is more popular and contains a set of eight linked stories that are thought to be semi-autobiographical. The stories explore the growth of Vanessa MacLeod, and a commonly anthologized story from this collection is 'The Loons' which is a sensitive poignant story about the fading away of the past and is symbolic of the disappearance of the First Nations people. Stories from the Celtic background are the forte of Alistair MacLeod (b.1936). His collections, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*, and *As Birds Bring Forth*

*the Sun* (1986), are stories that discuss the trades of the sea and life of mariners.

The short story of the 70s became a much-acclaimed genre and the writers too began to be recognized internationally. The new crop of writers included a host of women writers such as Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Audrey Thomas, and Sandra Birdsell. Of these, the most prominent are Mavis Gallant and Alice Munro for they have foregrounded the short story as an extremely popular genre.

Mavis Gallant (b.1922) is settled in Paris and her short stories are known for the control in language, focus on immigrants and portrayal of unfamiliar surroundings. Her stories have been unswerving in subject matter and setting for a number of years'. Her first collection, *The Other Paris* (1956) depicted the rootless life of humans in urban settings such as Paris, Quebec, and the French Riviera. Some of the stories worth mentioning are 'Wing's Chips', 'Deceptions of Marie-Blanche', 'The Legacy', 'A Day Like Any Other', 'The Picnic', and 'Autumn Day'.

*Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968) was Alice Munro's first short-story collection. Immediately after publication, she received the Governor General's Award for fiction in 1968. Her stories in the beginning were about ordinary people living in difficult circumstances. Munro has since produced nine more collections of short stories. Her earlier works such as *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), and *The Progress of Love* (1986) are notable for the skillful mastery of

narration. Munro also experiments with the form to make it more spatial rather than linear and comments on the fact that her stories could be read from any point as they have a circular dimension to them. Her protagonists are generally women, who see the life not as lives just to live but more so as lives that need to be queried, probed and analyzed. Her stories also carry many points of view namely the child, the teenager, the adult woman, the daughter and the mother. She is also a storyteller, who has ambiguously connected the short stories in two of her collections, *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Who Do You Think You Are* to be read more as novels. Her later stories in the collections, *Open Secrets* (1994), *Selected Stories* (1996), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001), *No Love Lost* (2003), and *Runaway* (2004) are works that deal with a greater degree of complexity in narration and plot. The stories also reveal an epiphanic moment and an increased awareness of the individual self. The use of digressions and flashbacks in the story lend it a postmodern effect.

Audrey Thomas (b. 1935) is a writer who is incessantly examining the experiences of women in different relationships. Her collections include *Ten Green Bottles* (1967) *Ladies and Escorts* (1977), and *Goodbye Harold, Good Luck* (1986). She is a writer who uses the metafictional narrative forms and deconstructs language thereby building new modes of communication. Another writer who has followed Munro's tradition is Sandra Birdsell (b. 1924). Her short story collection *Night Travellers* (1982) is a series of stories linked by setting (the fictional Manitoban town of Agassiz) and by characters (the numerous

Lafreniere family). Birdsell's *Ladies of the House* (1984), uses a child narrator who finds her daily world a traumatic experience.

The contemporary short story has shifted from the strains of realism and landscape to a sense of inner self. The modern stories focus more on psychological truths with illuminating moments of truth. In contemporary Canada, the short story has become a specialized genre skillfully used by various writers to forge a new identity to Canadian literature.

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