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**Women in the Arts  
in Canada**

*by Sandra Gwyn*

*A monograph based on essays by*

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*with a Foreword by Jean Le Moyne*

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## FOREWORD

"Nevertheless", St. Paul wrote in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (Chapter 11, verse 11), "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Mankind exists through the reciprocity of the sexes; neither male nor female can be explained except in terms of, and by reference to, each other. Hence it follows that any problem that touches women must also ultimately affect men; a lack of equilibrium in the relationship of the sexes not only violates the harmony of the couple (the primary unit of human existence) but also does injury to both its participants. If the plight of women leaves something to be desired, given the reciprocity of the sexes, that of men is also necessarily defective. All this takes place in a bipolar context.

The facts of life and the need for intelligent discussion and for effective action, however, fully justify isolating the case of women and treating it apart from this context. Indeed, we find ourselves obliged to do so, being as we are in our individual capacities partial representatives of our species, capable only of visualizing ourselves either as men or as women. The consciousness of the individual can only comprehend what concerns him in person. But the common consciousness of a human couple, as such, operates on another level and is of a different order; it functions on the plane of emotional intuitions and sexual expectations, and resembles in the intermittency of its operation the evanescence of poetical inspiration. In the intervals separating these moments of corporate consciousness, the two partners wait for each other, accepting a darkness analogous to that experienced by mystics, the only tangible aspect of which is the humdrum of everyday life.

The human pair, made up of a man and a woman, is necessarily an entity with constantly shifting outlines; but it is one in which the participants nevertheless find an immediate and enduring community. As the concrete expression of an universal relationship, it is necessarily imperfect. Yet the community of the partners transcends them as mere individuals, for it typifies the fundamental pattern of human existence, the couple. The limitations of this community of two are the outcome, in part, of the limited possibilities for self-realization that each couple possesses, and, in part, of the limited knowledge we have, both personally and collectively, of the physiological and psychological elements that make up each individual. Thus, we are brought back again and again to the concept of mankind as a duality, and it is with this complex concept of man that we must be ultimately concerned.

What is commonly called the feminine question is only one of the many aspects of the present state of human evolution. We have no more control over this particular element than we have over any of the other components of our existence in the world. Our capacity to understand and to act in this sphere is more or less proportional to the knowledge that we possess of our whole development and to the influence that we can exert upon it. And as yet we are far from taking the course of our own evolution into our hands.

Human evolution is an invention, and in every invention there are many things that escape the inventor. This is part of the creative process itself, part of the motivation that provides impetus for, and part of the circumstances that produce, the invention. There is no invention that is fully possessed or has perfect integrity. Such integrity would presuppose a transparency of the real which it is not the nature of reality to have. And the measure of man's liberty is the degree to which he himself and the objects that he views are transparent to his own intelligence. Humanity in the process of evolution invents itself, and invents itself as the couple. There is no ground for supposing that this invention has been influenced either by the conscious will or by the critical intellect and that, consequently, its imperfections are due either to conspiracy or to betrayal. The conspiracies and betrayals (and there have been many) are merely the epiphenomena, not the causes, of evolution -- its symptoms, not its impulse of origin.

The status of the male in the world is privileged, while that of the female, disadvantaged. We tend to attribute this inequality of the sexes to numerous empirical causes in our history, to former institutions and ways of life, themselves the products of empiricism. The sum total of causes thus identified represents a vast reserve of historical knowledge, yet one that is less than adequate to provide a basis for truly rational action. We are therefore still compelled to act empirically in our immediate situation, even though our empiricism is being gradually enlightened by an increasing mass of theoretical knowledge.

We cannot afford to sit idly by, expecting that the conditions in which we must act will become more favourable. I do not hesitate to say 'we must act', although very clearly the initiative in this case must come from women, partly because their contribution is absolutely indispensable and partly because they can expect little help from the majority of men. The doors of the male preserves must be forced open, both literally and figuratively speaking. And I dare speak of a common action to take into account a minority of men whose aspirations are attuned to those of women and who join women in their protest because they have the

same visceral awareness of the unbalanced relationship of the couple. They conspire with women to achieve justice, and at least, they impart intentionally a full dimension to women's aspirations. One point needs to be noted emphatically - there is an immense difference between solitary and unilateral action. If circumstances should compel women to act more or less on their own and induce us men to stand by uncommitted and to pass up our opportunity for useful intervention, they might well be tempted to act unilaterally, in the manner of soldiers or parsons. No doubt, the club they would form would be no less laughable than ours has been.

Considering the action that we envisage, what order of priorities should we follow? To my mind, the priorities in this case come down to one thing - an urgent need for thought.

It can be said that with the rarest exceptions (the importance of which has been vastly exaggerated both by men and by women to serve their own purposes), until recently (the beginning of the present century, more or less) thinking was an activity reserved for the male. Our world is a world interpreted, represented, managed, civilized, evaluated, exploited and structured by men. Society is conceived along exclusively masculine lines. The observation has often been made, and is still true to fact that throughout history, women have never been closely connected with ideas or taken an active part in their genesis or invention. Their relation to the realm of thought has always been passive, derivative, osmotic, second hand. The evolution of thought, from the earliest speculations of theology and metaphysics to the latest achievements of technology and mechanics, has been one initiated exclusively by men, although the practical results of this progress have been imposed upon women as well. Hardly imposed, in fact. It may be more accurate to speak of developments as sweeping women along irresistibly, with an impetus as powerful and compelling as the unalterable necessities of existence. Tribes, kingdoms, empires, republics -- churches, theologies, philosophical systems -- ethics, codes of law -- sciences and technology -- aesthetics and machines -- all are the prodigious erections and irresistible orgasms of the male intellect. Once more, there can be no question of a male conspiracy here, for men themselves have never escaped from the consequences of their own ideas, and remain to this day the prisoners of those imperfect modes of thought that are always necessarily theirs. There is no conspiracy to be sure, but a species condemned to compromise

as any evolving living being. It would be interesting to know why, of all the possible compromises that might bound human existence, man has chosen to accept this particular one. But the really interesting point of the situation lies in the fact that, of all species, man alone is potentially able to correct the compromises of his own evolution.

Because women have not participated directly in the elaboration of ideas, there is reason for saying that mankind still thinks only by halves, that the universe is only half thought out. Admittedly, this is a sweeping generalization; but my concern here is with broad generalities. I am speaking in terms of the tangible contributions, the great formal accomplishments of humanity, such as for instance Aristotle's Organum, Bach's Art of the Fugue, or Francis' turbine. Only that which is formal, only that which possesses its own finite and original form is fully revealed. Hence it follows that feminine thought, having barely exerted an occasional influence on the informal aspects of life, and then only by way of ephemeral improvisations or variations of masculine themes, is scarcely known to us. The intelligence of the sexes may well be equal, yet feminine thought cannot be reduced to a mere extension of the masculine. Femininity and masculinity, the two modes of incarnation of human intelligence, vary man's mode of perceiving reality.

We look forward to women contributing their share -- a share still lacking and urgently needed -- to original human thought. To be able to do so, they will have to extend to the utmost limit both their presence and efforts, and to exempt from their action no domain a priori. The harmony of the human couple can be based only on the synthesis of the two partners' thinking.

INTRODUCTION

"Culture is the domain in which women have best succeeded in asserting themselves... Because of women's marginal position in the world, men will turn to her when they strive through culture to go beyond the boundaries of their universe and gain access to something other than what they have known."

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex

Simone de Beauvoir's comments serve, not only as the text for this analysis of the record and role of women in the arts of Canada, but also as stage directions. With conscious precision, she has written, not that culture is the domain in which women have succeeded in asserting themselves but the one in which they have best succeeded. The distinction is crucial.

Beyond question, Canadian women have done better in the arts than in any other field of competitive activity. As Director of the National Gallery, Jean Boggs is the only woman in the world to head a major art institution. All three of Canada's professional ballet companies were founded by women, and, as for theatre, Yvette Brind'amour has played the same central role in establishing and developing Le Rideau Vert.

Their prominence as "arts activists" dates from the very beginning, when women were pioneers equally of the arts and of settlement itself. Marie de l'Incarnation writing from 17th century Quebec to her mother convent in France, Susanna Moodie roughing it in the Southern Ontario bush in the 1830's and Anna Leonowens, founding an art school in the bluff 19th century naval bastion of Halifax are removed in time but not in essential circumstance from Celia Franca, in the winter of 1950, crossing the country "in isolation and perishing cold" in search of enough dancers to form a national ballet company.

The Canadian environment itself made it possible, and indeed inevitable, that women could successfully assert themselves. In a cold colonial country, where men drew strength from the Calvinist and Jansenist ethics, the ladies (once God had been jovially prevailed upon to bless 'em) were left alone to nourish what were then known as "the finer things of life." And, by implication, the less important.

Much later, when the arts had at last been welcomed through the front door of the national life, women refused to slip self-effacingly out the back. They turned their genteel

chamber music clubs into tough-minded symphony committees; they helped little theatre groups flower into professional repertory companies; like Agnes Lefort in Montreal, and Dorothy Cameron in Toronto, they opened art galleries.

And yet, these feminine successes, to a degree, are less considerable than they appear. If women now are often at the top, part of the reason is that they were there first. As the critic Robert Fulford has put it, and bluntly, "Women are like Jews who become doctors instead of bankers. They have gone into fields which were open to them." Nevertheless, as administrators, critics, publicists, fund-raisers, directors and producers, women exert a massive influence upon what might be called the arts establishment. More than this, they constitute what Peter Dwyer, Director of the Canada Council, has termed "an important refining influence on Canadian society."

By grace of tenacity and hard work, Canadian women in the arts had achieved by 1970, to use another phrase of Dwyer's, "a half won victory." Still to be conquered is the gap between inspiration and execution, between producer and proselytizer, between, in the last analysis, interpreter and creator.

As interpreters - actresses, musicians, dancers - Canadian women have a proud record. As activists, administrators and spokesmen, their record is exceptional. But as creative artists - painters, sculptors, novelists, poets, playwrights and composers - their record, like that of women in most countries, is on the dull side of respectable. They have failed in the only aspect of the arts that ultimately matters.

Why? Is there an essential and immutable difference between male and female artistic creativity, as there is between male and female athletes. To put it plainly, is Genius (like God) a man?

Some would say yes. Many of them women. In a research paper on the role of women in the visual arts which she prepared for the Royal Commission, the art critic Elizabeth Kilbourn came to grips with the subject:

"One gallery director remarked: 'Creative energy is essentially sexual energy channelled into the arts', and this meant that a woman, whose sexuality is more intimately and totally a part of herself is torn between her two drives in relation to a man and to her work. To pursue this theme, certainly there is a very real sense in which a great artist must be ruthlessly and totally

selfish, to the degree that there can be a contradiction between being a great artist and a good parent or spouse. To fulfill his genius, there often has to be a self indulgence, a child-like demanding, a ruthlessness that makes the great artist less of a human being. It is not so easy for a woman as a man to exploit this immature side of genius. Women are by nature potentially less obsessive and less criminal about things external to themselves. Possibly this explains why, in the history of art, so few of the major creative innovators have been women. The history of painting in the last twenty years, for example, could be written without referring to any female artist who had an absolutely essential and fundamental role in creating the new styles of abstract expressionism, post-painterly abstraction, op, pop or hard-edge. Possibly, the woman artist's talent lies mostly in her ability to make a more human and organic and total use of innovations and discoveries pioneered by men."

Others - some of them men - would disagree. As they see it, women have not been creators in the arts largely because society has conditioned them to accept a secondary role. Peter Dwyer suggests:

"Genius is, as it were, a kind of distillation from a well-shaken up mixture made up of education and liberty. And this women have not up till now begun to enjoy in any great numbers. In her book, A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf herself illustrates this point by contrasting the miserable and limited life of an imaginary sister of Shakespeare with his own life of learning and adventure."

In Dwyer's view, "It will be some generations yet before the self-abnegation which inhibits the growth of a woman to great stature in the creative arts can be entirely eradicated." Yet a new day may be at hand sooner than he - sooner than most of us - expect. For new feminist phenomena, notably the Women's Liberation Movement, have deliberately set out to reform the consciousness of women. Using the same techniques which convinced negroes that "black is beautiful" these pioneers intend to convince woman that she is capable of creating other than flesh and blood - that Genius is neither man nor woman, but human, or, for that matter, divine.



By definition, genius is as rare as it is unique. If only Emily Carr, Marie-Claire Blais and perhaps Isabella Crawford among Canadian women artists can confidently be called great or near-great, the number of Canadian male artistic geniuses is also strictly limited. The disparity between men and women becomes much more pronounced, and less easily explicable, when one examines the record of artists who possess talent rather than true genius.

The critic Robert Fulford suggests one reason:

"It's hard enough for any artist to make a conscious decision to be serious about art - to make the decision to commit himself entirely to painting, writing or composing. Always there is the deadening fear that one may not be good enough.

When you add to this the extra problems that a woman faces, conditioned as she is to give her boyfriend emotional support, to be a good wife and mother, you're putting a crushing load on her."

The young American novelist, Alison Lurie, makes much the same point in her recent novel, Real People, which has for its theme the problems of the woman writer. Her protagonist makes the statement, "You get what you want from life - but not your second choice too." In other words, a woman artist has to decide which is more important - her art, or her fulfilment as a woman.

No doubt the frightening irrevocability of this decision explains at least in part why there are so many roads not taken by women in the arts, and why, as one young writer suggested, "there are so many one-book women." It may also explain, to approach the question from another angle, why so few women artists have been able to combine their career with successful marriage and motherhood. For the art becomes both husband and child. Emily Carr once told a friend:

"I feel about my paintings exactly as if they were my children. They are my children, of my body, of my mind, of my innermost being. When people call them hideous and horrible I resent it deeply. I can't help it. I know people don't have to like my pictures, but when they condemn them, I feel like a mother protecting her young."

Emily Carr - that brooding, Brontë-like free spirit - is of course an extreme case. Yet, as one close observer of the visual arts scene has remarked:

"By and large, women painters lead abnormal lives. I think this is because women are by nature much more dependent on close relationships than men are. So the women either deny that whole side of their nature, and live like nuns, or they go the other way, and blaze from one highly emotional affair to another."

Even when a woman is lucky enough to find a sympathetic, supportive husband, she finds trouble. Sociologists call it role-conflict. One young novelist has remarked,

"When I'm writing well I want to stay locked up with my typewriter sixteen hours at a stretch. But I feel guilty as hell if, three or four nights in a row, I ask my husband to feed the children and put them to bed. That's not his job - even if he does it without raising an eyebrow."

A decision taken by another young novelist, Marian Engel, is exquisitely revealing of the problems a woman faces in trying to keep both her talent and her home.

"I applied for a Canada Council grant. Not to go off to Spain or Majorca to write for a year. What I needed was to buy myself some time. So on my application I listed it all - I said I needed the money to buy a dishwasher and a washing machine, to pay for the move to a house almost next door to a nursery school, so that I wouldn't have to spend hours taking the children on the bus."

The grant was made - an indication perhaps of the Council's recognition that, these days, a dishwasher and a washing machine constitute answers to Virginia Woolf's plea for "money, and a room of one's own."

Still more difficult is the position of the woman who marries another artist which, as is not surprising, many do.

"I met 'X' at art school", one woman painter remarked. "And the day before we were married, our teacher took me aside and told me that I should stop painting. 'X is the important one,' he said, 'don't try to compete with him.' So I didn't take up a brush for ten years. I've started again now, and we're having no problems. But only because he's better than I am."

If, in this instance, the teacher's advice was misguided, his analysis was correct. X is the better painter. But one wonders what his advice would have been if the woman had been the more talented of the two.

The double standard is most evident in its most evident form. While Leonard Cohen can unabashedly celebrate sex, Joyce Wieland's phallic paintings and constructions often deeply disturb their viewers - the grandchildren, no doubt, of those who were upset by Emily Carr's implicit sexual imagery.

For all her difficulties, and provided her talent is powerful enough to endure them, a woman who chooses to become an artist - or at least an individual creative artist - has a few advantages on her side. In a research paper on the women writers of French Canada, the critic Gilles Marcotte outlined these:

...."women seem to adjust better than men to the essential requirement for literary creation - solitude...to become a writer it is not necessary to spend a lot of money on material or specialized training. The woman who is pompously called a 'Housewife' in demographic surveys has as many chances as anyone else to write. Moreover, material worries, such as the need to make a profit are frequently not her concern. To be a writer, all one needs is some paper, a pen (a ball-point will do) a little desk (the kitchen table, if the children are not too noisy), talent, and a little bit of time. Of course, that is a caricature of writing, and I am referring only to the married woman, and ignoring the overwhelming chores that fall on her shoulders. I simply want to underline the fact that writing remains in its practice a very rudimentary craft and because of this does not place before the woman the obstacles that she may encounter in other careers."

In some measure Marcotte is overstating the case, because for a married woman, the demands of home and children are often as heavy as those of earning a living, while the situation for a single woman is the same as that of a man. But his point is valid. And to some degree, though to a substantially lesser extent (because of the cost of materials) it holds true for women painters and sculptors. As one woman painter suggested,

"I find I can paint more easily in my own kitchen than anywhere else. My work comes out of my environment - my children, my husband, even my cooking is part of it - and I have no need to be sealed off from it."

And finally, financial discrimination is less common in the arts than in most other fields. Equal pay for equal play is the rule in most of the performing arts and by union contract in the case of all symphony orchestras. (The corollary to this is that by and large, neither male nor female performing artists are well-paid).

In the performing arts, women function as interpreters, rarely as creators. Their record has been so outstanding - singers from Madame Albani to Maureen Forrester, actresses from Marie Dressler to Geneviève Bujold, dancers from Melissa Hayden to Lynn Seymour - as to parallel the striking success of Canadian women skiers who, like singers, actresses and dancers, compete only with their own sex.

Yet these women also pay a price to the "bitch-Goddess, success." They suffer the same problems of divided loyalties which confront writers and painters. The only difference is that because of the peripatetic demands of their professions, the divisive force is stronger. An actress explained:

"Painters and writers are lucky. If their husband is transferred to the North Pole they can still work. An actress - or a dancer or musician for that matter - has to go where the work is, where the parts are. Even if you marry inside the profession - which most of us end up doing - you find that your husband is offered something in England just as you've signed a contract at Stratford."

Or, as a dancer married to a musician suggested:

"When we were married, my husband was working in the same city, and we had no problems. Now he's with an orchestra three hundred miles away. Someone's career has got to give - and I have a feeling it's going to be mine."

When performing artists aspire to international careers, the problem becomes even more acute. In his research paper, John Kraglund notes the number of Canadian singers who have not fulfilled their potential:

"Most often, their careers have been modified by a tendency to put their homes and children ahead of their art. Maureen Forrester is one of the few who has managed to combine a strenuous concert career with an equally strenuous family career."

No Royal Commission can cure the private agonies of women torn between career and family. The answer may lie in the apocalyptic philosophy of the Women's Liberation Movement or, more gently, it may lie in the character and will of the individual artists such as Maureen Forrester who has said: "I can sing the morning I'm giving birth, and even during."

Individual women, obviously, handle their personal problems and tensions in different ways. Among Canadian women artists, whether interpreters or creators, there is another obvious - and in this case a collective - difference. If women are different from men, so also are French-Canadian women different from English-Canadian women.

The sociological differences can be detected in every discipline. English Canada, for example, has produced few women playwrights and none to equal Françoise Loranger. Ballet, on the other hand, in Montreal as well as in Toronto and Winnipeg, is predominantly an English-Canadian art form. In literature, the differences not only are multiplied, but are fundamental to the art itself. The works of English-Canadian authors, even though they are set in Canada, deal with characters and themes which belong to the modern world rather than to any country or region. The poems and novels of Quebec are peopled by characters who belong only to Quebec and more than that, who are Quebec.

It hardly needs to be said that women artists have been scarcely more successful than male politicians in finding common ground between the two cultures. The published exchange of letters (Dear Enemies) between Solange Chaput-Rolland and the late Gwethalyn Graham, and the flawless ability of Denise Pelletier to perform brilliantly in Montreal and at Stratford are exceptions which reinforce the melancholy rule.

Whether confident of her place and role in society like Québécoises or burdened by the ambivalence and uncertainty which is bottled up inside so many women who speak English, Canadian women have found the arts the easiest - and the most congenial field in which to express themselves. But not that easy. Jean Boggs spoke for all the Canadian women, past and present, committed to the arts, when she commented to the late Wendy Michener:

"It requires a kind of discipline which is difficult. It's a very lonely life. It demands a singleness of spirit."

The following chapters attempt, in some detail, to chart that singleness of female spirit through the various artistic disciplines. Part of the material for these chapters has been drawn from a series of research papers prepared for the Commission by a sextet of experts: Elizabeth Kilbourn on the Visual Arts, Nathan Cohen on English-language theatre and ballet; J. Rudel-Tessier on French-language theatre; John Kraglund on music; Gilles Marcotte on French-language literature and Emmett O'Grady on English-language literature. The balance of the research was obtained from personal interviews, from files of newspaper and magazine clippings - principally those maintained by the Canada Council, the National Gallery of Canada and the Toronto Public Library - and from standard reference works. For those who would like to read further, a partial bibliography is included, as Appendix A.

## THE VISUAL ARTS

A pure and powerful celebration of the glory of God in an austere land, the first art in Canada developed three centuries ago in Quebec. It found form in primitive, colourful ex-voto paintings, in forceful wood sculpture, in joyous and delicately executed fine embroidery. Women, most of them nuns, were at the naissance. Several of the altarcloths and vestments they stitched survive, most notably those worked by the recluse Jeanne La Ber, which are to be found in the Quebec Museum.

It was perhaps also a woman who first attempted to portray other than religious subjects, who first translated the epic Quebec landscape onto canvas. At the Quebec General Hospital are two paintings which date from around 1700: in the background of one is a view of Quebec; in the other that of an Indian village. Most historians believe that these are the work of Mère Marie-Madeline Maufils de Saint-Louis, who belonged to the order which served the Hôtel-Dieu.

It was a promising beginning. But the flower of early Quebec art perished with Montcalm. And in British North America serious painting and serious subjects were reserved for men: habitant scenes by Krieghoff; frontier landscapes by Kane, portraits by Beaucourt and Plamondon and Hamel. Only simple folk crafts, and delicate watercolour sketches recorded the works of women artists of the day, witness to what one critic has termed, "the adventurous charm that accompanies dabbling."

It is true that, here and there, individuals recognized that talent in a woman might count for more than a useful social grace. At the westernmost tip of the country, a stern pater-familias called Richard Carr looked at the charcoal sketch his youngest daughter had made of the family dog, and muttered "Um". He sent her to drawing school, and pruned his cherry tree to build her an easel. Years later, that first drawing was discovered among Carr's papers. On it he had written, "By Emily, aged eight."

Most women, though, were discouraged from attempting careers as artists. The most tenacious among them tried a different tack. Instead of trying to create works of art in their own right, they set out to create in Canada an ambience in which art could flourish - to build, in other words, the institutions through which the art of others could develop. The two pioneers whom we single out here - Princess Louise and Anna Leonowens - were as different from each other as night is

from day. Yet they launched the same tradition: they were the first women activists in Canadian art.

Princess Louise was the third of Queen Victoria's four daughters. She was also a talented painter and sculptor. Her most considerable artistic achievement, however, was the part she played in founding the National Gallery of Canada.

This came about in 1880, soon after Princess Louise arrived in Canada with her husband, the Marquis of Lorne, the third Governor General. From the beginning, the Princess found Canada little to her liking: Ottawa was stuffy and provincial; Rideau Hall chilly and cheerless. One group of Canadians, however, drew her interest. Shortly after the Lornes had settled in, a delegation of artists came to call, in search of Royal patronage to establish a Royal Canadian Academy.

The Princess and her husband, who shared her enthusiasm for the arts, were delighted to help. As a direct result of their support, the Academy was formally launched on March 6th, 1880, with a gala at the Clarendon Hotel and an exhibition which the Lornes themselves had selected.

In the long run, however, a provision in the Academy's charter turned out to be much more important to Canadian art than the Academy itself. On admittance to the Academy, the clause stipulated, each Academician must deposit a diploma work. From this nucleus the National Gallery traces its collection and from March 6th, 1880, its history.

At about the same time Ottawa waited atwitter to greet Princess Louise, Halifax was poised agape to meet an equally celebrated newcomer. On the face of it, there was nothing remarkable about Anna Leonowens' situation: a widow in her late forties moving to town to live with her daughter and her banker son-in-law. But Anna was no ordinary mother-in-law. At 24 she had gone to the court of Siam as Royal Governess; she was the "I" of "The King and I."

Before long, Anna Leonowens had become the busiest woman in the city. She organized book-clubs and reading-classes, lectured extensively and taught Sunday school. Later on, she became one of the most forceful members of the National Council of Women.

Anna's first love, though, was the visual arts. In 1887, to commemorate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee, she set out to found the first art school in Nova Scotia. To raise funds for it, she organized the most lavish exhibition Halifax had ever seen.



Officers of the garrison were prevailed on to lend their treasures; everything from idols from Burma to fragments from the ruins of Pompeii. Anna even uncovered a Caravaggio and a Gainsborough. She herself provided the hit of the show: autographed letters from the King of Siam, written on palm leaves.

The exhibition amassed \$10,000 - an incredible sum in those days. In the autumn, the Victoria School of Art and Design was established. Today it is the Nova Scotia College of Art. In honour of its founder, its new exhibition extension is named, the Anna Leonowens Gallery.

Anna Leonowens had established her art school and Princess Louise her National Gallery, but in those days there was not much else a woman could contribute to "the finer things of life."

At the Art Association of Montreal, a few years later, Canada's first great art teacher, William Brymner, discovered that many of his most promising students were young women from Westmount and Square Mile families. At the end of the first World War, a group of them - including Nora Collyer, Emily Coonan, Prudence Heward, Mabel Lockerby, Mabel May, Kathleen Morris, Liliias Newton, Sarah Robertson, Anne Savage and Ethel Seath - came together once more and rented studio space in a building on Beaver Hall Hill. They came to be known as the Beaver Hall Hill Group.

These women were by no means careerists. Nor were they innovators. As Norah McCullough noted in her introduction to a travelling retrospective display of their work organized a few years ago by the National Gallery:

"They were talented gentlefolk...they painted what they knew best...the family groups - the young girls of their social kind. They studied the various faces of their city, and on holiday turned their attention to Quebec province."

Looking backwards a half a century later, the Beaver Hall Hill Group is a tender period piece; a canvas one of its own members might have painted. The setting is the studio late on a winter afternoon in the days when Montreal still looked like a Morrice; in the foreground the artists, folding their easels as the last light fades, sipping tea from a thermos as they discuss each other's work.

Easy to smile, yet painting meant far more to the group than the excusably eccentric hobby their friends and families no doubt considered it. Some of the best still life painting in Canada radiates from their canvases. Their most important member, Prudence Heward, was, the art historian Russell Harper has written, "an intense and complex painter." Others, notably Anne Savage and Ethel Seath, went on to become outstanding art teachers. In Norah McCullough's opinion,

"Brief as was the moment of the Beaver Hall Hill Group - their work now overshadowed by current trends, the achievements of these artists carry the essential hallmark of quality."

For all their dedication and enthusiasm, the Beaver Hall Hill Group never tried to compete on men's terms. They lived, generally speaking, in an upper-middle-class cocoon and their work was never the central point of their existence. The situation of the women in Toronto who were their direct artistic contemporaries was, however, quite different.

Frances Loring and Florence Wyle were sculptors. It was their reason for living - as Alan Jarvis has noted, "they worked with single-minded zeal and immense energy" - and it was also their living. Even had they created nothing of value, Loring and Wyle would still deserve mention as arts activists (they were the moving spirits behind the Sculptors Society of Canada) and as the first Canadian women artists to commit themselves entirely to their art. None of it came easily.

In 1913, the two came to Toronto from New York: Frances Loring, dark, brooding, a little like the young Gertrude Stein; Florence Wyle, slight, sensitive, somewhat child-like. In 1920, the year that the Group of Seven was formally titled, they moved into a converted church on Glenrose Avenue. This was to be their home and studio until the end of their lives, in 1968.

Perhaps the Glenrose Studio was not unlike the Paris salon of Stein and Toklas: "The Girls", as they came to be known, held open house for their contemporaries, and tirelessly encouraged fledgling artists. Their wills stipulated that any work which remained in the studio was to be sold, and the proceeds used to buy the work of young sculptors.

Wyle and Loring worked in the classical tradition. Their best-known pieces are their large commissioned works: Frances Loring's lion which marks the entrance to the Queen Elizabeth Highway and her statue of Borden on Parliament Hill;

Florence Wyle's portrait busts of Varley and A.Y. Jackson. Many critics, however, believe that their talent found its happiest expression when they dealt with subjects - mothers and children, youth and young animals - which are usually categorized as feminine. As Alan Jarvis suggests, in his introduction to the catalogue of the Loring-Wyle memorial exhibition, held at the Pollock Gallery in Toronto in 1969:

"Perhaps the best word to describe their work is 'womanly', with all the implications of strength and endurance which it implies. As far as mastery of their art is concerned, they need not take second place to anyone."

Because of Loring and Wyle's influence, other women were encouraged to seek careers as sculptors, most notably Elizabeth Wyn Wood, who came from Orillia, and died in 1966.

Much of Miss Wood's early work was radical and experimental. Using stone, and sometimes glass and tin, she rendered landscape; she sought to achieve in sculpture what the Group of Seven had accomplished on canvas. Perhaps discouraged by lack of recognition, she later turned almost exclusively to commissioned pieces for monumental buildings, and her work lost most of its vitality. Nevertheless, early pieces like the National Gallery's "Passing Rain" stand testament to a talent, which had it been encouraged, might have made her for her time the finest sculptor in Canada.

Today, when sculpture has come to mean anything from a gigantic hamburger to a kinetic light-show, it is difficult to assess properly the work of these pioneer women sculptors. They worked the traditional vein, and their work is largely out of fashion. No doubt much of it deserves to be. Yet their contribution to Canadian art was important. They laid a foundation upon which a vibrant tradition of Canadian sculpture has developed. And they proved that women artists could work alongside men.

Our chronicle has reached the early thirties. In Ottawa, in the crenellated stone castle that in those days housed the National Gallery, Eric Brown reigned as Director. Forceful and quixotic, Brown believed in taking risks. A few years before, he had the nerve to ship the Group of Seven (the "hot mush school" some critics called them) to the Wembley Show in Britain. Brown had just taken another gamble. He had hired the Gallery's first woman curator.

Kathleen Fenwick was a vibrant young woman from Oxford, with red hair and a lilting voice. Her job was to build a national collection of prints and drawings. A strange job for a woman, many thought then, but time proved Eric Brown right. Many years later, the finest printmaker Canada has produced - and certainly one of its finest painters - wrote:

"There is one person to whom I owe a great deal. I salute the extraordinary taste and tenacity of Kathleen Fenwick, who has, with a limited budget, assembled a great collection of prints and drawings, without prejudice against any period or style, and who has persistently pushed our print-makers into the international arena with the same catholicity of judgment. To watch Miss Fenwick search a print or drawing, like some super Sherlock, is an experience I would deeply regret having missed."

Harold Town's encomium to Kathleen Fenwick is still, for the purposes of this chronicle, far in the future; he was not yet even in kindergarten. What matters now is that, out on the West Coast, a great spirit was stirring out of a long dark night of the soul.

One afternoon in Victoria, a gruff and dowdy eccentric picked up the telephone, and listened with disbelief:

"Eric Brown, Canadian National Gallery, speaking.. I should like to call upon Miss Emily Carr to see her Indian paintings."

Life had not been fair to Emily Carr. The career so joyously begun had long since been abandoned in despair. In her fifties, she scratched out a living running a boardinghouse and raising sheepdogs.

Brown's visit, and what came after it, have been described many times: The triumphant exhibition in Ottawa, the "reawakening in me of something I had thought quite killed, the passionate desire to express something of Canada"; the return to painting and the great late period that put her in the front rank, not of Canadian women painters, but of great Canadian painters. The triumph, finally, of a great painter; the triumph, doubly hard, of a great woman painter.

Facts alone do not explain the source of Emily Carr's inspiration, nor the breadth of her achievement. She was one of the first painters to translate contemporary international forces in art - fauvism and expressionism - into a distinctly Canadian style. Like the Group of Seven, she used Canada itself - native myths, native culture and the landscape - as material for poetry in paint.

But Emily Carr's genius went far beyond nationalism. She was also a woman. And this was intrinsic to her art. It is true that, unlike the other great women painters of her time - one thinks of Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Marie Laurencin - she shied away from feminine themes. Indeed, she rarely portrayed the human condition in any context. Yet she told a friend that her paintings were "my children, of my body, of my mind, of my innermost being." One of Emily Carr's most perceptive critics, Roy Daniells, has written that her work, at the most profound level, was a tortured woman's search for self:

"She was not primarily interpreting Canada to the world, she was interpreting herself to herself by the symbols which the forest provided..she has seized the innermost and atavistic images of the jungle, the maze, the Gothic wood with its promise of endless revelation of strange forces..I can't escape a certain suggestion of the Freudian unconscious obsessions in those deep forest canvasses which are generally so womblike and phallic."

She came as close to artistic genius as any Canadian woman has ever done.

In Emily Carr's day, a woman artist who hoped to compete on men's terms had to adopt the instincts of a prizefighter and the life-style of a nun. If she wanted to be taken seriously, it was almost axiomatic that she had to forego marriage and motherhood.

By the thirties and forties, her choice was less irrevocable. By then, a substantial number of women artists were working in Canada. Most of them were married, and most reared children. If few of them deserve to be remembered as important painters, it was perhaps not so much because they faced impassable obstacles than because they lacked ambition, and enduring talent.

Generally speaking, women artists chose one of two directions. As Graham McInnes, the Canadian Forum's art critic, wrote, in 1937:

"Either they are completely and enchantingly feminine, or else a valiant, impersonal cold fury marks their femininity, which nevertheless comes through, as a sort of re-agent, suffusing everything they do."

In the long run, the angry painters proved to have the staying power. Marian Scott, the Montreal painter whom McInnes cited as an example of this category, has had a 30-year career of almost continuous renewal, working her way through from naturalistic cityscape to pure abstraction. Hortense Gordon, the Hamilton painter who died in 1961, belonged to the same relentlessly experimental tradition. In the thirties, she was one of the first Canadian painters to turn to abstract forms. In 1955, when she was nearly 70, she exhibited alongside artists considerably less than half her age in the landmark exhibition "Painters Eleven", which saw the start of a new and vital era of development of Canadian art.

Gentler painters also made their mark. Paraskeva Clark, for example, the Russian-born, Paris-trained artist who brought wiry strength and unsentimental sensitivity to still lifes, portraits and landscapes. And Lillian Freiman, who imparted to her street scenes and circus figures a wishful air of nostalgia.

The war years brought to the fore two younger artists who shared a common concern - rare among Canadian painters of either sex - for portraying the human being and his environment. Pegi Nicol McLeod and Molly Lamb Bobak both worked as official war artists. Both were primarily interested in interpreting their own time and place.

"Delighted" is probably the best word to describe the body of work Pegi Nicol McLeod left behind when she died, tragically young, in 1949. People were her passion: she painted them wherever she saw them, and preferably when there were a lot of them, so that she could catch a complex moment in time on canvas.

Molly Lamb Bobak continues her fruitful career in Fredericton. Of her work, her husband, the painter Bruno Bobak has written: "Molly bubbles with interest and amusement for the everyday things, which she interprets in paint with sympathy, good humour and liveliness."

Decades of depression and war, the thirties and forties were fallow years for Canadian art. The Group of Seven had gone their separate ways and had started to repeat themselves. Younger artists, all too often, only repeated what the Group were repeating. Yet, amid the barren furrows there were creative shoots. New ways of seeing art; new ways of teaching art; new ways of writing about art, were all pioneered in those days.

As activists, women carried their share of the load. Norah McCullough worked tirelessly as an educator and as a proselytizer, and indeed she continued to do so until her retirement, in 1968, as the National Gallery's Extension Officer in the West. The late Pearl McCarthy brought intelligent, sympathetic art criticism to the Toronto Globe and Mail. Artists themselves also contributed: Pegi Nicol McLeod helped found the summer school of fine arts at the University of New Brunswick; Hortense Gordon encouraged young artists almost to the day of her death.

Before long, those young artists would explode onto canvas and into stone. The first stirrings were in Quebec.

French Canadian art had been dormant for decades. The best male painters escaped into exile in Paris; of women's work there is little to record beyond the charming pre-Grandma Moses primitives of the three Bouchard sisters.

Suddenly, in 1948, the volcano erupted. The automatiste group in Montreal, centred around Borduas and Riopelle, published Le Refus Global, a manifesto which called on painters to break with the old moribund traditions and strike out joyously in search of new forms of expression.

Of the fourteen artists who signed Le Refus Global, five were women. It was the beginning of a raw and combustible period during which Quebec produced what one critic believes, "more active women painters of the first rank than any other arts centre in the world." So long pent up, talent and vitality poured onto canvas.

Nearly all these women - Marcelle Ferron, Marcelle Maltais, Suzanne Bergeron, Rita Letendre, Kittie Bruneau, Lise Gervais - worked in abstract. Their style, in essence, flowed from the late work of Borduas. Yet, like all the artists in Quebec - writers and chansonniers as well as painters - they drew their inspiration from the land itself. A wintry canvas

by Suzanne Bergeron is Gilles Vigneault singing, "ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver." The lyric expressionism of Lise Gervais, with its emphasis on reds, yellows and oranges, is an autumn day in the Eastern Townships. As the critic Guy Viau has remarked:

"The French-Canadian artist uniquely remains a peasant, a farmer, but with a new vision produced by a nature of which the dimensions have become cosmic... As is normal for a people in part alienated, dispossessed, we have been exposed to all the influences, to all the winds and tides, not only of the contemporary arts but of the American and English civilizations. But a fidelity has saved our art; a fidelity to nature. Whatever we may become, we still feel the nostalgia of the open fields, of the forest and sky; we are marked by a long fight against nature. The snow in particular remains an essential element in our consciousness."

Of the many women painters of Quebec, perhaps two - Marcelle Ferron and Rita Letendre - should be singled out. In Viau's opinion, the work of Marcelle Ferron, who has recently returned to Montreal after a long sojourn in Paris, cannot easily be categorized as feminine. "Her painting is powerful, exuberant...one has the feeling of a rough powerful world ordered out of chaos, with a freshness and purity that is almost inhuman."

Recently, Marcelle Ferron has been experimenting with stained glass. By grace of an enlightened civic policy towards art, one of her glass murals is the centrepiece of Montreal's Champ de Mars metro station.

The painting of Rita Letendre, a vibrant, dynamic woman who is part Iroquois, is both emotional and introspective. Viau has noted:

"She says laughingly that her principal working instrument is the chair on which she sits interminably, in front of her pictures, questioning them and questioning herself. Her work has the freshness of morning, suggesting powerful natural forces, and planets in collision. As a woman Rita Letendre is power incarnate."



Whether they take place on canvas or in politics, revolutions need outlets. In 1950, the revolutionary young painters in Montreal found one at Galerie Agnes Lefort, the first art gallery in Quebec - indeed, one of the first in Canada - to concentrate entirely on modern Canadian artists. Vivacious and white haired, Mlle Lefort was known to her proteges and clients as "La Poule Blanche", after the chicken in the fable who scratches out the best grain in the field. She herself, she once wrote, liked to compare herself to "the pig that finds the truffles."

After Mlle Lefort's retirement in 1961, Mira Godard, a Roumanian-born engineer, carried on the tradition she founded. Today, Galerie Godard Lefort, conceived and developed entirely by women, has become one of the most successful and influential commercial art galleries in Canada.

Nor have the Mlles Lefort and Godard been alone in their province. L'Atelier and Galerie La Huchette in Quebec City are women's ventures; in Montreal, Mme Denyse Poulin is co-founder and co-proprietor of Galerie Denyse Delrue and Estelle Hecht launched the successful "Gallery 1640", for prints.

Until the nineteen-fifties, whether in Quebec or in English-speaking Canada, a first-rank woman artist had to be blessed with a personality at least as powerful as her talent. Those that succeeded deserve to be remembered for their stamina as well as for their creativity. Early in the fifties, however, the situation changed dramatically: the number of women artists and activists increased by leaps and bounds. The reason had less to do with sex than with money and opportunity. As Elizabeth Kilbourn noted in her research paper:

"The neglect of artists and art, especially contemporary art, that was true of the depression and war years gave way to an atmosphere of excitement amid the wealth and leisure of the new decade. For the first time, metropolitan newspapers from coast to coast devoted extensive news coverage to the visual arts. Richer and more powerful patrons and pressure groups emerged to promote the cause of the arts and the condition of the artists. The arrival

of CBC Television in 1952 created new interest and friction. Television was not only the newest of the lively arts, and to some degree a creator of artistic sophistication in the mind of a large public, but it also provided employment for a great variety of people whose chief vocation still lay in one of the visual arts. For example, think of the number of fine painters whose bread and butter was derived at one time or another from CBC's graphics department."

The establishment of the Canada Council, in 1957, was an even more critical landmark. By grace of arts fellowships, it became possible for the first time, for artists to think of devoting themselves fulltime to creative work. Fourteen years after the Council's formation, there is probably not a single artist of worth in the country, male or female, who has not, in one way or another, benefited from it.

Business corporations and governments also made it easier for artists to make a living. The Federal Department of Transport, for example, commissioned works of art for all its new airport buildings; the City of Montreal made art an intrinsic part of its Metro system. And then, and lavishly, there was Expo 67.

Amid the new affluence women art activists came into their own. Almost every art gallery spawned its Women's Committee, and, as Elizabeth Kilbourn points out:

"It was these women, perhaps more than any other group, who consciously pioneered the public acceptance of contemporary Canadian art, who moved business corporations away from their attraction to discreet prints of British hunting scenes, or pale imitations of the Group of Seven."

It is true that some of these women - whom the American writer, Russell Lynes, has called "the culturesses" - embraced painting and sculpture because they were the fashionable arts, a highroad to the right dinner-parties. (Few women, indeed arose to embrace the cause of the not-so-stylish Canadian writer). Perhaps they were sometimes guilty, as Lynes once put it, "of creating their own forms of genteel appreciation, of saying that art is nice when art is not nice at all." Yet the achievements of Women's Committees far outweigh their shortcomings. As Elizabeth Kilbourn continues:

"Women's committees pioneered the device of picture loan for collectors with small budgets or for offices who wanted to change their decor. The Women's Committee sale, which began at the Art Gallery of Toronto, and was quickly copied elsewhere, took chances on artists that no society would show, nor for whom no commercial galleries yet existed. It was these sales that brought many of Canada's finest young artists onto the commercial scene for the first time and made it possible for them to move to something like self support by their own creative work in the 1960's. One should also note another influence of the women's committees and that is the way in which, through their raising of money and various kinds of pressure upon the male-dominated boards and staffs of art galleries, they pioneered purchase policies which encompassed the very best of contemporary art from other countries."

Out of the ranks of the happy amateurs, some talented professionals emerged. In 1959, Dorothy Cameron, described affectionately by one of her admirers as "nine parts Savonarola and one part Machiavelli", opened Toronto's Here and Now Gallery, dedicated to uncovering new and unknown talent. Later on, it became the Dorothy Cameron Gallery, primarily concerned with the newly-emergent forms of sculpture and print-making. After her gallery closed, Dorothy Cameron travelled the country to organize the mammoth Centennial Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Square, Toronto. As Canada's foremost fine arts consultant, her special concern at the moment is to make the work of Canadian artists better known abroad.

Other women chose the fiercely competitive world of curatorship, most notably Jean Sutherland Boggs who in 1966, at 39, was appointed Director of the National Gallery of Canada, and so became the only woman in the world to head a major art institution. Miss Boggs, in whom a soft voice and a gentle manner mask steely determination, had already made her mark as a scholar (her study of Degas is definitive in its field) and as a superlative organizer (as chief curator of the Art Gallery of Toronto, she had arranged the outstanding exhibitions of Picasso, Canaletto and Mondrian). Since her appointment, the Gallery has embarked upon a venturesome period of development. New precedents have been established (The Gallery is developing a collection of painting from the United States; major Canadian artists are, as a matter of course, being honoured with retrospective exhibitions). Even more significantly, the exceptional staff which Miss Boggs has attracted has done much to lay to rest the myth that men won't work with women.

If Jean Boggs leads the visual arts hierarchy in Canada, she is far from the only woman at the top. As Chief Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Doris Shadbolt, wife of the painter Jack Shadbolt, has played a key role in nurturing the development of one of Canada's liveliest artistic centres and has set the same international standards for exhibitions as Jean Boggs. And there are others: Nancy Robertson Dillon who directs the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, and Paddy O'Brien at the London Public Library and Art Museum.

It is women, too, who are today largely, if not primarily responsible for moulding public opinion about Canadian art. Arts Canada is edited by Anne Brodsky; Vie des Arts by Andr e Paradis. Joan Lowndes, Kay Kritzwiser, Elizabeth Kilbourn and Bernadette Andrews are lively and well-informed critics; Naomi Jackson Groves a leading arts scholar.

As often as not, women have taken the lead as private collectors. And some of them - Ayala Zacks in Toronto for example, and Fay Loeb in Ottawa - have sought to develop a sort of modern Canadian equivalent of the eighteenth century artistic salon. Indeed, insofar as what one might term the visual arts hinterland is concerned, it sometimes seems, as Elizabeth Kilbourn notes, that "the feminist revolution has arrived, the Amazons have taken over."

But not entirely so. In 1969, Gail Dexter, the promising 23 year old art critic of the Toronto Star abandoned the field of art criticism. She made her decision primarily because she had come to believe that art criticism amounts to exploitation of creative artists; that it hurts creativity more than it helps creativity. But Miss Dexter is also convinced that women still have far to go before they achieve total equality in the field of the visual arts.

"Being a woman and being part of this whole cycle is interesting. There's job discrimination against women, so an aggressive, career-oriented female is always competing for a limited number of jobs."

Turning our attention away from arts activists, and towards women artists, the last decade or so has produced a number of important developments. One is the emergence of a new breed of women sculptors: Françoise Sullivan, Sybil Kennedy, Katie van der Ohe, Sarah Jackson, Ursula Hanes, Patricia Fulford. Some have drawn strength from earlier traditions: Anne Kahane's sinuous wooden figures echo the heyday of Quebec wood sculpture: Elza Mayhew's totemic columns which, along with the work of Harold Town, represented Canada in the 1964 Venice Biennale, are rooted in the native culture of the Pacific Coast. In a much different vein, Dora de Pedery Hunt has turned to the delicate, precise form of miniature medals, creating, as she puts it, "a whole world in a tiny space."

Other women best expressed themselves through the introspective, highly personal art of print-making. Working within the realistic tradition, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth and Rita Briansky have created an ambience of gentle melancholy. Subtler and deeper in intellectual content are the abstract prints of P.K. Irwin, Shirley Wales and Patricia Martin Bates, who, in 1969, won first prize at the international print biennale in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

As art became increasingly environmental, some women chose to experiment with new forms. Audrey Capel Doray worked with kinetic light sculpture; Margot Ariss looked for a new dimension in clay. Esther Warkov, still in her twenties, blended pop art, op art and surrealism into huge, hinged triptychs which evoke, in their turn, art of the early Renaissance.

For all the new possibilities, a number of important artists preferred to hold to the traditional women's tools - loom, needle and fine fabric. Montreal's Micheline Beauchemin took the three-century old Quebec craft of rugmaking, and turned it into high art. Her most notable achievement has been the massive, glowing curtain she created for Ottawa's National Arts Centre. Also in Quebec, Mariette Vermette works in the same tradition, while in Halifax and Vancouver respectively, Charlotte Lindgren and Sharon Hassell create extravagant, three-dimensional sculptures in textile.

Perhaps the restless, questing spirit abroad among contemporary women artists in Canada, looking wistfully at the past and wonderingly at the future, is best expressed in the work of Joyce Wieland, the Toronto artist now resident in New York. Not yet forty, and endlessly versatile, her work encompasses almost every form: oil on canvas, sculptural constructions; quilted wall hangings and most recently, film-making.

As an artist, Joyce Wieland is unmistakably and undeniably feminine.\* Many compare her talent to that of Emily Carr, but unlike Carr, Joyce Wieland does not bury her sex deep in a Gothic wood. Freudian imagery is explicit in her work. It may be a measure of the distance women artists have yet to travel that many people find her work disturbing, believing, as one critic suggests, "It is proper for a man to paint of his obsessions with the opposite sex, but not yet proper for a woman."

"There are two kinds of art," Joyce Wieland once remarked. "Man art and woman art. They are two different kinds of people, so the art comes out differently."

In Canada, at the start of the seventies, there are no longer two kinds of art activists. Whether they are motivated by romantic commitment, as in the case of Dorothy Cameron, or by scholarly dedication, like Jean Boggs, women have done as much as men - if not more - to create an atmosphere in which visual art can thrive. If women's committees still lick envelopes and pour tea, the person to whom they report is, as likely as not, a woman.

But commitment is not creation. And atmosphere is not art. There are many professional women painters in Canada today. But there are far more who are men. Perhaps half a dozen Canadian painters deserve to be called great. Of these, only one - Emily Carr - is a woman. Nor is this true of Canada alone. As Elizabeth Kilbourn has noted, "The history of painting in the last twenty years could be written without referring to any female artist who had an absolutely essential and fundamental role in creating the new styles of abstract expressionism, post-painterly abstraction, op pop or hard edge."

It is true that even today a woman painter starts out with several strikes against her: she is not expected to be as professional in her approach and attitude as a man; the prices she commands for her work tend to be lower and her sales less numerous than if she were a man of equal ability. As Elizabeth

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\* As a footnote, it is perhaps worth mentioning that Joyce Wieland - that most uninhibited of women painters - is one of the very few women artists of the first rank who has been able to combine an outstanding career not only with a successful marriage, but with a successful marriage to a male artist who is also of the first rank - Michael Snow.

Kilbourn points out "there is still a tendency to relegate artists to amateur status and to comment on their work in the women's pages, where being a housekeeper is the professional thing and being an artist comes definitely second." But barriers like this cannot deter genius; not are they likely to last much longer. What remains is the reality that, as Wieland said, women are different from men.

In her research paper, Elizabeth Kilbourn explored in depth the question of masculine and feminine creativity. The comments of hers which apply equally to all the arts we have quoted in the introduction. Her comments on the difference in the visual arts put a finish to this chapter.

"One must point out the simple, fundamental physical differences between men and women. One would naturally expect that in an art which includes the physical gesture, in which the movement of the arm, and indeed of the creator's whole body, goes right into the painting or sculpture, that physical differences between men and women would produce different characteristics in the kind of work they were able to do. If it is true that woman's arm is attached to her body in a different way from a man's and this prevents a woman from throwing a stone - or paint - in the same way a man does, it seems quite obvious that there is no more likelihood of a woman producing a certain kind of art than of her winning twenty games as a big league pitching star. Clearly, too, differences in physical strength and stamina and speed are involved. Harold Town has compared the art of painting to that of boxing and here one must note again not merely the aggressive nature of some kinds of art but also the physical differences between men and women. A woman is simply not capable of playing the role of artist as virtuoso boxer.

One might speculate further upon the differences between the way a man and woman feel about and relate to their bodies. It has been suggested that in a woman it is the torso which is fundamental not only for herself and the way she feels, but as a person or even as an object to be looked upon by others. By contrast, in a man the various extensions of the trunk, the arms and legs and genitals seem somehow more crucial. If this is so, it may have some effect or may relate to some difference between the psychology of the male and the female artist.



"Let us turn to the most fundamental fact of all - that some women artists have children, or as one of our leading painters put it in her soulful Russian voice, "Woman has Womb." Speaking personally as a woman, to me the simple fact of gestation - the whole slow business of giving yourself to nature - taught me a great deal about myself that I don't think would be available through all the teachings of the art schools and universities or any amount of practising my craft as a critic. During pregnancy there is a sense of identifying with the ground of being which you cannot avoid. It is a marvellous thing to be able to feel and understand an area which the eye and the mind cannot possibly open up. The great drama of those nine months of developing slowly and inevitably, the relentlessness of it all, the fact of not being able to do anything about yourself, the simple discipline of yielding up to this and getting through it and beyond it can teach a woman the kind of acceptance that nothing in a man's experience can teach him. At the end, with the great climax of childbirth, there is something relentless and sexual in the excitement of labour, in the birth of one's child, which teaches a woman something about creation.

"There is obviously, too, something very different about a woman's relationship to young children from that of a man. Her physical involvement, if only because of breast-feeding, is so much closer. Then, too, in looking at the whole miniature society of children and the family and their inter-relation, their inter-action, the woman by this position and career has a natural tendency to observe more and perhaps to feel more the way in which the life of children works.

"Finally, there is another sense, of course, in which the male artist tends to be the child rather than relate to the child in the manner of the mother. Recovering the pure uninhibited creativity of the child is of course one of the artist's greatest needs - but so is the female role of contemplating human beings with a maternal eye."



## THE PERFORMING ARTS

### Introduction

Music, theatre and ballet are gregarious arts. Solitude is a condition of creativity for painters and writers, but performing artists pursue their muse in groups. Even composers and playwrights cannot work entirely alone; before what they create can come to life, it must be interpreted by others.

Because they imitate everyday life as well as interpret it, the performing arts absolutely dictate the presence of women. As Peter Dwyer, Director of the Canada Council, has remarked, "Without Cio-Cio San and Carmen you have no opera, and ballet demands women. Once you have women filling essential roles, some will obviously rise to the top." Canada has produced at least half a dozen concert and opera singers of the first international rank and almost as many outstanding actresses. All three of our professional ballet companies were founded by women, and two of them have been developed entirely by women.

As an actress however, and as a dancer or singer, a woman plays a role as classically feminine as that of the housewife. If the role is generally more demanding, it is more glamorous - and much less ambivalent. Thus, without intending to discount the myriad accomplishments of women artists, our principal concern in this chapter is with the woman who competes directly with men as director and artistic director.

For group arts also depend upon organizational structures: business managers, boards of directors, grant-giving agencies. Women who choose to become directors rather than performers face many of the same disadvantages which confront women executives in business and in government. Everyone knows that only a woman can sing Butterfly or play Juliet, but there are many who believe that only a man can adequately direct or produce her performance. And the notion that only a man can win community or business support for a performing arts venture is even more ingrained.

## THEATRE

In 1768, a poster heralding a performance in Halifax of "The Tragedy of Jane Shore" announced that tickets could be obtained from Mrs. Pritchard. A century or so later, Ida Van Cortlandt, a gifted Toronto actress, set up her own theatre company to tour the Canadian hinterland, sacrificing, so she claimed, "metropolitan success for the wee bit of domestic life accorded by a life on the road." In the 1880's, Sarah Anne Curzon, an early feminist, wrote a play called "The Sweet Girl Graduate", based on her own struggle to gain admission to Toronto's University College. Thus, from the start, women staked out their claim to important roles in Canadian theatre: Mrs. Pritchard as administrator; Miss Van Cortlandt as actress and artistic director; Mrs. Curzon as playwright.

Beyond these three, however, the early years leave little to record. Indeed, until recently there was precious little Canadian theatre for anyone to lay claim to.

It is true, of course, that touring companies played to packed houses until well after the first World War. Ibsen's Nora slammed the door on many a Canadian stage. But for the most part, these companies were British or American in origin and in content. By the 1920's, the grand old opera houses had closed, or had been converted into movie-houses, and live theatre became the preserve of the amateur, a pleasant spare-time pastime. Anyone who sought a serious career had to look for it south of the border, or in Europe. The story of those years, when, as one critic has remarked, "not only was there no room at the top, there was no top" is a melancholy litany of names who went away, among them the actresses Margaret Anglin, Judith Evelyn and Marie Dressler.

There were exceptions, talented individuals here and there who worked to bring grassroots theatre above the level of "Captain Applejack's Adventure" and who dreamed of a native professional theatre. Nancy Pyper, the University of Manitoba's first drama director, founded a rural drama festival, and later on became a moving spirit behind the University of Toronto's Hart House Theatre. Dr. Betty Mitchell was instrumental in founding the drama department at the University of Alberta. Martha Allan, Roberta Beatty and Norma Springford worked to establish English language repertory theatre in Montreal. Yet their best efforts failed to bear fruit. To an entire generation of Canadians, as the playwright Tom Hendry has recalled, "the classics meant a week of Donald Wolfitt every five years, contemporary

drama meant tired troupes on the last long leg back to New York and local productions meant practically nothing."

It was during the 1940's, in both English and French Canada, that local productions for the first time began to mean something more. Two of the most significant developments were pioneered by women: Dora Mavor Moore in Toronto, and Yvette Brind'amour in Montreal.

"Canadian artists stay here, Canada needs you" has been Dora Mavor Moore's credo throughout her long and productive life. Before the first World War, she abandoned a promising career overseas (she was the first Canadian graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and the first Canadian actress to play at the Old Vic) to join a stock company in Ottawa, and later, to become a leading lady with Philip Ben Greet's touring company. Once married, and settled in Toronto, she became active in theatre education and during the nineteen-thirties, founded the Village Players. In 1946, as an act of faith, she launched the New Play Society, dedicated "to developing a living Canadian theatre on a permanent, professional but non-profit basis."

For seven years, beginning with a performance of "The Playboy of the Western World" in the Royal Ontario Museum's basement auditorium, the Society mounted a regular season. Money was always short, facilities skimpy, sets commonly shabby. More often than not, the original Canadian plays the company sought out were notable for novelty rather than merit. Yet, as Nathan Cohen has written, "In terms of a powerful inquiry and a projection of a play's basic qualities, the New Play Society speedily asserted its worth." The New Play Society also established precedents: in 1948, long before Biculturalism had become a catch-phrase, Dora Mavor Moore introduced "Les Compagnons de Saint Laurent", the first important theatre company in Quebec, to Toronto and so gave English Canada its first experience of French-language drama. In 1949, she produced the first "Spring Thaw" revue, founding a tradition which is now well into its third decade.

In 1953, the New Play Society went into semi-retirement. By then, as the founding of the Stratford Festival in the same year demonstrated, the groundwork for a wholly professional theatre had been laid. As a grace note, it is pleasant to record that it was Dora Mavor Moore who first suggested to the young theatre visionary, Tom Patterson, that

Tyrone Guthrie might be interested in helping to develop a summer Shakespeare Festival on the banks of the Canadian Avon.

Yvette Brind'amour is of a younger generation than Dora Mavor Moore, but she is possessed of the same resourcefulness and determination. Montreal-born, Mme. Brind'amour returned to Montreal from study in Paris fired with the idea of founding a permanent theatre. On February 17, 1949, Le Rideau Vert parted for the first time - on a production of Lillian Hellman's Les Innocents. Today, it has the proud distinction of being the oldest established professional theatre in Canada.

The honour was not easily won. There were years when no suitable playhouse could be found; seasons when the house stood dark. But Yvette Brind'amour and her partner and administrator, Mercedes Palomino never abandoned their dream. In 1960, Le Rideau Vert found a permanent house in the Stella Theatre, and each year since then has played a full nine-months season, presenting a new play each month.

From an early diet of boulevard comedies, dictated by the need to woo audiences, Yvette Brind'amour enlarged her repertoire to include the classics, and to experiment with new Canadian plays. Several of the most successful of these have been the work of women playwrights, notably, Encore Cinq Minutes by Françoise Loranger, which won a Governor General's Award, and L'Execution, by Marie-Claire Blais, which Le Rideau Vert commissioned as well as produced.

Before long, the company won international acclaim. In 1964, at the express invitation of André Malraux, the troupe took L'Heureux Stratagème to Paris and a year later, after an engagement in Leningrad, returned to Paris once more, this time with a Canadian play, Françoise Loranger's Une maison, un jour. (It was during this engagement that the company's ingenue, Geneviève Bujold, first caught the eye of the French film Director, Alain Resnais). In 1969, Mme Brind'amour took Le Rideau Vert abroad for the third time, to represent Canada, with Hedda Gabler, at the first International Festival of Italy.

In the proud tradition of actor-managers, Yvette Brind'amour directs many of Le Rideau Vert's productions. And in a theatrical centre where it is not the custom for any one theatre to maintain a permanent ensemble, she provides a measure of continuity by appearing frequently as leading lady.

Between them, Yvette Brind'amour and Dora Mavor Moore proved that women had the ability to run a professional theatre organization. (So also did Amelia Hall, who for several years in the fifties was at the helm of the Canadian Repertory Theatre in Ottawa). If Dora Mavor Moore's New Play Society is now of interest principally as a historical first, Yvette Brind'amour's twenty-one years as artistic director demonstrate a quality more often considered masculine than feminine - that of staying power in a fiercely competitive world.

Mme Brind'amour's stamina, and that of Dora Mavor Moore, is undoubtedly based on the fact that each women created her own theatrical company, and that the company thereafter remained, in a very real sense, hers. The story of other women directors is less happy. As Nathan Cohen has remarked, "You will find women who are stage managers, you will find them as press agents, you will certainly find them as costume designers, but you find too that in a great many theatre activities, the doors are closed to them." The experience of Jean Roberts and Marigold Charlesworth is a case in point.

Jean Roberts, a director-stage manager who worked at Stratford on Avon, and Marigold Charlesworth, an actress-director who has played there, are both British-born. In the late nineteen-fifties they came to Canada with the idea of founding a theatre. Early in the sixties, after several successful seasons in command of the Red Barn summer playhouse in Jackson's Point, Ontario, they launched a season of high quality productions in repertory at Toronto's Central Library Theatre. Though this venture foundered financially the two recouped their losses with a brilliantly successful production of The Fantas-ticks and, in 1965, they assumed the artistic direction and administrative control of the Canadian Players. Nathan Cohen picks up the story:

"They took this company, founded in 1954 as an outgrowth of the Stratford Festival but which had deteriorated lamentably in succeeding years, and rejuvenated it, both as a touring attraction and as an ensemble group located in Toronto, again at the Central Library Theatre. Their programme was a judicious combination of the traditional and the contemporary. Only one production of the six they staged was a failure. At least two - The Firebugs and Murder in the Cathedral - were as worthy of critical approbation as they were of their box office popularity."

So successful was the season that plans were laid to merge the foundering Crest Theatre with newly burgeoning Canadian Players, under the direction of Miss Roberts and Miss Charlesworth. But a series of protracted disagreements with the two Boards of Directors led to their resignations. Jean Roberts joined the Canada Council as Theatre Arts Officer, Marigold Charlesworth continues as a freelance director, and most recently she has worked at Neptune Theatre, and with the Young People's Theatre in Toronto, and at the St. Lawrence Centre.

Failures are hardly new in the chronicle of Canadian theatre. But what was at stake here was the creation of what would have been the most important theatrical venture in English Canada outside of Stratford. And it would have been a venture conceived and developed by women.

It is risky to play the game of "what would have happened if". Yet it is impossible not to suspect that, in the same circumstances, a male director might well have been able to command the support both of the Boards, and of the community as a whole. In other words, women have yet to find room at the top of Canadian theatre - unless they happen to own the theatre.

The careers of other women who sought to run theatres has been equally brief. As one director ruefully remarked, "It sometimes seems as if women do the pioneering, and get the action started, but when the time comes to expand, men take over."

In 1967, Joy Coghill, who had been instrumental in establishing children's theatre in Vancouver, became artistic director of that city's Playhouse Theatre. Her appointment lasted barely two years. In 1965, Mary Morter founded Instantheatre, designed to produce one-act plays and entertainments as noontime diversions for office workers and shoppers in downtown Montreal. By 1970, when Instantheatre had become the Centaur Theatre and had begun to mount full-scale productions, Miss Morter was no longer associated with it.

Indeed in 1970, as in 1950, Yvette Brind'amour stands alone as the only woman who is artistic director of a year-round, fully professional theatre. The senior Canadian companies: Stratford, Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, the Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Charlottetown Festival have remained, from their inception, masculine citadels. At the National

Arts Centre in Ottawa, no woman has held a post higher than Director of Public Relations, and even that only briefly.\* It is true that a number of these organizations include women on their Boards of Directors. But such women are not really central to decision-making, and it is striking that no woman has ever directed a play on any of these stages.

It is not easy to find precise reasons - not even a common denominator - to explain this record of feminine failure. Certainly it runs directly counter to the situation of women executives in, say, the visual arts. One woman director, after pondering the question, suggested:

"The problem is not really within the theatrical profession itself. A director of plays, or an artistic director, is accepted as good or bad, and sex really doesn't enter into it. The trouble starts when women come to deal with lay boards of directors, which are usually made up of businessmen, who, quite simply, are not used to dealing with a woman in a position of authority.

And women themselves are partly to blame. They don't play the game by men's rules. They are forthright when they should be subtle, emotional perhaps, when they should be cool."

If women directors, by and large, have been cut off from the mainstream of Canadian theatre, they have made one important tributary their own. Beginning with the pioneer efforts of Dorothy Goulding in Toronto, and of Julia Murphy and Marian Taylor in Ottawa, children's theatre has been almost entirely of women's making. Joy Coghill and Jane Heyman founded Vancouver's Holiday Theatre, and sent troupes to tour British Columbia schools; the actress Barbara Chilcott was instrumental in developing the Crest Theatre's Hour Company, which continues to flourish long after the theatre itself went dark. The most striking achievement, however, is that of Susan Douglas Rubes.

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\*In February 1971, Jean Roberts was appointed Theatre Officer at the National Arts Centre.



An American-born actress whom Nathan Cohen has called "the most indomitable person on the Toronto theatrical scene", Susan Rubes moved to Canada with her husband, the singer Jan Rubes, early in the nineteen sixties. Determined to give children meatier fare than the Saturday diet of television cartoons, she launched the Museum Children's Theatre in 1962. Using the stage on which Dora Mavor Moore's New Play Society had performed a decade before, the Museum Theatre played to delighted audiences for several seasons. Perhaps its most notable production was The Dandy Lion, an original play by two Toronto women: Pat Patterson, hostess of CBC's Matinee, and Dodi Robb, Director of Daytime Programming. Later on, the play was produced in French, as Le Lion Distingué.

After a dispute with the Board of Directors ('twas ever thus, although in this case the Board of Directors was made up exclusively of women!), the Museum Theatre closed. Mrs. Rubes, undaunted, founded in its place the Young People's Theatre, which plays regular Saturday programmes at the Colonnade Theatre, and tours schools in the Metro area. Susan Rubes has also been responsible for organizing the Ontario Department of Education's "Prologue to the Performing Arts" project, through which capsule programmes of opera, ballet and theatre are presented to students.

Susan Rubes' philosophy is that theatre should create in children a sense of occasion and celebration. For the most part, Young People's Theatre productions are presented formally, using full sets and costumes. Other women, notably Anna Palo-Heimo, president of the Canadian Child and Youth Drama Association, are more interested in using drama as a tool for leading a child towards self-discovery. She and her disciples experiment with intimate, informal and impromptu plays in which children themselves participate.

Within a decade or so, both threads should knit together a creative new audience for adult theatre. Perhaps out of this audience will emerge Boards of Directors more sympathetic to the potential of women in theatre.

In French Canada, indeed, the situation of women directors is already more promising. There, apart from the sturdy Le Rideau Vert and Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, the theatrical scene is free and fluid. Small companies spring up for a season or several, then fade away. In this atmosphere, so much less rigid than in English Canada, several women directors have made a considerable mark. Like Yvette



Brind'amour, most of them are also actresses. They reflect the powerful latent creativity of French Canadian women so evident in the work of novelists like Marie-Claire Blais and Gabrielle Roy, and in painters like Marcelle Ferron and Rita Letendre.

To list just a few of their accomplishments: by founding, respectively, Le Théâtre Club and Le Théâtre de l'Egégore, Monique Lepage and Françoise Berd were largely responsible for introducing contemporary and avant-garde drama to Montreal. As co-director with Paul Buissoneau, Louise LaTraverse established the lively Théâtre de Quat'sous and Françoise Gratton is one of three directors of Le Nouvelle Compagnie Théâtrale, which sponsors performances for high school students.

Summer theatres in Quebec are almost entirely the preserve of women. Le Théâtre de Marjolaine, founded and directed by Marjolaine Hébert, functions as a kind of French language mini-Charlottetown Festival, producing original musical comedies each year. Mariette Duval is co-director of Théâtre des Marguerites, near Trois Rivières, while Monique Lepage has recently assumed management of the Piggery Theatre in the Eastern Townships. The longest lived, if by no means the most artistically venturesome playhouse is La Poudrière, a charming 154-seat auditorium carved out of an old military powder magazine on Montreal's Ile Saint-Hélène. Founded in 1958, by Jeannine Beaubien, La Poudrière each year presents a partial season of plays in French and English, and sometimes in German and Italian.

The difficulties which confront women theatre directors have had slight if any effect on women performers and for obvious reasons. An actress, like a writer or painter, is judged solely on her performance -- and women play women.

For Canadian actresses, as for all Canadian performing artists, the pull of the United States and to Europe remains strong. Toby Robins is in London; Joanna Shimkus is in Paris.

But the pull abroad is weaker than it was a generation ago. Canadian theatre, complemented by television and by the first stirrings of a native film industry, has developed into a profession where a performer can make a living. Kate Reid, for example, has given the Stratford stage many of her finest performances and has frequently lent her talents to bolster small, uncertain Canadian ventures. Frances Hyland has spent

much of her career with regional playhouses; most recently, at the new Globe Theatre in her native Saskatchewan.

French language theatre has produced a pride of actresses: Monique Miller, Francine Racette, Louise Marleau, to name just a few. Perhaps one might single out in particular the astonishingly versatile Denise Pelletier. At home in the classics and in theatre of the absurd alike, Denise Pelletier was able to play a stunning performance as "Alice" in Strindberg's "Dance of Death" at Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde one season and, the next year, create an equally magnificent Alice in English, at Stratford.

A striking development of the late sixties has been the emergence of younger actresses who received all their formal training in Canada. Out of the National Theatre School, for example, came Martha Henry; out of the Quebec Conservatory, Geneviève Bujold, the latest Canadian actress to become an international success.

And yet, for all their success, actresses, like theatre directors, face problems which are related to their sex. As Nathan Cohen points out:

"We have few playwrights who write for women. Although there is an abundance of work for qualified actresses in Canada today, the fact is that the new plays make very little provision for them. Occasionally one has the kind of instance where a play is written with an actress specifically in mind - A Festival of Carol's for Anne Cameron, The Ecstasy of Rita Joe for Frances Hyland - but generally one must say that few new plays have good roles for women in them or are written with any understanding of women, or sympathy for them."

In his research paper, on French-language theatre, J. Rudel-Tessier elaborated on this point:

"The truth is that authors for theatre bring to the stage a world where men are very important. When a dramatist puts two people on the stage - chances are great that they are a man and a woman. But if he has to introduce a lawyer, doctor, member of parliament, minister, senior official, architect, university professor (and so on almost endlessly) - chances are that he creates these roles only for men.

"The reason for this is that dramatists are forced in a certain way to take things as they are. But also because the theatre adopted habits a long time ago - when there were no women doctors, lawyers, professors and architects. And it is also because many plays are presented which were written in a different era. To present Racine, Corneille, Molière, Beaumarchais, Musset (and, one might add, not to mention Shakespeare) many more actors than actresses are needed.

But it still remains that modern dramatists are forced, by the reality they wish to convey, to put on stage more men than women characters. And to excuse them, it is undoubtedly necessary to take into account also the fact that they know men better than women, since dramatists, like good novelists, find in themselves all their characters."

Of our final area of concern - that of women playwrights, there is, unhappily, little to say. Canada in fact has yet to prove fertile ground for dramatists of either sex.

As is so often the case with indigenous theatre, the most interesting developments have taken place in Quebec. The most notable and prolific woman writer for theatre is Françoise Loranger who, since 1964, has produced a new play almost every year. Although she began to write seriously only in her forties, Miss Loranger's development has been rapid. Her first two plays, Une maison, un jour, and Encore Cinq Minutes were, generally speaking, conventional dramas. Une maison, un jour concerned the events of a single day in the life of a French-Canadian family. Encore Cinq Minutes (which, as we have noted, won a Governor General's Award) was in a way a modern, French-Canadian version of "A Doll's House", about a middle-aged woman's sudden discovery of self.

The three plays which followed were more experimental. "Le Chemin du Roy", based on General de Gaulle's 1967 visit to Quebec, was a rollicking tour-de-force in the style of Joan Littlewood. Double-Jeu went further and involved direct participation by the audience. Françoise Loranger's latest play, Medium-Saignant, opened in January 1970 to mixed reviews. But the body of work she has so far produced is witness to an important talent.

Two leading French Canadian women novelists have also written for the stage: Anne Hébert's Le Temps Sauvage was produced by Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and a later play, La mercière assassinée, was produced on television by Radio Canada. L'Execution by Marie-Claire Blais (which, sadly for actresses, was set in a boys' school) was commissioned by Le Rideau Vert.

In English Canada, the situation is less encouraging. During the nineteen-thirties, Gwen Pharis Ringwood wrote a number of plays set in depression Alberta; of these, Still Stands the House is probably the most important. During the nineteen-fifties, Patricia Joudrey's Teach Me How to Cry won considerable success in New York and London as well as in Toronto.

But these tentative achievements have not been followed up. Nathan Cohen has summarized more recent developments:

"For the 1966-67 season of the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Ann Henry wrote a play called Lulu Street. Miss Henry is an experienced journalist with a colourful history, but Lulu Street is evidently her first and last play. Victoria and Vancouver have a number of women who wrote plays for children; and Dodi Robb and Pat Patterson seem to have created an international favourite for the very young with The Dandy Lion.

In the 1950's, a Toronto journalist, Mary Jukes, wrote a romantic comedy, Every Bed is Narrow, which was a local success. It was taken to England, where it was tried out briefly in the provinces. Miss Jukes never put pen to paper again not, that is, as a dramatist. Calgary used to have an interesting playwright, named Elsie Park Gown, at least one of whose farces, The Last Caveman, was not without merit. She too evidently was not encouraged, or simply lost interest.

Curiously, in English as well as in French, Montreal seems to be the best breeding ground for women playwrights. Although she still has difficulties finding the right shape for her material, Aviva Ravel keeps doing the really important things: she writes plays and gets them performed by whomever she can, amateur and professional."

In summary, for all the effort they have made, the success of Canadian women in Canadian theatre has been limited. Perhaps their mixed record results, at least in part, from the fact that, as Nathan Cohen suggests, "Male chauvinism is a much more serious force in Canadian theatre than one might think at first." But Cohen ended his paper on a more cheerful note. The last words shall be his.

"There is no reason to think that the doors closed against women in Canadian theatre will remain closed much longer. We are dealing here with the continuation through habit, and through a certain reticence on the part of women, of certain long practised social attitudes that no longer have any true force. We are all too aware of the achievements in other countries of such people as Jean Dalrymple of the New York City Centre, Zelda Fitchandler of Arena Theatre in Washington and Joan Littlewood in England, and Mira Trilofic in Yugoslavia, to mention a handful of outstanding theatre figures, to believe for a moment that there are any jobs in theatre beyond female competence.

What is required is a conscious effort within such institutions as the Canadian Theatre Centre, the Stratford Festival and the Canada Council to bring about a changed attitude. Habits die hard. It is necessary to take certain symbolical actions to demonstrate the opening of doors and the overturn of reactionary and untenable views. Equality is not a matter of statistics and actuarial counts of an even division of labours and responsibilities. That kind of equality means something, but not very much. The true index of equality of the sexes is the psychological and social acceptance, as a matter of course of a person without regard to gender - the acceptance or the rejection, for that matter."

## MUSIC

Music in Canada is far from an upstart art or, at any rate, it is less so than the others. As early as 1764, Quebec boasted a concert hall; weekly subscription concerts held there included symphonies by Haydn, overtures by Handel and concertos by Mozart. During the nineteenth century, almost every town of consequence could muster at least a makeshift orchestra, and many developed choirs of several hundred voices. The audiences were equally enthusiastic: In 1851, more than a thousand people paid \$3.00 each to hear Jenny Lind sing at St. Lawrence Hall. By the eighteen-nineties, as the building of Toronto's Massey Hall attested, music had become an institution. The first decade of the new century saw the establishment of permanent symphony orchestras in Quebec and in Toronto.

From the beginning, women were encouraged to play a part in the nation's musical life. But not an important part. Here, as in other countries, "a little singing, a little piano playing", as Arthur Loesser wrote in Men, Women and Pianos, "was generally judged to render a girl a more valuable prize in the marriage market." As a result, and because music, and certainly the classic variety, is inherently more conservative than other art forms, a tradition developed which effectively barred women from the top ranks of the musical hierarchy. Even today, the unwritten law remains almost universal. Women almost never conduct orchestras, and never major symphony orchestras. Only rarely do they become even concertmasters.

Within the field allotted to them however - that of performance - Canadian women have cultivated a rich and abundant garden. Particularly as vocal artists, their talent and tenacity has transmuted what was once thought of as no more than genteel accomplishment into great art.

At the start of his research paper on women in music, John Kraglund made the point:

"As far as the relationship between the sexes is concerned, the solo performance category is the least competitive and the one in which there is least evidence of discrimination. Vocal music is strictly non-competitive. Men are as happy to leave the soprano and contralto repertoire to women as women are to be barred from the music for tenors, baritones and basses."

Kraglund's observation cannot, of course, explain how it has happened that Canada, in relation to the size of its population and to the amount of musical activity it supports, has produced such an astonishing array of vocal talent of the first international rank. It does, however, indicate at least part of the reason why so many of these singers (Kraglund's own estimate is that the honours between men and women are divided roughly evenly) have been women.

Their story begins in Montreal, on a stifling August night in 1860, when, to celebrate the opening of the Victoria Bridge, a "Grand Musical Festival" was staged in the presence of the Prince of Wales. Among the performers was Emma Lajeunesse, a thirteen year old French-Canadian girl, with a soprano voice which even then was astounding.

For the first time perhaps, but certainly not for the last, Canadians failed to appreciate an enormous talent. After a public subscription to finance her further training collapsed, Emma moved to Albany, New York, whose citizens were more sympathetic and who, in 1868, sent her to study in Paris. Two years later, as Madame Albani (Had Montreal been more receptive, might it have been Madame Montreali?) she made a brilliantly successful debut in Messina, singing Amina in La Somnabuli. From then on, for nearly half a century, Albani remained in the forefront of operatic celebrities. "No small achievement", as the Canadian musical historian Hellmuth Kallman has written, "in an age which boasted Patti, Tietjens, Nilsson and Lucca". Ironically, on the diva's triumphal tours of Canada, the country which had once discouraged her claimed her as "Canada's own" and put a private railway car at her disposal.

In the wake of Albani's triumph, other Canadian singers won laurels abroad, notably Mary Hope Morgan, Mme Edwina (Marie Louise Martin) and Beatrice LaPalme. Most important among them was Pauline Lightstone, also from Montreal, who, as Madame Donalda, created the leading soprano part in Ravel's L'Heure Espagnole. But unlike Albani, who lived her life as well as made her name overseas, Mme. Donalda returned to Montreal in 1937, where she made an important contribution to the development of music in Canada, as a teacher, and as founder, in 1940, of the Montreal Opera Guild. To this day, in co-operation with the Montreal Symphony, the Guild stages operatic performances.

Eighty or so years after the future Madame Albani sang before the future Edward VII, another Montreal teenager gifted with a magnificent voice dreamed, as she once recalled, "of being Deanna Durbin in the film 100 Men and a Girl."

For Maureen Forrester, however, far more significant honours were in store. Today, in her prime as a contralto, she is, in the words of the critic Jacob Siskind, "one of the greatest artists Canada has produced, and she is also one of the greatest artists of this generation."

On international concert stages, Maureen Forrester, whom one of her admirers has described as "a golden-haired earth mother, quick with intelligence and humour" is renowned primarily as a singer of lieder and oratorio. As the wife of the conductor Eugene Kash, and the mother of five children, she is one of few women artists in any discipline who has been able to marry career and family and see neither suffer. On one occasion, Maureen Forrester gave a recital at New York's Town Hall barely two weeks after giving birth to a daughter. As she herself has explained, "I can sing the morning I'm giving birth, and even during. It doesn't bother me. It's just the conductors who get nervous."

If Maureen Forrester is in a class by herself as a contralto, so also, as a soprano, is Toronto's Lois Marshall, a brilliant dramatic singer best known for her work in concert. So great is Miss Marshall's dedication to her art that a few years ago, following a serious accident, she undertook a grinding concert season in a wheelchair.

Among operatic singers, Montreal's Pierrette Alarie has, like Maureen Forrester, combined marriage with a magnificently successful career. Together with her husband, and frequent vocal partner, the tenor Leopold Simoneau, she has been acclaimed, in Strasbourg, as a singer of Mozart and in Bayreuth, as a singer of Wagner. Other important divas include Teresa Stratas, the fiery young soprano from Toronto who won stardom at the Metropolitan Opera, Colette Boky who won it in Vienna, as well as Huguette Tourangeau, Irene Salemka, and Nelly Mathot. The list grows longer with each passing year. As John Kraglund notes:

"Among those whose promising careers have begun only recently are Heather Thomson, Lillian Sukis, Jeannette Zarou, Helly Sapinski, Maria Pellegrini, Marguerite Paquet and Roxolana Roslak."



For better or for worse, all these singers have chosen the merciless, brutally competitive field of international concert and opera. Other Canadian women, notably Elizabeth Benson Guy, Claire Gagnier, Mary Morrisson and Patricia Rideout, have, for the sake of their families chosen to make their careers closer to home. These singers, as Kraglund points out, "are not necessarily lesser performers except in terms of their personal ambitions." Indeed, in his opinion, their contribution to the development of music within Canada itself, may well be as great as that of the international stars:

"A great many recent Canadian works for soprano, for example, have been composed specifically for Mary Morrisson. Her career permitted her to devote time to becoming fully acquainted with the problems of contemporary music, and she has, consequently, helped to bridge the gap between the modern Canadian composer and his audience."

As concert and opera singers, women vie only with one another. As solo instrumentalists, however, they must compete also with men. In this field, in Canada as in other countries, they have fared less well. As Kraglund points out, "There is no ignoring the fact that the Canadian pianists and violinists most frequently engaged at the present time are men."

It is difficult, as it always is, to find the precise reason why. Certainly, at the earliest stage of performance, girls frequently outshine boys. As Kraglund notes,

"Anyone who has examined the results of competitive music festivals, not only in Ontario and Quebec but across the country from Halifax to Vancouver will realize that a high proportion of the awards are won by girls and young women. Keith MacMillan, executive secretary of the Canadian Music Centre, has suggested a reason for this. He feels that woman's greater ability to concentrate upon details and to achieve at an early age the co-ordination which is essential to accurate musical performance leads to earlier, more satisfactory results - even in competition with boys who are more musically gifted."

As the young instrumentalists mature, the simple physical differences between men and women start to make a difference. As Kraglund develops this point, his comments are strikingly similar to those Elizabeth Kilbourn made about the difference between masculine and feminine creativity as it applies to painting and sculpture.

"Detail, discipline and co-ordination are not the sole requirements of mature music-making. A prime requirement is physical strength, combined with control. While women are capable of achieving either of these characteristics, it seems exceedingly rare that they achieve both, combined with a broad vision that permits details to take care of themselves.

While these comments apply primarily to piano music, they are also applicable to the string repertoire. Physical stamina is of vital importance to a violinist, who must be able to retain absolute control of a bow arm, even when the position seems sufficiently unnatural to tire a listener who becomes overly conscious of the visual aspects of a performance. The success of women in orchestral violin sections would seem to belie this, but the explanation may be that they are not then concerned with big-scale solo sound, and that matters of interpretation are left in the hands of the conductor."

In some measure also, to develop further this thesis of the visual and physical aspects of musical performance, audience preferences continue to mirror eighteenth century mores. As Loesser noted in Men, Women and Pianos,

"When a woman plays the flute she must purse her lips, and she must do this likewise when she blows a horn, besides also giving evidences of visceral support for her tone. What encouragement might that not give the lewd-minded among her beholders? When she plays a cello, she must spread her legs: perish the thought! 'In thousands of people it calls up pictures that it ought not to call up' primly said the anonymous Musickalischer Almanach für 1784. When she plays the violin, she must twist her upper torso and strain her neck in an unnatural way; and if she practices much, she may develop an unsightly scar under her jaw. For centuries, the violin was generally regarded as a quite unwomanly instrument."

Perhaps it is for this reason that the majority of successful women solo instrumentalists have been pianists. (Loesser notes: "A girl could finger a harpsichord, a clavichord or a pianoforte with her feet demurely together, her face arranged into a polite smile or a pleasantly earnest concentration"). Among Canadians, one can cite Ida Krehm, Ellen Ballon, Patricia Parr and Sheila Henig. Violinists who have triumphed over the odds include the late, great Kathleen Parlow, Ida Haendly, the European virtuoso who now makes her home in Montreal, and Edmonton-born Betty Jean Hagen, who, in 1961, was a finalist in the Tchaikovsky International Music Competition in Moscow. There is also Zara Nelsova, who prior at least to the recent sensational success of Britain's Jacqueline du Pré, was regarded as the foremost female cello soloist in the world.

In certain areas of music, most notably that of the harpsichord, attention to detail rather than strength is the prime consideration. Thus it is not surprising to find that Canada's outstanding harpsichordist is Toronto's Greta Kraus. Still, as Kraglund points out, "There is a decidedly limited field for concert activity."

Over the broader spectrum then, what can be done to banish the ghosts of two centuries ago, and so improve woman's position? In Kraglund's opinion, there are no easy answers:

"It seems to demand both physiological and psychological changes. It does not seem feasible or even desirable that equality should extend so far that men and women become identical. It seems more likely that given comparable talent the rest will have to be left to chance...the chance, that is, that a woman's natural characteristics will include a compromise between the most desirable female and male qualities. Perhaps it is imaginary, but this sort of compromise seems to have existed in most great female artists."

When they are students, promising musicians generally set their sights on an international concert career. For men as well as women, however, this path is narrow. Most eventually turn to orchestral playing, a field which, as Kraglund remarks, "continues to become increasingly important in Canada as the demand for orchestras grows in direct proportion to the population and an expanding interest in the arts." It is also a field in which women are becoming increasingly welcome.

The Montreal and Toronto symphonies, for example, each muster approximately 100 players. In Toronto, 17 of these are women, and in Montreal, 26. Ottawa's new National Arts Centre orchestra numbers 14 women out of a complement of 44. The National Youth Orchestra, which constitutes the hope of the future for all Canadian orchestras, will have, for its 1970 season, 45 girls among its 106 players. The new National Youth training orchestra has 18 girls out of a total of 35.

Most women play in the string sections. (In the horn, brass and woodwind sections, apparently, the old taboos linger). In Toronto, indeed 10 out of 29 violinists - or about 35 per cent are women. The growing shortage of male violinists indicates that this proportion is likely to increase. One qualified observer, the Montreal cellist Walter Joachim, has even suggested that within ten or fifteen years the violin sections of most Canadian orchestras will be made up entirely of women and of Japanese. (Japan is one of the few countries which has evolved a highly successful violin school).

In all Canadian orchestras, union contracts demand that men and women work for equal wages. In Kraglund's opinion, as far as the body of the orchestra is concerned, talent is the only criterion for hiring:

"A case in point was the recent audition for an additional player for the double bass section. Of the six applicants, one was a young woman. It was expected by the auditors that the post would go to a young man whose capabilities were already known to the orchestra because he had sometimes filled in as a substitute. The young woman won because her audition was of such a high calibre that the auditors had no other choice. It is interesting to note that she is now the third woman in the Toronto Symphony's nine member bass section - a high percentage where the instruments seem designed to overwhelm all but giants."

Within the orchestral hierarchy, however, the odds against women remain high enough to overwhelm all but the most tenacious. Apart from the National Youth Orchestra, which, for half its sessions has had a female concertmaster and which frequently includes young women as principals of string and woodwind sessions, the number of Canadian women

who have held positions as concertmasters and principals can be counted on the fingers of one hand. One can cite Zara Nelsova, who was at one time principal cellist with the Toronto Symphony, and the violinist Marta Hidy, who was for several seasons concertmaster of the CBC Winnipeg orchestra and assistant concertmaster of the Winnipeg Symphony, and one can include a few women who have taken the lead in the second violin section in various orchestras, but that about ends the list.

As symphony conductors, as we noted at the outset of this section, women have been notably unsuccessful throughout the world. The only important Canadian exception is the Montreal violinist Ethel Stark, who for 25 years has endeavoured to build a conducting career as leader of her own women's symphony orchestra. Her efforts however, have met with no more than limited acclaim.

In the field of chamber music, where attention to detail is vital, the story of women conductors is more cheerful, - more cheerful perhaps than in other countries. In Toronto, Kathleen Parlow played a vital role in developing the art form, and for many years led the Parlow String Quartet. Today, her role has been assumed by Greta Kraus, who directs the Collegium Musicum. In Winnipeg, Christine Mather founded and directs the Manitoba Consort, while in Montreal, as Kraglund remarks, "it would be difficult to imagine an outstanding string ensemble which did not include the violinist Mildred Goodman."

The conservatism of the musical profession itself, a lack of personal ambition among women, a resigned acceptance of the lack of opportunity and, to call a spade a spade, the physical differences between men and women which affect the visual aspects of performance, have resulted in a striking absence of women in the top ranks of orchestras. In the long run, perhaps, one must look to the young women musicians emerging from the National Youth Orchestra, where at all levels, talent is the only attribute that counts, to fill them.

To some degree at least, composition can be compared to choreography and to playwriting. Generally speaking, Canadian women composers have been markedly more successful than their counterparts in ballet and in theatre.

Indeed, as Kraglund suggests, "In terms of their recognition and the performance of their works, women are better off in the field of composition in Canada than they are in any other country."

Prime among them is Barbara Pentland, the Vancouver composer who, as Kraglund remarks, "is likely to be remembered for the astringency of her music." Influenced at various times by Cesar Franck, by Copland, Stravinsky and Webern, she is deeply concerned with the development of Canadian music, and she has pioneered in what she has described as "bringing forth our own manner of speech."

The Montreal critic Andree Desautels has suggested that the hallmarks of Pentland's style are "lively, spontaneous and often syncopated motifs." Perhaps these show to best effect in her Second String Quartet which the International Society for Contemporary Music chose to be performed at the Stockholm Festival of 1956, and in her more recent Symphony for 10 Parts.

Jean Coulthard, also from Vancouver, works in a style which is more easily accessible to audiences. A recent major work "The Pines of Emily Carr" gave the lie to the old saw that music and painting are the two arts which cancel each other out, the one assuming that you can't hear, the other that you can't see. Scored for mezzo-soprano, narrator and chamber ensemble, "The Pines" was broadcast on the CBC network in September 1969.

The works of another important woman composer, Violet Archer, who studied with Bartok and who is now Professor of Music at the University of Alberta, were chosen to be performed in the concert series which marked the opening of Montreal's Place des Arts. The compositions of Winnipeg's Sonia Eckhardt-Gramatte have been performed frequently, particularly on CBC. Among younger, experimental composers, the most notable perhaps is Norma Beecroft, who has also worked extensively on CBC commissions. From Dreams of Brass, a work scored for narrator, soprano, choir and electronic music is considered by many to be her most important achievement to date.

No discussion of the role which Canadian women have played in the field of music is complete without mention of their work as teachers. The manner in which students are introduced to music has an important bearing upon the nation's musical development, not only in terms of performance but also in relation to the development of appreciative audiences. As John Kraglund notes:

"Anyone who studied music as a child during the past three decades will remember that most of the available music teachers seemed to be women. What is more important, they will recall that where both male and female teachers were available - at all levels of study - it was frequently the women who had the highest reputation, judged not only on student achievement, but also on the reports of the individual students."

Among the important teachers of the recent past, some of whom continue to take pupils, Kraglund cites Mona Bates of Toronto, Lubka Kolessa and Yvonne Hubert of Montreal, and the late Gladys Egbert of Calgary.

Even today, at least in the field of private music teaching, women continue to hold sway. In Montreal, for example, the important Vincent d'Indy music school is staffed almost entirely by nuns. At the Royal Conservatory in Toronto, women outnumber men as teachers by almost two to one. It is also women who, more often than not, take the lead in experimenting with new ways of teaching. As an example, John Kraglund singles out Doreen Hall of Toronto, who has pioneered in Canada the methods of musical instruction devised by the composers Carl Orff and Zoltan Kodaly. He notes also Rachel Cavalho, who inspired a group of Canadian composers to compose contemporary music specifically designed for the capabilities of contemporary Canadian children. (Among the composers enthusiastically involved in this project is Barbara Pentland).

A number of enlightened school boards, most of them in the Toronto area, have now made music a vital part of the regular school curriculum. In this area, however, a cloud as yet no bigger than a man's hand has appeared on woman's horizon. To put it bluntly, at certain levels it appears that male teachers are being given preference over women.

The borough of Scarborough, which boasts perhaps the most innovative musical education program in Canada, is a case in point. Within the elementary school system, it is true, more women than men are employed as music teachers. But nearly all the women teach in Grades 3, 4 and 5. In Grades 6 and 8, nearly 80 per cent of the teachers are men. At the secondary level, the gap is even wider: of a staff of 30 teachers in 17 high schools, only three are women.

The situation in the City of Toronto proper is much the same. Here, in the elementary schools music is taught only in Grades 7 and 8, and at this level the staff is divided more or less equally between men and women. In the high schools, however, where almost one-third of the students choose music as an elective, men outnumber women in a ratio of about three to one. As Kraglund points out, "Indeed, if one ignored vocational schools and schools for girls, which have largely female staffs, the ratio would be nearly 10 men to one woman - or very close to the Scarborough level."

It would be inaccurate to claim any evidence of outright or overt discrimination. In his research paper, Kraglund notes that Keith Bissell, supervisor of the Scarborough program, explained that men predominate in the upper grades partly because they seemed better able to cope with older students, and partly to ensure continuity of the program, since many young women teachers remain on staff only for a year or so. Bissell also pointed out that, at the high school level, women constitute no more than ten per cent of the applicants for teaching positions.

In the case of Toronto, Harvey Perrin, Director of Music for Toronto schools, explained that instrumental music plays a larger part in the high school music curriculum, and that fewer women graduates have specialized in this field. He also noted that many women find the physical aspects of conducting bands and orchestras too demanding.

There are other factors which have a bearing on the situation: for one thing, women are often much better than men at establishing rapport with very young children; hence their predominance at the lower level. For another, few women seek university degrees in musical education. At the University of Toronto, for example, women constitute only about 25 per cent of the student body in the field. But in teachers' college, the students of which go on to take positions in elementary schools, the percentage of women music students is much higher.



Even so, and whether they are discriminated against or not, it would be a pity to see women abdicate their role as proselytizers of music. As Kraglund points out:

"There is increasing evidence that women can make a vital contribution - particularly at the elementary school level. Recently developed systems of teaching music to young children may have originated with men, but much of the influential international influence can be attributed to the work of women. And women teachers have shown that they are not always prepared to accept traditional methods just because they have been long established...

It seems reasonable to suggest that those responsible for the expansion of music education in the schools should keep these facts in mind. For many women, the problems of discipline have proved no more insurmountable than for men. And it is likely that once this is recognized something may be done to eliminate the other hurdle - that is, the one involved with program continuity. As for the difficulties of coping with orchestral music in secondary schools, it is likely that women who are interested in this aspect of music will somehow find the stamina to bear up under the added strain."

## BALLET

Of all the art forms, only ballet has a feminine mystique. Think of theatre, and you will think of Olivier; think of music and Beethoven will come to mind. Painting will summon up Michelangelo and writing, Shakespeare, or Dante.

Think of ballet, though, and you will think of Pavlova, Ulanova or Fonteyn. All the great roles - The Swan Queen, Giselle, Coppelia - have been created for them; the list of great premier danseurs pales against the roll of great prima ballerinas.

If women outnumber men on the ballet stage, which by itself is not surprising since dance is traditionally a feminine skill, they also come close to matching men behind the scenes. In Britain, Ninette de Valois founded the Royal Ballet, and Marie Rambert the Ballet Rambert. In the United States, Lucia Chase launched the American Ballet Theatre, and Rebekah Harkness the Harkness Company. In no country, however, have women been so central to the art of ballet as in Canada.

It began as an idea in the wilderness when Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally, two British ballet teachers, came to Winnipeg in 1938, to open a ballet school. In those days, as Miss Lloyd once recalled, "ballet on the prairies was only something in the memory of many Canadians who had come from Europe at the beginning of the century, a lingering dream of colour and movement almost lost in the years of achievement and hardship in a new country."

The dream was not long being reawakened. Within a year, the Winnipeg Ballet Club was founded as an amateur company and, the next year, made its first western tour. After a lull during the war years, the pace of development quickened. In 1947, Miss Lloyd and Miss Farrally organized the first Canadian ballet festival, and in 1949, the Winnipeg Ballet was incorporated as the first professional dance company in Canada. By then, the troupe had found itself an outstanding prima ballerina, Eva Von Gencsy, a European dancer who was discovered working as a domestic in a Winnipeg household. In 1951, the company received a Royal Charter, and performed before Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Troubled times lay ahead. In 1954, all the company's sets and costumes were destroyed in a disastrous fire. But Miss Lloyd and Miss Farrally persevered. By 1958, when they retired from the company, the Royal Winnipeg was back on its feet again. The tradition Miss Lloyd and Miss Farrally founded has been carried on by Arnold Spohr, who received all his early training from them.

During the nineteen sixties, the Royal Winnipeg has gone from strength to strength, culminating in 1968 with a triumphant European tour during which the company won first prize in the International Ballet Festival in Paris, and Christine Hennessy, its principal dancer won the gold medal for individual ballerinas.

In the line with the policy laid down by Miss Lloyd and Miss Farrally, the Royal Winnipeg has remained a small company. Rather than develop a classical repertoire, it has concentrated on shorter, modern interpretative works. Perhaps because of its close links with Brian Macdonald, the only important choreographer Canada has so far produced, it displays a certain freshness and in so far as this is possible, a Canadian character.

It remained for another woman, Celia Franca, to mount the classics, and to make ballet a Canadian institution.

By the late nineteen-forties Canadians were becoming increasingly interested in ballet. Thousands watched the Sadler's Wells Company when it played in Toronto; a generation of young girls had been entranced by Moira Shearer in the film, The Red Shoes. And so, a group of Toronto balletomanes, determined to found a national company, asked Dame Ninette de Valois how to go about it. Her answer was to dispatch Celia Franca as ambassador.

Celia Franca was then 29. Raven-haired, and expressive of face, she had been, as de Valois once described her "the best dramatic dancer Sadler's Wells ever had." She arrived in Canada during the winter of 1950. "I was dazzled by the chance to build a company," she has recalled, "and, looking back, it's a good think I was young and a good thing I was a woman. A man who had the sense to weigh the odds, and to look at the idea logically, probably would never have started."

Celia Franca started by embarking on a cross-country tour to ferret out dancers. One way or another, she found them. (One was uncovered in a law school). In the autumn of 1951, the company gave its first performance in Eaton auditorium. Nathan Cohen has said, "No international tumult greeted the establishment of the National Ballet, but its survival is doubly valuable as an example of the power of tenacity and faith."

Certainly, tenacity and faith were demanded. For more than a decade, the National Ballet battled the odds against survival. Productions were ragged; Lois Smith, the company's principal dancer once recalled, "we had to learn how to do what we were already doing." Funds were so short that at one point Celia Franca had to take a part-time job in a department store to make ends meet.

By the mid nineteen-sixties, as its first full-length performance of "Romeo and Juliet" demonstrated, the National Ballet had come of age. Since then, the repertoire has grown to include sumptuous productions of nearly all the great classics, and though Celia Franca has never been successful in developing choreographic talent within the company itself, a number of contemporary ballets have been staged. By 1970, Clive Barnes, ballet critic of the New York Times, was able to write, "There are many things wrong with the National Ballet but it must nevertheless be discussed only at a high international level." Indeed, by then many of the world's leading dancers had appeared with the company as guest artists, including Rudolf Nureyev, Erik Bruhn, Suzanne Farrell and Melissa Hayden, the great Canadian ballerina who joined the New York City Ballet in the early fifties, because there was no opportunity at home.

Crucial and central to the success of the National Ballet has been the development of the National Ballet School. Founded in 1960, by Betty Oliphant, formerly ballet mistress with the company, this institution provides secondary education as well as training in dance. Nearly all the company's young dancers have come out of the school; in 1965, Martine Van Hamel, who had received all her training there, won first prize at an important international competition for junior ballerinas at Varna, Bulgaria.

Since then, the National Ballet School has won further international acclaim. Eugen Valukin, of the Bolshoi school who taught there for a season has said: "I have taught at quite a few schools and this school provides the best training I have

seen in America." Galina Ulanova, the Bolshoi's great prima ballerina watched the students and commented, "Everywhere in America I have seen bad arms. That is not true here. Here they are very good. This school is serious and knows what it is about." As a return compliment, Miss Oliphant, on a visit to Russia, was invited to teach classes at the Bolshoi School.

If the National Ballet is based on the traditions of Britain's Royal Ballet, and if the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is, in a special way indigenous to North America, Canada's third professional company, "Les Grands Ballets Canadiens" of Montreal, has for forebears the great European ballet companies of Diaghilev and DeBasil which flourished between the wars. Like the National Ballet, its record, as Nathan Cohen has remarked, "is the story of one woman's indefatigable perseverance, her belief in the cause of dance and her capacity for leadership."

The woman in this case is Ludmilla Chiriaeff, a Latvian dancer who trained at the Bolshoi and danced with the Ballets Russes. In 1952, Mme Chiriaeff emigrated to Canada. There seemed slight prospect of launching a full-fledged company, but television was in its infancy, and as Cohen points out, "Mme Chiriaeff's good fortune was to be able to fill a vacuum which existed in the fledgling medium in Montreal, and in half a dozen years to shape a small band of dancers who performed regularly on various programs, most notably the French network's L'Heure du Concert. In 1955, the company gave its first public performance at La Comedie Canadienne, and in 1957, was formally incorporated as "Les Grands Ballets Canadiens."

Today, the company's complement of dancers almost matches that of the National Ballet. As the Canada Council's Centennial-year survey of the arts noted, "Les Grands Ballets have a kind of panache, a flair of their own which, since ballet is an international art, in as much Gallic as it is French Canadian." A number of important international choreographers have created works for the troupe, including Anton Dolin and Fernand Nault; its most important production in recent years has been a ballet version to the full score of Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, which won bravos on the company's first tour abroad, in 1969.

Although, in the space of a generation, classical ballet has come from nowhere to become one of the most vibrant of Canadian art forms, and the one for which we are perhaps best known abroad, modern dance, in the style, say, of Martha Graham, is still in its infancy. Once again, however, women are pioneers. It is too early to make predictions but it may be that in 1990, Jeanne Renaud of Le Groupe de la Place Royale of Montreal, and Patricia Beatty of the Toronto Dance Theatre will be seen in hindsight to have been the Celia Franca and Ludmilla Chiriaeff of their day.

Ballet is perhaps the most expensive of all the arts. Indeed, it has been said that it costs as much to keep a ballerina on stage as to keep a soldier in the field. How then, to explain the success Franca and Chiriaeff have had in maintaining full control of their companies, in remaining central to their development, when, as we have seen, Boards of Directors tend to balk at the thought of a woman in authority?

Two reasons suggest themselves.

There is, in the first place, the international tradition of women as directors of ballet companies (although, in contemporary terms, the predominance of women directors makes Canada unique). In Canada, a generation ago at least it seemed natural for this tradition to be adopted, particularly at a time most men, if they thought of ballet at all, thought of it as a sissy art, something akin to painting on china.

More importantly, in the same way as Yvette Brind'amour is Le Rideau Vert, Celia Franca is the National Ballet, Ludmilla Chiriaeff is Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Perhaps Ludmilla Chiriaeff has best expressed the relationship, part maternal, part managerial which exists between a woman and a ballet company.

"I was here first and created the ballet company. In a special way, it is still my ballet company. I take no salary as artistic director, and I have two mortgages on my house. These things are not important -- but they may indicate the kind of proprietary interest I feel in my artists and in my company."

As for the National Ballet, late in 1968, when the company was in serious financial trouble and she herself was under attack from several quarters, Celia Franca tendered her resignation. Her Board of Directors refused to accept it. Clearly, even her severest critics could not imagine the National Ballet without Franca.

And without Franca, Chiriaeff, Lloyd and Farrally there would be no history of ballet in Canada; they achieved what no man was willing - or interested - to attempt.

#### CONCLUSION

Across the broad spectrum of the performing arts, women activists have played almost as vital a role as in the visual arts. To take an example, they dominate the field of publicity and public relations. Among the many, one can cite Mary Jolliffe of Stratford and of the World Festival of 1967; Mary Webb, formerly of the Manitoba Theatre Centre, and now of Stratford; Catherine Smyth of the Canadian Opera Company, and Edith Binnie, of the University of Toronto's Concert Bureau.

Non-professional women have been equally important. Without the invitation of that group of Toronto balletomanes, Celia Franca would never have come to Canada. Without the support of Lady Tupper in Winnipeg, Gweneth Lloyd would not have been encouraged to found the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. In the same way as Women's Committees are crucial to the development of art galleries, Women's Committees are central to symphonies. As Peter Dwyer once remarked, their members "are partners with the Canada Council in a very complex undertaking - the support and encouragement of orchestras across the country."

Faced with scores of women dedicated to the performing arts, it is difficult to single out individual names. Perhaps, however, the honour should go to Vida Peene of Toronto. As founder of the Canadian Opera Guild, a founding member of both the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, a leading member of the National Ballet Guild, and most recently as President of the Dominion Drama Festival, Miss Peene for four decades has been a moving spirit behind all the performing arts.

Nor has Vida Peene, unlike many women, done the right thing for the wrong reasons, embraced the arts because it was the socially correct thing to do. As the journalist Betty Lee has written:

"It was unfashionable in the mid-fifties to tackle serious work for the theatre, for the hilarious local ballet company or the amateurish opera company. But Vida Peene not only got in on the ground floor, she quickly dominated the scene, because of her almost fanatical will to work."

It is Vida Peene, and hundreds of other women like her, who have built the foundation upon which ballet, theatre and music in Canada now flourish.



## THE LITERARY ARTS

It is no harder for a woman to become a writer than it is for a man. Which is another way of saying that anyone can write.

To practise the trade requires neither special training (only hard work), nor, beyond a stack of paper and a marmalade jar full of pencils, expensive equipment. "Money and a room of one's own" were the requirements Virginia Woolf laid down forty years ago, but for married women relief from the need to earn a living can make up for the demands of raising a family and perhaps even for having to work at the dining-room table.

Like all trades, writing has its drawbacks. The writer's life is as lonely as the lighthouse keeper's. Not for them the cheerful camaraderie and companionate misery of actors, musicians and dancers nor even, because writing is the most inner-directed of all the arts, the therapeutic release of flinging paint on canvas. (Perhaps this explains why there are so few Sunday writers: for the author, even more than for the academic, it's a matter of publish or perish).

But though anyone can write, fewer women than men are writers.

"Books by women", the American critic, Mary Ellman has written, "are treated as though they themselves were women and criticism embarks upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips." Nor is the Canadian experience much different. Frank Scott's caricature of Miss Crotchet the poetess and her friends as "virgins of sixty who still write of passion" has often been swallowed whole, without the grain of salt that Scott intended.

More important a cause of the disparity of literary output between men and women than discrimination (which anyway is often as much catalyst as obstacle) is the most obvious difference of all - the sexuality of women, from which they can no more escape by writing than by becoming business executives, or lawyers or doctors.

"To me the trying part is being a woman at all. I've come to the ultimate conclusion that I am a misfit of the worst kind. In spite of a superficial femininity - emotion with a foreknowledge

of impermanence, a daring mind with only a tongue as an outlet, a greed for experience plus a slavery to convention -- what the deuce are you to make of that - as a woman? As a man, you could go ahead and stir things up - fine."

Those lines, which Emmett O'Grady quotes in his research paper, were written by the poet Marjorie Pickthall in 1919. But they could have been penned by almost any serious woman author in English Canada, at almost any period.

It is much less probable, however, that Pickthall's cri du coeur would have been uttered by a woman writer in French Canada - who would have either not said it at all, or done so without any defensive sense of inferiority. As obvious as the sexual difference between men and women writers is the cultural difference, in Canada, between French-speaking and English-speaking women writers.

There are French and English styles in all the arts: a stranger to Canada could guess without too much difficulty the respective regional origins of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and of the National Ballet, and readily detect the American influence upon Joyce Wieland and the European influence upon Marcelle Ferron. But in writing, which is at one and the same time the most political of art forms and the most revealing of the personality of the author, these cultural differences are decisive: they create two solitudes which place an English-Canadian woman writer as far apart from her sister in Quebec as she is from her brother in Toronto or Vancouver.

This difference between French and English-speaking writers expresses itself as strongly in style as in substance. In English Canada, for example, where the line between poetry and fiction is quite distinct, women have as often - if not more often - opted to become poets as novelists. In French Canada, on the other hand, women novelists far outnumber women poets. What has happened there, as the Canada Council's centennial-year survey of writing suggests is that,

"The poetry has crept into the fiction. Jean-Le-Maigre in Marie-Claire Blais' haunting Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel is in fact a poet, and the novel has a pitch of emotional intensity that is anything but prosaic."

And then again, in English Canada, most women who write fiction do so in the naturalistic tradition. Character concerns them as much as social commentary, and yet they largely develop their characters through the interpretation, in sharply observed detail, of their time and place. To experience the taste and smell of life in a small Ontario town at the turn of the century, read Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist. To experience it today, read Alice Munro's Dance of the Happy Shades. In Margaret Laurence country, the town of Manawaka is itself a character; so, in the world of Ethel Wilson, is the Fraser River.

With the exception of Gabrielle Roy (who, come to think of it, grew up in Manitoba) the everyday world intrudes much less into the work of the women writers of French Canada. They interpret their environment no less acutely, but much less literally and much more subjectively. To experience Quebec, read Marie-Claire Blais and Anne Hébert. But in their landscapes you will find few clocks or place-names; you will discover not Quebec but les Québécois, and, above all, la famille québécoise. It is with this world that our survey begins.

To hive off the women writers of Quebec is almost an insult. In the development of French Canadian literature, they have been as important as men. Gilles Marcotte remarked in his study:

"No one would write a study of our poetry without giving top priority to a few women writers. Of the four great poets who have led French Canada into the modern period, two are women, Rina Lasnier and Anne Hébert. Their works are as influential as those of an Alain Grandbois, or a St. Denys Garneau. One finds in their work, if one so desires, themes that are specifically feminine but one would never think of excluding them from the mainstream of poetic evolution."

"... Of the four writers who are sometimes considered the classicists of the French Canadian novel, two are women, Gabrielle Roy and Germaine Guèvremont."

And, Marcotte continues, insofar as critical and popular success is concerned women have done as well as men:

"If I am not mistaken, no Quebec writer has achieved, during the last few years, a sales and critical success as complete as Claire Martin for her autobiography, Dans un gant de fer, a success as brilliant as Marie-Claire Blais for Un Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel. Since 1960, the publication of Le Temps de Jeux by Diane Giguere and Amadou by Louise Maheu-Forcier, the creation of Une maison, un jour by Françoise Loranger, have been among the most striking literary events and the most abundantly reviewed works."

"Moreover, most of the Quebec writers who have brought back important literary prizes from France have been women: There is Gabrielle Roy (Le Femina); Claire France (le Grand Prix du Maine) and Marie-Claire Blais (le Médicis)..."

"It is not enough to say that women writers, in contemporary literature, are many; they mark an epoch. If one describes the thematic and formal evolution of this literature for the past twenty years, there is scarcely a development to which one or several women writer's names cannot or should not be linked."

Nor is this entirely a modern phenomenon. To understand the contemporary ascendancy of women writers in French Canada, one must first know something of the dominant - and paradoxical - role women have played in shaping French Canadian consciousness.

The women who pioneered New France had little time to read, let alone to write. If they were not nuns, they married as soon as they landed, bore a child each year, worked alongside their men in the fields, and shouldered muskets when Indians attacked.

Among the few written records of that period are the letters sent home to France by the remarkable religious Marie de l'Incarnation; the letters of Madame Bégon, a century later, are one of the most lively chronicles of life in New France at the end of the French regime.

As time went by, in an isolated, fiercely Catholic society where outside influences were few there emerged gradually in literature the dominant figure of the French-Canadian mother; a kind of courtly love figure but en famille, whom Jean Le Moyne has described:

"She is altogether something special, for the equivalent of which, I believe, you would look in vain among civilized people of our time ... she stands on her linoleum, in calico, in front of a stove and a cooking pot, an infant on her left hip, a large spoon in her right hand, a cluster of little ones about her legs, and a baby in the cradle next to the woodbox."

But the paradox of this figure is that, as Edmund Wilson has noted, "with all her fecundity, she is supposed to be inaccessible since, as mother, like the Virgin, she is sacred."

Upon French Canadian literature this myth -- this regional feminine mystique if you will -- had both negative and positive effects. Speaking for the negative, Le Moyne notes that it has until very recently been almost impossible for Quebec writers - whether men or women - to present either a genuine woman, or genuine, normal love between man and woman:

"I should be quite unable to discuss, except as a psychologist or sociologist, the feminine characters who people our fiction and are invoked in our poetry. I cannot find in them a single woman who makes me feel her living presence as does a Princess Cassamassima, a Milly Theale or even a Sister Carrie, all American heroines, or any that has the same kind of significance as Mme Verdurin, as Odette Swann, as Oriane de Guermantes.

"...At the approach of love, whether legitimate or not, or at the idea of an everyday intimacy, something in them is resistant to the consummation, the giving of themselves."

On women writers, however, the effect of the mystique has been galvanic. Imprisonment of passionate spirits has produced a kind of creative tension which is an important characteristic of Quebec literature.

One of the first woman writers to express this creative tension was Laure Conan (Marie-Louise-Felicité Angers) who between 1880 and 1924 produced a half dozen novels of which the best known are Angéline de Montbrun, and A l'oeuvre et à l'épreuve (translated into English as The Master Motive). A spinster, and so withdrawn that she would not allow herself to be photographed, Laure Conan, like many of her male contemporaries, used as themes religion and French-Canadian patriotism. But there was more to her work than that; she was also the first writer in French Canada to use a psychological approach to her characters, to explain why her heroines and heroes sacrificed human happiness to an ideal. And, as Le Moynes points out, Laure Conan, albeit unwittingly, revealed much of the repressed interior world of the French Canadian woman of her time:

"It would be difficult to discover an unhealthier work in our literature than Angéline de Montbrun. The lovers in the novel are not Maurice Darville and Angéline, but M. de Montbrun and his daughter, Mme de Montbrun being as dead as possible. The passionate declarations that father and daughter lavish on each other, the hold they exert over one another, their mutual possessiveness, the dreamlike decor, the violent death of M. de Montbrun, Angéline's fall that results in her disfigurement, the solitude that closes in on the unhappy girl, the omnipresence of the father in her memories and in her piety - all these things expressed in such perfect innocence are so blatantly obvious that it is pointless to analyse them."

For nearly two generations Laure Conan was revered as the important woman writer in Quebec - a distinction relative rather than absolute since the number of readers of any literature was severely limited. Among the few other women writers of those days was Marie Le Franc, who published a series of fictional rural idylls, and Blanche Lamontagne, who translated the same peasant country life into simple lyric verse. But Marie Le Franc was a Frenchwoman who spent only part of her time in Canada, and the only notable thing about Blanche Lamontagne's poetry is that it was the first to be published by a French Canadian woman.

Towards the end of the nineteen twenties, however, a flurry of feminine activity resulted in the emergence of a new genre of feminine romanticism. Its prime exponents were Jovette Bernier and Simone Routier.

Jovette Bernier came from Rimouski. Between 1924 and 1945 she published four collections of poetry, remarkable for their frankness and freshness. In 1931, her novel, le Chair déçevante, broke new ground in that it was the first Quebec novel to speak frankly of physical love.

The poetry of Simone Routier, who, besides writing, has also had a distinguished career as an archivist and diplomat is equally sincere, but more sophisticated. An early collection, L'immortel adolescent is essentially romantic in concept, but later on she moved towards free verse and religious mysticism, as in Le long voyage and Les psaumes du jardin clos, both published in 1947.

The same repressed passion which coloured the work of Laure Conan was expressed again, this time knowingly, in the work of Thérèse Tardif. Désespoir de vieille fille, a long prose poem, is a bitter protest against the fear of sensual pleasure which a Jansenist ethic had inculcated in Quebec women. Medje Vezina also wrote of forbidden themes with, Le Moyne suggests, a "smouldering vehemence."

Other women poets who belong to this era are Alice Lemieux and Eva Senecal, each of whom published romantic verse, and Cécile Chabot, perhaps best known for her writing for and about children.

Until the second world war, despite their creativity, and regardless of whether they were men or women, the writers of French Canada had only a limited impact on the public. For there was no more than a rudimentary publishing industry in Quebec. Books from France dominated the market. As a result, few books by Quebecers were published or sold. In 1940, with the fall of France, the imported book trade all but ceased. Local publishers moved in to fill the gap. Many merely churned out the classics of French literature, but the more venturesome began to encourage young writers at home. As Gerard Tougas points out in his History of French Canadian Literature "in an extremely short period, a decisive impetus was given to French Canadian literature." Two of the most important writers this impetus produced were women.

Artists often have a way of appearing on the scene in pairs; their works and personalities contrasting or complementing one another. Dickens and Thackeray; Fitzgerald and Hemingway; closer to home, Callaghan and MacLennan. So it is with Germaine Guèvremont and Gabrielle Roy.

In age (Guèvremont is the elder) the two are only nine years apart; both write novels of social realism and, indeed, their first novels appeared in the same year (1945). But Germaine Guèvremont writes of traditional, pastoral Quebec, while Gabrielle Roy, though she has taken a number of excursions into rural Manitoba, is primarily concerned with modern, urban, industrialized society.

Of the two, Gabrielle Roy, who won Le Prix Femina in 1948, is the best known internationally. Her first novel, and the one for which she continues to be best known, Bonheur d'occasion, stands out, Tougas suggests, "as the French-Canadian novel par excellence, a reflection of the vitality of French-speaking Canadians, and of their spiritual and linguistic isolation." As The Tin Flute, it became the first novel of French Canada since Maria Chapdelaine to have an important impact on English Canada.

The most important reason for the success of The Tin Flute as Hugo McPherson has noted,

"was its startling documentary quality: for the Québécois it arraigned the monster of big city poverty with an accuracy that caught the last syllable of the market vendor's cry and the tragic rhetoric of the Saint-Henri bum; to the English Canadian it spoke brutally of a city which he had known only through the genteel drawing rooms of his Westmount relatives."

Nevertheless, as McPherson continues,

"The book is impressive for a deeper reason, what it gives us is an image of modern life that has all the clarity of nightmare, or of an apocalyptic landscape by El Greco."

Gabrielle Roy's gift for character is as powerful as her sense of atmosphere. Rose-Anna Lacasse, the all-forgiving, fortitudinous mother of The Tin Flute is the French Canadian mother of myth translated, as McPherson puts it, "into a universal mater dolorosa who stands finally as a true image of



poverty and of boundless wealth." Alexandre Chenevert, the bank clerk who gives Gabrielle Roy's third novel its title "is much more than a nameless Montreal clerk who suffers from insomnia and the aches of modern life...he is us, Everyman."

In three novels, La petite poule de l'eau (Where Nests the Water Hen), Rue Deschambault (Street of Riches) and La Route d'Altamont (The Road Past Altamont) Gabrielle Roy returns to Northern Manitoba, the nostalgic landscape of her own youth. These books describe the relatively simple lives of country people and children. And yet, as McPherson points out,

"It would be deceptive to consider these works as day-dreaming retreats from the present. These works are rediscoveries, deceptively gentle and subjective, of the meaning of valour, pain, aspiration and love."

The oeuvre of Germaine Guèvremont is made up of a volume of short stores, En Pleine Terre, and two novels, Le Survenant and Marie Didace (which together have been translated as The Outsider). All of them are centred round the same set of characters - the Beauchemin family. Their common theme is Quebec rural society, seen from the point of view of this family.

When she deals with character, and with the land itself, Germaine Guèvremont shows psychological and poetic gifts almost equal to those of Gabrielle Roy. As Tougas has written,

"the great merit of Germaine Guèvremont's art is in the juxtaposition of short photographic chapters, which lay bare the workings of her character's minds. The exactness of the design she traces, in great part made up of racy dialogue which fits the actors to perfection, is remarkable."

Yet, in Germaine Guèvremont's novels, the misfortunes of the Beauchemins come about through a series of exterior circumstances that makes their story closer to melodrama than true tragedy. In this vein, a television series adapted from her novels won Germaine Guèvremont a large, affectionate audience.

Interestingly Gabrielle Roy and Germaine Guèvremont may also each be linked to a major male novelist whose work is in turn complementary. Like Germaine Guèvremont, Ringuet (Philippe Panneton) wrote of rural Quebec. Like Gabrielle Roy, Roger Lemelin is an urban novelist. In his research paper, Gilles Marcotte looked at the four as a symmetrical group, and made some interesting comments on the different ways in which men and women handle the same themes:

"Between Roy's Bonheur d'occasion and Lemelin's Les Plouffe, there is a difference of tone and of vision of the world that is similar to the difference between Ringuet's Trente Arpents (Thirty Acres) and Le Survenant. On one side - that of men - there is aggression (implicit or explicit) contention and killing. The women exhibit just as intense a vision of social reality, but they wrap it in a warmth of attention that gives weight to each moment, gesture and word.

Bonheur d'occasion is certainly no less revolutionary a novel than Lemelin's Au pied de la pente douce (The Town Below). Indeed, Gabrielle Roy's novel was, and remains in French Canada the only work of fiction that draws a convincing picture of the condition of the working class, but its process rises out of sympathy, out of a warm understanding, rather than from open disputes.

One can see the same differences between 30 arpents and Le Survenant: in the former there are no pleasant landscapes, no character is likeable or engaging, while in the latter, by Germaine Guèvremont, one becomes attached to the characters and places at the very moment when he feels a growing suspicion that their harmony is in the process of destroying itself.

I realize that such a comparison risks leading me directly to a catastrophically commonplace conclusion: that man is generally found on the side of action and struggle, and women on the side of conservatism. This conclusion would be wrong because the novels of Gabrielle Roy and Germaine Guèvremont are no less radical in their unmasking of social and personal realities, or in putting them at the stake, than works by Ringuet and Lemelin. Differences are only in the ways of struggle, its degree of clarity and maybe, also, the values of life according to which the struggle is waged. Insofar as women

writers are less attracted by rationalizations, they escape perhaps more easily from the prevailing ideologies which furnish men with the occasion for explicit and spectacular struggles."

Primarily social realists, Germaine Guèvremont and Gabrielle Roy looked at the world objectively. At the same time two other women delved into their own interior worlds -- and found there the stuff of poetry. With Rina Lasnier and Anne Hébert we are dealing with two of the most important poets in Canada, of either language.

Of Rina Lasnier, Gérard Tougas has written,

"Among women poets, (she) is the one whose work is furthest removed from the commonplaces to which men are accustomed to resort when explaining the other sex. As much as the extraordinary evidence of intuition, incisive rhythms and male vigour characterize her poetry."

Religion is Rina Lasnier's inspiration, and religious themes appear in all her work. Her first important collection was Le chant de la montée, based on the old testament story of Jacob and Rachel. In subsequent collections, L'Escale, Présence de l'absence, Mémoire sans jours and Les gisants, the imagery, as Nora Storey has commented, "is more complex, and the verse moves with startling rapidity."

Rina Lasnier has also carried religious motifs into several biographical plays which deal with the lives of such early Quebec figures as Marguerite Bourgeoys and Katerine Tekakwitha. And yet her work is by no means ascetic. As Gérard Tougas sums up:

"Neither Alain Grandbois nor Anne Hébert, nor, among the young ones, Paul-Marie Lapointe could ever compare with Rina Lasnier in the expression of simultaneous enjoyments of the senses. The wind from the open sea, the vast cosmic space which Alain Grandbois brought into poetry are to be found again in La Malemer....Like a virtuoso, Lasnier makes music in all keys...Her best inspirations have come to her from a combination of her

own sensitivity and the original manifestations of North American cultures."

Almost the same age as Rina Lasnier, Anne Hébert was the cousin and confidante of the tragic hero of French Canadian literature, Saint-Denys Garneau. Like his, her work has been influenced by French poets, notably Paul Claudel. Again like Garneau's much of her early work, (notably Les songes en équilibre and Le Tombeau des Rois) is suffused with the symbols of suffering and death.

This latter book drew her the acclaim of the literary critic of Le Figaro as "one of the greatest poets writing in French in our days." Anne Hébert's later poems are less sombre; "the language of her poetry", Tougas has noted, "has been broadened to include the complicated associations of the senses and the affirmation of a possible happiness."

A similar progression from despair to hope marks Anne Hébert's prose work. Her first novel, Le Torrent (1950) which begins with the line, "I was a child dispossessed of this world" is a powerful Gothic parable of matricide and suicide. Les Chambres de bois, published eight years later, is set in as closed a world, but at the end, the heroine escapes, not through suicide, but through love.

For French-Canadian literature, the 1940's represented one of those definitive periods, not uncommon in the arts, when external factors fuse with latent talent to produce an explosion of creative activity. Such explosions - the Irish Literary Revival of the 1890's for example - are commonly followed by a gentler period of consolidation. Instead, as Quebec spun toward its quiet revolution, literary ferment quickened: as Tougas has written,

"the rich years of the war seem today to have been only the prelude to the broad development which followed, and whose effects make themselves felt more positively today."

In this development, women did far more than simply play a part. In Marie-Claire Blais they have produced a writer whom more than one critic believes to be a genius.

In striking contrast to her own brilliant success story, (at 18, a brilliantly successful first novel; at 22, a protege of Edmund Wilson; at 27, winner of one of Europe's most coveted literary prizes; at 31, the age when most budding writers have produced at best a novel or two or a slender collection of verse, an oeuvre of eight novels and two plays), the work of Marie-Claire Blais is suffused with a profound pessimism. Her books are peopled with characters who are ill-loved.

In Nora Storey's words,

"She explores the lonely world of the individual moved by emotions that can find no expression in the day to day relationships that govern his existence."

Of her first three books, La Belle Bête (Mad Shadows), Tête Blanche, Le Jour est noir - Tougas writes:

"What child reproaches her parents for being too much concerned about her happiness? In these first two attempts at explanation which depict monstrous parents, one feels the exaggeration born of a judgement still not too sure of herself... (in Le Jour est noir) having reached maturity, Marie-Claire Blais, instead of attacking her parents, turns more profitably to herself... Instead of condemning, she turns her attention to the mystery of living."

With Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, which won the Medici Prize for 1965, Marie-Claire Blais achieved what most critics believe to be her finest work so far. For the first time, as Edmund Wilson noted in his introduction to the novel, she dealt with the exterior world:

"The clairvoyant's crystal ball that revealed the diminished, remote and somewhat mysterious visions englobed in the early novels has been suddenly darkened and filled with the turbid and swirling sediment of the actual French Canadian world - with the squalor and the squirming life that swarms in the steep-roofed, cement-covered houses of the little Canadian towns. We see the senselessly increasing family, tending to scatter but partially stabilized by the presiding monumental matron; the illiterate and blundering father; the semi-literate schooling of the children; the barren regime of the convent ..."

Since Une Saison, Marie-Claire Blais has written three novels, L'Insoumise, Les Manuscrits de Pauline Archange and Vivre! Vivre!. As her most recent title suggests, as she develops from prodigy to a mature author, Marie-Claire Blais has become mellower; her characters closer now to human models. As the critic Philip Stratford has written, "To follow the sweep of her dark imagination to the easy stride of her mature prose is an exhilarating experience."

From her recluse's cottage on Cape Cod, Marie-Claire Blais pursues her vision, which, if gentler, remains dark and cosmic. At home in Quebec, a score or more women novelists plumb the distinctive depths of feminine psychology. Of the mature writers, perhaps the three most important are Claire Martin, Claire Morin and Andrée Maillet.

In the first of these, Claire Martin, French Canadian literature, according to Marcotte, finds its closest equivalent to the female rebellion expressed by Simone de Beauvoir. Of her novels, Doux amer and Quand j'aurai payé ton visage and her collection of short stories, Avec ou sans amour, Marcotte has written,

...."In each of these, men are taken to task, they are seen, judged and torn to shreds by a mercilessly lucid inspection. Even in a work as tender as Quand j'aurai payé ton visage, where the prospect of shared love takes form, it is the woman who takes the lead...she carries out a revolution of love against a society dedicated to a conformism of marriage arranged by the family."

Claire Martin's most recent work, the sombre autobiography, Dans un gant de fer (In an Iron Glove) might be called Memoirs of a dutiful daughter written from a Quebec point of view, with the sense of humour de Beauvoir so conspicuously lacks.

Much gentler and more conventional are the novels of Claire Morin, who writes under the pseudonym, Claire France. Les Enfants qui s'aiment (Children in Love) was a tender story of adolescent love. Autour de toi, Tristan, an episodic novel depicted through the lives of four families, won Le Grand Prix du Maine in 1962.

In Les remparts du Québec, Andrée Maillet, who is also known for poetry, and short stories has written what Marcotte considers to be "one of the most striking illustrations of the French-Canadian perplexity in which many young writers find themselves today."

Other women novelists, of a slightly lesser rank, include Adrienne Choquette and Charlotte Savary. Adrienne Choquette's best known novel, Laure Clouet treats the familiar theme of identity crisis in a woman of middle age. Charlotte Savary, whose prime concern is social criticism, expresses this to best effect in her most recent novel Le Député.

It is difficult, at this point in time, to write with assurance of the youngest generation of French Canadian women novelists. To include them all - for the list grows longer each year - is beyond the scope of this survey; more importantly, their best work may well lie ahead of them.

Out of the many, perhaps one might single out in particular Diana Giguère (Les Temps de Jeux, L'eau de torrent), Monique Bosco, (Un amour maladroit, Les Infusoires), and Louise Maheux-Forcier (Amadou, L'île Joyeuse, Une forêt pour Zoé).

As their titles suggest, these young women write of love; their heroines, somewhat Saganesque, look for love but cannot find it. As Marcotte has noted,

"Everything hinges round the love of the couple. The woman is presented as someone who is exploited, subjected to love's caprice, victim of love and who rebels openly against such servitude."

As is evident from this survey, the romantic novel today holds sway in French Canada even more than in the past. Few women poets have emerged in the wake of Anne Hébert and Rina Lasnier. Of those who have, the most notable are Michèle Lalonde, best known for her cantata Terre des Hommes, and Suzanne Paradis. A novelist as well as a poet, Suzanne Paradis has also made an important contribution to French Canadian literary criticism with Femme Fictive, a study of French Canadian women novelists achieved through an analysis of the feminine characters which appear in their books. And we shall leave it to Suzanne Paradis

to suggest one of the principal directions which the women novelists of French Canada will take in the future:

"..we believe that the feminine French-Canadian novel, which has abruptly and exclusively searched for eroticism and sexuality, which reviews all possible amorous forms, will emerge more or less rapidly from this chaos to produce the true romantic novel of the future. 'L'Insoumise' (by Marie-Claire Blais) has already set us on a discreet but promising path. One thing is certain, the harvest will be plentiful and the workers many."

Perhaps because their current preoccupation with the romantic novel breeds introspection rather than external commitment, contemporary women writers have taken a less active part in the literary milieu of Quebec - the world of reviewing, publishing and editing - than one might have expected. As Marcotte notes, "In the periodicals which have been influential in French Canada in the last 15 years: Cité Libre, Liberté, Parti Pris -women have played, at best, a rather obscure role. They were welcomed, of course, but - except for the continuous participation by Michele Lalonde in Liberté - their collaboration has been sporadic and from the outside."

Indeed, their isolation from the mainstream runs deeper. As Marcotte continues:

"When one reads a novel by Jean Basile, Jacques Godbout, Gérard Bessette or Hubert Aquin, one cannot help but be aware of the author's idea, and of its similarity or lack of similarity with the latest doctrines. It is rare that one has such an impression when reading the novels which women have written during the same years.

Moreover, let us think of the diverse movements which have stirred up our small literary world recently, the school of "joyal" for example, there is no woman writer who stands out...In its fifth number (1967) the Quebec Government's review, Culture Vivante presented under the title, "Tendencies and orientations of the New Literature" the remarks of seven young authors. Seven young men, of course...why not Marie-Claire Blais



who is after all not a harridan? Her absence from Culture Vivante may be explained by her absence from Quebec, but I suspect that she would have had the same fate if she had continued to live in her hometown. Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel is certainly a personal novel; it is original and singularly powerful one has to admit - but in the limelight of local literary movements it does not have a place among those works which give the impression of forecasting the future."

What Marcotte is driving at here is that, in Quebec, the literary revolution has assumed many of the same dimensions as the political revolution. As such, it is primarily masculine territory.

Perhaps in the long run the strength of the women writers of Quebec will have been their reluctance to take sides and join literary-political factions. In literature, if not in life, the long view generally prevails.

As mother, as virginal love object, women have played a central role in Quebec. Because they have been so important to the consciousness of their society, French-Canadian women writers have been able, not only often to grasp better than men the essentials of French-Canadian life and translate these into poetry and prose, but also, while in no way subordinating their femininity, to express it in ways that are more balanced and less obsessive.

The English-Canadian woman, by contrast, is not only not central to English-Canadian culture, but there is generally speaking, no distinctive English-Canadian culture for anyone to be central to. She has therefore more time to be conscious of herself as a woman; and more time also to be conscious that she is not a man.

In contrast to French-Canadian women, English-Canadian women, by and large, have had more freedom, for a much longer time, and they have been more broadly educated. None of these advantages have brought self-confidence. Thus, while the chronicle of French-Canadian feminine literature records a steady march forward from bondage to freedom, both cultural and sexual, in English-Canadian, with flurries of activity here, patches of brilliance everywhere, the pattern of achievement is more kaleidoscopic than constant, fragmented rather than continuous.

Long ago, in the days when Canada was still the New World, people used pens the way we use cameras. Visitors rushed to write down their impressions; these records constitute our first literary genre. Because women had time to spare, they wrote as frequently as men; because their eyes were often sharper than their husbands', they often tell us a good deal more of what really went on in daily life.

Among such women, the most notable was Frances Brooke who came to Canada in 1763, as the wife of the chaplain of the Quebec garrison, and stayed for five years. Instead of using the conventional form of diary or memoir, Frances Brooke translated her impressions into fiction. The History of Emily Montague, which she published in 1769, is the first Canadian novel and, some historians maintain, the first novel to come out of North America.

Written in the epistolary style which Richardson's Pamela had made popular, Emily Montague is made up of 228 letters, written among a group of friends in Canada and England. As the poet and literary historian Fred Cogswell has remarked:

"These are pleasing, written in an easy lively style and give a vivid picture of the society of the small provincial capital, with its afternoon drives and evening parties, balls, and an unforgettable sketch of a sleighride across the ice and snow of the St. Lawrence."

And yet, for all its charm, The History of Emily Montague is no more than a superficial sketch. For Frances Brooke, snug in her garrison cocoon, life in Canada differed from life in England only in externals. Before a woman could come to grips with the raw essentials - with what we call in modern jargon, "the gut issues" of pioneer life - she would have to throw in her lot with the new country. Luckily for Canadian letters, three of the women who came to stay - Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill and Anna Jameson - were uncommonly gifted writers.

Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill were sisters, members of the talented Strickland family of Suffolk. (Of their seven brothers and sisters, four besides themselves became published authors, most notably Agnes, known for her classic, Lives of the Queens of England).

The sisters married within months of each other and the next year, 1832, their husbands decided to take advantage of land grants available to half-pay officers and emigrate to Canada. Both women began to write even before they landed; Catherine's letters to her mother were published in 1836 as The Backwoods of Canada, Susanna's sketches, written for the Literary Garland of Montreal were collected in 1852 as Roughing It in the Bush.

So far, Susanna and Catherine sound like alter egos, the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of the Canadas. In fact, as their writings demonstrate, the two were vastly different.

Catherine Parr Traill, in the phrase of Dr. Clara Thomas, "was the Fannie Farmer and the Mrs. Beeton of the 19th century Canada." She adapted quickly and readily to pioneer life and indeed, The Backwoods of Canada was designed as a "how-to" guide for prospective female immigrants.

Susanna Moodie's personality was much more complex. Dr. Thomas suggests that she in fact was the real-life prototype for the "romantic rebel" heroine who appears recurrently in Canadian fiction. Penny Wain in Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising or, more recently, Marian McAlpin in Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman. (In fact, the influence of Susanna Moodie on Margaret Atwood is striking. A year or so ago, as she has related, Margaret Atwood dreamed of Mrs. Moodie and as a result was inspired to write a series of poems based on Roughing It in the Bush, and published in 1970 as The Journals of Susanna Moodie).

In the beginning, Susanna loathed Canada. If Catherine's work was a welcome, hers was a warning. As she noted in the conclusion of Roughing It in the Bush:

"If these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family from sinking their property and shipwrecking all their hopes by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada, I shall consider myself amply repaid for revealing the secrets of the prison-house, and feel that I have not toiled and suffered in the wilderness in vain."

But Susanna Moodie had the inclinations of a novelist and, as she herself once put it, "a perverse inclination to laugh in the wrong place." And so Roughing It far transcends diatribe. Clara Thomas has written:

"In Canada she was thrust into the company of all sorts of people, few of whom were of her own social class and all of whom seemed different, often totally reprehensible but almost always amusing. These people she could write of without inhibition and she captured a whole gallery of them, in the very accents in which she heard them speak. From the ship's captain to the little stumpy man, Roughing It was made memorable by these people....

In the service of her sketches, Susanna is recklessly self-revealing. It was natural for her to be the centre of her narrative, as Catherine is the narrator and centre of hers. But unlike her sister, Susanna, centre-stage, becomes one of her own characters, a prejudiced, class-conscious ill-equipped pioneer, sometimes the butt of her own stories, sometimes the heroine, passionately revolting against her circumstances while slowly and uncomfortably adapting to them. Catherine quietly states the achievement, whether it be confidence in an assured social position or satisfactory relations with servants; Susanna dramatizes the struggle, with herself a storm centre."

In later life, Susanna's attitude towards Canada softened. In a later book, Life in the Clearings, she pays homage to Canada, "the country of my adoption - the great foster-mother of that portion of the human family whose fatherland, however dear to them is unable to supply them with bread." Though it lacks the drama and urgency of Roughing It, Life in the Clearings is an invaluable social record of life in mid-nineteenth century Ontario.

If Catherine Traill is our Mrs. Beeton and Susanna Moodie a romantic rebel, Anna Jameson represents, in Clara Thomas' opinion, the strongwilled woman who, nonetheless, "could not prevail over circumstances." As such, she is the precursor of Ruth in F.P. Grove's Fruits of the Earth and of Hagar Shipley in Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel.

In Anna's own case, the circumstances over which she could not prevail were those of a broken marriage.

An Irish woman and an early feminist, she came to Canada in 1836 to visit her estranged husband, a member of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada. The marriage remained

unmended. Yet the visit was not fruitless. The book which came out of it, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, is a kind of companion piece to Roughing It in the Bush and, in its way it is equally interesting. As Nora Storey has written:

"Mrs. Jameson's account of her Canadian visit contains the forthright statements of an intelligent woman of strong likes and dislikes who despises the pretentiousness she found in Toronto. Some of her caustic comments may relate to her domestic difficulties, of which she made no secret."

This free and formidable trio stand at the high-water mark of our early literature of observation. As an evocation of what life was then like, seen through feminine eyes, their books are the closest equivalents in English Canada to the letters of Marie de l'Incarnation and of Madame Bègon.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, Victorian propriety caught up with Canadian women. Readers were fobbed off with literary creampuffs and such women writers as there were churned them out like pastry-cooks. There was something for every taste - providing all your teeth were sweet. Maritimers could cluck over Mary Herbert's Belinda Dalton; or Scenes in the Life of a Halifax Belle: Ottawans over Kate Carr's Cupid and the Candidate. If nothing else, the prize for the most bizarre title in Canadian letters goes to a woman writer of this era, Annie Gregg Savigny for A Heartsong of Today Disturbed by Fire from the Unruly Member.

Trivial as their tales were, some authors did astonishingly well by them. Mary Agnes Fleming, a Saint John housewife who pounded out 42 novels in the space of 17 years, sometimes earned as much as \$10,000 annually.

In bitter contrast, the only woman writer of the period who mattered, the poet Isabella Valancy Crawford, lived in abject poverty. When she died in 1887, at 37, no more than 50 copies of her masterpiece, Old Spookses' Pass, Malcolm's Katie and other poems, had been sold.

James Reaney has suggested that, as a poet, Isabella Crawford is a precursor of E.J. Pratt. One can think of her also as an earlier Emily Carr - in print. In the same way as Emily Carr was one of the first to translate the mythic Canadian landscape onto canvas, Crawford, as Reaney has written, "was one of the first to translate our still mysterious melancholy dominion into the releasing, potentially apocalyptic dominion of poetry."

Ideal love is the dominant theme of her work, and to express this she used recurring symbols of nature. As the critic Roy Daniells suggests,

..."her poems invite two readings - a straightforward and an esoteric - with very different results. Malcolm's Katie, her longest and best known piece, is on the face of it, a preposterously romantic love story on a Tennysonian model in which a wildly creaking plot finally delivers true love safe and triumphant. To add that there are some nice pictures of the struggles and satisfactions of clearing the land and building homes in the wilderness is not to add much. What makes this poem 'ancestral, important, haunting' is its ability to pull the raw landscape into an interior world of living passion and fulfilment"...

In the opinion of another of Isabella Crawford's admirers, the critic A.J.M. Smith, Malcolm's Katie is also an important landmark in the development of Canadian poetry:

"It is the first, and not one of the least, of the few poems that can really be called Canadian, because its language and imagery, the sensibility it reveals and the vision it embodies is indigenously northern and western, a product not of England or the States but of Canada. We do not get this again until Towards the Last Spike of E.J. Pratt."

For generations after her death, Isabella Crawford was all but forgotten. Today, her work is undergoing a modest and deserved revival. As Roy Daniells sums up:

"There are a few poets in every generation, and Isabella Crawford is one of them - whose personality shines through their achievement ...her brief history is one of unremitting courage, dignity and hopefulness in the face of ever recurring calamity. She had all the virtues of romanticism - and predominantly a sense of the power and pre-eminence of the human spirit."

In content if not in form Isabella Crawford was years ahead of her time.

More than half a century passed before Canada produced another woman poet who came even close to rivalling her. But Crawford was by no means the only woman of her day to write poetry. There was Marjorie Pickthall, for example - she who wanted to stir things up. In the opinion of A.J.M. Smith, some of her lyrics "sound a note of singular purity that lifts them above the work of any of her contemporaries, at least among the English-Canadian poets. A sharp perceptiveness of the beauty and transience of life and a passionate longing for escape into God give to her poems, "Resurgam" and "Quiet", a quality not much inferior, if at all, to that of Christina Rossetti."

Nor should one forget Pauline Johnston. Half Indian, the daughter of a Mohawk chief, she was the first "pop" phenomenon in Canadian letters. In Indian costume, Pauline Johnston toured nationally and internationally for more than twenty years reciting The Song My Paddle Sings, When Red Men Die and Cry of an Indian Wife to packed houses. To the jaded literary milieu of fin de siècle London, she came like a west wind, sounding as one critic put it, "the note of the Red Man's Canada." At home she commanded the kind of audience only a Leonard Cohen among poets could muster today. An elderly woman who heard her long ago has recalled,

"I still shudder, it was so real when she recited When Red Men Die. Of course there was no radio, no TV and a concert like that was a great event and the whole town was there."

Most of Pauline Johnson's poetry was derivative and sentimental. Yet, simply by being herself, she made an important contribution to Canadian identity. During the first decade

or so of the twentieth century, as Laurier tried to teach Canada to become less an outpost of empire and more a nation in her own right, a number of other women writers, most of them novelists, sought to mirror the change in consciousness.

Some of these women, strongly influenced by Henry James, did so by placing Canadian characters in an international context - as northern "innocents abroad." The most important among them, Sara Jeannette Duncan, in her novel, Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London explored, long before Mackenzie King, the notion that Canada could play the role of honest broker between Britain and the United States. Miss Duncan's best book, The Imperialist set in her own home town of Brantford, Ontario, revolved around an election campaign; its hero was a young man carried away by his belief in Imperial Federation. Besides being a telling portrayal of small town life, The Imperialist also wittily disabused its readers of the notion, then widespread abroad, that all Canadians longed to be as one with Britain.

Less effectively than Sara Duncan, Alice Jones of Halifax pursued the same theme of innocents abroad. In Gabriel Praed's Castle, a Montreal businessman is duped by a villainous Paris art dealer but saved from ruin by his young daughter. In Marcus Holbeach's Daughter a young girl from Gaspé is introduced into corrupt English aristocratic society. Another woman of the day, Emily Murphy, remembered also as one of the Alberta Five who worked so valiantly for women's rights, worked the same vein in non-fiction. The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad is a vivid account of a trip to England in which, as Nora Storey notes, "she repaid criticism of Canada with her own, of a certain type of English arrogance."

Other women looked at Canadian society on home ground. The novels of Marian Keith (The Silver Maple, Treasure Valley, Lizabeth of the Dale) sketched a charming picture of rural Ontario life. In Sowing Seeds in Danny and The Second Chance, Nellie McClung, another member of the Alberta Five, described in telling detail life among the homesteaders of the west.

And yet for all their diligent Canadianism, these writers - and their male counterparts - could limn Canadians only by contrasting them to other, stronger cultures. The creation of authentic national myths - the mark of a self-confident society - was beyond their scope. None of them created, for English Canada, a vision of the land comparable to the mythic Quebec of Louis Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine. To find an English Canadian equivalent to Maria, one must look east, to Anne and her Island.



A generation of young girls once pored over Anne of Green Gables by gaslight. Today, their grand-daughters read about her to the beat of the Rolling Stones. Out of the simple fabric of her own sheltered girlhood, L.M. Montgomery created an authentic - and apparently immortal - Canadian heroine.

At their simplest level, the Anne series, and the other books L.M. Montgomery wrote are no more than charming, but dated regional fiction. Prince Edward Island is vividly drawn; the characters, or most of them, talk and behave like real people. But much of the writing is overblown and gushing; plots depend far too much on coincidence; the overall tone is naively optimistic. To find the true source of the author's staying power one must look deeper, into forces of which she herself was unaware.

In a thoughtful re-evaluation of L.M. Montgomery's work, Elizabeth Waterston has suggested:

"The same kind of sesame that unlocked Lewis Carroll's inhibitions and let him write the classic of fantasy and repression that we now see in Alice - that same magic releasing power seems to have operated with the Canadian, late-Victorian provincial spinster. Writing for children, she could re-enact the myths of childhood. Recreating her own remembered yearnings and anxieties, she could create a myth of the hesitant desires and worries of the virginal years.

Modern psychology explains some of the hidden power of L.M. Montgomery's books, especially for adolescent girls. Most teen-aged girls find it hard to get along with their mothers, the psychologists say, yet not daring consciously to dislike the mother, they are torn by mixed emotions of admiration, rivalry, dependence, hostility, all operating at a subconscious level. The heroines of L.M. Montgomery have no mothers. They do have aunts and grandmothers (who can safely be hated)...also, in adolescence there is a normal intensity of feeling for the father, a feeling that must be outgrown or re-directed, but that is very powerful in the transitional stage between family relations and extra-familial ones and correlated with the transition from homosexual to heterosexual devotion. In most of L.M. Montgomery's books, the father, safely distanced by death, stirs deep feelings of attachment (usually disapproved of by the aunts or grandmothers)...

"We may guess also that this author was increasingly conscious of the basic equation she had established by chance in her first successful novel. "The Island" is adolescence... encircled by the mature sands of logic, pragmatism, utilitarianism and conformity, the island of youth for us and in us still. L.M. Montgomery's world of poetry, virginity and pantheism still opens for the adult reader the way back to his own world of young realization; he "wakes, to dream again."

In the Victoria ambiance of rural English Canada at the turn of the century, women were confined in a kind of perpetual virginal adolescence. In writing about her childhood, L.M. Montgomery was writing about herself as an adult and about the "hesitant myths" of the Canadian women of her time and place.

Such was the international appeal of her books that L.M. Montgomery was for a time the best known Canadian writer on the international scene. Her success, however, paled beside that of Mazo de la Roche who took the rural idyll which Montgomery had helped shape, transferred it to a higher level of society, gave it a few more earthy touches, and fixed it in a landscape which, while shadowy, is identifiably that of southern Ontario. She had found a magic formula. One of the most dramatic events in the literary life of Canada between the wars was the awarding of the Atlantic Monthly's \$10,000 prize to Jalna, as the best novel of 1927.

Today, when Jalna and the fifteen sequels which followed it are largely out of fashion\* (save among schoolgirls in France, whose passion for de la Roche is exceeded apparently only by their devotion to A.J. Cronin) it is difficult to assess properly Mazo de la Roche's work. Certainly, as Desmond Pacey has remarked, "judged as a realist she is almost pitifully vulnerable; of course rural Ontario life is not typically as she describes it in the Jalna series nor in the three novels which preceded Jalna." And yet, as Pacey continues, Mazo de la Roche has the gifts of a true novelist:

\* Although it has recently been announced that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation intends to adapt the series into a Canadian equivalent of The Forsyte Saga.

"What impresses us most about Jalna is its liveliness, particularly the liveliness of its characters.

"Miss de la Roche had learnt from Dickens how to fix a character in our minds by attaching to it a few strong identifying gestures, mannerisms or habits of speech....the plot is ingenious and continuously exciting and the style if a little too precious for our austere modern taste is fresh and beguiling...writing of this sort is apt to sound offensive to contemporary ears, but if the style of Jalna has tarnished, its chief glory - the character of Grandmother Whiteoak - remains blunt, coarse, greedy, rude, extravagant, sensual and selfish, she dominates the family and earns the reader's grudging affection by her immense vitality, her insatiable appetite for experience."

In contrast to the florid romanticism of Mazo de la Roche, the Canadian women novelists who were her contemporaries worked the vein of sombre social realism. The influence of Henry James had been superseded by that of Willa Cather. The novels of Laura Grace Salverson for example, (The Viking Heart, The Dark Weaver, When Sparrows Fall) used Cather's classic theme of the integration of immigrants - in this case from Iceland and Scandinavia - into Canadian life. Martha Ostenso, an American writer who spent six years in Manitoba left as legacy to Canadian literature Wild Geese, a powerful and brooding study of pioneer Manitoba. During the thirties, as the depression tightened its grip, the novels of Irene Baird - in particular Waste Heritage which told of a strike in Vancouver in 1938 - gave a vivid picture of the effects of the depression on the west coast. And in 1944, Gwethalyn Graham published Earth and High Heaven, a bitter, fictionalized indictment of anti-Semitism in Montreal.

By and large, however, the years between the wars were bleak ones for the Canadian novel. The most important women's writing of the period appeared in the form of poetry. In fact, the nineteen-thirties marked the start of what has become a continuing phenomenon of Canadian literature in English: the surprisingly high proportion of women among our poets.

The first of this new breed, Dorothy Livesay and Anne Marriott, emerged as children of their times, influenced equally by the international movement towards free verse and spare language and by the Auden-Spender-Isherwood tradition of social commitment.

For Dorothy Livesay, the more important of the two, success came early. Her first collection, Green Pitcher, was published when she was only nineteen. Even then, the twin hallmarks of her style were apparent; a "complete avoidance of facile metrical effects and a devotion to actuality", as Munro Beattie described them. The horrors of the depression, and Dorothy Livesay's personal knowledge of them through her experience as a social worker intensified this latter quality; the poems in her second collection, Day and Night, which won a Governor General's Award in 1944, speak strongly of protest and revolution. And yet, though Dorothy Livesay has never lost her concern for social problems, many critics believe that she is at her best in her later work when, as Beattie put it, "the sensitive reverberator has prevailed over the agitator."

Dorothy Livesay's work has been marked by continuous renewal; the growth of Anne Marriott, however, has been less sustained. Her first book, The Wind Our Enemy, a sequence of 10 poems which describe with bitter accuracy the plight of Saskatchewan farmers during the great drought, remains her best one. In Beattie's opinion,

"This work shows that no poet has better understood how to make the methods of modernism yield full value...what has counted most, however, has been the poet's intense concern over the land and the people."

In French Canada, as we have remarked, the war years let loose a flood of literary activity. Perhaps in response, Montreal in the 1940's became as well a hotbed of English-speaking poets. Two magazines Preview and First Statement were founded; the ferocious rivalry between them honed creativity even as it sharpened tempers. Out of the tension emerged three women poets of note: P.K. Page, Miriam Waddington and Kay Smith.

The work of P.K. Page has been published in three collections: As Ten as Twenty and The Metal and the Flower which won a Governor General's Award and Cry Ararat. Though much of her early work was inspired by her concern for social justice, P.K. Page is primarily a poet of interior reality. As Munro Beattie suggests:

"Her frequent theme is separateness, the incapacity to escape from the self or to communicate with others. The direction in most of the poems is from the outer objective world of typewriters and snowfall to the world of fantasy, nerves, complexes, madness. She takes a virtuoso's delight in delineating a neurosis (Round Trip, Magnetic North, If it were You, Only Child...) Even more striking are the poems in which she has composed a montage of imagery to suggest the horror or the mystery that lies behind the phenomena of the commonplace world (Adolescence, the Stenographers, The Bands and the Beautiful Children."

Warmer and more lyrical is the work of Miriam Waddington who, since 1945 has published five collections of verse, the most recent in 1969. Like Dorothy Livesay, Miriam Waddington has been a social worker; several of her best poems - "My Lessons in the Jail" - for example - have come out of her profession. And she is also an intensely feminine poet. Of her third collection, The Season's Lovers (1958), Beattie has written:

"The most memorable poems are two, in the first part of the book, in which the centre of consciousness is a woman alone in a city and oppressed by the lonely agonies she feels about her. These two ('The City's Life' and 'Poets and Statues') are extraordinary among Canadian poems for their tone, the intensity with which real anguish has found expression."

The third member of the trio, Kay Smith, is primarily a documentary poet. "Conversations with a Mirror", a sequence of soliloquies by people emotionally involved with war, constitutes one of the few civilian records of Canada during World War II.

For women poets, the decades of the fifties and sixties were even more richly productive. Every year or so, a fresh talent found its way into print. A few writers - like

New Brunswick's Elizabeth Brewster - held to the earlier traditions of regional naturalism. But most women turned (like their male contemporaries) to universal themes and concentrated, as the critic A.J.M. Smith has suggested, on "the fusion of the modern world with archetypal patterns of myth and mythology."

In the work of Anne Wilkinson, for example, who helped found Tamarack Review and who died in 1961, one finds ballad and pastoral forms which suggest Marvell and Vaughan. But Anne Wilkinson's poetic insight made them her own. In Smith's opinion,

"She is among the small group of women poets who have written of love and death with a peculiarly feminine intuition, an accuracy and an elegance that does not hide but enhances the intensity of the emotion - Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Elinor Wylie and Leonie Adams."

Similarly, the complex, metaphysical poetry of Margaret Avison reflects what Smith has called "toughness of mind and tenderness of spirit." If, as James Reaney has suggested Isabella Crawford is Pratt's precursor, some hold Margaret Avison his heir. As Munro Beattie has expressed it:

"Like Pratt, she loves to grapple with time and space on an heroic scale; she shares his zest for the wonder of things as they are, although unlike him she rarely employs regular metre, her handling and selection of words resembles his."

In Beattie's opinion, Winter Sun, which won a Governor General's Award in 1960, "contains some of the most stimulating and endearing poems ever written in this country."

As for the archetypal myths and patterns which Smith mentions, they perhaps make themselves most deeply felt in the work of Jay MacPherson. Her collection, The Boatman, which won a Governor General's Award in 1957, is, to use Nora Storey's summation,

"A series of inter-related poems through which she traces the progress of the awakened soul ('poor child') from the earthbound state to its redemption by Christ ('the fisherman'). Noah ('the boatman') symbolizes the role of the artists in saving the world ('the sleepers') from drowning."

In form, Jay MacPherson's work is classical and astringent. That of Phyllis Webb is sensual and deeply impressionistic. As Beattie points out, "She refers to no conventional patterns...every sensation, every perception is unique and demands a unique form of utterance. This is a risky procedure. Some of her poems do not sufficiently realize the insights that evoked them. But when they do communicate, they are capable of producing in the reader a glow of recognition."

As in the case of the youngest generation of French Canadian writers, to single out and to assess, at this point of time, the work of the youngest generation of women poets, is beyond the scope of this survey. Suffice it to say that two of the most important among them, Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn McEwen had each, before turning thirty, published three collections of poetry, and each of them had won a Governor General's Award. Younger still is Paulette Jiles, a strongly feminist poet, whose work is deeply influenced by the tragic young American writer, Sylvia Plath.

Perhaps the most interesting characteristic of these younger poets, in terms of the direction which writing in Canada is likely to take, is their versatility. Unlike older authors, who usually chose a single art form and then stuck with it, they move freely from poetry to fiction and back again. Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn McEwen have each written novels, and though she is somewhat older, one can also add to this list Phyllis Gotlieb, who has published three novels as **well as** three collections of poetry. As in French Canada, the line between poetry and fiction may be beginning to blur.

There are few contemporary women poets in English Canada (there are indeed few contemporary poets) of whom a casual reader in another country would remark, "It's obvious - she has to be a Canadian." Quite the reverse is true of contemporary women novelists. Their themes are universal. But, heiresses to Jane Austen, George Eliot, Willa Cather, they interpret these themes in terms of their own community.

The first important novelist to emerge during the postwar period was Ethel Wilson - one of those rare writers to whom the call came late. She was 57 when her first novel, Hetty Dorval, was published. And in a revealing demonstration of the arbitrary ways in which muses strike, the book was written in two months, at a time when she was deeply involved in the more practical concern of helping her husband organize a major medical convention.

In Hetty Dorval, and in her four subsequent books, The Innocent Traveller, The Equations of Love, Swamp Angel and Love and Salt Water, Ethel Wilson combines the passionate sense of place (in her case, the place is British Columbia) and the descriptive power of say, Willa Cather, with the heightened sensibility and subtle gift for character which mark the works of such British novelists as Elizabeth Bowen and Elizabeth Taylor. Out of these two threads she has spun her own style, and she is also, as Hugo McPherson has written,

"an odd mixture of artist and sibyl who tells her tales with delicacy and astringent sympathy; who knows that life is without plot...and who believes that the artist must, above all, convey a personal impression of life, whatever the cost to unities and decorums. In short, Mrs. Wilson's art is erratically objective and personal, traditional and adventurous, but the reader is never in doubt that he has met in her pages a person of extraordinary sensibility and wisdom."

Ethel Wilson is the kind of novelist of whom one never knows what she is likely to do next: Hetty Dorval was an international coquette; The Innocent Traveller a lively centenarian; Swamp Angel told the twin stories of a runaway wife and an aging circus queen. The work of Margaret Laurence, the other major figure among modern Canadian novelists, shows a more orderly progression.



Her three early books, The Prophet's Camel Bell, This Side Jordan and The Tomorrow-Tamer are set in Africa but the four books which mark her ascendancy: The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, The Fire-dwellers and A Bird in the House - this last a volume of previously-published short stories which appeared in 1970 - all have a close family connection. All but The Fire-dwellers are set in the town of Manawaka, Manitoba, a kind of fictional evocation of Margaret Laurence's own home town of Neepawa. Rachel Cameron, the lonely middle-aging spinster of A Jest of God and Stacey MacAindra, the trapped housewife of The Fire-dwellers, are sisters.

As a creator of character, Margaret Laurence is peerless among Canadian writers: no other heroine in our literature can match Hagar Shipley, the bitter, unruly, unreconciled nonagenarian who, "rampant with memory" strides like a Colossus through the pages of The Stone Angel. As S.E. Read has remarked, "Hagar finally transcends fiction to the world of supra-reality inhabited by literature's great characters."

But if Hagar is a universal figure she is also an identifiably Canadian one, and so also - though to a lesser extent - are Rachel Cameron and Stacey MacAindra. As Clara Thomas has written:

"the reality of place and time, the authenticity of incident and the mood are completely convincing... Mrs. Laurence handles her detail with the absolute assurance and authority that E.J. Pratt evinced for the sea and ships or Hugh MacLennan for the Halifax explosion, or Gabrielle Roy for the sights and sounds of Montreal in the thirties."

And moreover, in an important sense, Manawaka is Canada. As Clara Thomas continues:

"..Hagar was a girl there in the 1890's, Vanessa (of A Bird in the House) a child there in the 1930's and Rachel's ordeal there was only yesterday. This town and its people say the things about Canadian experience 'that everybody knows but doesn't say', the truth that Margaret Laurence wishes to show more than to say and that, by extension and their deepest level are true for all experience everywhere.

The town was built by men like Hagar's father, Jason Currie, adventuring for success, his golden fleece, and willing to do battle with the land to get it. He

"and his kind did tame the land and build physical things, but at great cost to their human relationships and to their spiritual selves. Then they found that their domination and triumph were temporary after all. Margaret Laurence does not find, as Willa Cather does (and, one might interject, as Ethel Wilson also does) a sense of benign continuity in the land itself. When such a feeling burgeons it is disappointed..

So far, this is the old story of our exile, our isolation and our separateness; our writers, historians and sociologists have thrashed us unceasingly with its blackness. But in the Manawaka group, as in all Mrs. Laurence's work, there is also, emphatically, the light."

Much of the strength of Ethel Wilson and of Margaret Laurence derives undoubtedly from the fact that they have both been extraordinarily prolific writers. In the space of ten years, Ethel Wilson produced five books, and Margaret Laurence eight. For whatever reason - writer's block, an inability to combine art with family concerns, or simply a diminishing of the creative spark - many other promising women novelists have been less successful in fulfilling their talent. Either they have produced only a single book - or their books have been separated by wide gaps in time.

Sheila Watson and Adele Wiseman are cases in point. In 1959, Sheila Watson's The Double Hook, a spare and allegorical tale of family life in an isolated British Columbia farming community was described by Hugo McPherson as "the most literary and probably the most sophisticated novel of the period... (which) achieves something of the universality of a Walden, or Winesburg, Ohio." But Sheila Watson has yet to be heard from a second time. The instance of Adele Wiseman, however, though similar, is more cheerful. Fifteen years have elapsed since the publication of The Sacrifice, a vigorous and sharp-etched story of three generations of a Jewish-Ukrainian family in Winnipeg which won the Governor General's Award for 1956, but Miss Wiseman, in 1971, will publish a second novel.

Younger writers are already showing themselves to be increasingly productive. Between 1968 and 1970 Adrienne Clarkson had produced two novels: A Lover More Condoling and Hunger Trace; so had Marian Engel, No Clouds of Glory and The Honeyman Festival.

Of the others whose first work promised well, one can single out Margaret Atwood for The Edible Woman, a witty if slightly hair-raising tale of the effects of consumer society on

a sensitive heroine; Gwendolyn McEwen for Julian the Magician, a delicate imaginative work set in a medieval landscape of the mind, Phyllis Gotlieb who has written two novels of science fiction and whose first contemporary novel, Why Should I Have All the Grief? appeared in 1969, and perhaps most significantly, Mavis Gallant for A Fairly Good Time, a wise and funny appraisal of a Canadian girl's relationships with her Parisian in-laws.

Mavis Gallant has also published two volumes of short stories. In these, as in her novels, her prime concern has been to delineate relationships between people - a skill which shows to superb effect in two stories which Robert Weaver has included in his Anthology of Canadian Short Stories (Second Series). Bernadette is a rueful exploration of the unbridgeable gap in comprehension between a French-Canadian housemaid and her relentlessly liberal Westmount employers; My Heart is Broken is concerned with the effects of life in a Northern lumber camp on a selfish, flibbertigibbet bride.

The stories of Alice Munro whose first collection, Dance of the Happy Shades won the Governor General's Award for 1968, are less sophisticated but equally subtle. Her stories are suffused with poignant nostalgia and "she understands almost perfectly", as Beth Harvor, who is herself a promising short story writer, has remarked in a perceptive review, "the world of the child."

Canadian women are, of course, writing millions of words which are beyond the scope of a survey confined to the arts. Journalism and scholarship must remain untouched. And then again, there are other writers whose work is difficult to classify. Does one categorize, for example, Helen Wilson's witty, affectionate reminiscences in Tales of Barrett's Landing as autobiography or as a humorous novel?

Unlike the other art forms which we have discussed, women have taken little part as activists in Canadian writing. They have written much, but only rarely have they helped others to write. With the exception of P.K. Page who, during the 1940's helped found Preview and Anne Wilkinson who was instrumental in the early development of the Tamarack Review, women have played only a slight role in our literary magazines, or in publishing. And Canadian literature has never nurtured a Sylvia Beach, a Gertrude Stein or a Caresse Crosby.

On the reason why, one can only speculate. Until very recently, Canadian literature has been neither extensive enough nor profitable enough to support a hinterland. Our publishing houses (McClelland and Stewart is the outstanding exception) acted primarily as distribution agents for British and American books; the book review pages of our newspapers and magazines were filled by academics and struggling writers anxious for a few dollars pocket money. And there were simply not enough writers to support anything so pretentious as a literary salon. In short, there have been very few jobs on the fringe of writing, which anyway requires no fund-raising or organizing committees, and these were, overwhelmingly, filled by men.

Lately, there have been harbingers of change. Within the last two years, as the proliferation of new publishing houses (Oberon, Hurtig, House of Anansi) demonstrates, the frail world of letters has grown hardier. Moreover, as book review sections grow correspondingly livelier and more substantial, one finds more and more women's names heading columns. In Phyllis Grosskurth, Canadian literature has at last found a reviewer whose standards are almost as exacting as those of a Mary McCarthy.

At the outset of this survey, we remarked that the development of women writers in English Canada has been random rather than progressive. And yet, the reader will have noted by now that a growing number of poets and novelists have emerged within the last twenty years or so. But quantity is not a synonym for quality. Some of the finest achievements came at the beginning. Save for Margaret Laurence, no feminine eye has raked the Canadian landscape as ruthlessly as Susanna Moodie's; no poet has emerged with an apocalyptic vision to rival Isabella Crawford's.

Equally significantly, no Canadian woman writer has really come to terms with what Beth Harvor has described as "the contemporary angers, frustrations, guilts, vis à vis men, vis à vis work, vis à vis children that writers like Doris Lessing, Edna O'Brien and Penelope Mortimer have obviously experienced", though one finds traces of this liberated, or would-be liberated woman in Marian Engel's Sara Porlock, in Margaret Atwood's Marian McAlpin, and Margaret Laurence has sought hard to find her in Stacey MacAindra.

Instead of writing about themselves, English-Canadian women writers have often transferred their feelings to female characters who are safely (safely at least in terms of their relations with men) beyond the change of life. The most electric and memorable characters they have produced tend to be nonagenarians, like Mazo de la Roche's Adeline Whiteoak, and Margaret Laurence's Hagar Shipley. Perhaps it says something about the failure of Canadian feminine nerve, or conviction, that the truest portrait of a modern, urban Canadian woman is the creation of a man - Mary Dunne in Brian Moore's I am Mary Dunne.

If, in the last decade, cultural confidence has begun to develop, and even at a surprising rate, no English-Canadian writer has yet emerged to "go ahead and stir things up - fine."

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