THE MOWER AND THE BONELESS ACROBAT: NOTES ON THE STANCES OF BASELAND AND HINTERLAND IN CANADIAN POETRY

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In previously published essays[1] on the eco-poetics of Canada's baseland and hinterland, primary emphasis was placed on the landscapes themselves and on the forms that are mimetically suitable to their recreation in poetry. It was argued that, in ecological terms, relatively closed and structured froms such as the couplet and the sonnet are fitting for Canada's agricultural and metropolitan baselandscapes while relatively open and unstructured forms, such as blank and free verse, are appropriate to the stretching terrains of the hinterland. Still working within the topocentric[2] assumption that Canadian culture derives part of its vitality and coherence from the dialectic between baseland and hinterland, between what Patrick Anderson in his explanatory poem on "Canada" calls "the sections and the spaces"[3] of the country, the essay underway will explore the hypothesis that from the beginning to the present there has been in Canadian poetry the possibility of two distinct and antithetical stances: that of the baseland and the hinterland, which correspond to the broad divisions in the Canadian landscape and their resulting psychological orientations. The aim of the undertaking will be, not merely to place on view these baseland and hinterland stances, but also to show that the radical disjunction between them, though by no means incapable of reconciliation within the canon of those Canadian poets like Duncan Campbell Scott, Earle Birney and Eli Mandel who in different places exhibit both orientations, has, at times caused con-

[1]See "A New Dimension: Notes on the Ecology of Canadian Poetry," *Canadian Poetry*, 7 (Fall/Winter, 1980), 1-20 and "A Stretching Landscape: Notes on Some Formalistic Continuities in the Poetry of the Hinterland," *Contemporary Verse Two*, 5 (Summer, 1981), 6-18.

[2]This term is the coinage of my colleague Leon Surette in "Here is Us: the Topocentrism of Canadian Literary Criticism," *Canadian Poetry*, 10 (Spring/Summer, 1982), 44-57.

[3]*Return to Canada: Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 87.

siderable animosity between poets and critics of opposing perspectives, and, moreover, has since the Second World War played a considerable part in the development of Canadian poetry.

The fact that the different stances and states of mind discussed in this essay can, and frequently do, co-exist in the work of individual Canadian poets—indeed, exist no more purely in actual experience than absolute good and evil—should not detract from the usefulness of the terms baseland and hinterland as metaphors of access to two distinct but not mutually exclusive attitudes in Canadian poetry: the one a tendency towards recollection, structure, teleology, and rational meaning (baseland) and the other towards process, openness, chance, and uninterpreted experience (hinterland). Although the latter attitude has found many of its purer exponents among the postmodern writers of recent years, particularly those whose imaginative roots and geographical *milieux* lie in the relatively unhumanized spaces of the West, its perspective and characteristics can be found in earlier periods of Canadian writing. Similarly but conversely, the baseland stance which extends back to the beginnings of Canadian poetry in the relatively cultivated landscapes of the East remains—despite its partial eclipse in recent years by the postmodern poetry of the hinterland orientation— a viable stance for such writers as Don Coles of Toronto. The selection of the terms baseland and hinterland as metaphors of access does not mean that the present discussion subscribes to a facile environmental determinism, setting the influence of nature on culture above all other considerations; however, it does assume—as does the Tory tradition of Donald Creighton and W.L. Morton in Canadian history—that landscape and geography constitute factors of some importance in the physical and imaginative life of Canadians; and, moreover, it does accept, as a corollary, that certain attitudes of mind will find congenial ground in the long-settled or stable areas of the baseland and others in the newly-settled or frontier areas of the hinterland. There may possibly be cultural significance to the very fact that the terms baseland and hinterland—terms which, of course, exhibit affinities with such pairings as neo-classical and romantic, Apollonian and Dionysian, cooked and raw— would recommend themselves at all to a Canadian writer concerned with placing on view some of the patterns and continuities of Canadian poetry.

Prior to the Second World War the central and sanctioned poetic stance in Canada was that of the baseland. It was central because oriented primarily, if not exclusively, towards the settled baselandscapes

of Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick and, looking eastward beyond them, towards the European—specifically the English and French— tradition of social Romanticism (or high Victorianism) with its genteel commitment to the well-being of society and society's component parts. Since a myth of concern, together with the Loyalist tradition, animated the baseland orientation, its adherents perceived Canadian soil as "unrepublican"[4] and, by implication, unsuitable for the propagation of American poetic models. "Not *Hiawatha!*" and "Not Whitman!" were the cries of Daniel Wilson, the literary critic who would later become President of the University of Toronto, in his reviews of the eighteen fifties in *The Canadian Journal*.[5] While Wordsworth, Tennyson, Arnold and, to a lesser extent, Keats, Shelley, and the Pre-Raphaelites, were the sanctioned models of the baseland orientation in Victorian Canada, the post-Confederation period saw various writers such as Isabella Valancy Crawford and William Wilfred Campbell turning to Longfellow for the means to articulate the landscape and mythology of the Great Lakes region of Canada West, Crawford making levies on *Hiawatha* to infuse her Tennysonian domestic idyll,[6] *Malcolm's Katie* (1884), with Amerindian content and the early Campbell, the Wordsworthian "poet of the lakes,"[7] drawing on Longfellow's poem to inspirit the haunted wilderness of his *Lake Lyrics* (1889). Well before the end of the century there were maverick poets such as Judson France Davidson, whose *Muse Whangs* (1887) reveal the constellation of ideas—a love of freedom, an irreverent insubordination, and a rejection of British models— that constitutes a hallmark of the hinterland stance in Canadian poetry. Davidson's "To Tennyson" is remarkable both for its association of the poet laureate with what, for its author, is the domestic, classical, and enclosed subject-matter and *milieu* of the baseland and for its contention that the larger and untamed materials of the wilderness (or—to borrow Douglas Lochhead's usage—the "wilder-ness"[8]) lie beyond the reach

[4]John Richardson, *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled* (Montreal: Armour and Ramsay, 1840). I, 82.

[5]See Carl F. Klinck, "Literary Activity in Canada East and West, 1841-1880," *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 153-160.

[6]See Elizabeth Waterston, "Crawford, Tennyson, and the Domestic Idyll," *The Crawford Symposium*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Frank M. Tierney (Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1979), pp. 61-77.

[7]A.C. Stewart, *The Poetical Review: A Brief Notice of Canadian Poets and Poetry*. ed., and with an Introduction, by D.M.R. Bentley, *Canadian Poetry*, 1 (Fall/Winter, 1977), p. 77 gives satirical edge to the phrase. See Carl F. Klinck, *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1942), p. 37f. and "Introduction," *Wilfred Campbell: Selected Poems* (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976) p. 2f. for Campbell's debt to Longfellow.

of the English poet's "gentle muse."[9] Davidson's republican sympathies enable him to address the newly-created Peer with a temerity that is utterly unimpeded by humility:

> Sing with grace courtly, and Virgilian mien
> Of still life, parlour pathos, garden scene;
> Of languid lilies, zephyrs, minster towers,
> Praise brainless princes, maudlin dukes, for these
> Are themes whereto thy grovelling spirit warms,
> And more congenial to thy paltry powers.
> Thou canst not sing the splendour of the seas,
> The mountain's grandeur of the sweeping storm's.

That Tennyson's muse is inadequate to the "splendour" and "grandeur" of the hinterland represents an ecological observation whose validity is, for present purposes, less important than its occurrence here in a context that is clearly hostile to the stance of the baseland poet. In "Now Dreams the Poet," that hostility provides the norm for a humorous treatment of what, for Davidson, is the baseland poet's mistaken attempt to transcend the here and now: "He muses in sequestered woodland haunts," writes France, "A far-off look within his yearning eyes,/Till a chestnut-burr both penetrate his pants,/And interrupt his soulful reveries."[10]

Although Judson France Davidson's *Muse Whangs* was published a year before *Among the Millet* (1888), its broad hostility to the baseland orientation could be mistaken for a specific attack on Archibald Lampman. Not fortuitously, it is Lampman who, of all the major Confederation writers, most consistently adopts the baseland stance of Canadian poetry. Where William Wilfred Campbell and Duncan Campbell Scott, Charles G.D. Roberts and Bliss Carman, all displayed in different ways and at different times the orientation towards the wilderness and towards America which is characteristic of the hinterland stance, Lampman retained throughout his creative career a primary loyalty to the English Romantic-Victorian tradition, a fact to which his description of Tennyson as "Our grey-haired master of immortal verse . . ."[11] symptomatically attests. Not only was Lampman dedicated to the continuation of the English tradition in Canada,[12] but his principal locale or poetic "am-

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[8]"Open Wide a Wilderness," *Collected Poems: The Full Furnace* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p. 84.
[9]*Muse Whangs* ([Toronto]: Printed at the Sign of the Will-o'-the-Wisp, 1887), p. 34.
[10]*Muse Whangs*, p. 59.
[11]*The Poems of Archibald Lampman (including At the Long Sault)*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Margaret Coulby Whitridge (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 275.
[12]L.R. Early's fine doctoral dissertation at York on Lampman and the Romantics makes this point, *passim*.

biance," as W.W.E. Ross points out in his article "On National Poetry" in *The Canadian Forum* in 1945, was "the softer type of inhabited Ontario countryside"[13]—the baseland. Viewing Canadian poetry from a perspective which, consistent with his authorship of a slim volume of *Sonnets* (1932), shows considerable sympathy for the baseland orientation, Ross notes in his article that "More recently [in Canada] there has sprung up the regional image of the 'wilderness.' " This wilderness or hinterland, he observes,

> . . . may be the north country (Group of Seven in painting, A.J.M. Smith's "Lonely Land" in poetry), the mountains (Earle Birney), the prairies too, at least when drought-blasted (Anne Marriott's *The Wind Our Enemy*), even the sea (E.J. Pratt, Charles Bruce) . . . The "wilderness" as poetic habitat was used to some extent by W.W. Campbell and Bliss Carman.

Ross might well have mentioned such poets as D.C. Scott, Robert Service, Arthur Stringer, Wilson MacDonald, F.R. Scott, the Allan Creighton of *Cross Country* (1939), and, indeed, his own *Laconics* volume of 1930 for their use of the wilderness as a "poetic habitat." Equally, he might have mentioned other poets of the pre-war period, from the Roberts of *Songs of the Common Day* (1893) to the Leo Kennedy of *The Shrouding* (1933), whose use of closed forms, European models, and an "inhabited . . . countryside" reveals a baseland orientation, albeit one against which the Tantramar Roberts was already chafing.

Neither Ross's article nor the present essay aims to be exhaustive, however; the pertinent point about "On National Poetry" is its comprehension of the differentiations that can be made among Canadian poets past and present in terms of the implied orientations of their "poetic figure[s]" towards either the baseland or the hinterland. With hindsight, Ross might have wished to revise or elaborate some of the judgements of his article—for instance, his impression that, "in spite of its cosmopolitan leanings," Smith's "poetic figure" locates itself in the hinterland and his perception that, "besides setting itself among the western mountains," Birney's "poetic figure" appears "in Vancouver's environs." But his sense of A.M. Klein, some three years before the publication of *The Rocking Chair* (1948), as a poet who has "succeeded to some extent" in placing his poetic figure in Montreal anticipates that poet's major achievement as a poet of the baseland, as an attentive

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[13]"On National Poetry." *The Canadian Forum* 24 (July, 1944), p. 88.

critic and celebrant of Quebec's landscape and people. Moreover, Ross's recognition of the symbolic significance of E.J. Pratt's movement from the Atlantic Ocean to "Huronia" with *Brébeuf and His Brethren* (1940) is both anticipatory and revelatory of the essentially centrist, baseland orientation of the post-Victorian sage of Victoria College, the armchair hinterland who would subsequently speak in a bardic and impersonal voice for the mind of Canada in *Towards the Last Spike* (1952).

Two years after the publication of Ross's article in *The Canadian Forum*, John Sutherland expressed his hostility to the poetry of what is being called the baseland stance in his notorious review of the volume that won the Governor-General's Award in 1946: Robert Finch's *Poems*. As a direct result of Sutherland's polemical review, several poets— including Patrick Anderson, A.M. Klein, F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, P.K. Page, and Ralph Gustafson—resigned from the editorial board of *Northern Review* (where it was printed). The reasons for these resignations were, no doubt, as complex and varied as the individual poets themselves. It is plausible to suggest, however, that some, perhaps all, of the poets objected, not merely to what they perceived as the harshness and injustice of the review,[14] but also to the assumptions about the means, ends, and orientation of Canadian poetry which were prompting Sutherland's attempts in the late 'forties to cut the very ground out from beneath the adherents of the baseland stance—to oppose *Preview* with *First Statement*, to counter Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry* (1943) with *Other Canadians* (1947), and, in the Finch review, to attack both the work of a practising poet and the Award that had sanctioned it. Those who see elements of a Freudian family romance in literary attacks such as those of Sutherland (b. 1919), a young and pro-American radical, on Finch (b. 1900) and Smith (b. 1902), two older professors of European orientation, might use Sutherland's later espousal of Catholicism and E.J. Pratt to argue for the adolescence of the hinterland orientation and the maturity of the baseland stance. Sutherland's own diagnosis, in the "Introduction" to *Other Canadians*, of a "Canadian oedipus complex"[15] in the attitude of the Canadian Authors' Association *vis-à-vis* the "motherland" of Britain might seem to add stature to such psychoanalytical speculations but, in fact, should constitute a useful warning against the danger of discussing the baseland or the hinterland orientations in Canadian poetry in such dismissive terms as immature

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[14]See "Editorial Board of *Northern Review*," *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, ed. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), pp. 109-110.
[15]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, p. 48.

dependence and adolescent rebellion. No doubt such terms can supply useful metaphors of access to certain phases in the careers of all Canadian poets. They may even provide a salutary reminder that Canadian poetry as a whole, being the product of a satellite culture, remains reliant on 'parental' models. It is important to remember, however, that point-of-view is a key factor in the disputations of baseland and hinterland orientations, that each is disposed to see the other as excessively dependent on an alien perspective and destructively unaccepting of its own position. It is with such considerations firmly in mind that the discussion may proceed to an examination of Sutherland's review of Finch's *Poems* (1946).

The specific terms of Sutherland's attack on Finch reveal a good deal both about his own hinterland orientation and about the baseland stance to which he objects. When he describes Finch as a writer who is "more concerned with the advantages of mental exercise in verse form than with the writing of poetry"[16] and as a mere versifier of "moral truism," Sutherland points illuminatingly towards the connection in poetry of the baseland orientation between traditional verse forms such as the sonnet (a favourite form for Finch) and the traditional moral values of Christian humanism. "Sanctimoniousness," says Sutherland was a possible reason why the Governor-General's Award went to *Poems* (1946); "Mr. Finch was morally correct and sounded religious." In his "Introduction to *Other Canadians*" Sutherland notoriously connects A.J.M. Smith (whom he classifies with T.S. Eliot as a "traditionalist and classicist in literature") with the "school" of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, arguing that both agree in principle with the idea that art is the handmaiden of religion and "would only quarrel when they proceed to *crystallize* their vague immanences into *definite form.*"[17] (It is worth opening a parenthesis to observe that the submerged objection here, as the added italics intend to show, is to the baseland conception of form as fixed, crystalline, and artificial as opposed to organic, proceeding, and natural. When Smith argued, in 1964, that formal decisions result from "a crystallization in the mind" and, moreover, that "Strict, intricate, and difficult forms are not . . . a departure from nature or a violation of nature," he may well have had the objections of Sutherland's hinterland orientation to "traditional and well established"[18] forms

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[16]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, p. 107.
[17]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, pp. 51 and 55.
[18]"On the Making of Poems," in his *Towards a View of Canadian Letters* (Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 222.

in his thoughts.) Clearly perceiving that, certain postures and appear-
ances aside, Smith and Roberts accept at base the connection between
traditional ideas and traditional forms, the Sutherland of *Other Cana-
dians* articulates his hostility to the "art-religion hypothesis" in a met-
aphor—traditionalist poetry as a "jar of preserves"[19]—which at once
recognizes and condemns the *closed* quality of much Confederation
and Modern verse of the baseland orientation. As much as Margaret
Avison's "Butterfly Bones; or Sonnet Against Sonnets," Sutherland's
quarrel is with both fixed ideas and fixed forms; as such it could be
extended to apply to the works of more recent writers such as—to give
a geographical sampling of post-war poets of the baseland orientation—
Robin Skelton (Victoria), Wilfred Watson (Edmonton), Jay MacPherson
(Toronto), Fred Cogswell (Fredericton), and R.A. Parsons (St. John's).

Cogswell, for instance, suits the traditional values of his Christian
heritage, "those of responsibility to one's self, to family, to society, and
to God" with the "old forms: the sonnet, the quatrain, the couplet, the
epigram."[20] And R.A. Parsons, in the centenary of Confederation, uses
decasyllabic couplets reminiscent of Crabbe, Cowper, and Goldsmith[21]
to celebrate his Newfoundland "Village," its acculturated surroundings,
and communal values:

> Along our valley from the river-head
> A hundred parcels of fenced land are spread.
> Here are the grazing grounds and plots that grow
> Rare timothy . . .

> *   *   *

> At peace with all, we gather from the sea
> And help each other in adversity.[22]

While such versifications of moral truisms in traditional forms as "The
Village" will find no place in a literary history that is predicated on the
notions of innovation, transgression, and obsolescence, they deserve
to be discussed (and criticised) as part of the baseland continuity that

[19]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, p. 55.
[20]Carrie MacMillan, "To Grow Up Slow and to Endure for Long" (Rev. of Fred Cogswell,
A Long Apprenticeship: Collected Poems), *The Atlantic Provinces Book Review*, 8 (No-
vember, 1981), 1.
[21]See A.C. Hunter, "Foreword" in R.A. Parsons, *The Village and the Wayside* (Don Mills:
Ontario Publishing Company, 1967), p. vii.

goes back in Canadian poetry to the eighteenth century. In *Other Canadians* Sutherland argues that "There are ideas and attitudes, feelings and forms of expression, that sometimes cannot be conveyed by means of the polished and symmetrical vehicle of English poetry, but which attract [the Canadian poet], because *they seem more easy going and natural*—in short, more American."[23] By and large, the baseland orientation in Canadian poetry has rejected the American call to poetic freedom, fearing in the "trochee's heave"[24] the triumph of liberal individualism over humanistic community. In "Coelocanth" F.R. Scott has a modern iambus, the characteristic measure of baseland poetry, articulate its own archaic connection with society, tradition, and order:

> I am an iamb
>> because the bones of my social fish
> were so precise
>> I was meant to be embedded
>> in the soft mud of my ancestors
> or to be drawn on stone
>> giving out words dreams ideas
>>> regular as ribs
> crisp in the perfection of pattern
>> dated
>> a trilobite in limestone.[25]

"Coelocanth" concludes when the lonely and "ancient frame" of the iamb, after surveying the disquieting but innovative results of the "earthquake" of radical modern poetics (the "diaspora of dactyls/iambs split to the core"), expresses its yearning for a lost order and finds itself "answered only by/I AM"—the assertion of a confident and, for the iamb, delimiting and destructive singularity. No axe need assiduously be ground in defence of the poetry of the baseland to make the obvious point that it is the orientation of many modern and postmodern writers, including the Sutherland of the late 'forties, towards (American) life, liberty, and the pursuit of free or open form that has led to the critical eclipse in recent years of Canada's baseland continuity with its emphasis on (British) peace, order, good government, and traditional form.

Sutherland's other, major accusation against Finch in his review of *Poems* (1946) is that he writes poetry as if "playing a sort of verbal

[22]*The Village and the Wayside*, pp. 24 and 28.
[23]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, p. 59.
[24]See Robert Von Hallberg, *Charles Olson: The Scholar's Art* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 170-204 for a discussion Olson's poetic.
[25]*The Collected Poems of F.R. Scott* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart), p. 183.

chess" or, like a "kitten," plays with "rhyme and metre," conceits and similes, to produce poems by a "method . . . of compilation rather than of composition."[26] When stripped of its denigrating rhetoric this accusation can be seen to centre on an important issue in the taxonomy of baseland and hinterland stances—the vexed matter, not merely of how poems are made, but of how they are perceived to have been made. The generic poet of the baseland, as Robert Frost's well-known comparison of playing tennis with the net down indicates, likes to consider— and be seen to consider—the rules and boundaries of a closed form or game a valuable discipline of his craft. In contrast, the generic poet of the hinterland orientation, as Robert Duncan's equally well-known comparison of the poet, not to a tennis player, but to an "explorer" intimates, wishes to affirm and encourage the idea that freedom from formal rules and restrictions is the poetic corollary for "free thought and free movement."[27] In Canadian poetry such notions are sometimes treated whimsically, as in Margaret Avison's "Tennis," where the players "Score liquid Euclids in foolscaps of air,"[28] or in A.J.M. Smith's "Etude in a Minor Key," where a poet is told that her "love is not free love/And her verse is not free verse."[29] The facetiousness of these quotations should not obscure the fact that when a poet chooses to 'compile' a poem according to a complex, pre-arranged game plan such as the Petrarchan sonnet or the Spenserian stanza he acts in a manner which, for the very reason that it is consistent with his commitment to stability and tradition, suggests a reluctance to adventure, to develop, to entertain new ideas. There are few better descriptions of the implied poet of the baseland stance than David Solway's "New England Poets" where the authors of "geriatric sonnets" who "alternate" their rhymes and "regulate their numbers" are envisaged as "steady, reliable, usually monogomous" "members of English Departments" who are preternaturally partial to "square wooden tables,/checkered table-cloths, well-swept rooms,/and especially devoted wives . . ."[30] Though there will be more to say on the subject later, the observation may be made here that when Sutherland, Avison, and Solway refer, respectively, to chess, to Euclid, and

[26]*The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, pp. 107-108.
[27]See *The Poetics of the New American Poetry*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Donald Allen and Warren Tallman (New York: Grove, 1977), pp. 209 and 224.
[28]*Winter Sun* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 16.
[29]Anthologised in Michael Darling, "A Variorum Edition of the Poems of A.J.M. Smith with a Descriptive Bibliography and Reference Guide," Diss. York Univ. 1979, p. 128.
[30]*Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies*, ed., and with an Introduction by Andre Farkas and Ken Norris (Montreal: Véhicule, n.d.), p. 104.

to "square . . . tables" they indicate a connection through geometrical form between poetry, mentality, and landscape that has profound and crucial implications for the baseland orientation in Canada.

Where the formal geometry, the "polished and symmetrical vehicle," of baseland poetry both contains and overrides the romantic fiction that poems are composed *sur le motif*, in the heat of a few moments *among* the Timothy as it were, the much-vaunted openness of recent hinterland poetry represents, not merely a resurgence of that fiction, but its elevation into a *modus operandi et vivendi*. With his back to the forms and traditions of the baseland, the poet of the hinterland orientation desires and purports to compose his work (in Olson's phrase) "by field"—in open, direct, spontaneous, and unpremeditated response to his immediate surroundings. According to this fiction, hinterland poetry is generated by negative capability rather than through either the preconception of intellectual strategy or the recollection of powerful emotion. As George Bowering puts it: "Literature must be thought, now."[31] Memory is to be distrusted because, in the words of Robert Creely (whose influence on recent Canadian poetry of the hinterland stance is of course extensive), ". . . in the memory I fear/the distortion. I do not feel/what it was I was felling."[32] Should the discourse or the world of the hinterland poet appear to have a plan, it must be, in bp Nichol's words, "a plan/not in the sense of plot/pre-conceived/but there . . ."[33] Since the poet of the hinterland stance wants it to be believed that he neither premeditates nor postmeditates the "compilation" of his poem, that his work is part of a continuing process ("it is not over/it is never over" says Nichol near the 'end' of *Martyrology IV*), his discourse transpires as a series whose generative principle is one of opening and subsequent thoughts or impressions. Thus Al Purdy in "Trees at the Arctic Circle," after giving his initial and denigrating impression of the Ground Willows, revises his perspective and opinion as the poem proceeds:

> But these
> even the dwarf shrubs of Ontario
> mock them
> coward trees

[31]*Allophanes, The Long Poem Anthology*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Michael Ondaatje (Toronto: Coach House, 1979), p. 205.
[32]"A Place," *20th Century Poetry and Poetics*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Gary Geddes (Toronto:
[33]*The Martyrology, Book IV, The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 275.

> And yet—and yet—
> their seed pods glow . . .

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> I see that I've been carried away
> in my scorn of the dwarf trees

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> I have been stupid in a poem
> I will not alter the poem
> but let the stupidity remain permanent[34]

As these quotations from Purdy's unpunctuated and open-ended poem indicate, the poetry of the hinterland tends towards a plain or casually emergent style and a dialectical or self-reflexively argumentative movement, employing frequent conjunctions ("But," "And yet") to create the sense of a mind actively responding to its environment and continually arguing with itself. (Not surprisingly Purdy's poem also generates a postscript and an additional note.) The major pitfalls of the unedited poetry of a poet's direct and personal experiences are, of course, a tendency towards a solipsistic concern with writing itself and a banal presentation of uninteresting experiences. Although the most appealing and interesting poems of the hinterland orientation manage to avoid or exploit these pitfalls, no doubt in many instances through careful editing and revision, they nevertheless retain their impromptu quality and, moreover, imply as their mode of composition the unstudied activity of improvisation.

By adopting the role of the improviser, the hinterland poet disputes the traditional notion that works of art are first to be designed, then executed, and, finally, subjected to revisions that result in "perfect finished poems."[35] Well understanding the connection between structured form, civilized landscape, and providential design, he follows a programme that is consistent poetically, geographically, and philosophically in its endorsement of unstructured (free or open) verse, unenclosed

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[34]*North of Summer* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart), p. 30.

[35]*Louis Dudek: Texts & Essays*, ed. Frank Davey and bp Nichol, *Open Letter*, 4th ser. 8 and 9 (Spring and Summer, 1981), p. 12.

landscape, and what are popularly thought of as the heraclitean gods of change, nature, and chance. There will be more to say in due course about early manifestations of the hinterland stance in Canadian writing, but it may be noted here that imaginative indentification of such poets as Theodore Roberts and Tom MacInnes with the *voyageur* and the *picaro* represents a pre-World War II manifestation of the hinterland mentality, for as Roberts says in his "Epitaph for the Voyageur" "Change was his mistress, Chance his counsellor./Love could not keep him. Duty forged no chain"[36] and as MacInnes writes in his "Ballade of the Free Lance" "the world is laid/Full of adventure and multiple chance!"[37] Indeed, MacInnes' rebellion against the "inadequate gamut of rhyme; the rectangular effect; the absolute lack of curve"[38] in the ballade form echoes forward to later, and equally temperamental, rejections of what Stuart MacKinnon calls "the too strict forms."[39] It may also be noted that the vagabondia of Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey, a realm that "stretches from the open sea/To the blue mountains and beyond,"[40] anticipates the unenclosed terrain of much post-War hinterland poetry. In their espousal of Olsonian poetics and Heraclitean flux, their venture into the unfenced field and along the open road, Vancouver's *Tish* poets are among the more recent and best-known exemplars of the hinterland orientation. Not only is their subject-matter, when summarized by one of their principal apologists, Warren Tallman, as "Boat trips, gardening, trees, moths, a sequence of days, fights, injuries, Tarot cards,"[41] consistent with the hinterland stance in its emphasis on chance and change, movements in space and time, and activities and objects in nature, but Tallman's conception of why the poetics of Olson and his followers (Duncan, Creely, *et al*) were imported and adapted to the Canadian environment through Vancouver, agrees entirely with the ecology of the hinterland. Mid-century Modernism "caught on in the Canadian west," explains Tallman, "because it was right for the west, where the environment is so open and undefined, child-like perhaps,

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[36]*The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, ed. Wilfred Campbell (Oxford Univ. Press, 1913), p. 298.
[37]*Complete Poems of Tom MacInnes*, with an "Afterword" by F.P. (Toronto: Ryerson, 1923), p.
[38]*Complete Poems of Tom MacInnes*, pp. 186-187.
[39]*The Intervals, The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 73.
[40]"The Vagabonds," *The Poems of Bliss Carman*, ed., and with an Introduction, by John Robert Sorfleet (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 38.
[41]"Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960's," *The Writing Life: Historical & Critical Views of the Tish Movement*, ed. C.H. Gervais, and with an Introduction by Frank Davey (Coatsworth: Black Moss, 1976), p. 37.

easily given over to a sense of inner wonder."[42] "Western people" (a group which, to judge by Victoria poet Robin Skelton's hostile reaction to *Tish*, does not include the West's baselanders), "are more conscious than easterners of the unformed spirit of the North American place," Tallman argues. "From ten miles north of Vancouver on out to the north pole is 99 and 44/100 percent wilderness. Heading east, the towns come few, small and ramshackle, huddled near heavy-shouldered mountains with heavier, higher mountains back of them, and back of them more mountains, heavier, higher still"[43]—i.e. Carman's "blue mountains and beyond." In other words, mid-century Modernism with its emphasis on open form and open thought ("The open-ended structure corresponds to the open-minded problem"[44] Louis Dudek tells bp Nichol) represents a western-Canadian ecospecies: an imported organism that is entirely at home in its new habitat. (It may or may not be fortuitous that Canada's best-known anarchist, George Woodcock, and the most articulate critic of the frontier impetus in Canadian literature, W.H. New, have chosen to live in Vancouver.)

While the mode of composition in the hinterland tends, at least fictively, towards the open, inconclusive, and improvisational, the mode of composition in the baseland tends towards the closed, the teleological, and the *bouts-rimés*—the poem that develops within a series of given and prearranged rhythms and rhymes. Lampman is known to have begun some of his finest stanzas (the word stanza of course means room in Italian) with the rhymes[45] and, no doubt, Finch, Klein, MacPherson and other poets of the baseland orientation have followed the same strategy of *bouts-rimés*. Be this as it may (and confirmation of the hypothesis may have to await the publication of the work-sheets of these poets in a sympathetic periodical such as Skelton's *Malahat Review*), the generic poet of the baseland has no wish to deny that his poems are composed with forethought within a given philosophical system. Thus "A Tall Man Executes a Jig," Irving Layton's superb, step-by-step account of the poet's achievement of the stature of a Nietzschian superman, is a sonnet-sequence that begins portentously "So the man spread his blanket on the field/And watched . . ."[46] and "The Archer," Smith's painstakingly self-conscious examination of the creative act, is

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[42]*The Writing Life*, p. 40.

[43]*The Writing Life*, pp. 52-53.

[44]*Texts & Essays*, p. 12.

[45]See Kathy Mezei, "Lampman Among the Timothy," *Canadian Poetry*, 5 (Fall/Winter, 1979), 61-63 for a discussion of Lampman's process of "compilation."

[46]*Collected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 335.

a sonnet whose sestet begins "So for a moment, motionless, se-rene,/Fixed between time and time, I aim and wait . . ."[47] In both cases the conjunction of premeditated volition, "So," indicates the teleological nature of what is occurring, and provides, for the present discussion, a symptomatic contrast to the 'Ands' and 'Buts' of much improvisational, hinterland poetry.

Needless to say, improvisation and *bouts-rimés* are by no means as mutually exclusive as this *reductio* for the purposes of clear differentiation makes them seem. As Smith's elaborate commentary on the composition of "The Archer" in "On the Making of Poems"[48] indicates, the selection and filling of a traditional form or stanza is to a certain extent an improvisational activity, and improvisation, to the extent that it is, in itself, a chosen rhetorical stance, draws on predetermined patterns. The hinterland poet would like it to be thought that Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, runs between his poetry and tradition. Amongst the cherished ideas of the *Tish* poets and their associates and apologists, therefore, are such notions as the poetic mind as "not imitative and derivative"[49] but innocent of influence ("one's debt to one's father/forgotten" as bp Nichol puts it[50]) and simultaneous occurrence, rather than metropolitan or "world centres," as the source of ideas and poetics (the "totally decentralized, non-national, global connection and interchange" of Nichol and Steve McCaffery's description of Robert Filliou's "Eternal Network"[51]). But, in the Canadian context particularly, the decision of the *Tish* poets and their successors to be open and natural in the manner of Olson is, of course, the selection of a tradition: it may be a selection that leads to a liberally open-minded poetry of apparent spontaneity, but it cannot be an intuitive decision because it involves a conscious, cultural choice to follow in the Canadian context an (improvisational) programme or strategy that has been explicitly articulated elsewhere.

Both the points of meeting and the points of divergence between improvisation and *bouts-rimés*, the *reductios* of the implied modes of creation of the two primary stances in Canadian poetry, can sharpen our perception of the orientations of individual poets and poems. Take, for instance, the "So let's continue/These vast accumulations/not with-

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[47]*Poems New & Collected* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 158.
[48]See *Towards a View of Canadian Letters*, pp. 223-227.
[49]Frank Davey, "Introduction," *The Writing Life*, p. 17.
[50]*The Martyrology, Book IV, The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 279.
[51]*Louis Dudek: Texts & Essays*, p. 28.

out reason, that may have a use/or none"[52] with which Louis Dudek begins *Continuation I* (1981), the "experiment in poetic process" which, he says, has neither a "prescribed end or conclusion" nor an order "in poetic traditions or in ideas consciously held."[53] Quite clearly the opening of Dudek's poem represents a point of meeting between the baseland and hinterland stances ("*So* let's *continue* . . ."), a conscious, uneasy, and partial alignment by a poet who was earlier accustomed to deciding "what the poem was to be beforehand"[54] towards the openended poetry of process, the recent poetic of the hinterland. To an extent, Dudek—partly because of his primary debt to Pound, whose enthusiastic entry into the mind of Europe is congenial to the baseland stance but whose poetic practice in his later *Cantos* is part of the experimental line that leads to the hinterland stance—stands on a middle ground between the two orientations of Canadian poetry. In his *Open Letter* interview with Bowering, Nichol, McCaffery, and Frank Davey, a Janus-like Dudek champions civilization over barbarism but, as might be expected from his affirmations of openness and freedom in art (not to mention the inconsistency of his affirmation of Matthew Arnold and rejection of Northrop Frye), readily confesses to his interviewers:

> . . . I am not a Paleface in American poetry, or Canadian poetry. I want the energy of you Redskins, combined with the total concerns—and structural awareness—of the critics and establishment poets . . . (Let's say I want Henry Miller and Matthew Arnold rolled into one.)"[55]

Just as the taxonomy of baseland and hinterland serves to emphasize the syncretism, or, it may be, ambivalence, of the *via media* which Dudek attempts to follow, it permits the recognition that such poems as Pratt's *Brébeuf and His Brethren* and *Towards the Last Spike*, despite their hinterland subject-matter, are the creations of the baseland orientation that subsumes a variety of materials (including text-book history and the biographies of great men) to a controlling pattern of blank verse and epical devices, a pattern—and this is part of Pratt's genius—which is entirely and ecologically appropriate to its heroic, hinterland subject-matter.

Of course, Pratt was not so complacent in his armchair at Victoria College as to think that the hinterland either of rock or of mind could

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[52]*Continuation 1* (Montreal: Véhicule, 1981), p. 11.
[53]*Continuation 1*, p. 7.
[54]*Texts & Essays*, p. 11.
[55]*Texts and Essays*, p. 14.

be totally and finally subdued to a providential or humanistic design: the undigested quotations of prose throughout *Towards the Last Spike* do, like the unsubdued laurentian lizard, provide evidence of the intractability of at least part of hinterland nature.[56] Nevertheless, Pratt's primary allegiance is to design in the universe as in art, a fact which clearly emerges when his long poems are compared with those of a hinterland-oriented writer such as Robert Kroetsch who, in imitation or, as he would have it, "emulation"[57] of William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* incorporates rather than subsumes his raw materials—a failed poem, a conversation with Rudy Wiebe, an excerpt from a seed catalogue— making them the constitutive materials, not necessarily the subjects or themes, of his writing. The improvisational poet of the hinterland favours the trouvaille, the dictation, the dissonant, the accidental, the unarranged, the collage, the bricolage, the serial poem, because they deemphasize the notion of the artist as a minipulative maker of rational constructs. All creative writing is, perforce, constructive, but the hinterland orientation leans always towards minimalism, towards the idea that the poet, far from remaking the chaotic world or reflecting an external design in the ordered realm of poetry, merely reproduces reality in all its disparate and shifting phenomenological manifestations. "i want the world/absolute & present/all its elements," says bp Nichol, "if i let the actual speak/it will reveal itself."[58] To achieve his aim of becoming an object among objects (and Nichol's lower case "i" represents a denial of the status traditionally accorded to the self), the recent poet of the hinterland stance feels it necessary to subvert or, in Kroetsch's term, to "uninvent"[59] such ordered and ordering emanations of the baseland as form, myth, and ego. As George Bowering puts it: "Breaking up . . . mypsyche/the way of the world/order,/form."[60] For the would-be poet of the hinterland stance, break up and break down represent the opening routes to break out.

If for a moment the magisterial pronouncements of Layton in "A Tall Man" and Smith in "The Archer" are recalled and contrasted to

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[56]See Janice Edmundson, "From Sea-Cat to Laurentian Lizard: A Study of the Treatment of Animals in the Poetry of E.J. Pratt," M.A., Univ. of Western Ontario, 1981, p. 175.
[57]"Uncovering Our Dream World: An Interview with Robert Kroetsch" conducted by Robert Enright and Dennis Cooley, *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 18/19 (Summer/Fall, 1979), 28.
[58]*The Martyrology, Book IV, The Long Poem Anthology*, pp. 271 and 278.
[59]See Ann Mandel, "Uninventing Structures: Cultural Criticism and the Novels of Robert Kroetsch," *Open Letter*, 3rd Series, 8 (Spring, 1978) 52-71.
[60]"Breaking Up, Breaking Out," quoted by C.H. Gervais in *"Tish*: A Movement" in *The Writing Life*, pp. 198-199.

Bowering's idea of the necessary dismantling of the ego, it becomes possible to recognize that, where the hinterland poet advocates the breakup of the social self (and, with a consistent atavism and anarchy, affirms the perspectives of the outlaw, the primitive, the untutored child, the wonder merchant), the baseland poet retains an egotistically sublime conception of the poet as philosopher and sage. Although he may advocate self-effacement as a means to any number of ends (especially mystical insight of one sort or another), the poet of the baseland orientation remains, above all (and above nature particularly), the prophet who speaks of privileged insights, in rationally coherent poems, to a relatively unenlightened audience. Charles G.D. Roberts begins his address on "Canadian Poetry in Its Relation to the Poetry of England and America" (1933) by promising "to justify [himself] in the role of prophet [and] prophesying a distinguished and distinctive future for Canadian poetry."[61] Here Roberts is wearing a mantle inherited from his high Romantic and Victorian predecessors. It is the same mantle that Lampman had worn and which, some superficial appearances to the contrary, later poets such as Klein, Layton, Wilfred Watson and Margaret Atwood would frequently wear. The poet of the baseland orientation may occasionally despair of getting his message across to his audience. He may sometimes doubt the ability of language itself to communicate that message. He may even, in recognition of the distrust of didactic poetry, make prose the major vehicle for his cultural, social, and ultimately, political prognostications. He always remains unashamedly engaged with the prevailing culture, however, and chooses, not to break with his society, but to argue from whatever platform he finds congenial— imperialism, socialism, communism, nationalism, Tory transcendentalism, Red Toryism (needless to say, anarchism, liberalism, and neoconservatism are implausible ideologies for the baseland stance)—towards the diminuition of injustice, the enlargement of humanity, the communal triumph of right or imaginative reason. It is the ultimately political commitment of the baseland poet that makes him a working critic of the culture and society of the country—the author of "To a Millionaire" (Lampman) or "Golfers" (Layton), *Survival* (Atwood) or *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution?* (Mathews).

Since the baseland poet, however disillusioned with urban life and bourgeois society, retains his commitment to order rather than anarchy, he will tend to envision the realm of his soul's nightmares as an un-

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[61]The text of Roberts' address is printed in *Canadian Poetry*, 3 (Fall/Winter, 1978), 76-86.

congenial order ("The City of the End of Things," "The Improved Binoculars," "Warren Pryor") and the land of his heart's desire ("The Land of Pallas," "Grain Elevator," *The Double Hook*) as a realm in which order still exists but—to quote the Herbert Marcuse of *Eros and Civilization* (1955)—has lost its "repressive connotation."[62] Even a cursory glance at *The Blasted Pine* (1957) will reveal that the satirical tradition in Canada, true to its eighteenth-century roots and baseland orientation, manifests itself in well-governed forms such as the couplet and the quatrain which use order to attack disorder and to suggest alternative orders. It may also be noted that the baseland urge, not just to order, but to condemn malevolent orders and to advance benevolent ones, results in a satirical *and* constructive use of parody; such poems as F.R. Scott's mock elegy "W.L.M.K." and the same poet's "Ode to a Politician" are cases in point, though it may also be noted that two of the consummate achievements of the baseland stance, Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) and Sheila Watson's *The Couble Hook* (1959) include strong elements of parody within highly syntropic adaptations of imported forms—in Leacock's case the very artificial form of the *ballade* and in Watson's the superficially fragmented but deeply structured form of T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*.

As Leacock's well-known treatment of the points of view of insider and outsider at the beginning of *Sunshine Sketches* suggests, the faculty for responding sympathetically as well as satirically to the manifestations of demographic density in the baseland realm of city, town, and field may well constitute a primary characteristic of the baseland stance. Lampman, after all, is the author of "A Vision of Twilight" and "A Niagara Landscape" as well as of "The City of the End of Things" and "The Railway Station;" and the same Klein who wrote "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" and "Pawnshop" also celebrates the geometrics of civilization in "For the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu," "Pastoral of the City Streets," and "Montreal"—to name only three of his sympathetic responses to "the civic Euclid."[63] By contrast, Kroetsch sees in "The home place:/a terrible symmetry"[64] and John Newlove—one of the most consistent adherents of the hinterland stance—finds the language of the city completely unintelligible, a labyrinthine gaggle of "meaning-

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[62]*Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 149.
[63]"Lookout: Mount Royal," *The Collected Poems*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Miriam Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 319.
[64]*Seed Catalogue*, *The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 23.

less patterns.''[65] While Lampman and Klein work mainly within the geometrics of their baseland environments and poetics, Newlove, the connoisseur of chaos, avails himself of ordered stanzas to reflect but, more importantly, to condemn the desire to wrest order from chaos that is exhibited by his own reprehensibly despotic way of seeing. ''It is imperfection/the eyes see,'' concludes the third and irregular verse paragraph of ''In This Reed,'' ''it is unpreciseness they deserve'' but— and here the poem breaks into relatively ordered three-line stanzas:

> . . . [the eyes] desire so much more,
> what they desire, what they hope,
> what they invent,
>
> is perfection, organizing
> all things as they may not be,
> it is what they strive for
>
> unwillingly, against themselves,
> to see a perfect order, ordained
> reason—[66]

From the hinterland point-of-view, the baseland orientation, with its ordering mode of perception, its preordained shapes and forms of order, appears to be a terrible and delusive trap, a self-denying ordinance or chartered street, which is refusing the sweet surrender to the random, the unconfined, the real, blocks off the poet's access to the freedom and energy that lie beyond the fence in the open field, beyond the street in the open road.

Where the poet of the baseland orientation may happily survey (an appropriate word), the achievements of his civilization, emphasizing as he does the settled, cultural features of his landscape (houses, churches, barns, fences, orchards, railways), the hinterland poet tends to emphasize the unformed, open spaces of Canada and the unsettled nomadic life of the Indians. Of course, there is a plant affinity between the hinterland poet's emphasis on unhumanized nature, his pleasure in recording that ''No man is settled on [the Ellesmereland] coast . . . Nor is there talk of making man/from ice cod bell or stone,'' and the displeasure that he manifests at the progress of civilization: ''And now in Ellesmereland there sits/a town of twenty men . . . A mountie visits twice a year/And there is talk of growth.''[67] Viewing as intrusive the regular

[65]''The Dream Man,'' *The Cave* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 43.
[66]*Black Night Window* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 82.
[67]Earle Birney, ''Ellesmereland I'' and ''Ellesmereland II,'' *Ghost in the Wheels: Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 60.

measures of the baseland—"the anglican rhythms of the factories" (Leona Gom)[68] and the "violent anapest/(uu ---- ! uu ---- !)" of a train (Al Purdy)[69]—the poet whose primary sympathies lie with the hinterland can champion neither the creation of the baseland through settlement (as does W.D. Lighthall in "The Pioneers") nor the preservation of civilization through heroism (as does Lampman in "At the Long Sault: May, 1660"). Nor is he likely to view with anything but dismay either the civilization of the primal wilderness by means of the "Iron Horse" (Charles Sangster's "Morning in Summer")[70] or the humanization of the hinterland terrain by means of demographic increase (F.R. Scott's "Laurentian Shield"). (Indeed, it is tempting to read in the recent hostility of Westerners to the supposedly imposed language and measures of the East—French and metrication—the political and paranoic equivalent of the poetic rejection of the Eastern and European that are under discussion.) For the hinterland poet, as intimated by Lionel Kearns' *"Listen George Now Trains are O.K./From the Outside . . .* there's the train snaking along the curve of the lake . . .,"[71] the cultural elements in the Canadian environment can only be acceptable if they do not circumscribe the poet and, perhaps, if they serve to define the natural contours of the land. When he finds himself, not with Kearns and Bowering among the Rockies, but within the realm of what Louise Morey Bowman in "Moonlight and Common Day" (1922) calls "well-ordered, punctual living/Behind tall, well-clipped hedges;/And practical common-sense people,"[72] the hinterland poet will tend to focus on those aspects of the baselandscape which either resist acculturation or reveal its impermanence—collapsed fences, falling barns, adventitious sprouts, decomposing hotels, persistent weeds and the like. Poems such as Al Purdy's "Detail" and "The Country North of Belleville" with their ruined houses and abandoned farms oppose themselves at least superficially, to the ethos of the baseland by challenging its belief in an enduring and expanding civilization in Canada and by subverting its tendency to sanction acts of domination and control. They thus align themselves with the human portraits of failed baseland aspiration in such poems

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[68]"Immigrants," *Land of the Peace* (Saskatoon: Thistledown, 1980), p. 42.

[69]"Winter Walking," *Poems for All the Annettes* (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 96.

[70]*The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay and Other Poems, Hesperus and Other Poems and Lyrics,* with an Introduction by Gordon Johnston (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 107.

[71]"Listen George," *Imago,* 3 (1965), 20-21, quoted by C.H. Gervais, "Tish: A Movement," *The Writing Life,* p. 205

[72]*Moonlight and Common Day* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1922), p. 13.

as Birney's "Bushed" and Atwood's "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" which treat negatively of the constructive impulse but also, as exemplary poems, point the road towards redemption through an abandonment of the rage for rationalistic order and paternalistic ownership.

The constructive, baseland impetus behind the history of Canadian settlement was towards the subjugation, once and for all, of its natural enemy, a seemingly hostile terrain, by "hacking down"[73] and burning off trees in order to establish permanent ploughlands and fenced pastures. Similarly, the baseland orientation, particularly in early Canadian poetry, may have been led by a dread of "extended space"[74] and wild nature or, concomitantly, by a desire for permanent construction, to apply tidy grids of visual geometry in the shape of fixed forms and measured lines to the raw material of experience. From the hinterland point-of-view, which attempts to respect and reflect the preformalized quality of what existed in Canada before the advent of European civilization (and, hence, selects for importation poetic modes such as imagism, projectivism, and the haiku which promise to bring poetry near to uncivilized outer and inner reality), the baseland poet's tendency to set his verse above or against the existent and existential may seem, at best, misguided abstractionism and, at worst, a manifestation of the imperialistic designs of "world" on "earth" (the terms are Heidegger's, as elaborated by Dennis Lee in *Savage Fields*). Yet there is a correspondence between, on the one hand, the mathematically ordered forms—the squares, circles, and lines, the "parallelograms,"[75] "triangles and hexagons"[76]—of the mature baseland which surrounds and includes the city, and, on the other, interconnected, geometrical shapes of the stanzas, poems, and structural patterns of such volumes as Lampman's *Among the Millet* and Klein's *Rocking Chair*. From the beginning of the baseland continuity in poems like Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains* (1789) and J. Mackay's *Quebec Hill* (1797) symmetry and order in both landscape and poetry are the reflections as well as the means of governance, providing and proclaiming evidence of the humanization of the Canadian terrain through the shaping power of reason.[77]

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[73]George Bowering, "Grandfather," *Points on the Grid* (Toronto: Contact, 1964), p.
[74]Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 15.
[75]Leona Gom, "Reconstruction," *Land of the Peace*, p. 7.
[76]Al Purdy, "Winter Walking," *Poems for All the Annettes*, p. 96.
[77]See "Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains* (1789) and Its 'Preface'," *Canadian Poetry*, 5 (Fall/Winter, 1979), 1-28.

Owing partly to his recognition of the correspondence between the ordered and ordering structures within and without, and partly to his decision to work with those structures, the poet of the baseland orientation conceives pastoral, picturesque, and controlled nature in such anthropocentric terms as the wise teacher, the gentle mother, and the organic cathedral. In other words, he endows nature with comfortable, human characteristics which reflect his confidence that, as a result of the acculturation of the Canadian environment, an empathetic relationship between man and the external world has become possible. (Of course, once the possibility of true empathy with "earth" becomes a reality, the baseland poet may also find the hinterland orientation a possibility.) The matter of fitting internal and external structures in baseland poetry is a chicken-and-egg, deductive and inductive, affair. As Munro Beattie says of Robert Finch's *Poems*: "Sometimes the pattern is in the events that constitute the little 'plot' of . . . a poem . . . But, almost as often, the pattern exists first in the poet's perception and he transforms nature to match the inner geometry."[78] At the core of the poetry of the baseland are the principles of similitude and analogy which issue in a heavy reliance on such tropes as simile, metaphor, conceit, and objective correlative, tropes that the hinterland poet quite predictably tends to avoid. In its predilection for formal structures and correlational tropes lie the seeds of the major weaknesses of baseland poetry: a tendency towards the arbitrary application of fixed form (as, for instance, in some of Lampman's philosophical sonnets) and a tendency towards the turgid over-elaboration of clever tropes (as, for example, in some of P.K. Page's early verse).[79] A full and sympathetic understanding of the historical importance and aesthetic qualities of the poetry of Canada's baseland continuity, from the heroic couplets of Thomas Cary, through the Spenserian stanzas of Charles Sangster, the Petrarchan sonnets of Charles G.D. Roberts, and the epical structures of E.J. Pratt to the number-grids of Wilfred Watson, must turn on the recognition that it is the aim of the generic baseland poet to uncover and reveal the pattern and unity, the resemblances and correspondences, which he knows to exist in his world.

Even when he seems least concerned with the self and most attentive to the external world, the baseland poet will seek, frequently with a wise passiveness allied to metaphysical rationalism, to discern

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[78]"Poetry, 1920-1935," *Literary History of Canada*, p. 739.
[79]See Don Precosky, *"Preview:* An Introduction and Index," *Canadian Poetry*, 8 (Spring/Summer, 1981), 76-77.

the design in things, and to embody that design in form. The final stanza of Lampman's "Heat," a poem renowned for its "formal elegance,"[80] provides a ready example of a baseland poet achieving and communicating a privileged moment of intense, rational insight; its constellation of symmetry and unity, self and other, are emphasized by italics:

> And yet to *me* not *this* or *that*
>   Is always *sharp* or always *sweet*;
> In the sloping shadow of my hat
>   *I* lean at rest, and *drain the heat*;
> Nay more, *I think* some *blessèd power*
>   Hath brought *me* wandering idly here:
> In the full furnace of this hour
>   *My thoughts* grow *keen and clear*.[81]

Consistent with the baseland poet's forthrightly idealistic and anagogical approach to the external world (Plato's cave and Emerson's "Nature" both lie in Lampman's particular background), the conclusion of "Heat" emphasizes spiritual significance over objective fact, the recording mind over the objects seen. Both the achievement by the poet of the existence of "some blessèd power" (a cognate surely of Fortuna rather than of fate) which has controlled even his apparently undirected actions are entirely consistent with the teleological assumptions and deductive method of the baseland poet, as, indeed, is the fact that the stanza itself, like the poem as a whole, develops within a prearranged formalistic structure towards a clear, certain, and smoothly closural conclusion.

It should be apparent that to write a poem like "Heat" would be little more than an exercise in an alien mode for the generic poet of the hinterland stance whose conceptions of nature as a heraclitean flux and of poetry as an endless dialectic will dispose him neither to develop arguments from design nor to scheme plots for his poems. A witty instance of the hinterland poet's disposition simply to record, to register without the addition of interpretative tropes, the phenomena which he finds in his field of vision is George Bowering's "Against Description." (In view of Olson's conception of poem as letter with reader as respondent, it is appropriate that "Against Description" came to the editorial offices of *Canadian Poetry* on a post card.[82]) Taking his point of departure Susan Sontag's attractive (though, from a baseland perspec-

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[80]A.J.M. Smith, "Our Poets: A Sketch of Canadian Poetry in the Nineteenth Century," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 12 (1942-43), 86.
[81]*Poems*, p. 13.
[82]From Ken Norris, dated October 26, 1981. The poem is quoted from this post card.

tive, wrong-headed) idea that any attempt to interpret a work of art by placing it in a rational system constitutes a delusive falsification, Bowering argues by demonstration that any act of description or treatment beyond the minimal represents a falsification of the integrity of nature's phenomena. "Against Description" is written in "minimalist couplets"[83] that are suitably reminiscent of Williams' work in the imagist or objectivist mode. Its opening couplet implies in its choice of verb and grammatical structure ("I *went to* the blackberries[*for*] . . .") a purpose behind the speaker's excursion into the natural realm; this implication is frustrated by the remainder of the poem:

> I went to the blackberries
> on the vine.
>
> They were blackberries
> on the vine.
>
> They were
> blackberries.
>
> Black
> berries.

One aim of Bowering's poem is to subvert interpretation; critical silence is the obvious, though not the only, response to its assertion that external phenomena are neither this nor that but merely what they are—unmotivated signs without allegorical or didactic significance for the poet or reader. If a collage of the ostensible casualties of "Against Description" were to be compiled it would certainly include Plato's cave, an Eolian harp, a page from Aristotle's *Poetics*, and a blue guitar.

But at base "Against Description" is an act of prestidigitation, for the refusal to interpret phenomena is in itself an interpretative act, a bequeathing of significance and value. Bowering is far too astute to be unaware of this: "patterns I deny," he says in "Circus Maximus," "and that/is part of a pattern."[84] As even the first part of Smith's "The Lonely Land" makes clear, the very recognition of unformed (hinterland) nature constitutes an act of assimilative cognition which at once becomes amenable to generalization ("This is a beauty . . . This is the beauty . . ."[85]).

[83]Ken Norris, "The Poetry of George Bowering," *Brave New World*, ed. Jack David (Windsor: Black Moss, 1978), p. 89.
[84]*The Silver Wire* (Kingston: Quarry, 1966), p. 39.
[85]*Poems New & Collected*, p. 51.

"No man" may be settled on the Ellesmereland coast in Birney's poem, but Noman, it may be recalled, was but one of the disguises of Odysseus, that archetypal and ever-returning hinterland voyageur. Perhaps, after all, it is impossible to argue with logical consistency for the denial of humanistic presence, or even significance, in any discourse which is acknowledged to have an author and a reader. It is not the aim of the present discussion, however, either to humanize the post-humanists or to deconstruct the deconstructionists, though such assimilative tasks certainly fall within the purlieus of the baseland activity of critical writing as traditionally conceived. The main point is that Bowering's "Against Description" is true to the hinterland orientation in its emphasis on image, on thing, on the merely visible, and in its refusal to categorize, characterize, or humanize the "black/berries." The hinterland qualities of Bowering's piece can be easily underscored by a glance at Smith's "Wild Raspberry" which also uses the Williams couplet but, as part of its delightful critique of the imagist emphasis on mere sensation, sexualizes and humanizes the plant in question by describing its leaves as "slipp'ry" with moisture, its "gashes of red," its "Yellow whips," and its "prickly little branches/[that are] pulled into curves/by [its] big berries."[86]

While the baseland stance in Canadian poetry became practically possible only with the permanent settlement of the Eastern regions of Canada, the hinterland orientation theoretically predates the construction and acculturation of the Canadian landscape and has always remained, particularly in the West, an available alternative to the baseland stance. There is in fact a hinterland continuity in Canadian writing that stretches back in time to the earliest explorers and poets of the new and open land but which was, until the turn of the present century, rendered formalistically inconsistent with its own orientation by the unavailability of truly open, non-teleological literary structures. In 1798, Adam Allan appended to his "Description of the Great Falls, of the River Saint John, in the Province of New Brunswick" (the lengthy and locodescriptive title is in itself telling) an epigraph from Dryden which effectively sums up the perspective of those early writers whose orientation—though they wrote in the closed forms of the day, the heroic couplet and the exploration narrative—was towards the hinterland; it reads, in part, ". . . pleas'd I am no beaten road to take,/But first the way to new discov'ries make."[87]

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[86]*Poems New & Collected*, p. 47.
[87]Allan's poem is reprinted in *Literature in Canada*, eds. Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman (Toronto: Gage, 1978), I, 62-63.

As intimated by the reference to new discoveries in Allan's epi-graph, the early Canadian manifestation of the hinterland stance is most easily discernible in the figures of the explorer and the fur-trader—the men who ventured towards the peripheries of urban control in a com-merce concerned with the discovery and mapping of new terrains. It is in the sense of a recording of new terrain that the activity of mapping has become in much recent Canadian poetry of the hinterland orien-tation a metaphor for writing conceived as an act of exploration, as a venture into the interior of country and consciousness. The early ex-plorers, like some of their poetic successors (most notably John New-love, Al Purdy, and bill bissett), associated themselves with the Indians and with an itinerancy whose means, the river and the canoe, were to become the symbols of the hinterland orientation: Daryl Hine's per-ennial hinterlanders are the "Lovers of the River" and Wilson Mac-Donald's hinterland *persona* is Caneo,[88] an anagram of canoe. Although Samuel Hearne, the nearctic explorer who has become, through poems by John Newlove ("Samuel Hearne in Wintertime") and Don Gutter-idge (*Coppermine*), a primary anti-hero of the hinterland orientation, did not, in actual fact, travel by canoe into the wilderness, he never-theless, and as a result of his early naval experience, called his Indian companions a "crew."[89] This minor point is worthy of mention because it directs attention, not only to the fact that the Canadian hinterland in all its manifestations (prairies, mountains, forests, and so on) has always been amenable to marine terminology,[90] but also to the fact that the ocean voyage has, especially since the time of the Romantics, been associated with the journey into the unknown, chaotic realms which lie beyond the boundaries of space that has been sectioned off legally, agriculturally, and spiritually.[91] Since he is in rebellion against enclosure and enchanted by a myth of freedom, the hinterland poet has little difficulty in conceiving his world as "oceanic"[92] or in seeing himself in any number of figures—the seafarer, the nomad, the rebel, the siwash, the outlaw, the fanatic, the genius, the neurotic—who in one way or another represent models of dissent. Of these figures, the early Canadian

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[88]See "A Stretching Landscape," p. 14.

[89]See *A Journey to the Northern Ocean* . . ., ed., and with an Introduction, by Richard Glover (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 2, 18, 12 and so on.

[90]See "A Stretching Landscape," pp. 7-8.

[91]See W.H. Auden, *The Enchafed Flood* and Marshall McLuhan and Harley Parker, *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Poetry and Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 153.

[92]bp Nichol, *The Martyrology, Book IV, The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 269.

explorers have proved very congenial to many recent poets of the hinterland orientation, probably because they seem, in the imagination at least, to be travelling, always outwards into the unknown, recording as they go the direct experience of an unlabelled world which William Carlos Williams and his American successors have advocated as a way to escape from the stultifying round of convention.

While it was the aim of the explorers to scout and chart the hinterland for commercial purposes, they occasionally encountered events, such as the massacre of Bloody Fall, which could be assimilated only with difficulty and sometimes not at all to preconceived ideas and patterns. It is well-known that David Thompson failed ultimately to subsume his Canadian experiences to the teleological form of a narrative. The reason for this, as the following passage will indicate, was his all-consuming interest in each and every phenomenon that impinged upon his consciousness; notice how scientific purpose alternates with mere observation in the passage:

> . . . I returned and found part of my Men with a Pole of twenty feet in length boring the Snow to find the bottom; I told them while we had good Snow Shoes it was no matter to us whether the Snow was ten or one hundred feet deep. On looking into the hole they had bored, I was surprised to see the colour of the sides of a beautiful blue; the surface was of a very light colour, but as it descended the colour became more deep, and as the lowest point was of a blue, almost black. The altitude of this place above the level of the Ocean, by the point of boiling water is computed to be eleven thousand feet (Sir George Simpson). Many reflections came on my mind; a new world was in a manner before me, and my object was to be at the Pacific Ocean . . .[93]

Thompson's *Narrative* contains many such medleys in which a scientific purpose coexists with an almost child-like urge simply to record the phenomena of the external world. It is in his capacity for wonder that Thompson more than any other explorer resembles the *Tish* poets— Tallman's "wonder merchants." Another explorer whose work echoes forward, but in a very different way, to recent poetry of the hinterland orientation is the Alexander Henry of *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories* (1809). Henry's frequent recourse to gamblers' terminology—"The die appeared to be cast,"[94] he says, for in-

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[93]Excerpt entitled "A Night in the Mountains" in *The Colonial Century: English-Canadian Writing Before Confederation*, ed., and with an Introduction, by A.J.M. Smith (Toronto: Gage, 1973), I, 119.

[94]*Travels and Adventures in Canadian and the Indian Territories . . .* (New York: I. Riley, 1809), p. 82.

stance, during the massacre at Fort Michilimacinac—reveals an adventuresome reliance on chance, fate, and vicissitude which many later proponents of the hinterland orientation might envy as they shuffle their Tarot cards, concoct poems in praise of randomness, and concern themselves with the baffling labyrinths of civilized life. Neither Henry nor Thompson was a poet, but their works can be seen, then, to reveal attitudes which bear a family resemblance to the ideas of recent Canadian poets of the hinterland stance. Thompson especially is remarkable for his openness, not merely to the multifarious phenomena of the external world, but—as even the published portions of his *Narrative* amply attest—to the Amerindian myths of the Northwest which have become a staple of hinterland poetry, particularly in the form of the Trickster figure, Coyote.

It was perhaps inevitable, given the penchant of the hinterland orientation for the unpredictable and the native, that Coyote would become an ubiquitous deity in hinterland poetry. In view of Coyote's association with the magical, the erotic, and the (apparently) anarchic, it is equally predictable that, from the baseland point-of-view, he appears primarily as a malevolent and destructive presence. Since the poet of the baseland stance, though he may not reject entirely the Amerindian materials which the hinterland poet quarries with an almost archaeological dedication,[95] consistently places his primary emphasis on European religion and mythology, the presiding deity of his verse is Mnemosyne, the mother of the traditional muses and herself the embodiment of memory. As well as encouraging his selection of traditional forms and genres such as the sonnet and the pastoral elegy which come trailing clouds of glory from the mind of Europe, the desire of the baseland poet to remember forward into his Canadian environment the achievements of the European tradition leads him to affirm, sometimes with a neo-classical de-emphasis of originality which, of course, runs counter to the hinterland poet's romantic espousal of both individualism and the *avant-garde*, the validity and creativity of stylistic imitation and of remodelling models. The "perfect poet" says Lampman in his essay on "Poetic Interpretation" would treat every subject with "the best truth of the special [English] poet who has handled it best."[96] The desire to continue rather than to supplant, to husband rather than to transgress,

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[95]See D.G. Jones, "Al Purdy's Contemporary Pastoral," *Canadian Poetry*, 10 (Spring/Summer, 1982), 32-43.

[96]*Archibald Lampman: Selected Prose*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Barrie Davies (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1975), p. 91.

the European tradition will not predispose the baseland poet to sojourn on the shores of Great Bear Lake or to study the Indian pictograms of Northern Ontario; rather it will lead him (or her, for Jay MacPherson's *Boatman* volume of 1957 is a fine example of this tendency) to dig for the ancient foundations upon which to construct a new edifice in such congenially ordered repositories of European myth and literature as Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. Nor will the neo-classicism of the baseland poet issue in deconstructive parodies of traditional modes but, on the contrary, in intentional and respectful allusions to such works as the *Odyssey, Lycidas,* and *The Waste Land*. Here is the concluding couplet of the "highly formal"[97] and very traditional "Invocation" in Wilfred Watson's *Friday's Child* (1955):

> O love, teach us to love you, that we may
> Through burning Carthage take our way.[98]

Almost baroque in their richness of allusion, these lines sound subtle echoes and significant variations on several central texts of European humanism. The mythopoeic reference to the burning city of Carthage embraces Virgil's *Aeneid*, Augustine's *Confessions*, and Eliot's *Waste Land*.[99] More subtle allusions are to Arnold's "Dover Beach" ("Ah, love, let us be true/To one another!"[100]) and to Milton's *Paradise Lost* ("They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,/Through *Eden* took their solitary way"[101]). As well as forming the very fabric of Watson's affirmation of human and communal love, these syntropically handled allusions in his "Invocation" to Aphrodite place that love in the context of the long Christian humanist tradition—which is to say, the *central* Canadian tradition. Watson's baseland orientation, it can safely be stated, would welcome the recognition of the allusive elegance and formal control of his poetry. By contrast, a poet of the hinterland stance might well be compelled by his assumptions to stress the absence in his work of intentional literary allusion and mythopoeic pattern. As Frank Davey writes of his *King of Swords* (1972): "This is a major insistence of the poem: that all its elements whether Arthurian, American, or personal

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[97]Stephen Scobie, "Love in the Burning City: The Poetry of Wilfred Watson," *Essays on Canadian Writing,* 18/19 (Summer/Fall, 1980), 283.

[98]"Invocation," *Friday's Child* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 7.

[99]See Scobie, "Love in the Burning City," pp. 283-284.

[100]*The Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold,* ed., and with an Introduction, by A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 162.

[101]*Paradise Lost,* XII, 648-649.

are happening on the day of the poem's writing. None of these elements to me were allusional, historical, or even archetypal—they were intrinsic to the phenomenological now."[102]

The baseland poet does not deny the value of time present or syncronic time, the continuously immediate and constantly changing "phenomenological now" of the hinterland poet, but his awareness of external structures and his search for larger significances disposes him to place a higher value on both *la durée historique* (the diachronic movement of human history and *la durée profonde* (the mystical time of revelation). What this means is that poetry written from the baseland stance will not only tend to be more gemmed with incandescent epiphanies, spots of time, noon annunciations, and points of intersection of the timeless with time than hinterland poetry but, as intimated earlier, will also lean more towards the kind of history which, in the words of Margaret Avison's "Voluptuaries and Others," has usually found its way "into public school textbooks"[103]—biographies of great men, reconstructions of heroic events, and the like. Thus Lampman's "Heat" and "Among the Timothy" find a consistent complement like different sides of the same coin, in his "Athenian Reverie" and "At the Long Sault: May, 1660" and, by the same token, Pratt's *Brébeuf* and *Dunkirk* a complement in his "Iron Door" and "Magic in Everything." In contrast, the hinterland poet (whom Pratt most resembles in *Newfoundland Verse*) will tend to emphasize either anecdotal history, what Newlove calls the "little histories"[104] of relatively unremarkable individuals in a specific geographical locale or, more ambitiously, totemic communion, the empathetic entry into the lives of earlier inhabitants of that locale which can be achieved through a physical contact with their artifacts or by an imaginative occupation of their space. Purdy's "Lament for the Dorsets" and Newlove's "The Pride" are well-known examples of the hinterland poet's sense of achieved communion with his aboriginal ancestors in Canadian space. Less well-known is Neil Munro's "Appreciation" in *Dr. W.H. Drummond's Complete Poems* (1926) which adumbrates the orientation of more recent hinterland poetry both in its disposition toward the "wild, free spaces of the unspoiled world" and in its conception of the wilderness and its inhabitants as part of a supraracial, collective unconscious: "it is the unfenced, uninhabited, the trackless areas our

[102]*The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 326.
[103]*Winter Sun* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 65.
[104]Quoted in A.F. Moritz, "The Man from Vaudeville, Sask.," *Books in Canada* 7 (January, 1978), p. 11.

subliminal memory recalls" writes Munro, "we have all come from the tribes, trailing no clouds of glory, but still with rags of zest in things adventurous . . .''[105]

In the same year as Munro's "Appreciation" of W.H. Drummond there appeared the collected *Poems* of a writer whose treatment of aboriginal and hinterland subject-matter would seem to place him in the continuity that leads from the early explorers to Purdy, Newlove, and beyond—Duncan Campbell Scott. The author of "The Height of Land" and "Powassan's Drum" was, indeed, one of the earlier poets to sense the fitness of free or loosened verse structures to the terrain and life of the hinterland.[106] As indicated by his depiction in "The Forsaken" (a poem based on an incident recounted by Hearne and an anecdote told to Scott himself)[107] of an Indian woman who baits a fish hook with her own flesh and later faces a lonely death with stoical equinamity, he admired such hinterland qualities as ingenuity and self-reliance.[108] Yet Scott's allegiance was divided between the hinterland and the baseland, with his underlying and final orientation being towards the baseland. In "The Height of Land" (1916) he turns his back on the "The crowded southern land/With all the welter of the lives of men" and faces towards "The lonely north . . . the cold arctic light"[109] but then proceeds, with the ambivalence that might be expected of a poet who stands at the "watershed" between baseland and hinterland, to interrogate the cosmic in terms of the ethical, to seek either denial or confirmation of man's permanence on planet earth and his progress in matters spiritual. In his dual role as Victorian poet and civil servant (in what would now be called the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs) he both lamented and prophesied the diminution of Indian culture, the final assimilation of the hinterland to the baseland.[110] In the final analysis, the hinterland stoicism of "The Forsaken" and the cosmic doubts of "The Height of Land" are contained within the larger structure

[105]*Dr. W. H. Drummond's Complete Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1926), pp. v-vi.

[106]See "A Stretching Landscape," pp. 8-11.

[107]See Susan Beckmann, "A Note on Duncan Campbell Scott's 'The Forsaken'," *Humanities Association Review*, 25 (Winter, 1974), 32-37.

[108]See E.K. Brown, "Memoir," *Selected Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1951), p. xii for the formative influence on the poet of Emerson's essay "On Self Reliance."

[109]*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1926), pp. 46-47.

[110]See *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1931).

of Scott's *Poems* (1926), a *livre composé*[111] like his mentor's *Among the Millet, Lyrics of Earth* and *Alcyone*. His final image of nature as a *Green Cloister* (1935) and of writing as a *Circle of Affection* (1947) are those of a baseland poet who, like A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, certainly saw the spiritual succour to be gained from the North but just as certainly embraced it with the assumptions of the baseland. This may explain why Duncan Campbell Scott, despite his hinterland sympathies, has largely failed to capture the imaginations of more recent Canadian poets of the hinterland stance.[112] In fact, the Confederation poets who have most presence in post-War poetry of the hinterland orientations are Carman and Lampman, both of whom *can* be construed as models of rebellion, the former in his vagabond stance and the latter in his mythical form as the primitive iconoclast of the Gatineau hills and the socialist outcast of Ottawa society.

As the human presences in the work of Lampman and Klein, Roberts and Layton, indicate, the baseland world is inhabited by the settled middle and working classes—businessmen, civil servants, farmers, craftsmen and the like—who, the baseland poet would like to think, move freely among the intercommunicating compartments of the baseland, its streets and fields, its buildings and sections, without the need fully and finally to escape. The debt of Roberts' sonnet on "The Sower," the taciturn rustic who treads the anglican soil of the "glebe" in "silent forethoughts,"[113] to Millet's painting of the same name shows the debt of the Confederation poets to the Romantic discovery of the peasantry. Klein's so-called radical poems, most notably the "Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger," show an interest in social milieu and social injustice that derives from the early, urban Eliot and the intense, political awareness of the 'thirties. The concern of the baseland poets for the inhabitants of his world, though constant, has thus taken different forms at different times and in different places. The genteel and agrarian socialism of Lampman and the aggressive and markedly ungenteel fumings of Layton are further cases in point, as, indeed, are the poems about social injustices and social abuses by F.R. Scott, Alden Nowlan, A.G. Bailey, Wilfred Watson and others. If the baseland concern for society and its

[111]See Raymond Knister, "Duncan Campbell Scott," in *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism*, ed., and with an Introduction by S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1974), pp. 66-71.
[112]Though see the playful allusion to "At Gull Lake: August 1810" in Purdy's "Soliloquy," *Pressed on Sand* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1955), p. 6.
[113]*Selected Poetry and Critical Prose*, ed., and with an Introduction, by W.J. Keith (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 57.

members has become progressively more radical and shrill down the years, it is because the baseland poet remains engaged with the problems of a post-industrial culture which in the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth, seems ever more in need of the diagnostic and curative skills of its sensitive physicians. That the baseland poet can be described as a physician, a committed healer, provides in itself evidence of his stubborn refusal of the hinterland option of turning his back on a society which has often seemed callously indifferent to his ideals and warnings.

It is to be observed that Lampman, though he frequently despaired of the writer's power to effect social change for the better, envisaged the poet as an entrenched worker—a Georgian reaper of sorts ("The Poet's Possession"), a child-like tailor (*Hans Fingerhut's Frog Lesson*), a charitable cobbler *(The Fairy Fountain)*—whose journeys are circular excursions out into the country and back into the city. Unlike Finch, Lampman did not write "Many . . . poems [which] are presentations of scenes looked at from the "human or humane *locus* [of] the window,"[114] but no less for him than for Finch or for any baseland poet, a human or humane society whose hub is the familial house, constitutes the basis and reason for his temporary rambles beyond the city limits and for his symbolic re-enactment in poems such as "Among the Timothy" of individually and, hence (for this is his hope), socially renovating moments of insight into the organic order of all things. In their darker moments the poets of the baseland stance may view their task as sisyphean and, like the "Valley-Folk" of Cogswell's sonnet, look longingly beyond ". . . the patterned fields that [they] enclose . . . To wider regions where the river goes."[115] In their comfortable moments, however, they can look with what from the hinterland stance must seem like a mindless complacency on their enclosed world: "Here in my narrow valley/I shall sit at ease," writes Cogswell in "Acceptance," "Knowing all roads escaping/Turn backwards on themselves."[116] It is against such an acceptance of fixity that Newlove argues when he enjoins his readers to "Ride off any horizon/and let the measure fall/where it may."[117] The topographic *and* aesthetic nature of Newlove's advice, as, in metaphorical fact, of Tallman's comment that it was the self-contained and

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[114]Munro Beattie, "Poetry, 1920-1935," p. 739.
[115]*A Long Apprenticeship: Collected Poems* (Fredericton: Fiddlehead, 1980), p. 5.
[116]*A Long Apprenticeship*, p. 201; also quoted by Carrie MacMillan.
[117]*The Fat Man: Selected Poems*, 1962-1972 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 41.

self-containing sentence that [Olson] helped tip over *like an old fence that in falling released a stampede of possibilities,*"[118] will be evident to anyone who has followed the discussion this far.

It is permissible to envisage the horizon to which Newlove refers as that which exists at the outer limits of the domestic circle of house, farm, village, and, ultimately, city whose civilizing expansion Goldsmith chronicles in *The Rising Village* (1825). Whereas the baseland poet is largely content with the privilege of the limits circumscribed by the domestic circle, the poet of the hinterland orientation wishes to possess a view or a vision that is unobscured by conventional horizons. Seeing Raymond Souster (who, not fortuitously, was also admired by Sutherland) as a poet of the hinterland orientation, Tallman describes him as being inhabited by a "Siberia . . . a region where speech falters toward silence because vision falters as his northern eye lifts towards endpoints where the vistas go bleak. He has the habit of ending his poems with limping phrases and lines as though appalled by the space that extends beyond the outposts his vision reaches."[119] Tallman ends his well-known *apologia* for the *Tish* poets with a sympathetically amused Souster and a warmly smiling Avison, perhaps in the latter's case because her quarrel with renaissance perspective, with the optical minification that became conventional through the use of a vanishing point ("*punkt*") to order pictorial space, amounts to an argument against the baseland way of seeing which, in the estimation of the hinterland poet, "cripples space"[120] and diminishes its haptic impact. Indeed, Avison's focus in "Perspective" on the relation between background ("plain," "horizon," "sky") and foreground (the percipients) to the virtual exclusion of the middleground provides an intriguing insight into the way of seeing that is proper to a non-picturesque response to Canada's hinterland terrains, terrains which, particularly when uninhabited, seem to pull the eye either towards the extreme background of mountain and prairie or towards the immediate forefront of plant and percipient. A more consistent victim than the middleground of the hinterland rebellion against closed perspectives and spaces, however, can be easily predicted from the assumptions of both baseland and hinterland orientations: it is the house itself, especially the enclosing and framing aspect of its windows and doors. George Bowering speaks enthusiastically of poems

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[118]"Wonder Merchants," p. 33; italics added.
[119]"Wonder Merchants," pp. 49–50.
[120]*Poetry of Mid-Century, 1940/1960*, ed. Milton Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), p. 87.

that do not seem "to be peering thru a crenel at the passing show." Roy Kiyooka speaks of his own work as "a musical score for a small ensemble, a window, a skylight and an open door." "Keep the door open/kitchen cool" says bp Nichol in the introduction to *Martyrology, III*.[121] "We took the storm windows/off/the south side of the house"[122] says Robert Kroetsch at the beginning of *Seed Catalogue*. Nichol "used to be a cross-country runner"[123] notes Michael Ondaatje; bill bissett is a "houseless"[124] poet notes Tallman. Such rejections of enclosure and affirmations of openness could be multiplied many times over from the recent poetry of the hinterland orientation. The exigencies of survival in a cold country may force the hinterland poet behind closed doors and safe windows for part of the year but they cannot circumscribe his desire, in the words of Alan Creighton's *Cross-Country* (1939), to "face the green-varied landscape/Of a new horizon" and to bid "farewell to house movements,/To towels and tea-cups/And manufactured goods."[125]

Prior to the Second World War the poet who was impatient with the conventional round of movement within the domestic circle and itched for the adventurous journey beyond the known horizon could take a variety of routes, all of them, like Creighton's in *Cross-Country*, more-or-less anti-bourgeois in their rejection of the settled, moderate life of conformity: for instance, he could, like Carman, celebrate the hedonistic pleasures of *vagabondia* in semi-primitive ballad rhythms; he could, like MacDonald, champion the democratic vistas of the west in the Whitman long line; or he could, like the Smith of "An Old Proud King in a Parable," contemplate "breaking bound of . . . counties green"[126] by adopting an anti-materialistic mask of selflessness and retreating into the austerities of the Northland. All these strategies partake of the hinterland continuity of Canadian poetry and, in so doing, adumbrate the success of post-War poets of the hinterland stance in mythologizing themselves as people on the move—itinerant workers, cross-country travellers, globe-trotting internationalists, citizens of one in Amerindia—who are openly journeying towards unexplored horizons. Of all the poets who since the Second World War have given all

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[121]The three poets are quoted by Ondaatje in the "Introduction" to *The Long Poem Anthology*, pp. 11, 13, and 16.
[122]*The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 21. South, of course, is a symbolic direction here.
[123]*The Long Poem Anthology*, p. 16.
[124]"Wonder Merchants," p. 55.
[125]"Cross-Country" and "Jungle Message," in *Cross-Country* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), pp. 3 and 23.
[126]*Poems New and Collected*, p. 12.

or part of their allegiance to the hinterland ethos, it is Al Purdy, or, more correctly, the Purdy *persona*, who has in the last two decades most typefied for the popular imagination the kinetic, hinterland stance in Canadian poetry.

No daring interpolations are required to trace a line of descent from the early explorers, through Carman the vagabond, to Purdy. *The Enchanted Echo* (1944), Purdy's first and worst volume, owes a clear debt to the poet of vagabondia ("Cousins of the gypsy clan,/Troubadors of ragged Pan,/Outlaws since the world began,/I am waiting for you"[127] concludes the "Summons to Vagabonds"), and Carman, in turn, expressed a strong admiration for the expeditions of David Thompson into the "Untrailed, unmapped, unguessed"[128] regions of the Northwest. The Purdy who characterized himself first as a "weed"[129] in *The Enchanted Echo* and then as a "tramp"[130] in Pressed on Sand (1955), and who aligned himself early with the peripathetic or primitive attitudes of such figures as the mariner, the nomad, the traveller, and the atavist, had by the mid-sixties—after the publication of *Poems for All the Annettes* (1962) and *The Cariboo Horses* (1965)—successfully mythologised himself as an itinerant and rebellious worker. The May, 1965 edition of *Time* (Canadian edition, of course) carried a description of the Purdy *persona* which the dust jackets of many subsequent volumes of hinterland-oriented poetry have rendered dismayingly stereotypical. The *Time* article begins, as might almost be expected, with a quotation from "Transient," a poem which, in addition to the journey motif, uses many of the technical devics (such as the placement of present participles near the beginnings and ends of lines to suggest the movement of the speaker or his subjects) which have become the mannerisms of Purdy in his hinterland stance. "For years," the article says, Purdy "rode the rails as a hobo. Later, scribbling poetry on scraps of paper [it might have said 'improvising'], he took whatever jobs he could get—on construction gangs and what farms, in shoe and mattress factories, as a taxi driver, storekeeper and peddlar of science-fiction magazines. An RCAF airman during the war, Purdy was busted from NCO rank because 'I didn't like other people telling me what to do.' "[131] After this laconic

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[127]*The Enchanted Echo* (Vancouver: Clarke and Stuart, 1944), p. 16.
[128]"David Thompson," *The Poems*, p. 149.
[129]"Self-Portrait," *The Enchanted Echo*, [p. 4].
[130]"Meander," *Pressed on Sand*, pp. 11-12. See George Bowering, *Al Purdy* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970) for a discussion of the emergence and character of Purdy's "voice."
[131]The anonymous article is reprinted in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, pp. 243-244.

statement of the truculent individualism of the hinterland stance, the orientation of the sensitive weed who will go to the Arctic "where a man might have some/of what beauty/is and none deny him/for miles," the article continues with a revelation as bathetically deconstructive of the Purdy *persona*, of the *myth* of the hinterland poet, as the knowledge that Thoreau was sustained by his mother's scratch cakes is of the fiction of Walden Pond. "In 1941," it states, "he married quiet-spoken, 17-year-old Eurithe Parkhurst. She devotedly insists that the only thing she knows about poets is that 'they're no different from other people.' Yet only now is Eurithe completing her last year of high school, largely because she has been working to help Al write ever since they were married." Perhaps in these days of Canada Council Grants and Writer-in-Residence posts, the hinterland stance, with its celebrations of transient life and its songs of impermanent husbands, can only be fully and consistently sustained as a fiction in the mind of poet and reader. Equally to the present point, however, is the fact that Purdy's poetry, despite its habitual colloquialism and iconoclasm, is frequently and unabashedly rich in respectful allusions to the classics of the European tradition. One of the most widely read and eclectically learned of Canadian poets, Purdy strikes the stance of the hinterland transient atop a substratum of baseland culture; in so doing he locates himself, in time, as a transitional figure between modern and post-modern Canadian poetry and, in space, as a figure who traverses the boundaries between hinterland and baseland.

Although Purdy, like Newlove, Layton, and Milton Acorn is viewed by Tallman as a "stalled"[132] poet, as a man who is no longer driving and writing himself forward along the unfolding road which Creeley likens to the process poem, his impure but attractive version of the hinterland stance has proved seminal and inspirational to several recent poets of the west. "In abandoning given verse forms for the colloquial, the prosaic, telling yarns in the oral tradition," Kroetsch has said, "Purdy was central"[133] to the so-called Prairie renaissance. One of the finer western poets to be inspired by Purdy is Sid Marty, whose *Headwaters* volume of 1973 is dedicated, by the practical ambiguity of the hinterland stance, "To Al Purdy . . . and the Canada Council." After the opening poem in *Headwaters*, a piece entitled "Dawn. Jinglin Poems" which establishes the *persona* of the poet as a siwash in the Maligne river region, the medium of the volume as unpunctuated and open free verse,

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[132]"Wonder Merchants," p. 57.
[133]"Uncovering Our Dream World," p. 28.

and the diction of its speakers as a clipped and vernacular colloquialism, there comes "Siwashing *for Al Purdy*," where the hinterland orientation of the volume is made quite explicit: "born fifty years too late," says the siwash-poet, he "Will not get used to/dying on a cushioned seat/rolling down [his] grey tomorrows."[134] "To live your own story/is no lie," Marty says later in the poem, "it feels like a saga/so it is." It is so, of course, because the anarchic individualism of the hinterland orientation allows impression to become reality through the authenticating feeling of the poet. The poem concludes with an affirmation of the self-sufficiency of the siwash and the omniverousness of his art:

> When the old men all are gone
> you must teach it to yourself
> and siwashing
> that all consuming art
> was good enough
> for me

The incompleteness of the unfiltered quotation from the popular Kris-tofferson-Foster song of the open road with which "siwashing" con-cludes serves to emphasize the open-endedness of Marty's discourse, the enormous silence that surrounded it, and, in its omission of any reference to a travelling companion (the song's title is "Me and Bobby McGee"), the aloneness and individualism of the siwash. Since local mythology, anecdotal history, and regional biology are the staples of hinterland poetry, *Headwaters* does not fail to provide various poems on trickster figures, mad mountaineers, bears, toads, and foxes. At the non-closural conclusion of the volume comes "Invitation and Cove-nant" which solicits the reader to abandon the "ordering geometry" of his cabin, to "Forget stories/Forget geometry," and marvellously opens the door for the egress of the housebound into the unknown with an unclosed parenthesis: "*You are alone (it is beginning to snow*"

To an extent Marty's *Headwaters* is representative of a hinterland genre of slim volumes in recent Canadian poetry—volumes such as Kevin Roberts' *Deep Line* (1978) and Anne Corkett's *Between Seasons* (1981) which, in common with works by Robin Blaser, bp Nichol, Robert Kroetsch, Patrick Lane and many others, manipulate certain common characteristics, most notably the assertion of openness in form and landscape and the endorsement of journey and individualism. The volumes of Roberts and Corkett, for instance, begin and end respectively

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[134]*Headwaters* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), pp. 10-11.

with poems entitled "Journey" and "The Circuit Ricer's Story" and both contain poems stressing openness: "Into the Open" in *Between Seasons* and "Waiting for the Season/To Open" in *Deep Line*. While Frank Davey and others have argued that Olson's poetics, and with them, the *Tish* movement, "cannot be understood as prescriptive,"[135] it would appear that the "great lesson of individualism and disresemblances"[136] taught by mid-century Modernism has yielded its own far from inimitable conventions.

A further case in point would seem to be provided by Montreal's Véchicule poets, the vociferous anglophone *cénacle* which likes to think of itself as an eastern successor to *Tish* (though, needless to say, radically different from the Vancouver school). As Louis Dudek perceives in the Véhicule group's semi-demotic pamphlet *A Real Good Goosin': Talking Poetics*, its members share some all-too-common aesthetic assumptions. "I now see your poetry . . . clearly," says Dudek to the Véhicule poets,

> The word for everything . . . is openness. Your poetry, your attitude to life, your feeling for each other . . . is open, free, welcoming all possibilities. (In this, like Frank Davey's Preface in the general guide *From There to Here*). In the poem especially, this is an aesthetic that needs to be understood. You do not want the poem contained in a structure . . . I believe something similar is happening in Toronto and Vancouver, and perhaps elsewhere, with a local difference wherever poets breathe a different air.[137]

In their discussions with Dudek, each member of the Véhicule group expresses his or her preference for openness and defiance of formalism differently but clearly: Tom Konyves stresses the influence on the group of " 'free-form' visual and plastic art" and of the techniques of "collage, mixed-media, dissonance, minimalism . . .;" Claudia Lapp emphasizes that form is not as "important as our aspiration to evolve, to keep moving" and "the form of poem of Videotape or performance or Song;" John McAuley describes himself as a 'churner,' a word that he associates with the Surrealists and with "unpredictability;" Endre Farkas aligns himself with the "messy" poets, a term which he takes to refer to the group's "use of the open form;" and Stephen Morrissey grudgingly admits that "Divisions," a "poem . . . written in a three day pe-

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[135]"Introduction," p. 21.

[136]"Wonder Merchants," p. 28.

[137]This and subsequent quotations in the paragraph are taken from the undated and unpaginated pamphlet *A Real Good Goosin': Talking Poetics: Louis Dudek & the Vehicule Poets* (Montreal: Maker Press). The pamphlet consists of interviews conducted between January 9, 1979 and April 15, 1980.

riod . . . [that] required very little editing," closely resembles "Olson's projective verse." Not surprisingly, the Véhicule poets reject dualism, deductive reasoning, order, permanence, Northrop Frye and "old Friar Eliot"—which is to say, the assumptions and orientation of the poetry of the baseland stance.

Only marginally less surprising than these preferences and repudiations is the assertion of the Véhicule group's most eloquent and academic spokesman, Ken Norris, in one of his *January Sonnets*, that

> If we could live inside a poem
> it would not be a sonnet;
> I'd prefer a dwelling
> with a little more head room . . .[138]

No doubt the juxtaposition of iambic and colloquial rhythms, solemn archaism ("dwelling") and punning colloquialism ("head"), in these somewhat banal lines is part of their theoretical message, their hinterland-oriented rejection of cramped and conventional forms and ideas. The conclusion of Norris' sonnet against sonnets has more interesting and, perhaps, original formalistic implications:

> If we could live inside a poem
> we'd live inside an ode;
> I'd sing of open spaces
> and you'd laugh while cutting onions.

The resistance to stock response which is implied by the last line of this passage is concomitant with the tendency of the hinterland poet to reject short, self-contained lyric structures in favour of longer and looser forms such as the serial poem, the haiku sequence or, in this instance, the ode. As Stephen Morrissey, probably remembering Michael Ondaatje's "Introduction" to *The Long Poem Anthology* (1978), puts it: "there is a spaciousness to long poems that seems almost a part of this country . . . [its] open spaces, the fact that the land is uninhabited in many areas . . ."[139] Although there are poems with such titles as "Ode to Radio" (Farkas), "qu'ode" (Artie Gold), and "Ode to Possibilities" (Norris) in the most recent anthology of *The Véhicule Poets* (1979), it remains to be seen whether poets of the hinterland orientation will be able to capitalize syntropically on Norris' association of the ode with open spaces. What does seem certain is that of the various types of

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[138]*The Vehicle Poets*, with an Introduction by A. Gold (Montreal: Maker, n.d.), p. 82.
[139]*A Real Good Goosin'*.

ode only the irregular or the loose, Pindaric ode can be ecologically suitable to the hinterland terrain and orientation, a fact of which McAuley seems to be aware when in "Shelley," the poem which—dare it be said—opens his section of *The Véhicule Poets* anthology, he observes that the Romantic poet "rules the margin of the Westwind" and implies that the neo-romantic or post-modern push beyond cramped postures and fixed forms, beyond previously drawn margins and boundaries, requires "straightening legs/& flexible feet."[140] If confirmation were required of the ecological affinity between the irregular ode and the hinterland terrain it could be found in *The Spectator* for September 6, 1712 where Addison, after describing the "makers of parterres and flower gardens" as "epigrammatists and sonneteers," observes that his own "compositions in gardening are altogether after the Pindaric manner, and run into the beautiful wildness of nature, without affecting the nicer elegancies of art."[141]

While the sonnet has been scorned and abused (but used nevertheless) by contemporary poets of the hinterland orientation, it has not gone without its defenders in recent years. Neither are these defenders, as might be feared, all fretless nuns and topiary gardeners. Milton Acorn, the self-proclaimed patriotic poet and Marxist-Leninist (a combination which, he insists, must not be taken as inconsistent), has published in the "Tirade by Way of Introduction" to his *Jackpine Sonnets* (1977) one of the most thoughtful commentaries on the sonnet in Canada, particularly on its political aspect. Acorn is true to his ideological roots in defining the sonnet as "a short poem with a dialectical argument"[142] and consistent with this definition and its assumptions in ignoring the Petrarchan sonnet in favour of the more argumentative and dialectical Shakespearean and Miltonic forms. Moreover, he is true to his Marxist-Leninist philosphy in tracing the history of the sonnet in Canada through practitioners who have had socialist leanings on one kind or another: Lampman, Klein, Kenneth Leslie, James Reaney and others—the formalistic implication of this continuity being that the design of the sonnet is in some sense a corollary for the socialist (or communist) order advocated by some of its major Canadian practitioners. This social-aes-

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[140]*The Vehicule Poets*, p. 52. Cf. Peter Van Toorn's "Ode" ("My snow-eyed country . . .") in *Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies*, pp. 1-2.

[141]I am grateful to Ian MacLaren for drawing my attention to this quotation in Nicholas Pevsner, "The Genesis of the Picturesque," *The Architectural Review* 96 (November, 1944), 142.

[142]*Jackpine Sonnets* (Toronto: Steel Rail, 1977), p. 16.

thetic implication becomes more apparent when Acorn, no doubt with the *Tish* poets and their successors in mind, condemns the practitioners of free verse in Canada as weak-kneed anarchists who have betrayed Canadian poetry (and baseland culture) by selling it out to a bogus freedom which can only assist the takeover of Canada by the Americans. Working from these political and formalistic assumptions, Acorn proceeds to give full credit for the invention of the irregular or jackpine sonnet to Robert Lowell, "a man heroic enough to boycott a White House reception to protest the Vietnam War."[143] Having thus associated the jackpine sonnet, through Lowell, with opposition to the American military-industrial complex, Acorn proceeds to describe his own experiments with the sonnet form in distinctly eco-poetic terms. "I have named [the irregular sonnet] after one of my favourite trees," he writes,—

> the Jackpine, which can grow in any earth in which you plant it, so long as it is not crowded: can be a puny but tough battle-scarred veteran clinging to an impossible cliffside, or a proud giant in a pasture. Unlike other conifers, *it grows at opportunity*, having no set form. Thus with its solid-looking needle foliage, it makes all sorts of evocative shapes.[144]

Acorn has shrewdly grasped the essential features of form in its ecological relation to landscape and stance in Canada; his jackpine sonnet retains the association with order which aligns it with socialism as opposed to anarchy, yet it is adaptable to both hinterland (the "impossible cliffside") and baseland (the "pasture"), while exhibiting, through all, an aggressive aspect—its "solid-looking needle foliage"—which suits Acorn's implied image of himself.

With Acorn's conception of the sonnet as an organically determined and transportable form that is equally at home, like his "puny" yet "battle-scarred" self, in the baseland and the hinterland, the polarities upon which this paper has been predicated achieve one of their many reconciliations within the work of an individual poet. Such moments of reconciliation or co-existence do not, it is hoped, reduce the provisional model explored here to a merely dictatorial polarization of data that is essentially monolithic or shapeless. The fact that—to borrow a gruesome image from Margaret Atwood—siamese twins are joined at the body does not mean either that their heads cannot look in different directions or that their dreams, if not their physical forms, cannot be conceived

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[143]*Jackpine Sonnets*, p. 17.
[144]*Jackpine Sonnets*, p. 17.

and analysed independently. Nevertheless the point needs to be clearly made that the taxonomy of baseland and hinterland should not be construed as a method of pigeonholing individual poets or particular groups of poets. It is intended, rather, as a means of isolating and discussing the orientations that are inherent in a given poet's stance(s) and work(s), orientations which may or may not operate consistently within and across the different phases of his creative career or, indeed, within and across his various volumes and poems. At the risk of turning the concluding paragraph of this essay into a circus side show a brief explanation is in order of the relation between the two sides of the colon in its title: "The Mower and the Boneless Acrobat: Notes on the Stances of Baseland and Hinterland in Canadian Poetry." The mower is the unseen figure, a representative of agricultural labour and a traditional embodiment of Time, who cuts the "circle clean and grey" around the "stump" to which the poet goes in his quest for regenerative insight at the beginning of Lampman's "Among the Timothy." The boneless acrobat, a figure who works within the loosened limits of his human form to achieve startlingly individualistic and evocative shapes, can be found in Tom MacInnes' poem of the western goldrush, "Lonesome Bar." These figures of the Canadian imagination stand in their contexts, it is suggested, for the components of an enriching dichotomy and dialectic that exists as surely in the Canadian psychic and poetic continuity as does the line which, in W.L. Morton's words, "marks off the frontier from the farmstead, the wilderness from the baseland, the hinterland from the metropolis."[145]

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[145]"The Relevance of Canadian History," in *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, ed., and with an Introduction, by Eli Mandel (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 52-53.