

**“Helping to Turn the Tide”:  
An Interview with  
Thomas H. Raddall**

*Diana Austin*

The following interview, recorded in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, on July 5, 1985, is the third in the series in which *SCL* talks to some of the people who have helped to shape contemporary Canadian literary and intellectual life.

Thomas H. Raddall was born in England in 1903 and came to Canada with his family in 1913. As a Halifax schoolboy, he won several prizes for his essays, but the need for money led him to jobs in wireless and in book-keeping before he decided, in 1938, to risk trying to earn a living from his writing.

Raddall's short stories were published both abroad and at home during the thirties and forties, winning him a solid international reputation and a Governor General's Award. As independent and versatile in his writing as in his life, Raddall soon turned his attention to the novel; in 1942 he published *His Majesty's Yankees*, which depicted Nova Scotia's colonial past in a startling new light. His strengths as a writer of historical fiction are undeniable, but he has also produced a contemporary novel, *The Nymph and the Lamp* (1953), which many critics deservedly consider one of the masterpieces of Canadian literature.

After a writing career which saw the publication of more than twenty books and garnered him numerous awards for both his fiction and his histories, Thomas Raddall chose to stop writing before his powers might decline with age. However, he retains an acute interest in the literature of the country which he wrote about boldly even before a nationalistic literature had developed. Although his writing has been neglected in recent years, at one time he won international praise for writing that was, unashamedly, set in Canada, and he was honoured at home, too, by being made a member of the Order of Canada.

DA: Perhaps we could begin, Mr. Raddall, by establishing the correct pronunciation of your name.

THR: Yes. Radio announcers and television people used to tell me that they found my name hard to pronounce, and I always said, "How do you pronounce r-a-d? —rad. How do you pronounce a-l-l? —all. Well, that's my name, Rad[d]all."

Now people tend to cut out one a or the other. They either call me "Rad'dle" or "R-dall'." A lot of people around here pronounce my name that way, but actually my name is Radd-all, slight emphasis on the first a.

DA: I would like to focus on the interrelationship of your work and the world you lived in. Let's start with the importance of human relationships. In your short stories and novels, you show love as having a redemptive power for both individuals and society.

I'll give a few examples of what I mean. In "The Courtship of Jupe M'Quayle," courting Cassie leads Jupe to a belated recognition of each individual's claim to dignity. In *Roger Sudden*, Roger's love for Mary redeems his character from the twin stains of opportunism and betrayal: in the final crisis, his fidelity to his lover restores him to fidelity to his country. In *The Nymph and the Lamp*, the love of Isabel and Carney saves them both—her from unattractive, unhappy spinsterhood, him from the darkness of isolation. In "Silk for Lennie," a boy's gift of love for his girl becomes the agent through which he saves the lives of his shipmates. Finally, in your last novel, *Hangman's Beach*, Cascamond and Ellen are "saved" by the love they share; he is redeemed from a lecherous, flippant self-centredness while she, like Isabel Jardine, undergoes a physical and mythopoeic transformation. On the broader level, this love between a French man and a British woman acts as a healing influence in the war-torn society that surrounds them, just as the love of the McNabs bridges the religious chasms in the society.

Now in all these examples, the vividly depicted physical passion seems to carry with it the spiritual quality of redemption. Is this an accurate description of the power of love shown in your works?

THR: The physical side is there, and it's silly to ignore it, but I never believed in overplaying it, any more than people in

ordinary life do. But there is a spiritual side to the love of a woman, too, and that is very important.

DA: This idea of the spiritual power of human love seems to fit in with a remark in your *Memoir* about your early loss of faith in orthodox religion. You comment that the suffering caused by the 1917 Halifax explosion, followed some months later by your father's death at the Front, led to "the first stirrings of a doubt that grew as the years went by. If there was an all-powerful and merciful God, why all the suffering I had witnessed . . . ?" You add that although you occasionally went to church as an adult, you did so, not from religious beliefs, but for the companionship you found there: "My unflinching interest and belief was in people. God remained invisible and aloof."

Is it fair to suggest, then, that, since human relationships take on a redemptive force in your work, in fact, people supplant God?

THR: Of course I didn't think of all these situations and people logically as you have set them forth. I was relying on my own imagination, but as far as religion went, I suppose I got a bit too much of it when I was younger. (My father and mother were devout Anglicans.) The difference between what we were taught and the reality of life and death as it came to my father impressed me even as a boy. What we had been taught was a lot of nonsense.

I think actually I inherited from my mother a feeling for people. My father was a practical soldier; she was a woman who went by intuition a good deal. I think I inherited that from her. But in any case, getting back to your main theme, the love of a woman is the most important thing in a man's life, no matter what adventures he may have or how life may buffet him about or whatever. It all comes back to the love of a woman.

DA: With that established, perhaps we can move from the importance of human relationships in your work to the loss of religious faith that seems to have increased your inherent feeling for people. Was your loss of faith based exclusively on personal grounds, or was it in any way influenced by or expressive of a general loss of faith by Canadian society following World War I?

THR: No, it was a personal thing, as far as I was concerned. The people around me, of course, were the Anglican community in Halifax. My own personal decision wasn't a sharp decision that I made at the time, but something that gradually came upon me. And when I got out at sea mingling with people, with men in actual life, seeing and hearing about their lives and so on, I met very few devout people.

I judged men by what they were and what they did, not by any religious conviction. I was concerned with people. I was interested in them from the time I was a boy, why they thought the things they did and why they did the things they did. And that persisted all my life. That has been my chief characteristic, I suppose, as a novelist and as a short story writer. Nearly all my short stories are based on actual people or on actual incidents. I never made anything out of whole cloth.

DA: That is another aspect of your work which I would like to ask you about. In your reliance on real life as the source of your art, did you feel free to shape reality to your own ends? Take, as an example in characterisation, one of your least attractive characters, Saxby Nolan in *Tidefall*. How are life and art interwoven in his extremely unsympathetic portrayal?

THR: I wrote him from a real person, and I described him just as I saw him. I never had a sneaking sympathy for him at all. I drowned him on the last page of the book, as you know, but in fact he's still living in Miami, very much the retired and respectable merchant or whatever. One of my friends called on him the winter before last.

DA: I see. I hope your friend didn't comment on the man's claim to fame in Canadian literature.

THR: [with a hearty chuckle] No.

DA: What about the interrelationship of life and art in the general shaping of your stories? For instance, you use irony in "Resurrection," capping off the description of the men's spiritual experience with a picture of the degrading scramble to retrieve their money just as they are about to be rescued. Did you add to the original incident your own view of society?

THR: I added my own view of society, of course, and I did use irony, but they actually did go back with their sore fingers and hands and climb up that rock to get the money, because they were going back to the world and they had to have money. They couldn't get along without it. So it enabled me to give at the end the cynical view, "What else is there?"

I still exchange Christmas cards with the skipper. He came up here with his wife, oh, four or five years ago, and stayed at White Point Lodge. We renewed our acquaintance.

DA: You have said that you drew upon real-life people and incidents for your work; did you ever, in similar fashion, try to weave prevailing social conditions into the fabric of your stories? Did you consciously mirror aspects of the society in which you lived?

THR: No, it was unconscious. As I've explained in my *Memoir*, I never plotted things deliberately; I had a general idea of the people involved and of the end I was going to bring about, but how I was to get from here to there I didn't know. I had to work it out as I went along. As I pointed out also, some writers plot everything from start to finish. They don't allow any of their characters to change or diminish or increase in any way. But life is not like that. I know where I'm going to be next Christmas, if I live that long, and I know with whom I will be. But what's going to happen to me and to them between now and Christmas, I don't know. I just had to work out my stories as you have to work out life. You just take it from day to day.

DA: So you were an adherent of the organic theory of creation, despite being circumscribed to some extent, particularly in your historical stories, by your reliance upon actual figures and events.

THR: Yes. I suppose this is the question that every author has to ask himself or herself: given these people and this place and this time and these circumstances, what might have happened? That was the question I always asked myself when I was beginning to write a story. I never plotted it out completely. I knew the end I was trying to bring about, but that's all. The rest was intuition.

I think it was Ambrose Bierce who said that in every man there is a lion, an ass, a pig, and a nightingale, and all the difference in character is due to the unequal proportion. I've found that in studying people, too. You might find a man who is practically all lion or all pig or all nightingale, perhaps, but everyone has some proportion of all those in him.

In the same way every person has certain male and female characteristics. Some people told me that I must have got a lot of my feeling for women from my wife. Actually, while my wife did help in the typing and that kind of thing, I never consulted her on any of the characters in my stories, and she never offered to help. I think it was probably the female part of myself that could absorb the idea of a woman and what she would do in certain circumstances. There again I think it was an inheritance from my mother.

DA: You have conveniently moved us into the next area I want to talk about, the portrayal of women in your novels and short stories. Your female characters are strong, determined, intelligent, physically passionate individuals. It comes as a surprise to discover that these remarkable women, of whom no modern feminist need be ashamed, were created by an author who in the *Memoir* is shown to be what is often called "a man's man," relishing the traditionally masculine activities of huntin', shootin', 'n' fishin'.

THR: It was a relief from desk work to get out in the woods, and I always enjoyed hunting and fishing, and exploring I enjoyed most. I never hunted or killed anything just for the fun of killing. I killed for the pot, and when that ceased to be necessary, I gave up hunting. But it wasn't just the hunting, the catching trout and that kind of thing. It was being in the woods, getting off the road and being in this green world that interested me and got me away from my sea outlook. I came to this part of the country, to this job in the woods, intending to stay not more than twelve months. I wanted to get back to the city.

At first I didn't dare step off the road without a guide, but then I realized that navigating in the woods was no different from navigating on the sea. If you had a map and a good compass and a good pair of legs, you could go anywhere anytime. Once I discovered that, the woods were mine. And then I found a vast relief from my labours at my

desk—just to get back in the woods as far as I possibly could.

And, of course, it was all grist to the mill. You have to retain your interest in humanity, and you meet all kinds in the woods: the Indians, the lumberjacks, the river drivers, all those people. You talked to them on their own ground and then incidentally you would pick up stories from actual life or the gist of a story. Quite often you would find the beginning of a story, and you'd have to fit it with a middle and an end, and sometimes all you would have would be the ends that you had to bring about. But you find these in actual life, and I found them wherever I went, as far as that goes, on the coast, in the fishing villages, on the river, and in the woods.

DA: So you enjoyed the activities of the Hemingway outdoorsman, but you didn't share the view of women that leads to his plastic dolls? After all, few of your female characters are beautiful in a conventional way, and you take care to stress that your women have brains as well as bodies. None of them seems to be like Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms*, a *Playboy* centrefold *cum* inflatable doll from a sex-aids shop.

THR: I was never greatly impressed with any of Hemingway's women, as a matter of fact, or with Hemingway, as far as that goes. He wrote in an interesting way, but I couldn't agree with his general viewpoint on life. I remember at an authors' convention in Toronto years ago, Professor Hardy from the University of Alberta (he used to write sexy novels about ancient Palestine and Greece) started a conversation about Hemingway, and I said, "The thing that impresses me most about him is that he wrote quite well, interestingly, anyway, until he became obsessed with the importance of being Ernest." That turned up in *Time* magazine about two months later, without any attribution to me, of course.

I read, and I re-read, Hemingway from time to time because of course he was one of the most important authors of my time, but I can see the great flaws in his whole attitude. Now there was a man who stalked just about everything that walked, swam, or flew—including women.

DA: You have already indicated that you think one explanation for your work's unusually strong female characterization may lie in your ability to write from the female part of your

own personality. I am very interested in exploring the origins of these women, so I would like to know if there might be any other elements involved. For instance, were you at all influenced by real-life role models, women you knew who were part of the post-World War I breaking down of social and sexual stereotypes?

THR: I don't think that I can elaborate any more than I have. In *The Nymph and the Lamp*, which of course to a very large extent was taken from my own life and experiences, Isabel was modelled on a real person (but not one on Sable Island). But as with all the characters, including Carney, who was based on a real man, I had to take away from the original character and add something more to create what I wanted. It was so to a considerable extent with Isabel, but not so much; she was a very real person.

DA: Part of the strength of your female characters lies in their freedom from convention. They don't seem to have the traditional attitude of shame about their own bodies or about the physical side of love; they feel free to initiate a relationship without the approval of parson, priest, or society. You have talked in your *Memoir* about society's obstacles to your own youthful sexuality, and you have announced your approval of today's freer sexual atmosphere for young people.

With these points in mind, I would like to ask if a contributing factor in your portrayal of women was your own reaction against your society's sexual restrictions, particularly its apparent ideal of female frigidity?

THR: I suppose it was a reaction against it, but I was always interested in unconventional women as far as that goes, and in unconventional people, because I was unconventional myself. I was a born rebel.

DA: Do you think that your portrayal of women had in it any element of trying to *change* the hampered feminine ideal of the time?

THR: Getting back to what I said before, I was always a rebel and I was a rebel against that among other things, against that attitude. But times have changed. People don't think the way they did. What was terribly obnoxious fifty years ago is taken in stride today. John Buchan remarked in one of his



addresses that it's when the author gets ahead of his time as far as sex and so on is concerned that he becomes obnoxious. As long as he's keeping pace with the thinking of his time, then his work is admissible.

DA: It might be thought that your portrayal of women is not just rebellious, but positively subversive. Whereas your men are sometimes shown rebelling against specific circumstances (as Neil Jamieson and Saxby Nolan rebel against their childhoods), the behaviour of your women is a kind of unconscious rejection of the fundamental rules of social intercourse, a rejection perhaps the more dangerous for being unconscious at the same time that it is inherent in their every action. Their portrayal, with its implicit questioning of social convention, might be called "revolutionary." What is your reaction to this suggestion?

THR: Oh, I don't like the word "revolutionary." They reflected my personal attitudes towards the conventions of my day, and even if I were to write *The Nymph and the Lamp* today, I don't think I would change it very much.

DA: Some of your women have, instead of a single passionate affair, a whole string of lovers. Yet there is no note of condemnation in the presentation of Lena Fitch in "The Mistress of CKU," and Georgie Belleisle, the prostitute in "The Badge of Guilt," is depicted as positively virtuous by comparison with Dolly Ternix and her bourgeois morality. However, your portrayal of Fanny in *The Governor's Lady* seems to strike a different note. Although the initial description of the harp strings quivering in her young flesh is sympathetic, the tone changes. Is she one of your few recognizably scarlet ladies?

THR: Oh yes. In her younger life, when she was just a small-town flirt, she was a much more attractive person. But then as I studied the life of Frances and the letters she wrote, I soon realized that she became much more blasé the longer she lived. Of course the important thing was her sojourn in London while John was still holding things down in America. She was thrown in with that fast crowd in London with Paul Wentworth, and when she finally got back to John she was a different woman altogether. That can be deduced from her own letters and what we know about her. I learned a lot more about her when I went to New Hampshire and found out what local legends there were about her.

DA: I did wonder if her different presentation might be because in *The Governor's Lady* you were more than usually circumscribed by real life. She and her husband are not your most appealing characters.

THR: Yes, in the same way John Wentworth himself was an admirable person in his work in New Hampshire. True, he went in for graft as all the governors did in that time—it was the accepted thing. But still, his main interest was in developing his own province and his own people in New Hampshire. And he was an admirable governor in many ways. But then the grind of life and the period of exile does something to him. When he gets back to Halifax, he's grabbing in the public purse right and left, and he becomes a much more hardened and less admirable creature.

DA: To close our discussion about your portrayal of women, I'd like to ask if the fact that you presented women as passionate individuals and depicted their unconventional relationships without condemnation ever got you into trouble with your publishers. You've said that one of the reasons Blackwood's rejected an early version of *The Wings of Night* was that it was "too sexy."

THR: Yes, that was one of the things they found wrong with it.

DA: You also mention in your *Memoir* that at a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada, you felt it necessary to explain that you had not chosen the cover for *The Nymph and the Lamp*, which was criticized by another Fellow for being too revealing.

THR: None of my books was ever banned by school committees in Alberta or that kind of thing, but you get crank letters, of course. I never replied to these things, I threw them in the wastebasket ordinarily, but one I did reply to. It was from a woman in what's called the Bible Belt in Ohio and around there. She was a schoolteacher and she'd ordered *The Nymph and the Lamp* to be removed from the school library because there was so much sex in it. She said she was surprised to read on the jacket that I was a married man with children, writing this obnoxious stuff.

My first impulse was to throw it in the wastebasket, but I replied. I told her that out of curiosity I had gone back

to the novel and counted the paragraphs that referred to sex, and that they all added up to—I forget now what it was—something like six or eight pages if you put them all together. I urged her to go back and read the other 330 pages because obviously she must have missed something. Oh yes, she ended her letter by saying that she would pray for me, that was it. And I said, “I too shall pray, not for you, madam, but for the children in your school.”

But ordinarily I never paid attention to those. I never had any real trouble, certainly not with publishers. In fact, talking with my publishers from time to time, they thought I ought to elaborate the sex, you know, that I didn't put in enough.

DA: Mr. Raddall, we have been looking at some of the ways in which your work might have been both a response to and an influence on social conditions in Canada in your time. Perhaps we could continue this exploration of your role as a writer both responding to and influencing your society by discussing how your career developed in relation to other aspects of the cultural atmosphere in which you lived and wrote.

To begin at the beginning, your *Memoir* says that you started your writing career with the short story form because that offered the opportunity to earn some much-needed money to supplement your meagre paycheck from the mill. You give details of the composition and publication of some of your early efforts, but there's no indication of how your early career might have been influenced by the intellectual climate around you. This was, after all, the heyday of the short story form: examples by masters of the genre were being avidly read by a large and eager public. Were you in any way influenced by the excitement that must have surrounded the form at the time?

THR: Oh, I was influenced as everybody is by the current short stories. For instance, I had always admired Kipling as far as his short stories went, but I never thought much of his imperialism. O'Henry was too tricky, too fond of those surprise endings, but, even so, when it is properly handled, as in “The Wedding Gift,” the surprise ending can be a marvellous thing. You tell a story that's a good story just as it goes, and then in one flash of light you show it in a new light altogether, and without resorting to tricks as O'Henry

did. It can be a very satisfying form. I didn't use it very much, but I studied O'Henry and Kipling.

DA: Were you also reading Callaghan, Hemingway, or Faulkner?

THR: Oh, yes, I read Hemingway; I didn't read much of Callaghan. I never thought much of him really, and I think less of him today because he's doing just what I vowed I would never do, go on writing long after you should have stopped.

I never thought much of Callaghan as an artist. He got into the *New Yorker* at a time when that type of story was very popular and turned himself into a kind of male Katherine Mansfield, writing little stories about a boy and a girl, no beginning and no end. That was very much in the venue of the *New Yorker* at that time.

DA: Did you ever send anything to the *New Yorker*, or did you feel that it wasn't your kind of magazine?

THR: No, it wasn't my kind of thing at all. No, I would rate Hugh McClellan a far better writer than Callaghan ever was or ever will be.

DA: Were you also reading Faulkner at the time?

THR: Yes.

DA: Did reading regional literature by other authors help to convince you to persevere in writing about your own little corner of the world?

THR: It was really personal, writing about the little corner that I knew. I used to read Faulkner, but I never admired his work particularly. Of course, he belongs to what I think the *Times Literary Supplement* called "the depraved South school," and I never cared much for the depraved South.

I remember, on one of my very few visits to my publishers in Toronto, one of my first visits, they said, "Aren't you afraid of running out of material down there in a little town on the Nova Scotia coast? Why don't you move up to Toronto where there are all kinds of people and where

there are all kinds of things going on?" And I said, "When I run out of material where I am, I'll let you know." But of course I never did. Plenty of material here!

DA: By the late 1930s your short stories were being published regularly in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and one had appeared in a prestigious American edition in the company of work by Faulkner, Hemingway, and Callaghan. Yet you seemed to feel the urge to move towards a longer form, for in 1938 you started a novel set in contemporary Nova Scotia. Even though this was rejected by your publishers, and even though your short stories were now beginning to pay well, with appearances in the *Saturday Evening Post*, you continued your move towards the novel form. In 1941 you began *His Majesty's Yankees*, choosing this time a historical theme.

Would you explain what you think influenced your movement from the short story to the novel, and in particular to the historical novel? You speak in your *Memoir* of the renaissance of the historical novel in North America beginning around 1933; I wonder if the intellectual and literary climate could have been exerting a subtle pressure on the direction of your development as a writer.

THR: It was really due to the persuasion of Kenneth Roberts and others who had seen my work in *Blackwood's*. As you know, amongst my Oldport stories was the story of the turn of the tide, when Perkins and his militiamen first fired upon their brother Americans. I did it in a short story for *Blackwood's*.

I had read Kenneth Roberts' books, but to me he was the typical American chauvinist. In dealing with the American Revolution and the War of 1812, all his Americans were brave, generous, and so on, whereas anybody on the British side was either a villain or an idiot. Then I was astonished to pick up *Oliver Wiswell* and find that he had jumped right around the other way, writing a story setting forth the Loyalist view with the same vehemence and the same one-sidedness. Anyway, I wrote him to congratulate him because I said I'd often thought I'd like to do a novel on that, on the Loyalists. And he wrote back one of his terse notes and said, "Why don't you do the same thing for the Nova Scotia Yankees? You've already written about them in *Blackwood's*."

Well, that was the germ of the idea, and then Theodore Roosevelt, who was a subscriber to *Blackwood's*, had been reading these stories. He read the short one which I called "At the Tide's Turn" and wrote to me in care of *Blackwood's*. He wanted my address first, but they would never give the address of any of their authors. The war was on and the letter was delayed in the mails, but I finally got it. He spoke about my stories in general, and then he mentioned in particular "At the Tide's Turn." He said, "Is this based on actual fact?" I wrote directly to him then, and said, "Yes, it is. I took a lot of it from the diary of a man named Simeon Perkins, one of the original New England settlers here, and it was an actual incident. And it was the first crack in the break between the other thirteen colonies and the Nova Scotians."

So then Roosevelt, who at that time was chairman of the board of Doubleday, came back and wanted me to write a history of Nova Scotia during the American Revolution, bringing all this in. At that time, of course, Nova Scotia included what is now New Brunswick and the Gaspé Peninsula. If the fourteenth colony had gone with the rest, there would have been a fourteenth American state right on the mouth of the St. Lawrence, with the only ice-free port. Canada wouldn't have existed, certainly not beyond the War of 1812, if that had come about previously. So all this had a very significant meaning in the history of North America, and I think I was the first one to bring that out.

Anyway, Doubleday talked this over with Tom Costain, who was a Canadian himself and who was also reading my stories in *Blackwood's*, and that's the way *His Majesty's Yankees* came to be written. It was really due to the persuasion of these men. I thought this was a terrible leap for me to make. I was making some kind of a living as a short story writer. I didn't know anything about writing history, which I rejected. Then it was Kenneth Roberts, really, who said, "Why don't you write a novel faithfully based on the facts?"—which was what I did.

And that's how I stepped into the novel. I found that my short story training had been very useful. When you start to write a novel, the first idea you have is, "Hurray! I've got room to sprawl." And you really haven't, because you lose your reader's interest when you start to sprawl. Writing the short story where you get a short and definite frame to fit all your story into, you had to make every phrase count if you were going to tell your story properly.

That taught you economy of words and the strength of words and expressions, to pick exactly the right word, what you wanted. So that when you came to write a novel, you wrote it on the same principles: everything in it counted. Nobody could skip five pages of that and not miss some important part of the story. Then when I got further and further into novels, I found your mind gets away from that short story frame and it becomes more difficult to write a good short story. So gradually I got more into novels and got away mostly from the short story. Now and again I would write one.

DA: Do you think that the encouragement you got from Americans—Roberts, Roosevelt, and Doubleday—to write the *Canadian* side of the American Revolution was a sign of the fact that by World War II the United States was beginning to recognize that Canada was not another state but a country with its own identity and its own past?

THR: Yes, I think so. It certainly was manifest in Roosevelt, who was the head of the biggest publishing company in the United States. I think that those stories in *Blackwood's*—the Oldport stories—had opened a lot of eyes to our history. Of course, that all comes down to the fact that when I went into the Archives in Halifax to tell them I was going to write a novel about the Nova Scotia Yankees, the Archivist said right away, "I'm not sure that I *want* to see a book written from that viewpoint." Then he realized how arrogant that sounded and corrected himself, but I could see that I wasn't going to get any particular help from him. I turned then to his assistants and they were delighted to see somebody coming in there who was going to take a fresh look at history—that's what the documents were there for. It was not a tomb of documents; they were there to be read and studied, and so I got a lot of encouragement from these young archivists. They were delighted to see somebody doing this.

DA: Your Oldport stories and *His Majesty's Yankees* must have been eye-openers for the British, too, since they show that Nova Scotia didn't stay British because of the inherent superiority of that system. The Nova Scotians' choice of sides hung by a hair, and the British navy's press-ganging and flogging nearly turned the balance in favour of the American rebels.

THR: *His Majesty's Yankees* was an eye-opener to a lot of people, but even so, it didn't sell an awful lot of copies. That first edition sold about ten thousand. I remember the editor of the *Family Herald and Evening Star*—a very popular Canadian newspaper, printed in Montreal—wanted to run one of my novels as a serial, and I suggested *His Majesty's Yankees*. He said, oh, no, he wouldn't run that, it was too subversive. And I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, it's anti-British." I answered, "Well, it's anti-British and it's also anti-American: I'm setting forth the viewpoint of the people who got squeezed between them." But he wouldn't publish it.

DA: You moved from the historical novel for a time in the 1950s. I realize that this was largely in response to the dictates of your own daemon, but was there also any element in it of feeling that the historical form no longer suited the times, any sense of a need to change your form to fit a new mood in society after the second world war?

THR: It was just for personal reasons. The historical novel was not falling off at that time, and in fact I went back to it again with *Hangman's Beach*. But I'd written three novels of the past, and I was now going to write three novels of my own time. And I did. I didn't want to become a stereotype.

Basically, of course, an author makes his own study of mankind and womankind, and people don't change very much really. People three hundred years ago reacting to a human problem would react pretty much as people would today. They wore different clothes and probably ate different food, they lived in different houses and spoke probably in a slightly different way, but otherwise they reacted as human beings; consequently, anyone who had any flair for writing about people, who had studied people and had some flair for historical research, could write either a historical novel or a modern novel. You're dealing with the human being, and that was my motive when I turned to the modern novel, or, at least, to novels of my own period anyway—I'm so ancient now that what I call a modern novel is historic!

Of course, there are two kinds of historical novel: one is the costume piece where the author concocts a story, and then does some boning up on costumes and whatnot and sort of drapes that around the story; the other one goes the other way: he studies the history of a place and the people



and so on, and lets the story evolve from what really happened and from what real people said and did. That's the way I preferred to work.

DA: Our discussion of a possible relationship between the general literary atmosphere in North America and England and your career as a writer has brought us to the idea of the turning of the tide both in Canadian history itself and in our contemporary perception of that history, so perhaps this is a good time to ask about some specifically Canadian cultural elements that might have played a role in your work.

I would like to begin by asking about the element of humour in your work, because Canadian literature has produced some very successful humorists. I know that you became familiar with Haliburton's writing while you were still a young boy, and I presume you had also read Leacock before starting your own career.

THR: Oh yes, I've read quite a lot of Leacock and enjoyed it.

DA: Did you feel that his work was specifically Canadian in tone?

THR: I thought it was specifically Canadian because he was talking about this little place Orillia and so on. Yes, I always thought of it as purely Canadian. He had a good market abroad, but he was writing about Canadians.

DA: As you say, Leacock was well-read abroad, and so was Haliburton. So, of course, were you. With this in mind and thinking about the humorous bent of a number of your short stories—"The Odour of Sanctity" is a good example—I wonder if you were in any way influenced by what might be seen as a successful Canadian tradition of humorous writing.

THR: No, I wasn't thinking consciously of Haliburton or anybody else. That story, as usual, was based on an actual incident. It tickled me just the way it happened, and then, of course, I elaborated it in my short story. I enjoyed writing it without thinking of any school of humour. I chuckled over the incident when I first heard of it, then I enjoyed writing about it, and I enjoy reading the story today.

DA: The humour of your short stories and novels is gentle; it isn't slapstick or farce. It provokes a chuckle or smile rather than a bellylaugh. (The revenge of Scabby Lou in "Tit for Tat" is a fine example of this kind of subtle humour.)

You say you weren't attempting to follow any tradition of Canadian humorous writing; were you trying to present a particular view of Canada, to show that the cold North, while not Faulkner's depraved South, was no region of dour faces, but a land of gentle laughter?

THR: No, that never entered into my writing at all. I was just taking life as it came in its various aspects, and this was one of them that appealed to me because I had a sense of humour myself. It pops out in various ways. My publishers, for instance, the people in Ontario who read my book on Halifax, were greatly taken with one or two of the expressions I put in there. The original plan of Halifax called for a parade ground, with an equestrian statue of George II, but that was done away with. I wrote in my book, "Halifax was spared the sight of George II mounted on anything so uncongenial as a horse."

When I entered into the Royal Society, they had to give me an introduction, and they spoke of the salty humour that comes out again and again. You don't look for that in ordinary history, but I thought it was time somebody did.

That was one of the things I liked about the Micmac Indians when I came to know them on this river. The average North American Indian had a very brutal sense of humour. If somebody fell down and broke his leg, they'd laugh, that was funny. But the Micmacs had wit, which was unusual in the North American Indian.

I got to know a band of Micmacs up the river, and I used to drop in at the village forge to talk to the men in there. I heard a number of stories about Scabby Lou, who eventually became an important character to me. One that delighted me as much as anything else was about the forge. The forge was dusty, and the windows were covered with the cobwebs of generations: the blacksmith never bothered to clean them off. On a hot summer day, the blacksmith had the best well in the village; it always had lots of good, cold, clean water. He used to put a bucket on a little stand in the forge and a mug. The people in the forge—the old retired sawyers and others sitting around

yearning, and anybody going by that way that wanted a drink—would use it.

Well, people coming out of the stark sunlight into the semi-darkness of the forge would make their way towards the bucket, and when they got almost up to it, they'd see old Scabby Lou sitting right alongside the bucket. So they'd reach for the mug and drink from the least obvious part of it. Old Lou watched this going on for quite a while. Finally a couple more fellows came bursting in, teamsters, and made their way to the bucket. Then they saw Lou and drank from the least obvious part of the mug. He piped up in that thin reedy voice which makes you wonder how they ever achieved a war-whoop, "That's right-a boys, drink by the handle. Good place, drink by the handle. Always drink by the handle, me."

That was typical of the Micmac Indian. They were witty, and old Lou was one of the wittiest of the lot. So that whole episode with the sawmill and the dynamite was typical of the Micmac wit. Lou didn't want to do anything destructive to get his revenge, but he brought about his end in a perfectly logical way that had to do with logs coming down the river.

DA: Yes, it was a nice cultural revenge, using the traditional Indian fishing ways to hit the white man in his pocket.

Did you sometimes use humour as a tool in characterization? I'm thinking specifically of the marvellously humorous depiction of Cascamond's preening male vanity in *Hangman's Beach*. Were you trying to soften the portrayal of his character by showing him in this ridiculous light?

THR: No, it wasn't a conscious attempt to lighten the character at all. That was the way I saw him.

DA: You were having a bit of fun at his expense while creating him?

THR: Oh, yes. That is one of the joys of creation: you can take a character and mould him—or her—with these various characteristics. But to get back to what I keep saying, a lot of it was just instinct; it crawled out of the back of my head without any conscious thought. This is the way I saw this man, and that's the way I put him down.

DA: Your instinctive use of humour and its expression of your own personality seems to demonstrate the Scholastic concept of connaturality, which Maritain sums up in "as a man is, so are his works."

THR: Well, I've always had a sense of humour.

DA: And you're willing to show it even when dealing with serious subjects, whether in your fiction or your non-fiction. Perhaps you would agree with the Athenian orator Gorgias, who is supposed to have said that "Humour is the only test of gravity, and gravity of humour."

THR: Humour is such an important part of life. We live in this vale of tears, but no matter how bad the situation looks, you can always find something to laugh at. That is of course what the troops found in the trenches; with death just around the corner, they found something to laugh at. A lot of the delightful expressions of the First World War particularly, like describing being dead as "pushing up the daisies," sprang up out of the macabre humour that they had, that they had to have. It was the only way to keep sane.

DA: Perhaps we could turn now from humour to another characteristic in your work that might have been influenced by Canadian conditions. *Money* is a frequent concern in your novels: most of them depict the frustration and indignities suffered by characters with inadequate finances and offer some variation on the "poor boy gets rich" motif.

You yourself had to scramble for a living from late youth, and as a young man with family responsibilities you took the risk of abandoning a poorly paid but fairly secure office job for a precarious existence as a writer. Is the concern with money in your novels a reflection of personal experience?

THR: I think it was personal. It was the result of my own experience with the need of money and my own observation of people, particularly during the Depression, who were living off the fat of the land at the same time that poverty was on every side and some people were working extremely hard for practically nothing. I was always impressed with that, and I suppose it crept into my work. But money is important: you can't live without it, you can't run a world

without it, and so if you're dealing with any aspect of life you've got to bring money into it somewhere.

As I said, I saw people working hard, including myself, for very miserable wages, and right alongside me in the factory, men who were making big incomes in what were generally hard times. I was very conscious of that contrast because I saw it constantly. I think if there had been a Communist cell here, at one time I would have joined it!

DA: That brings in one of the things I want to ask about the importance of money in your novels. I wonder if, in addition to personal factors, social and political factors played any role in the presentation of this concern. Many writers of your time, both here in North America and in England, were interested in social and political ideas. In the Maritimes there was hardship, but not a strong socialist political tradition to focus on it. Do you think that you were in any way giving voice to . . .

THR: Oh, no, I was never tempted to do that. I knew a United Church parson who came here during the second world war, and he was a strong socialist. Of course he went into what would now be called the NDP. In fact he ran as a provincial candidate here. He was quite a hiker, although he was a man then in his sixties. He found out that I took long walks every day, or as often as I could, so he called here. We used to talk, and we'd argue about socialism. I remember one day we started to walk on the road to Western Head, which is five miles from here. I used to walk out the inner road and then come back along the shore road, a round trip of ten miles. Well, this time we were arguing about socialism, and I said, "You expect to get a lot of support from the labour unions here, particularly the papermakers' union, but they all make big money. Those fellows not only have bank accounts, but they have brokers. Do you think that they would trust your people to run a bank?"

He replied, "Oh, nonsense, all this nonsense about running banks and so on. I could go in there, I'm an intelligent man, I've a college education, I could go in there and within a month acquire enough knowledge to run a bank and run it well."

And I said, "That's just the objection I have to your party. I just can't see you running it well." And I couldn't.

He was perfectly sincere, but the point is this was one of our first walks, and we got so absorbed in this argument that all of a sudden we were at the Western Head, looking down into the lagoon. I said, "Oh, gosh, we've come further than I thought. This is the point of no return so we might as well go on now and come back along the shore road." So he said, "What's the matter? Are you feeling tired?"

- DA: So you had interesting political discussions with your social hiking companion, but political concerns did not really play a part in your novels' presentation of the problems of too little money. In actual life, too, I believe, you deliberately avoided the world of politics, did you not?
- THR: Yes. The two old parties at various times tried to get me to run as a candidate or to enlist my support for their candidates, but I invariably refused. Even when the support was asked for a very good friend of mine who was running, still I refused.
- DA: I have one more question about the presentation of money in your works. As the opposite side of the "rags to riches" coin, you sometimes show old, established families gradually sliding downhill into impoverished gentility as the owners of new wealth and importance are rising. Was there any intention here to capture a sense of the historical cycle, to suggest that the vitality of Canadian society is in part dependent upon this mobility, this particular kind of re-distribution of wealth?
- THR: It's the old story of shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves, I suppose. In the case of the Larrabys in the Oldport stories, I set forth how the new generation was coming along. This is especially clear in the story where the new Collector of Customs comes in and more or less tells the Colonel that there's going to be no more smuggling—or else. And then in the affair about the Colonel's daughter, I brought in about the new generation that was arising and the Colonel's feeling that the world was about to end when types like this were getting on. This was when he was in what his daughter called his graveyard mood.

Yes, I did try to bring a sense of that in, and of course you see it going on every day.

DA: We have just been speaking about historical cycles, so perhaps this is a good point to move to a discussion of how Canadian history and your sense of that history influenced your work.

Canadians have not traditionally seen their history in terms of derring-do, and it hasn't been the custom to build national shrines in the form of popular songs and stories around figures from our past.

THR: No, it hasn't; unfortunately it hasn't.

DA: Perhaps this is a symptom of what some people see as a national diffidence, our unwillingness to believe that we could do anything of interest on the world stage. Given that this self-effacing quality is a strong thread in our history, did you have to deal with it in your work? Did you have trouble making figures from our past interesting?

THR: No. I never suffered from any idea that we were a mediocre people. I thought we were a superior people. I wrote mostly about Nova Scotia because that was my territory and these were my people, but it always seemed to me that the more I studied them, the more important they seemed. And they could compare with the people of any literature anywhere. I strove to set that forth: this is what happened and it was important and these people are important.

DA: Like Picasso, then, you showed that the artist does not have to seek, he finds. You did not have to invent interesting people and deeds in Canada's history because you saw them there when you studied the past. However, you did have to weave them into literature that could help your audience share your excitement.

When you were writing, were you consciously trying to remedy the lack of awareness about Canadian history?

THR: Yes. I could and did try to do that. For instance, I was writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, which had an enormous circulation in those days. I was writing "The Wedding Gift" (which has been one of the most popular of my short stories as far as anthologies go, and they've made a television play out of it and I don't know what all). Anyway, I was up against the problem that everyone has when he goes to write a story or an article or anything: how do I

begin? How do I set forth this picture? You can go into a lot of dull details setting the frame for it, and you lose your interest and your readers' interest right away. Finally, in desperation I wrote: "Nova Scotia in 1794, full stop. Winter full stop. Snow on the ground full stop." And then I went into my story. I thought for sure those editors in Philadelphia would cut that out, but they let it go. I was determined to make them see that I was talking about a particular place at a certain time of year, and Nova Scotia formed the first two words of my story.

In all of my stories I *made clear* that it was Nova Scotia I was talking about, that these were Nova Scotian people. I was determined to do this. When the *Post* finally, after two years, wanted me to change the stories so that they occurred in the United States, I could have gone on selling to them, doing what Callaghan did in his early stories, carefully setting them nowhere distinct so that readers could perceive them as American, but I didn't. I preferred to sell my stories elsewhere, even if for less money.

DA: Well, your sense of Canadian history and Canadian identity obviously played an important role in the content of your work. I wonder if it also influenced the form. You say in the *Memoir* that *Roger Sudden* was an allegory on one level, showing why the English succeeded in the New World and the French didn't. *Roger Sudden* makes clear that the key to the British success is their refusal to be closed in behind walls. In most of your novels you refuse to be closed in; you seem to prefer "open" as opposed to "closed" endings. You may bring the main action to a logical conclusion, but you leave many questions hanging in the air of that conclusion. You actually end *The Nymph and the Lamp* with explicit questions about Isabel's motives. Even in *The Governor's Lady*, where you were so closely circumscribed by your adherence to known facts, you chose to end the novel with a kind of beginning, John's triumphant return to Halifax to start his career as governor there, with the laughter of a girl in the crowd raising extragubernatorial possibilities.

Is *Roger Sudden* an aberration, or does your use of the open ending show another shaping of form by a symbolic element, in this case one that is meant to remind us that Canada is still a young and vigorous country, with its history still for the making?



THR: I didn't use deliberate symbolism. As you say, *Roger Sud-den* was almost an aberration. I had a dual purpose in writing that book, but not consciously in my other books.

As far as the open ending is concerned, nothing is permanent; there is no permanent ending in this life except death. But if you're dealing with people still living, then you can't go on forever. You've got to leave it open but to give an indication. For instance, I chose to end *The Governor's Lady* there because Johnny Wentworth was coming back to his former glory and importance after all his trials and tribulations. If I had carried it further, it would only have shown his degeneration into a selfish grafter, very much under the fingers of his ambitious wife. The girl's laughter was deliberate because he did have an affair with a mulatto later.

You leave it open to the imagination of your reader. In other words, you assume that your reader is intelligent. And life goes on. Death, as I say, is the only final thing, and by the deliberately open ending, you're true to life.

DA: Mr. Raddall, we've looked at some aspects of your work and career in relation to the particular cultural and historical conditions under which you were writing. Perhaps we could now change direction slightly and have you comment from the vantage point of your long career on the way conditions have gradually changed for the writer in Canada.

Your *Memoir* depicts in detail some of the practical problems faced by the Canadian writer of your day, particularly the twin difficulties of getting published and earning a decent living. Canadian opportunities were scarce; unashamedly Canadian material had to break into foreign markets; there was no Canada Council to encourage struggling young writers; and the tax department seemed to have a positively punitive approach to literature.

THR: Yes, if you wanted to make a living in Canada then as a writer, you had to have a market in the United States and, if possible, in Europe. No writer could depend on his Canadian earnings, and the trick was to get published in the United States and still insist on writing about Canadian people and Canadian scenes.

But they finally changed the income tax in 1949, and I had broken into the American market and into European markets by that time, so I wasn't dependent on Canadian sales. I never was. I was writing, you might say, for the world at large. I never had any idea that I could live on Canadian sales.

Yes, all those obstacles were gradually going away. There was recognition of me and people like W.O. Mitchell, people who had got into one of the leading American magazines, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which paid as much money as the *Saturday Evening Post*. Mitchell and I broke in about the same time, in altogether different fields. So the main obstacles were gone by that time.

DA: You say that changing times were bringing recognition to you and to others as Canadian writers, and certainly there is clear evidence of this in the literary awards you were garnering. However, I would be interested to learn if you feel the writer's position in Canadian society in general was also improving. Your invitation in 1968 to become Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia suggests a recognition of your services to society as well as to literature, but when in 1971 you received the Order of Canada, you were one of only two representatives of the arts so honoured, and your fellow artist made a telling comment on what this showed about respect for the arts in Canada.

Do you feel that there is appropriate respect for the writer in Canada? Is he valued as an asset to the community or is he shut out of all but exclusively literary circles?

THR: I don't think that there is the respect for writers in Canada that you find in, for instance, England or France, or even the United States.

No, there's not that respect, but they are held in higher esteem than they used to be. When I first started, a writer was considered a freak, and even in my own town people thought I was a pretty queer fellow. They thought I made my living in a very strange way, but they didn't hold it against me, that was the idea.

But I don't think it was the people that put me outside. Really, it was a case of putting myself outside in this way, which is true of any writer. You've got to mingle with humanity if you want to know what it thinks and how its heart

beats, but when you go to write a book, you have got to isolate yourself from people altogether. You've got to cut yourself off and simply live with the people who are in the book. You hardly know whether it's Christmas or Easter. So you're divided into two worlds, a watertight compartment on either side. You've got to mingle with humanity, but at the same time, when you're working, you've got to shut yourself off completely—from your family along with everybody else.

DA: Do you think that the lack of respect for the writer in Canada is symptomatic of that self-effacing Canadian identity we spoke of earlier, making Canadians hold the indigenous writer in lower esteem than writers in general?

THR: I think the sales would show that the Canadian public holds American writers particularly in greater esteem than Canadian writers, and, to another extent, British and other European writers. There's still that refusal to recognize that Canadian talent is as good as any anywhere.

Also, Canadians are not a reading people, as a whole.

DA: Do you have any explanation for why we are not a reading people? The problem is obviously tied in with what we have just been discussing, the position of the writer in Canadian society.

THR: I can't think of any good reason why it is so. I mean, you go to England and there's a bookshop in every little village, or a library, but until a few years ago you could count the bookshops, the real bookshops, in Canada on two pair of hands. There are a good many more bookshops now, just as there are a good many more publishers in Canada, which I think is a good thing on the whole, but even so, a town of this size hasn't got a bookshop in it. A few racks of paperbacks in a drug store and that's about it.

DA: Whatever the reasons for it, the climate of philistinism must be very frustrating for the writer in Canada. Did you ever find it so?

THR: I did to some extent. For instance, *The Nymph and the Lamp*, which turned out to be my most popular book, not only with the public but also with the critics, sold well everywhere but in Canada, simply because it wasn't plugged

enough. I berated Jack McClelland because they hadn't advertised the book more. (Of course, this is a continual war between authors and publishers.) Anyway, Jack took umbrage and produced facts to show that they had spent this and that on advertising. Well, they hadn't. McClelland and Stewart were notoriously niggardly when it came to advertising their authors' books.

Of course, nowadays you can't sell a book in Canada or anywhere without doing a tremendous amount of personal puffing. Gordon Sinclair had an author on one of those shows some years ago plugging his book as they frequently did in those days (they don't do it quite so much now, except for Berton: he's always plugging his own books), and Sinclair, typically, said, "Ya gotta hype ya book if ya want it ta sell; ya gotta hype it." I hadn't heard that word before, but I've heard it a lot since. That is the principle now. Farley Mowat carried it to a great, to an amusing, extent, but he sold his books. Apparently you can't sell books of any kind in Canada unless you do go round and "hype ya book."

I never could see myself doing that. The analogy of the organ-grinder and the monkey came to mind right away. I always had the philosophy that if your story was good enough, it would find sufficient readers. You might not make a fortune, but you'd find sufficient readers anyway, and I was justified in that belief. Nowadays, any sort of book, if it gets hyped enough, will sell like mad, and the movies will pay a large sum for it and so on.

DA: The only book tour you did make didn't really cover the country, did it? You didn't go past Ontario.

THR: No, that was the standard for those days. They figured that the West was struggling with poverty. I don't imagine it was a very good market for books anyway. Ontario was the important one, and they had a couple of sessions in Montreal, too, and that was it.

DA: No tour of the Atlantic region was arranged, though that must have been a good market for your work.

THR: Oh, well, they sent a representative down here to arrange for a big splash in the Halifax papers when I was going to have an autographing party at one of the book stores. I had a good market in this region.

My books sold well outside Canada too. Not long ago I heard from a CBC producer, a cameraman once with the CBC when they interviewed me. He was a German who had served in the German navy during the second world war, and he and Jack McClelland worked out that on one particular night they had been in boat patrols trying to lambaste each other in the middle of the Channel. He now runs a CBC radio station in the West. He went over to Germany in connection with some international conference, and he wrote me a year or two ago, saying, "You and your work are very well-known in Germany to this day." That surprised me because it's been quite a while since any of my books were published in German.

DA: That may soon change, because there appears to be a dramatic surge of interest abroad in Canadian literature, and your work would obviously be a logical inclusion in any "Can. Lit." course, whether here or in Europe.

THR: There may be a particular aspect that partly explains this new interest. In a lot of modern writing, the plot isn't bothered with, so the thing begins nowhere and ends nowhere. This is just fine, as far as the public seems to think, but when you go to make a play out of it, you've got to have a first act, and a second act, and a third act: a beginning, a middle, and an end. They can't make a film out of those stories, it's impossible. So then they come back to the old-fashioned authors like me. Three or four years ago a movie group wanted the film rights to *The Nymph and the Lamp*, and last fall another group bought the film rights to *His Majesty's Yankees*, and in January, another group bought the film rights to one of my short stories, "The Trumpeter." So there's a renewed interest in the old-fashioned story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

DA: As we are talking about "Canadian Literature," this is perhaps a suitable moment to ask for your views on what should be encompassed by the term. Some works included in "Can. Lit." courses have only a tenuous association with this country.

Do you have any rule of thumb for the term?

THR: This is the difficulty that the Canada Council is up against all the time now: what constitutes Canadian literature? They've been handing out money to almost anyone who applied for a grant. I have been one of the many people

they've consulted on grants. They send you an application and ask whether you think this is worthwhile or not. I have noticed that quite a lot of grants have been given to people from other countries who move to Canada and then write a book about wherever they're from. Because they have become Canadian citizens, they claim a grant and usually get one from the Canada Council.

But is this Canadian Literature? I say it is not.

DA: For you, then, a rough and ready guide would be that Canadian literature has to be about Canada?

THR: I think so.

DA: Would you include any residential restriction in the term?

THR: If their work is good, it doesn't matter whether they've been here six months or six years, as long as they write about Canada.

DA: So the Canadian writer living here but writing about somewhere else would not be on a course in Canadian literature?

THR: No I don't think he should be.

I'm thinking particularly of one or two Canadian writers. There is one who has been a very successful novelist; he has appeared on television many times. He is on Front Page Challenge every once in a while. He is a Canadian, he makes his home in Canada, but as far as I know he's never written anything about Canada or Canadians. Now, I don't think that he should be regarded as a Canadian author purely because he makes his domicile in Toronto.

DA: The point we're discussing now was actually implicit earlier when we spoke about your own attempts to contribute to a sense of Canadian identity by setting your short stories and novels in Canada, refusing to increase their saleability by blurring the national background.

THR: Of course, I'm biased, but if I had never written a book myself, I think I would still hold the same opinion. Canadian literature must be about Canada and the people in it. Indi-

viduals Canadians, brilliant as they may be, may go and live in London or Paris or somewhere else and achieve international fame with their books. But the mere fact that they were born in Canada doesn't give them a place in Canadian literature. At least, I can't see that it does.

And these applications to the Canada Council for grants: I was horrified to see how many real Canadian writers want money to buy a typewriter and paper and ribbons. They list all these things, and on the strength of them they propose to write a book. They give a little résumé of it and you are asked to give an opinion on its worth. I can't help thinking back to the days when I was struggling along on twenty-five dollars a week and battling it out on an old typewriter that I had to buy myself.

DA: Our discussion about Canadian identity and Canadian literature reminds me of the comment in your *Memoir* that the War of 1812 was really Canada's war of independence from American political domination, part of the struggle that began with the shots heard in "At the Tide's Turn" when the harassed Nova Scotians turned their guns upon their American brethren.

Do you think that we are still fighting our war for cultural independence from the United States?

THR: I think we haven't quite won our War of 1812 yet. Partly that's due to the many American professors teaching literature in Canadian colleges and schools. I can't help feeling that that undoubtedly has had an influence, although probably not one meant deliberately.

But despite the fact that today we watch American television—and I'm as guilty as anybody when it comes to that—if it came to the pinch, I would still prefer to be a Canadian on my own side of the border, having a country of my own, separate from the United States.

DA: Well, perhaps that comment gives us the key for concluding this interview by drawing together two major strands. We have been focusing on the interrelationship of your work and the society you wrote in: we opened by noticing how your work frequently demonstrates the redemptive power of human love for both the individual and the society; after looking at various aspects of your career as a

specifically Canadian writer, we closed with a discussion about the identity of Canadian literature.

I think that one might fairly say that the power of love is visible again: your love for this country, evident in both your last comment and in your life-long determination to write about Canada, has had a redemptive effect on our cultural identity. Your novels and short stories are the cultural equivalents of the guns fired in "At the Tide's Turn"; we may not yet have won this particular war, but writers like you have been instrumental in helping to turn the tide.

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