

I hired a coach to take me from confusion to the plane
And though we shared a common space I know I'll
never meet again
The driver with his eyebrows furrowed in the rear-
view mirror
I read his name and it was plainly written Nathan La
Franeer

I asked him would he hurry
But we crawled the canyons slowly
Through the buyers and the sellers
Through the burglar bells and the wishing wells
With gangs and girly shows
The ghostly garden grows

The cars and buses bustled thru the bedlam of the day
I looked thru window-glass at streets and Nathan
grumbled at the grey
I saw an aging cripple selling Superman balloons
The city grated thru chrome-plate
The clock struck slowly half-past-noon

Thru the tunnel tiled and turning
Into daylight once again I am escaping
Once again goodbye
To symphonies and dirty trees
With parks and plastic clothes
The ghostly garden grows

He asked me for a dollar more
He cursed me to my face
He hated everyone who paid to ride
And share his common space
I picked my bags up from the curb
And stumbled to the door
Another man reached out his hand
Another hand reached out for more
And I filled it full of silver
And I left the fingers counting
And the sky goes on forever
Without meter maids and peace parades
You feed it all your woes
The ghostly garden grows

Joni Mitchell

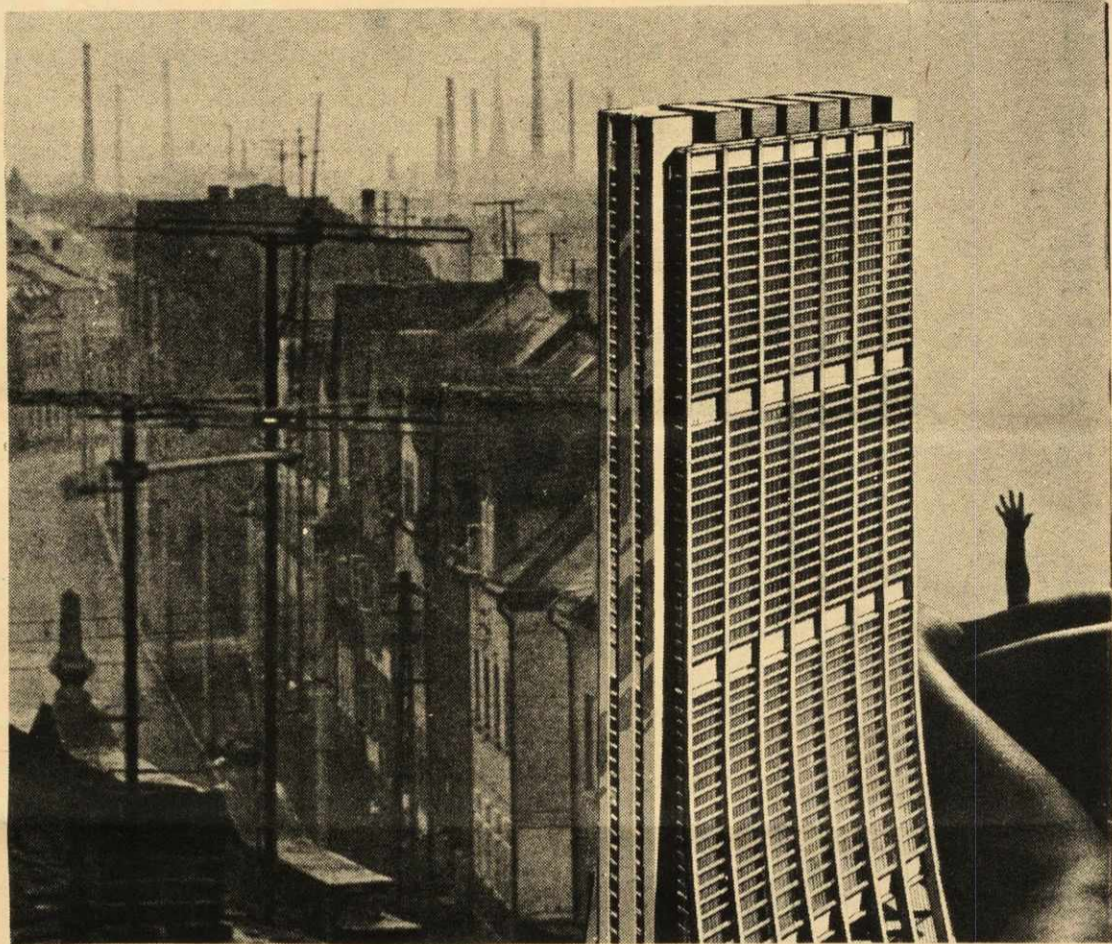
Any attempt to criticise or evaluate a song poem is a callous business at best. If a poem is meant to be experienced in its entirety, so must a song, more so even than a poem, for a song is set in a musical framework which cannot be ignored without mutilating the artistic unity of the piece. The musical fabric of this song cannot be rendered verbally, nor can any description of how the musical structure complements and accentuates the poetry hope to convey any more than the clumsiest approximation of the truth. In any case, NATHAN LA FRANEER is a poem and a song fused into one. While analysis will damage it, it will not totally destroy its art.

The album within which NATHAN LA FRANEER was recorded was conceived and executed as a continuous evolution. Every song in the album is a progression and an extension of the mood and content of the songs which preceded it. "I came to the city", the first side of the album traces the flow and changing patterns of the singer's emotions from the grief for a lost love, the innocent peace of a new one, the exultant joy of a night in the city, through the bleak loneliness of a dying love to a despairing flight from the chromium-crowded nightmare of the city. The reverse side of the album has a similar thematic continuity, but is centered around the country. This use of dualisms is a recurrent feature in the album, and within each song as well.

Much of the impact of NATHAN LA FRANEER is due to the juxtaposition of violently disparate images, as the singer is being driven to the airport, she catalogues the schizoid reality of New York: the burglar bells and the wishing wells, the dirty trees and the symphonies, the meter maids and the peace parades. The contrast is one between the creativity, compassion and wistfulness of which

You feed it all your woes

by Will Offley



man is capable, and the cold, complex maze which is growing into dominance. Although she sees parks, it is the plastic clothes that strike the eye. The most incongruous vision of all is the cripple she sees who is standing on the sidewalk selling Superman balloons. The contrast between the old man and the product he is selling, between his earth-bound impotence and the skyward tugging of the balloons, encapsulates the spirit of the city. The cripple does not release the balloons — he is engaged in the serious business of selling them. Likewise, Nathan La Franeer is not sharing his common space in a gesture of hospitality and humanity. He has been hired to deliver a passenger to the airport. Her physical closeness to him is more than offset by the vast gulf between them. There is no conversation; there is no contact.

The motif of buying and selling runs through the entire song. The singer hires a taxi and is driven through the buyers and the sellers to the airport. The taxi driver is dissatisfied with his tip, curses her, and leaves her to pick up her own bags. The doorman opens the door for her and scrabbles for a tip, eagerly counting up his money as she leaves. This motif underscores the cold devouring greed of the city. Nathan La Franeer actively hated everyone he drove in his cab, but he suffered through his ignominy if he was paid sufficiently. The only interchange that the singer has from the city to the airport is not one of ideas or feelings, but money.

In all of the songs of the album, color plays a major role. It is used as symbol, as an indicator of the emotional content of the song, and as a sensual reality of its own. In MARCIE, the song

immediately preceding NATHAN LA FRANEER, color becomes the core of the song, tracing the gradual change of hope into despairing anger. Green is sour, summer, going, jealousy; red is sweet, autumn, stopping, and anger. In NATHAN LA FRANEER, the only colors we see are CATHAN, the cold silver of loose change, and the grey expanse of New York City. They are sterile, dead, corrupt colors, admirably suited to the environment of which they are part.

The vulnerability and grief which the singer feels are emphasized by the musical accompaniment to the song. In the first and third stanzas the lines are sung in an achingly high soprano with an initial burst of volume which decreases almost to a whimper by the end of the line; the stanzas sound more like they are being sobbed than sung. The last stanza is a chopped, rushing rhythm climaxing with the vocal equivalent of a sigh of relief as the singer's plane takes off.

The city from which she is escaping is a ghostly garden. It is worse than dead, for it is a live and growing cancer and is spreading its purulence a little further every day. The cab driver, the cripple, and the doorman are live human beings who are slowly being crushed to death by the traffic and chromium of New York, and simultaneously they are incarnations of the same evil which propels the city. They are the passive victims of the brutal dehumanization of twentieth century America, and they are agents of the dehumanization. They are integral with the city; how can we tell the danger from the dance?

National Policies and the Federal State

By STANLEY RYERSON
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The student challenge to the business and academic Establishment is incomplete if it stops short of a critique of neo-colonialism. In English-speaking and French Canada the manifestations of neo-colonialist policy differ; but there is in both an underlying common denominator that has some bearing on social movements in each of the communities.

A notable feature of the original colonial-Victorian constitutional structure of the Dominion of Canada was the absence from the BNA Act of 1867 of federal competence in education or in international relations. The Canadian state thus possessed from birth a dual impairment of its organic structure. In the case of external relations, this inadequacy was a direct result of a colonial status which left this domain to the jurisdiction of the imperial authorities, to be acquired only subsequently by Ottawa (and then with certain limitations) in the course of a long tussle for autonomy in which 1919, 1926, 1931 and 1939 are landmarks.

In education, the case is different. Relegation of this field to a provincial existence (continued to this day) was initially a by-product of the compromise of 1867 with French-Canadian, Catholic Quebec. The inauguration of the provincial existence of the national community of French Canada included the attribution to Quebec of jurisdiction over education (and to the other provinces likewise). This concession to French Canada was an indispensable part of its vital minimum of national rights, without which Confederation could hardly have been achieved.

For English Canada however, its significance was not by any means identical. Certainly, regional differences and geographic dispersal of small populations scattered over great expanses of territory (from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island) made DECENTRALIZATION desirable and necessary. These factors did not, however, have to make provincial jurisdiction in education an inviolable PRINCIPLE for English-speaking Canada, nor exemption of the central power from responsibility, with its corollary of de facto federal abdication in this realm. Regardless of the historically explainable if complex origin of this extraordinary condition, the LACK OF ANY NATIONAL POLICY IN EDUCATION FOR ENGLISH CANADA is a hall-mark of political underdevelopment. The British colonial dependency having become a neo-colonial U.S. satellite, the consequences of this yawning cavity in our sovereignty become steadily more deleterious. (Encyclopedia Britannica of Chicago taking over the Quebec Centre de Fedagogie text book publishing enterprise is only a recent illustration — from the less vulnerable area, one might have thought, since non-English.)

Traditionally, English-Canadian attempts to surmount the difficulty have taken the form of demanding FEDERAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION. Since this proposal collides head-on with what is felt to be a vital national right of French-Canadian Quebec, its adoption would entail a drastic aggravation of French-English tensions and very probably the break-up of Canada. It would moreover tend to reinforce the English-Canadian superiority-attitudes which are basic to survival of the existing political and big-

business set-up.

Paradoxical as it may seem, constitutional recognition of the bi-national character of Canada, including acceptance of Quebec as the national state of French Canada, is the precondition for achieving a national educational policy in English Canada. Only through a radical restructure of the Canadian state can the English-speaking national community arrive at a national framework for developing, financing and administering its own educational program.

Undoubtedly, the existing English-Canadian provincial and regional structures would provide the natural point of departure for whatever degree of co-ordination or centralization that might be found acceptable; and current steps in such a direction, however tentative and frustrating (because of the existing constitutional set-up), point in such a direction.

The prospect of a situation of NATIONAL EQUALITY in education as between the two Canadian communities includes the possibility of their maximum CO-OPERATION in education. But the latter is a potential function of the former. The struggle of French-Canadian Quebec against neo-colonialist subjection to Anglo-Canadian and U.S. monopoly dominance offers powerful reinforcement to English-Canadian movements against the corporate political-economic Establishment. The demonstration of Toronto students at Queen's Park some years ago in support of equality for Quebec expressed the kind of solidarity that needs to find a new voice today. There is not a single vital democratic demand in English Canada that will not be enhanced by alliance with the national-democratic forces in Quebec.