

On the folly of propaganda anthologies and the immiscibility of our two cultures

UN SIECLE DE LITERATURE CANADIENNE/A CENTURY OF CANADIAN LITERATURE, edited by Guy Sylvestre and H. G. Green. HMH/Ryerson, 595 pp., \$4.95.

Will the Centennial Commission never cease boring us with its silly attempts at making us feel proud to be Canadians, or fond of our French brethren, or inspired by our great predecessors?

This is the bilingual anthology to end all bilingual anthologies. It is titled in French and English, published by French and English houses, edited by French and English editors, and filled with French and English authors in their original languages.

Editor Green starts off the show badly in his English introduction with the usual apologies—"could not hope to offer more than a random sampling of our literary achievement . . . have of course several regrets . . . could not possibly give the Canadian novel the attention it deserves . . ." and so on, in the manner of a man who knows he has made the worst of a bad job.

A glance at the contents reveals just what a bad job it was, and just how badly done. To begin with, there is very little "literature" in this book. There is a great deal of history, political commentary, and magazine writing. There is a great deal of verse, but very little poetry.

With all due respect to the

editor's stated purpose of not sticking to well-known Canadian literature, it is well to point out that not everything on the printed page qualifies as literature. The primary qualification for admission into this volume seems to have been subject matter rather than literary value—if it's about Canada, it's literature.

As for putting English and French writing into one volume . . . well, there's no accounting for the mysterious ways of the B & B boys. Presumably the premise is that there is some connecting theme in French and English Canadian literature, a premise that is demonstrably false. Messrs. Sylvestre and Green are attempting to turn a cultural exchange into a cultural unity, an absurd thing to try; for French and English Canada are cultural entities, and no amount of mutual anthologizing is going to make them go hand in hand.

The purpose of the anthology is, in short, just a bit too obvious. It is intended to make us feel all warm and glowy because the editors have successfully fused the French and English Canadian literary traditions. Unfortunately, juxtaposition is not fusion, and journalism is not necessarily literature.

Despite its ridiculous concept and sloppy execution, the book does have (as I suppose is inevitable by the laws of chance) one or two good things in it. A good number of respectable poets are included—Layton, Cohen, Pratt, Purdy, and the usuals among the English poets, as well as a good selection of minor writers—but, as

elsewhere, there is not enough of any one of them to tell us anything about the poetic tradition in Canada.

That, in fact, is the crux of the problem: a great many writers are represented, but very little writing. The anthology seems more an attempt to list as many writers as it can within 600 pages than an effort to present a good, readable, informative sampling of Canadian literature.

What selections there are, to do the editors justice, are well made in many cases. It is impossible for example, to capture the spirit of Leonard Cohen in a single poem; but "For E.J.P.", included here, comes as close as any other.

And certainly the anthology is original—there are very few of the "old favourites" presented here. (Presumably Earl Birney was not included because all of his poems are old favourites.) There are happy exceptions—Pratt's "Newfoundland", for example. Old favorites are a necessary part of any anthology; one wishes there were more of them here instead of reprints from *Hockey Pictorial*.

But nothing, one is tempted to think, could have saved this book after its ill conception. The very idea of an anthology in French and English is absurd, except for those few who have one foot in each culture; and much of the material presented in the volume is a travesty on the name of literature. Perhaps the Centennial Commission would have been better advised to stay out of the publishing business.

—Terry Donnelly



NAPOLEON BISSON—Second in a series of exciting pictures featuring the stars of the up-and-coming opera "The Barber of Seville". Baritone Bisson will play the role of Bartolo. Students will be admitted on November 22 for only one dollar. Tickets are now on sale at Heintzman's.

leftovers

We do have a creative writing magazine this year, diminished in grandeur though it may be. It's called *Pulpinside*, and it is a useful means of circulating creative works.

And where are the creative works? That is up to you. If you have any short stories, poems, plays, diatribes, satires, parodies, epics, lyrics, or reasonable facsimiles that you would like to see published, submit them to the magazine.

The place is room 232 in SUB. The editors cannot promise to print everything received, but fair consideration will be given all submissions.

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*On Reading Etienne Gilson
Never, never trust a bard
Who eulogizes Abelard;*

*His sympathies are bound to freeze
When he approaches Heloise.*

—Phil Budd in the Lethbridge "Meliorist"

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The ladies of the campus can have no idea what indignities the men must suffer in the washrooms of certain buildings. The plain white cakes of disinfectant soap which used to be seen in the bottom of urinals have been replaced this year with pretty pink and baby blue ones.

This is an intolerable invasion of femininity into man's last domain. Soon, no doubt, we will be forced to endure pastel toilet seats, tissue patterned with flowers, and lace curtains on the windows. Hee hee.

But then, men's washrooms have never been the same since they took those lovely old stand-ups out of the Arts Building.

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The following note was recently fixed to our door: *Hey Leftovers:*

So, you make fun of me, eh? You think maybe it's funny that I gotta run around the basement of this building all the time, eh? Well, let me tell you it ain't so funny. I have to feed myself by snatching scraps off the cafeteria conveyor belts. I don't get much sleep behind those bowling lanes.

You'll be sorry, Leftovers. I know what goes on in this building. You'll hear from me again.

The Phantom

The Bay Will be on Campus Nov. 6, 7 & 8

Last year we hired 12 U. of A. graduates as management trainees. Why don't you follow the lead of these people and investigate the career opportunities which our company has to offer? We'll be looking for graduates in the faculties of Arts, Commerce and Pharmacy to join our Management Trainee Program. Come to the University Placement Office to make an appointment for an interview with one of our representatives. Perhaps you'll find your future lies with the Bay!

the  Bay