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Résumé de l'article

Desmond Pacey's career as a critic of Canadian literature and criticism, beginning with his prefiguring of a pattern later developed by others such as A.J.M. Smith and John Sutherland, ultimately ends with his confirming the lines of regional decentralization that follow from Northrop Frye's re-creation of that very same early work. An outline of Pacey's career in effect traces the trajectory of the work of Smith, Sutherland, and Frye, and, as do all reflections, it actually serves to reverse what it ostensibly replicates. A re-examination of Pacey's history of Canadian literature reveals its movements of retreat, re-inscription, and relocation; its most characteristic leanings are toward ambivalence and paradox. Despite Pacey's striving for a sort of synthesis in the history of Canadian literature, his history ends in a representation of manifold division. Similarly, his history of Canadian literary criticism ends in binary opposition, maturity deferred.

MANIFOLD DIVISION: DESMOND PACEY'S HISTORY OF ENGLISH-CANADIAN POETRY

Philip Kokotailo

Desmond Pacey began his career as a critic of Canadian literature by prefiguring the pattern developed later by A. J. M. Smith and John Sutherland. In the decade before they declared that the national literature had come of age through a confederation of native and cosmopolitan traditions in poetry,[1] Pacey outlined a structurally similar process. In "At Last — A Canadian Literature" (1938), he observed that in the poetry of E. J. Pratt, who not only has "a first-hand knowledge of the essential Canadian occupations," but also knows "more of foreign poetry" than anyone else in the country, the foundations of a "distinctly Canadian" literature are being laid (147).

Pacey ended his career, however, by confirming the lines of regional decentralization that follow from Northrop Frye's recreation of what Smith and Sutherland developed. Through his principles of poetic synthesis and of culture as interpenetration, Frye effectively unravelled their confederated pattern into "post-national" threads of regional diversity (*Modern* 17).[2] In Pacey's last published work, *Essays: Canadian Literature in English* (1979),[3] he similarly relocated "distinctive" developments in "four major poetic regions of the country" (147), their capitals being Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Fredericton. From his original "foundations of an essentially national literature," there thus emerge separate structures of essentially regional poetry ("At Last" 146).

The outline of Pacey's career reflects, therefore, the trajectory of efforts by Smith, Sutherland, and Frye to exorcize past divisions of English-Canadian poetry in a unified present. Like all reflections, Pacey's actually reverses what it ostensibly replicates. It does so in two conclusive ways. First, while in theory Pacey follows Smith, Sutherland, and Frye by idealizing a harmonized or synthesized form of national unity, in practice he reinscribes re-

gional diversity as the leading characteristic of English-Canadian poetry. Second, while Pacey ultimately renounces their belief that Canadian culture has come of age in the work of one or another school of contemporary poets, he paradoxically relocates that maturity in the practice of criticism itself.

Like Smith, Sutherland, and Frye, therefore, Pacey upholds a present union of past difference to be the culmination of Canadian literary history. For him, however, it is the critics rather than the poets who finally achieve this resolution. Contemporary criticism, in his view, illustrates a fusion of the dialectical principles that underlie not only Smith's distinction between native and cosmopolitan traditions, but also Frye's distinction between centripetal and centrifugal impulses. Contemporary poetry, on the other hand, further develops the spatial, temporal, and psychological divisions that for Pacey have always been the genre's defining characteristics in Canada. To show how his work thus subverts, though it apparently supports, the work of Smith, Sutherland, and Frye is to redefine Pacey's own role in the representation and evaluation of Canadian literary history.

Pacey is now generally regarded as a champion of social and environmental realism in Canada. As Frank Davey puts it, he "demanded that the Canadian writer demonstrate his freedom from colonial mimicry by attending to Canadian experience" (229). The values that thus inform his work are often presented as alternatives to the values informing Frye's work. Again according to Davey, Pacey's "leanings toward regionalism, realism and particularism have made him one of the few academic critics to challenge the healthfulness of Northrop Frye's influence on Canadian poetry" (229).

However, to re-examine Pacey's history of the poetry in light of its representation not only by Frye, but also by Smith and Sutherland, is to reveal that his most characteristic leanings are toward ambivalence and paradox. Virtually every assertion he makes is balanced by a contrary assertion he makes elsewhere. Like the national literature that he ultimately defines by its blend of "irony with compassion, pathos with comedy, moral vision with . . . moral ambiguity" (*Essays* 197), Pacey's own work sustains continuously conflicting responses.

Fourteen years after hailing Pratt as the founder of a "dis-

tinctly" Canadian poetry, for instance, Pacey contradicts what he now calls a "platitude": that Pratt "is the greatest Canadian poet of this or of any other time" (123). In *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952), he maintains instead that Pratt "certainly has his limitations," spelling them out in such a way as to overturn his own original support for the "platitude." Pratt, he observes:

> has not yet portrayed a fully rounded character; he has little power of sustained thought; his passion for scientific accuracy sometimes leads him to indulge in excessive technical detail; he is prone to diffuseness and verbosity. (*Creative* 123)

Yet Pacey himself seems to recognize the contradiction in his assessments of Pratt, because he seeks to balance them by employing different standards of judgement. When he sets Pratt in the evaluative context of world literature, Pacey asserts that his poems do not achieve the "sense of universality which we expect of great art" (*Creative* 122). On the other hand, when he deliberately disregards such standards, he asserts that "Whether or not [Pratt] was a great poet in the world's context, he was certainly a great figure in the context of Canada" (*Essays* 101).

If, as Pacey ultimately suggests, such ambivalence is the distinctive "attitude towards experience" that Canadian literature as a whole makes manifest (*Essays* 197), and if, as he also suggests, literary criticism is the new mark of maturity in Canadian culture, then it may seem, finally, that Pacey is establishing a place for his own work at a new summit of Canadian literary history. Yet he never claims to have attained such heights for himself. He explicitly, though regretfully, awards that distinction to Frye.

Pacey thus draws to a close the pre-contemporary era in the history of Canadian literary history not only, as Davey observes, by encouraging "The emergence of Canadian poetry . . . out of Frye's confining shadow" (229), but also, paradoxically, by enshrining Frye as the central figure with whom all subsequent historians of English-Canadian poetry must come to terms. At the same time, though he has yet to receive much credit for doing so, Pacey encourages the emergence of Canadian criticism out of Frye's confining shadow. In a last reflective reversal, even as he declares that Frye has realized an elusive cultural synthesis, Pacey implies that his own work will lead to a final proof of Ca-

nadian cultural maturity. He reinscribes division, therefore, in the history of Canadian criticism as well as Canadian poetry.

1. Retreat

Near the end of his career, Pacey began to define his own work in relation to the work of Smith and Sutherland as well as Frye. For instance, in his review of *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* (1967), he explicitly lauds his three colleagues "as masters of expository and argumentative prose" (91). At the same time, he implicitly faults them for presenting "a series of brilliant half-truths." Because they affirm that Canadian culture has come of age in the work of one or another school of contemporary poets, all three contribute to "the myth of the up-to-date" (92). Yet because this widely accepted myth necessarily devalues past poetry, it also constitutes for Pacey "the besetting sin of Canadian criticism." He unequivocally disavows it, exclaiming: "The whole complex of ideas that leads us, in the name of a fictitious progress, to denigrate the work of a really profound poet such as Archibald Lampman is anathema to me" (92).

For Pacey, therefore, to validate the present at the expense of the past is not only to tell a half-truth, but also to commit a sin. By renouncing that sin, he implies that in his own work he endeavours to tell the whole truth. His efforts to do so are at least partly responsible for his leanings toward paradox and ambivalence. To tell the whole truth about the history of English-Canadian poetry, Pacey seeks to balance apparently contradictory half-truths. The entirety of his work manifests, as a result, the kind of double vision that he eventually identifies as the most distinctive characteristic of the Canadian imagination. Pacey's own double vision becomes increasingly evident as he gradually retreats from the historical half-truth that marks the beginning of his career.

In 1968 Pacey acknowledged that he too once promoted "the myth of the up-to-date." Looking back to the publication of "At Last — A Canadian Literature," he recounts having himself affirmed, also to the detriment of such a poet as Lampman, "that after a long period of derivativeness, Canadian literature was at last finding distinctive voices and distinctive modes of utterance" ("Outlook" 14). As if to atone for the sin he then committed in the

name of "fictitious progress," he now derides his argument for not having been made "very cogently," and he even mocks his title as "an arrogant assertion, rather than a modest question," calling it "the symptom, no doubt, of . . . youthful brashness" (14).

Pacey began to redress this symptom long before 1968. Only five years after he originally made his "arrogant assertion," he was already transforming it into "a modest question." In 1943 he wrote to Smith not only to congratulate him upon publication of *The Book of Canadian Poetry,* but also to reprimand him for not having included "At Last — A Canadian Literature?" (sic) in its bibliography. By thus giving his title the question mark that he would later complain it lacked, Pacey begins to retreat from his 1938 assertion that Canadian literature was then finally coming into its own.

Though he still thinks Smith ought to have cited his article, Pacey goes on in this letter to call it, paradoxically, "very weak," not only because it lacked "solidity and substance," but also because it was "adolescent in its uncritical enthusiasm." Already, he is beginning to think of whatever is "uncritical" as "adolescent," as immature. He also criticizes "At Last — A Canadian Literature" for having "quite failed to do justice to our older poets and to the new ones." Already, he is deducing that to identify and elevate a poet as he did Pratt is to commit something of a sin, an injustice.

Early in his career, therefore, Pacey discerns that in order to tell the whole truth about English-Canadian poetry he must resist the tempting evolutionary metaphor through which Smith, Sutherland, and Frye will later depict its history as a progressive realization of cultural maturity. To affirm this metaphor, in Pacey's view, is to slight the new poets as well as the old, the future as well as the past. Seeking to correct its injustices in his own work, Pacey finds, however, that he must somehow replace the evolutionary metaphor. He discovers that in order to rid his work of "uncritical enthusiasm," in order to give it "solidity and substance," he still needs some sort of structural framework. He thus aims, especially in his early essays on Duncan Campbell Scott (1948) and Oliver Goldsmith (1951), to set works of poetry in their spatial and temporal contexts.

Much later, in a 1974 letter to Malcolm Ross that Pacey calls "the nearest I shall ever come to writing an *apologia pro vita sua,*"

he claims to have employed this contextual approach as well in the book for which he is best known. With the self-depreciation he thinks is characteristic of English Canadians,[4] he says: "In *Creative Writing in Canada*, I was making the first (admittedly feeble) effort to relate our literature to our society." In saying so, Pacey neglects to mention what he explicitly identified as "The main purpose of this book" in its introduction: "to consider as carefully, as intelligently, and as sincerely as possible the *quality* of Canadian writing, to discover where it has succeeded and where it has *failed*" (3).

By adopting such a fundamentally evaluative approach, all the while trying to set literary works in their spatial and temporal contexts, Pacey can abstain from "the besetting sin of Canadian criticism." Unlike Smith, Sutherland, and Frye, that is, he can appreciate present work without necessarily depreciating that of the past or future. By adopting this approach, however, he raises important questions about his underlying principles. By what criteria does Pacey judge "the *quality* of Canadian writing"? By what standard does he determine "where it has succeeded and where it has failed"?

Though Pacey records many variations on his answer to these questions, their theme remains largely the same throughout his career. From the start, he upholds as his evaluative ideal a synthesis between "particular" knowledge and "universal" concern. In an April 1943 radio talk entitled "Our Literature," he asserts that when "the universal is seen shining through the particular . . . the imagination takes fire and great literature is born." Therefore, explains Pacey, the "business" of Canadian writers is to discern in "the local scene, the local problem" operations of "the eternal, the universal, forces." His own business as a critic is to judge "the *quality* of Canadian writing" by determining "where it has succeeded and where it has failed" to realize his synthetic ideal. Near the end of his career, twenty-five years later, Pacey continued to maintain not only that "regional accuracy" and "universal validity" are compatible, but also that their fusion is the source of "great art" ("Outlook" 24).

Even before Smith expounded his division between native and cosmopolitan traditions, therefore, and even before Frye recast it as a distinction between centripetal and centrifugal im-

pulses, Pacey set out his own dialectical framework for the representation and evaluation of English-Canadian poetry. His belief in the value of "regional accuracy" can thus be seen to prevalidate Smith's native tradition (in which poets concentrate on whatever is "individual and unique in Canadian life" [5]) as well as Frye's centripetal impulse (in which poets strive "to give an imaginative voice" to their Canadian surroundings ["Poetry" 86]). His belief in the value of "universal validity" can similarly be seen to prevalidate Smith's cosmopolitan tradition (in which poets seek to enter "the universal, civilizing culture of ideas" [5]) as well as Frye's centrifugal impulse (in which poets strive to ignore their environment and "compete on equal terms" with their international contemporaries ["Poetry" 86]).

Furthermore, by asserting that great literature stems from a fusion of particular knowledge with universal concern, Pacey upholds his own version of the harmony or synthesis that Smith, Sutherland, and Frye will later validate as well. Unlike them, however, Pacey cannot declare that the national culture has come of age through a realization of his ideal. By 1943 he can no longer make such a claim not only because he is already resisting the historical injustices it would entail, but also because he is already granting less validity to *any* concept of an essentially national Canadian poetry, literature, or culture.

In 1938, by using such words as *essentially* and *distinctly*, Pacey expressed his belief that literature can reflect "typically" national characteristics. By 1943, however, he had begun to discern a "dangerous" fallacy in statements that "such and such an attitude to life is typically Canadian" ("Our Literature" 2). At the same time, he also conflated nationalism with regionalism. In "Our Literature" he makes no distinction between the two when he maintains that the "business" of our writers is "not to avoid the national, the regional," but through them "to find the universal." In 1952 Pacey even gave the regional priority over the national, though in doing so he contradicted his original belief in an "essentially" or "distinctly" national literature. He now maintains that "A good regional literature must precede a good national literature; indeed, it is arguable whether there is any such thing as a national literature apart from its regional components" (*Creative* 95). Turning to those regional components, Pacey increasingly discerns temporal

and psychological as well as spatial divisions in the history of English-Canadian poetry.

2. Reinscription

Pacey's change of heart on the issue of literary nationalism versus regionalism stems from his attempts to answer the question with which he begins *Creative Writing in Canada*: "Of what does distinctiveness consist?" (1). His response is twofold because the question can be interpreted in two ways. If, he explains, "a distinctive national culture" is "one which reflects that nation's social organization, geography, and political history," then, he maintains, "a good case can be made out for the distinctiveness of Canadian culture" (1). Yet the more closely Pacey examines — through their reflection in English-Canadian poetry — these spatial and temporal features of the nation, the more clearly he sees underlying patterns of regional division. His focus shifts, as a result, away from the characteristics of what he perceives to be only a hypothetically national poetry, turning instead toward the characteristics of what become, for him, its more actually regional components.

In the nation's social organization, for instance, Pacey immediately discerns "a wide gulf between the cultures of French and English Canada" (*Creative* 5). French-Canadian literature thus comprises "a separate if parallel tradition" (vii). In the nation's physical geography, he sees English Canadians "spread over half a continent and divided into distinct regional groupings by geographical barriers" (4). Later, Pacey holds these social and geographical divisions responsible for the absence of a national cultural centre, a Canadian counterpart of London or Paris. Its existence, he believes, would not only encourage a more unified culture, but also strengthen a doubtful national identity. "The fact that there is no agreed centre of Canadian culture," he concludes, "militates against the development of a strong sense of national identity" (*Essays* viii).

As early as 1961, therefore, Pacey begins to emphasize the regional identities of contemporary English-Canadian poetry. In the revised edition of *Creative Writing in Canada*, he isolates three centres of regional, rather than national, activity — Toronto, Montreal, and Fredericton — and he gives priority to the differences, rather than the similarities, between the schools of poets in each.

Later he adds a fourth regional centre, Vancouver, and he ends his career by attributing "a distinctive style" not to the poetry that emerges from the nation at large, but rather to what emerges from each of these "four major poetic regions of the country" (*Essays* 147).

Pacey reinforces this divided spatial pattern when he turns his attention away from the social and geographical configuration of Canada to its political and economic history. Here he finds an equally divided temporal pattern, which he expresses through an extended metaphor of tidal ebb and flow. Midway through his career, Pacey announces that there have been "three creative periods, three waves of progress" in Canadian literary history ("Canadian Writer" 129). He says:

> The first, confined almost wholly to poetry, took place in the 1880s; the second, extending to both poetry and fiction, occurred in the 1920s; the third, again concentrated in poetry though not excluding fiction, came in the 1940s.

This is not, however, a strictly literary pattern. When these waves appear in Pacey's work, their rise and fall are clearly contingent on the ebb and flow of what he calls the spirit of national unity in political and economic spheres of life.

Pacey attributes the rise of his first wave, for instance, to "The sense of national unity inspired by Confederation" (*Creative* 82). From the 1860s to the 1890s, he explains, while "the desire for a united and strong nation" motivated the economic and political development of the country (32), the resulting "national excitement" also "initiated and sustained the first national cultural awakening" in the newly confederated dominion (81). As a result, he says, owing largely to the work of such poets as Mair, Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Scott, Crawford, and Campbell, "Canada's cultural development almost kept pace with her political and economic expansion" during the Confederation era (33).

Pacey maintains, however, that "the momentum of this first national literary movement was almost spent" by 1895 (*Creative* 80). In his view the high tide of poetic creation began to ebb because "The enthusiasm which had bound the provinces together into an at least apparent unity of purpose began to give way in the late eighties under the strain of political, economic, religious and racial rivalries" (80). Poetry falls into a similar state of divi-

sion because Canadian writers are "confronted with a wealthy but divided and restless industrial society" (84).

When Pacey expounds his second wave of progress in English-Canadian poetry, he stresses again the importance of a united nationalist spirit in political and economic affairs. He explains:

> Just as in the decades immediately following Confederation there had been a conscious effort to create a literature worthy of the new confederacy, so now [in the 1920s] there was a conscious, at times a self-conscious, determination to create a literature commensurate with Canada's new status as an independent nation. ("Writer" 478)

The underlying renewal of national excitement is especially evident in "the political sphere," observes Pacey, because "Canada's status as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations was officially recognized at the Imperial Conference of 1926" (*Creative* 111). Developments in the economic sphere are largely responsible for the literary tide's turn. Says Pacey: "The ebb in the second wave of literary activity can, I think, be directly attributed to the Great Depression" ("Canadian Writer" 128). In the meantime, the poets whose works mark a second high point in Canadian literary history are Pratt, Smith, Scott, Kennedy, Klein, Birney, Finch, and Livesay.

When Pacey focuses on his third wave of literary progress, he again attributes its rise to the emergence of a national "community of values such as Canada had not known for many years" and its fall to later developments that "smashed the unity of Canadian thinking" ("English-Canadian Poetry" 256). This "community" has political sources, because it originates in "a renewed sense of national purpose resulting from the virtual unanimity with which Canadians opposed Hitlerism and supported the joint efforts of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin" ("Writer" 488). This time economic developments enhance the underlying political unity, since, in Pacey's view, "The last years of the war and the first years of the peace" comprise "high water marks of economic prosperity and . . . national well-being" ("English-Canadian Poetry" 255).

Such political and economic conditions also foster, as they did twice before, a corresponding cultural condition. In the third wave, however, the poets Pacey commends for having reached "high water marks" include the old as well as the new. Those

who were part of the second wave, except Kennedy, continue to be part of the third. Its rise is enhanced as well by the emergence of "a whole host of new poets" (*Creative* [2] 185), among whom Pacey pays special tribute to Anderson, Page, Dudek, Layton, Souster, and Waddington.

No such confluence is characteristic of the fourth wave that Pacey adds to the overall pattern. Instead, he observes that in the 1950s most of the poets who had dominated the English-Canadian literary scene during its second and third periods of creative activity "either ceased to write or became relatively inactive, and with a few exceptions the most striking and interesting work was done by newcomers" (*Creative* [2] 234). The exceptions he singles out are Layton and Souster; the newcomers are Reaney, Macpherson, Hine, and Cohen.

This fourth wave runs contrary to the pattern in a more significant way, too. It does not stem from a rising tide of national unity in political and economic affairs. Instead, explains Pacey, the 1950s "saw the dissipation of the idealism and sense of common purpose which marked the war and postwar years" ("Canadian Literature" 212). Though he acknowledges that "beneath all the surface disturbances the groundswell of cultural nationalism continued to roll" ("Writer" 493), all that now remains of the earlier "idealism" and "sense of common purpose" is "opposition to the economic and cultural domination of the United States" (*Creative* [2] 231). It is not enough, however, to prevent Canadian writers from becoming "confused and frustrated," says Pacey, at the erratic course followed by world political and economic events during the decade ("Canadian Literature" 212). Rising conflicts in these areas become responsible for the poets' strong sense of the "baffling complexity and frustrating inadequacy of their own time and place" (*Creative* [2] 231). Since they respond to it by stressing different aims in different parts of the country, English-Canadian poets are divided by their conflicting motives into regional schools, rather than united by a single underlying spirit of national economic and political unity.

While Pacey's four-wave pattern of temporal division thus reinforces his four-region pattern of spatial division, both are the result, ironically, of his efforts to distinguish the unifying features

of an "essentially" or "distinctly" national literature. As Pacey makes clear in his original introduction to *Creative Writing in Canada*, however, there is a second way of interpreting the question, "Of what does distinctiveness consist"? — a way that would seem, at first, to lead more toward a recognition of national unity and less toward a reflection of spatial and temporal diversity. If, Pacey explains, "a distinctive national culture" consists of "something more profound" than an accurate reflection of the nation's "social organization, geography, and political history," if it consists instead of "the projection of a unique philosophy or the origination of special forms and techniques," even then, he maintains, "a case can be made out" for the distinctiveness of Canadian culture, "though it is less strong" (1-2). The case he proceeds to make out, however, once again reflects an underlying pattern of division, this time in the collective psychology of Canadian writers.

The first cause of such division, in Pacey's view, is "an immensely powerful physical environment" that fashions two forms of ambivalence in English-Canadian poetry (*Creative* 2). Just as the previously defined patterns are primarily spatial or temporal, the first of these psychological forms manifests itself synchronically, the second diachronically. The first also develops what Pacey calls "a distinctive conception of man's lot on the earth" because the environment from which it arises is "*at once* forbidding and fascinating" (2, emphasis added).

This remark constitutes as well a response to Northrop Frye. According to Pacey, when Frye calls the distinctive "artistic response" to Canada's geographical conditions "'the evocation of stark terror,'" he presents the first of his half-truths (*Creative* 199). Pacey objects that "this phrase, suggestive as it is, is not sufficiently inclusive" because the climate and landscape are "alluring" as well as "frightening" (199, 202). They inspire "exultation" as well as "fear" (199). Prevalidating Frye's later statement that "No idea is anything more than a half-truth unless it contains its own opposite, and is expanded by its own denial or qualification" (*Modern* 16), Pacey maintains:

> Exhilaration succeeded by or coupled with apprehension — this is what we find expressed over and over again in the most distinctive products of the Canadian imagination. . . . In Canadian literature this paradoxical awareness of the glory

> and terror of the natural environment is everywhere. ("Canadian Imagination" 438)

Pacey's expanded whole-truth thus consists of a psychological paradox, an apparent contradiction between simultaneous, or nearly so, apprehension and exhilaration. Both are inspired by the environment and sustained by the mind.

A similar sense of paradox becomes apparent when Pacey further attributes to Canadian literature "a distinctive conception of man's lot on the earth" (*Creative* 2). Calling it "a conception of man as paradoxically puny and mighty at once" ("Poetry" 107), he presents it as a corollary development. It too stems from the environment, because "Physically, [man] is incapable of withstanding the onslaughts of storm and flood; but he has spiritual resources by which he transcends destruction." The result is an apparent contradiction between simultaneous humility and audacity in much of Canadian literature.

As Pacey continues to expound these paradoxes throughout his career, he becomes more and more convinced that "the distinctive vision" of Canadian literature is thus a "double vision" ("Canadian Imagination" 439). His comments about Pratt suggest it is really a twice double vision. Pacey finds its most definitive expression here not only because Pratt envisions "a world which at once repels and allures us," but also because he places into it "man in his physical frailty but spiritual tenacity" (440).

To the landscape and climate of Canada, therefore, Pacey attributes principles that give rise to what he finally calls "protean paradoxes" ("Canadian Imagination" 444). They in turn give to Canadian literature "its most distinctive qualities" (438). Among these, the most definitive is the sense of conflict and struggle that Pacey continually emphasizes. Near the beginning of his career, he maintains that the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott presents what "may well come to be regarded as the distinctive vision of Canadian art" ("Poetry" 107). It is "a vision of conflict on a titanic scale," a conflict in which human beings are physically dwarfed by an environment that is "frightening because of its capacity to destroy, fascinating because of the intensity of its challenge," and against which these frail human beings pit their spiritual resources "of courage and endurance." Near the end of his career, Pacey similarly concludes:

> It is this sense of a dramatic struggle, never won but never irretrievably lost, that is the chief effect of our climate upon our literature — and it is that which gives it its most distinctive, *its most compelling component.* ("'Summer's Heat'" 23)

An equally pervasive struggle is evident in Pacey's second form of psychological ambivalence. Adopting a diachronic rather than a synchronic point of view, he maintains that to set English-Canadian poetry in chronological perspective is to discern another "recurring tension" in the nation's collective poetic output (*Essays* 148). This tension arises from a struggle "between the impulse to make poetry somehow removed from ordinary life (whether by intellectualization, mythologizing, or emotional stylization) and the impulse to set it firmly in the here and now." There are some English-Canadian poets, that is, who deliberately spurn their spatial and temporal surroundings in order to concentrate upon "the more permanent world of archetypal forms and myths" (*Creative* [2] 231).

Pacey first acknowledges this undercurrent in his discussion of the mythopoeic school of poets centred in Toronto during the 1950s. In doing so, he admits to his bias against their tendency to emphasize "the formal aspects of poetry and . . . archetypes of experience" over "the raw stuff of everyday life" (*Creative* [2] 236). He explains: "my own prejudice leads me to fear that [their work] too often degenerates into artificiality, into being literature about literature rather than literature about life" (245). Yet Pacey gives credit where he believes credit is due. He admits that such poetry "at its best . . . is undeniably clever, sophisticated, and brilliant." He even acknowledges not only that the Toronto school is "in many ways the most brilliant" of the three he has identified, but also that "there can be no doubt it is the school which has dominated Canadian poetry" during the 1950s (235, 245).

Later, Pacey goes further. He gives these poets who "concentrate upon universal themes and symbols" equal status with those who emphasize "the central issues of [their] own time and place" ("Canadian Imagination" 444). Despite his bias against the former and his affinity for the latter, he notes without judgement that there has been an oscillation between "poles of mythological remoteness and realistic closeness" in the history of English-Canadian poetry (*Essays* 196). He concludes that "The tension itself is a creative one, and it has been good for our poetry" (148).

By the end of his career, then, Pacey's history of English-Canadian poetry has become a representation of manifold division. Four spatial regions, four temporal waves, and two forms of psychological ambivalence have emerged from what he once called the foundations of a "distinctly" and "essentially" national poetry. Yet the sense of coherent identity implied by such adjectives ultimately breaks down even further, because Pacey's representation contributes to an evaluation in which Canadian literary history at large amounts to an erratic record of "dismal failures" interspersed with "moderate successes" (*Creative* [2] 282). This is so because, in Pacey's own terms, none of the poets in any of his waves or regions, none of those who either express the twofold psychological paradox or spurn the environment from which it arises, in short *no* English-Canadian poet ever fully realizes the fusion of "particular" knowledge and "universal" concern that he upholds as the standard of great art.

Such fusion, according to Pacey, leads to permanent, international recognition. His most persistent criticism of all English-Canadian poets, however, is that they have failed to achieve it. Near the beginning of his career, in his 1943 letter to Smith, Pacey scoffs at the use of a quotation from his own "At Last — A Canadian Literature" as evidence that Pratt "had a reputation outside of Canada!" Near the end of his career, in his posthumously published *Essays: Canadian Literature in English,* he concludes that "Canada has yet produced no great writers by world standards" (193).

Yet the more Pacey reinscribes division in the history of English-Canadian poetry, the more he longs to say it has attained the kind of maturity that the work of such a writer represents for him. He longs, that is, to say the national poetry has come of age in spite of the conflicting spatial, temporal, and psychological divisions he discerns in both its present and its past. A late change in Pacey's overall evaluation of his divided structural patterns not only reflects this longing, but also indicates why it cannot be fulfilled.

During the 1950s, when Pacey first outlined his three creative periods in Canadian literary history, he also maintained that the progress from one wave to the next "has been slight" ("Canadian Writer" 132). He explains:

> it seems to me that the second and third waves have not reached significantly higher than the first, that there has been little measurable advance. The only real improvement has been quantitative rather than qualitative: the first wave was restricted to a few poets, whereas the second and third have included considerably larger groups of poets and prose writers as well. (133-34)

During the 1960s, when he added his fourth wave to the temporal pattern, Pacey continued to assert that in spite of "auspicious developments" English-Canadian literature "is still in a state of promise rather than of solid achievement" ("Canadian Literature" 212). Yet he also surmised that "If the sixties fulfill the promise of the fifties, we may be able ten years from now to look backward with pride" rather than "forward with hope." Ten years later, Pacey does exactly that. He affirms that in "The level of our intellectual and cultural life . . . we can pride ourselves not merely on our promise but on our achievement" ("My Canada" 6). He now discerns in the last 70 years "a fairly steady advance in both the quantity and quality of writing in Canada, and . . . especially in the years since World War II, a rapidly accelerating progress" (*Essays* 193, emphasis added).

Paradoxically, the more Pacey's evaluation changes, the more it stays the same. Just as in the 1950s he concluded that "we have not yet a literature that can compare with the great literatures of the world" ("Canadian Writer" 133), so too in the 1960s he maintains that in spite of its "steady progress, and recently spectacular progress," Canadian literature still "does not yet rival the great literatures of such countries as France, England, Russia and the United States" ("English-Canadian Literature" 1).[5] Throughout these decades, the final evidence he continually cites as proof of his conclusion is that "There are as yet no giants, no great world figures, among Canadian writers" (1). Yet if such a writer were finally to emerge, Pacey would be unable to say so without violating the first principle that informs his entire career as a critic and historian of English-Canadian literature. To say so, that is, would be to commit "the besetting sin of Canadian criticism" from which he has religiously sought to abstain.

On this apparent contradiction, Pacey's history of English-Canadian poetry founders. To say that the national culture has

come of age, which he longs to do, Pacey believes he must identify a literary giant whose work represents the permanent fusion of "particular" knowledge and "universal" concern, a fusion he views as the mark of greatness in the world's mature national literatures. Yet to say that such an English-Canadian writer now exists would also be to promote "the myth of the up-to-date," to validate the present at the expense of both the past and the future, which he has vowed he will not do.

Escaping the contradiction, Pacey redirects his attention away from poetry, away from fiction as well, turning it instead to the criticism of English-Canadian poetry and fiction. Here he finds a body of work that does fully attain the elusive fusion of "particular" knowledge and "universal" concern. Here he also finds a "dominant," world-renowned figure — Northrop Frye. Though Pacey refrains from calling him a "giant," he reluctantly submits that Canadian criticism is at its best in Frye's work, and he reinscribes the maturity of Canadian culture in the practice of such criticism. Even so, the national culture does not come of age, in Pacey's view, through the work of Frye and Frye alone. His achievement is instead made possible by the work of others, most notably A. J. M. Smith. In the contrary work of John Sutherland, however, Pacey locates his own forerunner, suggesting as well that the two of them mark out an alternative route to cultural maturity.

3. Relocation

In *Creative Writing in Canada*, Pacey divides the criticism of English-Canadian literature along the same lines that Smith, Sutherland, and Frye divide the history of English-Canadian poetry. He casts it into an opposition between two conflicting tendencies. The first exhibits the kind of "local" orientation that informs poetry inspired by Frye's centripetal impulse, poetry that constitutes Smith's native tradition. In its extreme form, according to Pacey, the corresponding tendency in criticism exalts "every poem or novel produced [in Canada] simply because, in the face of appalling obstacles, it has been produced at all" (3). The second tendency exhibits the kind of "universal" orientation that informs poetry inspired by Frye's centrifugal impulse, poetry that constitutes Smith's cosmopolitan tradition. Again in its extreme form, the corresponding tendency

in criticism insists "that absolutely no account be taken of the extenuating circumstances" (3).

These conflicting critical tendencies are a further consequence, in Pacey's view, of the shortcoming he most persistently attributes to Canadian literary history at large: that it has failed to produce a giant, a great world figure. In 1950, already calling it "an obvious statement," Pacey observes "that there is no single pre-eminent Canadian writer, no one even remotely approaching the stature of Milton or Fielding" ("Literary Criticism" 117). There is no one whose work sets a standard, therefore, which critics can use to measure the achievement of other Canadian writers. As a result, says Pacey:

> For standards of measurement, the Canadian critic must invariably look outside the borders of his own country. He must relate the subject of his study to a tradition which is in at least some degree alien. (118)

Since Pacey is himself such a critic, this conclusion implies that his own work inevitably reflects both an understanding of foreign traditions and an application of international standards. His criticism of Canadian literature must be derived, therefore, from a "universal" orientation that corresponds to both Frye's centrifugal impulse and Smith's cosmopolitan tradition.

Two years later, Pacey explicitly confirms the implication. In *Creative Writing in Canada*, he acknowledges that his own critical tendency is "to insist that absolutely no account be taken of . . . extenuating circumstances." This attitude is "the proper one," he explains, because "any literature must submit to judgement by the standards applicable to all literatures" (3). At the same time, he admits that his "impassive ideal is almost impossible to apply in practice, and one's judgement is inevitably affected by one's knowledge of the circumstances in which the writing was done." As a result of the ambivalence, Pacey asserts: "I shall attempt to approximate this ideal," then immediately adds: "but that very fact makes me anxious to set down here an account of the main obstacles that have beset the writer in Canada" (3).

As much as he is inclined to practice a centrifugal or cosmopolitan form of criticism, therefore, Pacey cannot deny his contrary tendency to practice a centripetal or native form, too. On the one hand he must, in his own terms, "invariably" look beyond

the borders of Canada to find evaluative standards. On the other hand his judgement is "inevitably" affected by his knowledge of the circumstances in which Canadian writing has been done. In his own criticism, therefore, Pacey strives to enact the same kind of confederation or synthesis that Smith, Sutherland, and Frye validate in the history of English-Canadian poetry. A contemporary critic, in his view, like a contemporary poet, in theirs, must reconcile in the present two tendencies that have always been "at war" in the past (*Creative* 3). Moreover, while Smith, Sutherland, and Frye ultimately assert that such a fusion marks the maturity of Canadian culture, Pacey is tempted to do the same. He is predisposed, however, to find his evidence elsewhere. From the start of his career, he maintains that a fulfilment of the dialectical pattern in criticism, rather than poetry, will finally prove that Canadian culture has come of age.

It must be remembered that in Pacey's version of the dialectical pattern, "universal validity" can be attained only through "regional accuracy" ("Outlook" 24). This means that critics of Canadian literature, like the poets and novelists they criticize, must turn their attention to "the local scene, the local problem" ("Our Literature"). For these critics, however, what is "local" or "regional" is in fact the *national* literary output. Pacey implies as much when he submits to his colleagues that "as Canadians we have a special right and responsibility to investigate our own literary history" ("Literary Criticism" 119). By the time he makes this statement in 1950, Pacey has already started to exercise that right and responsibility on a national level. He has undertaken *Creative Writing in Canada*, doing what he claims literary critics in Canada must be willing to do: that is, "devote part of our time to the tracing and fostering of our own special tradition, the tradition of British North America" (119). Having said so and begun to do so, he concludes that "The emergence of such criticism will be perhaps the most certain sign that 'our day of dependence is over,' that our cultural immaturity is on the wane."

Though Pacey never submits in any explicit way that his own critical practice thus illustrates the maturity of Canadian culture, he does so in an implicit way. Eighteen years later, in 1968, he observes that English-Canadians are finally "approaching that state of cultural maturity in which we are ready to see ourselves

steadily and see ourselves whole" ("Outlook" 22). The "most certain sign" of this development, he maintains, is the emergence of a new generation of literary critics who devote at least part of their time "to the tracing and fostering of our own special tradition." It is a generation to which Pacey himself clearly belongs, because he too exemplifies its most noteworthy characteristic: another version of native-cosmopolitan confederation, centripetal-centrifugal synthesis. As Pacey now puts it:

> Although [these critics] all had a strong interest in Canadian writing, they were far from being merely parochial: most of them had studied also in Great Britain or the United States, and all of them were scholars knowledgeable about other literatures as well as that of their native or adopted country of Canada. ("Course" 22)

Having been born in New Zealand in 1917, having moved to England at age seven and to Canada at age 14, having received his BA from the University of Toronto and his PhD from Cambridge University, and having written about French, English, and American as well as Canadian literature, Pacey must be one of these scholars, too.

As a group, moreover, they all enact his own variation on the theme of maturity attained through compromise. They turn, that is, to "the local scene, the local problem," and they follow the path of "regional accuracy." In 1976, therefore, in his first posthumously published essay, Pacey concludes:

> The present century, and especially the last fifty years, has seen the gradual but sure emergence of a literary criticism in this country which is based upon a shrewd understanding of Canada but not upon a romantic adulation of everything Canadian; which is expressed in a language recognizably indigenous in its allusions, vocabulary, and rhythms; and which has increasingly concerned itself with close analysis rather than with general exhortation. ("Course" 17)

For Pacey, only such "close analysis" of whatever is "indigenous" will lead, finally, to expressions of "universal validity," expressions that will simultaneously testify to the maturity of Canadian culture. However, while he maintains that this state of maturity is being approached in the work of an entire generation, its most

noteworthy representatives for Pacey are Smith, Sutherland, and Frye.

Many of his comments indicate that Pacey ought to be seen as one of Frye's important Canadian opponents. For instance, about Frye's role as "godfather and sponsor" to the mythopoeic school of poets centred in Toronto, Pacey laconically remarks: "if poetry is now being led by criticism, rather than vice versa, I suspect that it is true for the first time in English literary history and for that reason a rather dubious proceeding" ("Canadian Literature" 203, 205). About Frye's elevation of "professional" poets who emphasize form over "amateur" poets who emphasize content, he wryly concludes: "if to write poetry out of one's own emotional experience rather than out of books of literary criticism is an amateurish proceeding, there have been some excellent amateur poets over the centuries" (205).

Other comments indicate, however, that Pacey should also be seen as one of Frye's important Canadian proponents. In the same essay, for instance, he asserts that Canadian criticism is not only "at [its] best," but also "brilliantly creative" in Frye's work (211). Fifteen years later he recognizes the "Frye school of mythopoeic and thematic criticism" as the "dominant" school in Canada ("Course" 24).

Pacey has similarly ambivalent feelings about Smith's criticism and its influence. On the one hand, *The Book of Canadian Poetry* constitutes for him part of a "decisive turning point" in the history of Canadian criticism ("Outlook" 15). In his view it set a highly salutary precedent, one that Smith maintained throughout his career by continually asserting "that Canadian writing must be judged by world standards, must be conscious of its time as well as its place, and must be ready to subject itself to detailed critical scrutiny" ("Course" 21). On the other hand, Pacey increasingly distanced himself from what he saw as Smith's unrelenting bias against whatever is native in literary affairs. Near the end of his career, Pacey even defined his own collected *Essays in Canadian Criticism* (1969) *against* the example Smith set. He did so by using the following quotation from W. B. Yeats as his epigraph:

> Cosmopolitan literature is, at best, but a poor bubble, though a big one. Creative work has always a fatherland.

> There is no fine nationality without literature, and . . . no fine literature without nationality.

For Pacey, however, Smith also provided the second half of what Frye finally synthesizes into a "dominant" form of Canadian criticism. The first half is provided by Smith's predecessor, Lorne Pierce, whom Pacey considered to be the representative Canadian critic of the 1920s and 30s, which is what he considered Smith to be in the 1940s and 50s. According to Pacey, Pierce practiced the native or centripetal form of Canadian criticism. He tended to exalt "every poem or novel produced [in Canada] simply because, in the face of appalling obstacles, it has been produced at all." Such "uncritical adulation" ultimately provoked the cosmopolitan or centrifugal tendency in Smith's critical practice ("Course" 21). Smith insisted "that absolutely no account be taken of the extenuating circumstances" in Canadian literary history. It is Frye who finally synthesizes "Pierce's national myth-making" with "Smith's literary sophistication" ("Course" 24).

Pacey's history of Canadian criticism appears to culminate, therefore, with Frye's realization of centripetal and centrifugal synthesis, native and cosmopolitan confederation, a fusion that attests to the maturity of Canadian culture for Smith, Sutherland, and Frye. In this dialectical representation, however, Sutherland seems to have disappeared from the history of Canadian criticism. Pacey carefully makes sure he does not, just as he ultimately casts into doubt the significance of Frye's achievement.

As early as 1950, Pacey claimed it was "a very good thing" not only that "we have had the un-academic enthusiasm of Lorne Pierce," but also that "we now have the equally un-academic bluntness of John Sutherland to ruffle the placid waters of our critical literature" ("Literary Criticism" 114-15). Both, in his view, are defined by their opposition to Smith. He explains that Sutherland saw cosmopolitanism as "merely a polite synonym for colonialism," in defiance of which he promoted poetry embodying "'a more Canadian point of view, a greater interest in themes and problems of a Canadian kind'" ("Course" 23, 24). Pacey admits, moreover, that as much as he himself respected "Smith's standards," his own sympathies lay with "the social-realist brand of nationalism preached by the early Sutherland" (24). This admission is understated. The course of Pacey's career indicates not

only that he would have "welcomed such a development," but also that he increasingly devoted himself to its promotion. His quotation from Yeats shows how he finally stressed the codependency of Canadian literature and Canadian nationality. In his own dialectical terms, however, Pacey maintains that "the Smith thesis of cosmopolitan classicism" did not provoke "the direct antithesis of national realism" (24). What developed instead was Frye's critical synthesis.

Thus the failure of Sutherland's social-realist brand of nationalism to become "the new direction" in Canadian literary criticism was in part Pacey's failure too ("Course" 24). He does not acknowledge it as such. He continues instead to express hope for its return, and he advances the cause by promoting a critical counterpart to Sutherland's social realism. In doing so, he also maps out another critical path to cultural maturity.

Pacey concludes his career by suggesting that the "now dominant Frye school of mythopoeic and thematic criticism" will pass *without* Canadian culture having come of age. He consigns its "thematic surveys such as the recent books of Jones, Atwood, and Moss" to the same imminent, historical dustbin to which he consigns "preliminary critical assessments of individual authors such as the various recent series of monographs have provided" ("Course" 31). To this dustbin he also consigns "Introductory historical surveys such as my own *Creative Writing in Canada*." Calling them all "useful in their day," Pacey concludes nevertheless that "their day is over, or soon will be." He affirms instead that "Much hard scholarship must come before another major critical breakthrough can occur" (31).

With the word *scholarship*, Pacey identifies his own last alternative to Frye's synthesis. He asserts that even though "we need literary criticism, both to interpret and evaluate our literature . . . we also need literary scholarship to provide us with authoritative texts and annotations" ("Areas" 69). Shortly before his death, in the 1974 letter that he calls "the nearest I shall ever come to writing an *apologia pro vita sua*," Pacey recounts that "recently, I have been trying to do what I feel now most needs doing — editing letters and texts, so that we may have scholarly sound materials upon which to base our critical judgements." Only when this has been done, he concludes elsewhere, "Only when we have an exten-

sive range of such scholarly texts and analyses shall I be prepared to say that Canadian literary study has come of age" ("Areas" 69).

Just as Pacey's history of English-Canadian poetry ends, therefore, in a representation of manifold division, his history of Canadian literary criticism ends in a representation of binary opposition. In both, maturity is finally deferred by a lack of unity. While in poetry the divisions are spatial, temporal, and psychological, in criticism the division is methodological. Implicitly, the next generation can follow Pacey's scholarly path or Frye's critical path, but the dialectical pattern underlying their work continues to call for synthesis.

NOTES

[1] For a full version of my argument that Smith and Sutherland, despite their well-known opposition, ended up supporting much the same vision of the history of English-Canadian poetry, see "The Bishop and His Deacon: Smith vs. Sutherland Reconsidered."

[2] I have traced Frye's recreation of their confederated pattern in "From Fathers to Sun: Northrop Frye and the History of English-Canadian Poetry." At the start of his career, Frye praised Smith's first *Book of Canadian Poetry* (1943) for proving "the existence of a definable Canadian genius . . . which is neither British nor American but, for all its echoes and imitations and second-hand ideas, peculiarly our own" ("Canada" 207). He then concluded not only that "the regional" and "the imperial" are both "inherently anti-poetic" environments (208), but also that poetry "flourishes best" within such a "national unit" as Canada had become (207).

By the late 1970s, however, the concept of a national unit as culture's most fertile ground had virtually disappeared from Frye's line of thought. He now affirms that "A world like ours produces a single international style of which all existing literatures are regional developments" ("Across" 7). The most fertile ground for poetry thus becomes "a restricted locale" ("Sharing" 62), from which rooted individual plants grow into international space.

[3] Though published four years after his death in 1975, Pacey appears to have written this book in the mid to late 1960s. Its editor, A. L. McLeod, explains that Pacey agreed to undertake it a "few years" after the publication of his own *The Commonwealth Pen: An Introduction to the Literature of the British Commonwealth* (1961), and that Pacey "substantially restructured and rewrote his manuscript in 1969" (viii). He saw it, according to McLeod, "as a means of updating by a decade the revised edition of his *Creative Writing in Canada* [1961]."

[4] Pacey affirms this characteristic as late as 1962, when he observes that "we still do have something of a colonial inferiority complex in our constant self-depreciation" ("Young Writer" 390).

[5] Even on this point Pacey appears to contradict himself. In 1973 he affirms that "Contemporary Canadian poetry and fiction . . . is as interesting as any being produced in English anywhere" ("Study" 71). He now submits that "in the last thirty years" Canadian literature *has* "come of age, has increased in both quantity *and* quality" (emphasis added). Because he does not fully expound such a definitive development, I consider this late statement to be a last manifestation of his critical ambivalence and his desire to *say* that English-Canadian culture has come of age, rather than a thorough revision of the historical pattern he composed throughout the previous four decades of his life.

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