GREETING THE UNKNOWNNS WITH A CHEER

Since my title resounds with literary echoes, I wish to disclaim at once any attempt to adopt the heroic stance of Browning's "Epilogue to Asolando" or the sarcasm of Frank Scott's "The Canadian Authors Meet." Bruce Hutchinson's *The Unknown Country* comes closer to what I have in mind. In spite of all the recent books on Canada, there are still unknown volumes and unknown facts about authors which one may find and welcome with a cheer.

The editors of *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* have agreed with me that the preparation of their volume planned to cover the early part of the 19th century will present unusually great difficulties. In that area of literary study the problems are compounded by the lack of publishing facilities in the Canadas during that early period; by the sporadic nature of literary endeavour; by journalistic casualness about by-lines; by duplication of names and the habitual use of pseudonyms; and by the subsequent general indifference to the collection and preservation of indigenous writings.

Because I had unusual luck in finding bits and pieces of some neglected unknowns, I wish to talk about a few, especially with reference to the earliest period of English in the Canadas, now called Quebec and Ontario. But, first, I shall explain how circumstances laid down for me the guidelines for such an enterprise.

In my youth Canadian historians and their bibliographers had begun to reorganize their disciplines upon a scholarly basis of hard data, but most writers about Canadian literature were aiming at being instant critics, preferring to let sleeping facts lie. There was no call for antiquarians, and I would not have responded if there had been one, for I aspired to master imitation of the felicitous terms and tones of English-trained professors in Canadian universities.

My courses in history had directed my interest to studies of my own country. I chose the Group of the 'Sixties as the best available Canadian subject for genteel discussion in my M.A. dissertation at Columbia University in New York. I cannot praise this effort too little: I have had the ingenuity to keep it buried from the prying of bibliographers until this day. Like many contemporaries with an interest in Canadiana, I had to go beyond the borders of my own country to prepare for advanced study of our literature. At Columbia I followed V.L.O. Chittick, who had published a doctoral thesis on Haliburton, and Carl Y. Connor, whose doctoral thesis on Lampman was in the press.

I was lucky in being there about 1929-1930, in my impressionable youth, when Professor Pelham Edgar of Toronto was lecturing at summer school. He was kind and generous to his young countryman and, back in Canada, introduced me to that great and genial bookman, Dr. Lorne Pierce, and so also to Colonel

Basil Campbell: I came away with permission to base my Ph.D. thesis on the numerous papers and letters of Wilfred Campbell which are now at Queen's University.¹ Here again was a windfall for me, but a puzzle for Columbia professors, who could not decide where I belonged for supervision, whether in American or Victorian or Comparative Literature. The final oral on my book turned into a lecture by one of my examiners, Professor J. B. Brebner of Columbia's Department of History. To this day neither I nor my advisers know in which of the conventional areas of study my degree was awarded.

Columbia was good for me: it knocked out my provincialism and taught me research techniques of English and Comparative literature which, if applied to Canadiana, might yield academic respectability to the systematic study of our own literature. I was amazed to find that systematic scholarship in the literature of the United States was of fairly recent date, and that it had not yet achieved a superior position in the graduate schools. I worked, however, under one of the most meticulous of American scholars, Professor R. L. Rusk, who had completed his exhaustive bibliography, *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* (New York, 1925). He suggested the possibility of my doing a similar task for Canadian literature. At the time I found this proposal distasteful, but I later spent many decades of research in trying to do exactly what he had foreseen.

The friendship, advice, example, and support of distinguished professors who took my subject seriously also began to meet my desperate need for confidence and objectivity in critical valuation of Canadian creative works. I was particularly fortunate in being sponsored by that great and modest man, Dr. Henry W. Wells, whose catholicity of taste is still displayed in a constant flow of perceptive books on Elizabethan, American, Oriental and, indeed, World literature. Teaching me and other Canadians by example, he wrote a book placing Ned Pratt in the mainstream of world poetry in English.²

During my years in the United States I visited the places where Campbell had sojourned as a theological student. On my trips to Cambridge and, of course, to Concord, I began to have doubts about ascribing Campbell's idealism to the influence of Wordsworth; "on the spot" I knew that Campbell had surrendered there to doubts about evolution and myth-making which drove him out of the Church, and he had found in New England a poetic resolution in the optimistic transcendentalism of Emerson.

So my guide-lines for research began to include a theory of the necessity for travel; that Canadian scholars must go as far afield as the authors being studied had gone. I nursed a secret, but then apparently hopeless, ambition to go to Scotland. When I finally saw the castles, hills and lochs of Campbell's beloved Argyll, my sassenach-oriented mind understood for the first time how this Canadian poet could have built his world view upon Scottish nostalgia.

Canadian literary history, I soon felt, was cramped by unsystematic use of local source materials, but even more by a lack of horizons. And the definitions of "Canadian" were too restrictive. There has been sarcasm about the free-wheeling procedure adopted years later for the *Literary History of Canada*, but has it not meant intellectual emancipation to extend our study to "whoever

¹ *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism*, Toronto, 1943.

² H. W. Wells and Carl F. Klinck, *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and His Poetry*, Toronto, 1947.

or whatever is native, or has been naturalized, or has a distinct bearing upon the native”³ This policy enables one to claim our immigrants and our expatriates as the British and Americans claim theirs. It recalls to memory many an author like Gilbert Parker from the limbo where neither the British nor the Americans claim him. It gives the study of “Canadian” literature an opening masterpiece in *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), and it “naturalizes” in Canada a host of pre-Confederation books published in England and the United States, and long forgotten there.

Probably the most salutary effect of this guideline has been to “naturalize” our literary past through increased interest in the term “native.” This interest is, unfortunately, not always focused on getting more and more authentic facts about authors and their works and times. Canadian criticism has too often taken a detour into subjective guess-work about Canadian “identity.” My own experience with hard-core facts has persuaded me that what is “native” and distinctively “Canadian” is a progressive development, a myriad of identities mingling to form a North American society of unique complexity, expressed in our literature in individual creative variety by men and women of many different cultural backgrounds. I have no patience with the popular sport of squeezing our past into a single sacred formula of retarded existence to be memorized by school-children. One page of an annotated bibliography of our literature holds more truth for me in its rich and treasured diversity than a whole volume of objective over-simplified speculative theory.

There is still insufficient imaginative use of the research facilities afforded by the libraries, archives, and private collections in Canada. How many scholars comb out systematically the bits of Canadian information from all the standard reference works and catalogues of library and private holdings in the United Kingdom and the United States? Discoveries may be limited in number, but they are often pregnant with suggestion.

It is never safe to assume that there is nothing for English-Canadians in the libraries of French Canada; in the British Museum, in the Record Office and in parochial and private records abroad; in the Library of Congress, and in the archives of Michigan, Ohio, New York and Wisconsin. As clouds lift from the horizon, even the foreground becomes clearer. To put it another way, a view in perspective can always be achieved, and then improved by travel to spots where there is an aura or atmosphere and relevant material for certification of facts and for definitive commentary. So, I have followed my clues as a roving traveller, thanks to similarly sensible views held by the Humanities Research Council, the Canada Council, my own University, and my wife, all of whom have been most generous to one who is a maverick in Canadian studies. Not with egotism, but with a profound sense of obligation, I will tell you what a few of my projects on very early Canadian writers have meant to me.

When the Graphic Publishers of Ottawa issued the first Canadian edition of Mrs. Frances Brooke’s *The History of Emily Montague* in 1931, someone connected with the firm, perhaps Frederick Philip Grove, displayed insight and imagination beyond the capacity of the Canadian book market of that time. My copy evidently came from among the cut-price remainders when the Graphic Publishers went bankrupt a few years later. Probably not enough women had

³*Literary History of Canada*, “Introduction”, p. X.

rallied around in the early 1930s to secure a memento of this pioneer of Women's Lib in the Canadas. At first I valued the book chiefly for its vivid descriptions of Quebec city and because its introduction and notes by Lawrence J. Burpee were models of scholarly editing, based upon sources in the Public Archives of Canada and the files of the *Quebec Gazette*.

When I persuaded McClelland and Stewart to risk a second edition in 1961, I knew that Mrs. Brooke's name and residence had never been entirely forgotten in Quebec, and I wondered whether some enterprising American scholars had done anything to claim her, for she sojourned on this side of the Atlantic in the very special interim period of 1760 to 1776, when Quebec and the various States shared membership in Britain's North American empire. The massive *Literary History of the United States*, published in 1946 by Robert E. Spiller and others, contained no mention of Mrs. Brooke, and, to my amazement, the standard bibliographies of American Fiction recorded no novel as early as 1769.⁴ So this was the first North American novel: *Emily Montague* composed in Quebec.

My imagination was stirred. Here was an opportunity to offer paragraphs of addition and correction to the literary history of the United States and perhaps of England. I found that Albert C. Baugh's monumental volume, *A Literary History of England* (New York, 1948) did no more than name "Mrs. Frances Brooke (1724-1789), author of *Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763), and a further train of other ladies somewhat too seriously sentimental for long popularity." But I found, when I went abroad, that something more could be said for Mrs. Brooke. She had not been entirely neglected by biographers, and I became indebted for information to the researches of John Nichols published in his *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (1812)⁵ and to those of E. Phillips Poole in his modern edition of *Lady Julia Mandeville* (London, 1930). I dared to believe that *Emily Montague* was a better novel than *Julia Mandeville*, and that Canadian critical examination in modern terms could improve upon the entry in Ernest A. Baker's *The History of the English Novel* (1934).⁶

Mrs. Brooke lived and wrote in the important period of the formulation of the modern English novel, for she got her start in the literary circle of Samuel Richardson. But what, apart from this fact of literary history, could be said regarding the literary value of *Emily Montague*? A good deal in terms of modern criticism, I thought, because the difference between *Mandeville* and *Montague* in the handling of the epistolary technique showed a great advance of skill in the Quebec novel.

Two propositions seemed bold, but irresistible: first that literary creativity in Canada was older and more closely related to contemporary fashions in Britain and the United States than we had thought — an impression confirmed by facts about our early 19th century writings. Secondly, that no readable Canadian book ought to be neglected or dismissed from the canon unless it

⁴By Oscar Wegelin (New York, 1929), Arthur L. Quinn (New York, c1936) and Lyle H. Wright (San Marino, Calif., 1939).

⁵II, 346-347.

⁶*The History of the English Novel* (London, 1934) V, 114-46.

had failed serious critical tests of style and structure in the light of the author's creative intention.

Such guidelines proved their value in seminars. For example, Miss Marilyn Davis felt encouraged to prove that the unique copy of *Belinda* (1839)⁷ by A.S.H. in the Detroit Public Library was not only what it professed to be, "a Tale of Real Life" set in the Chatham area, but that a local youth had actually perpetrated a rare and deliberate burlesque of the perennial American sentimental novels of seduction.⁸ These had flourished for several generations after the publication of *The Coquette* (Boston, 1797) by Mrs. Hannah Foster, the New England mother of Mrs. Cushing and Mrs. Cheney of Montreal, who became stalwarts of John Lovell's *Literary Garland*. Mrs. Foster died in Montreal in 1840. Such inter-relationships in American and Canadian literary history have proved to be not uncommon in all periods to which study has been devoted.

We also recovered, thanks to Dr. Kaye Lamb, all the available files of the first critical journal in the Canadas, *The Scribbler* of Montreal (1821-1827). Study of it, from the half-fantasy of a series of "Letters from Pulo-Penang" to a series of learned notes on Massinger's plays led to the realization that *The Scribbler* was an extended biographical revelation of the sensitive editor, Samuel Hull Wilcocke.⁹ He had been driven out of Montreal by charges of felony laid by North West Company officials and he had taken revenge, in the comparative safety of Burlington, Plattsburg and Rouse's Point, while he harrassed and described the people of Montreal by ingenious scandalmongering. I followed his trail even into the well-worn cells of his Montreal prison, where he had started *The Scribbler*.

We found that the literary classifications borrowed from traditional English aristocratic, and American republican, criticism were misleading when applied to the development of Canadian literary activity. Without re-definition, adjustment or scrapping of some of these high critical labels, there is no hope of representing precisely what emerged from the human situations and indigenous conditions of the pre-Confederation Canadas. Here, as for England and the United States before 1830, high romanticism would not be a suitable term for literature on the level of the majority of readers, where the supreme literary artists made little immediate impact: that level was one of Goldsmithian verse; brilliant journalism; military, political and mercantile news; and historical narrative. In the Canadas it certainly was not yet a time for introspection and the mysteries of the creative imagination. When they tried to rise above the prevailing realism, authors tended to present local scenes and history in grandiose terms. The literature of the Indians of the Canadas took a distinctive heroic turn, affected more by observation of living Indians and by history than by theories

⁷A.S.H. [Abraham S. Holmes] *Belinda: or The Rivals. A Tale of Real Life* Vancouver, The Alcuin Society, 1970.

⁸See Marilyn I. Davis's M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, "Belinda and the Sentimental Seduction Tradition" [unpublished]. Also Davis, "Anglo-Boston Bamboozled" in *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, II, Special Issue, Summer 1973, no. 3, pp. 56-61; and F. C. Hamil, "A Pioneer Novelist of Kent County," *Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records*, XXXIX (1947) 101-113.

⁹See "Samuel Hull Wilcocke", *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, II, Special Issue, pp. 13-21. His pseudonym was Lewis Luke MacCulloch.

of the noble savage. Major figures of Canadian Indian history were placed in the centre of literary experiments, with humanitarian overtones as in Robert Roger's neglected *Ponteach* (1766),¹⁰ with Byronic involvement as in the poems on Tecumseh by Levi Adams¹¹ and Major Richardson,¹² and with anti-missionary satire by Adam Kidd.¹³

Uncommonly free of affectation, the *Journal* of Major John Norton was epic in scope if not consciously "literary" in structure. Had it been published upon completion in 1816, Norton's book might now be known as a representative merger of the heroic and realistic rather than romantic tendencies in our early literature of the Indian. The *Journal*, however, did not appear in print until the Champlain Society of Canada published it in 1970, one hundred and fifty years after it had been deposited in hand-written form in two nicely-bound volumes in the Library of Alnwick Castle, the home of the Duke of Northumberland.¹⁴ The fortunes and misfortunes of the Second World War having made it imperative to reproduce the manuscript treasures of the great British houses, the one thousand pages of Norton's *Journal* reached the British Museum and the Library of Congress on microfilm. Crick and Alman recorded it in their *Guide to Manuscripts Relating to America in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1961). My eye happened to fall on the name of John Norton (Teyoninhokarawen) and the date 1816. It was a great moment, and more excitement followed.

Dr. James J. Talman and our wives became collaborators. The Duke of Northumberland gave us permission to publish the *Journal*, and my wife and I had the privilege of two visits to Alnwick Castle to check our type-written copy and to find relevant letters in the ducal library. Dr. Talman, meanwhile, had dug up archival records which took years to annotate and assimilate. Among these was a large bundle of Norton's correspondence which further demonstrated his forgotten role as chief and captain of the Grand River community, and his importance as friend, supporter and successor to Joseph Brant. This bundle had been as subject to chance as Norton's own career; it had been lost for years in Norton's old farmhouse on the Grand River, rescued from a salvage collection, lost again in a Historical Society vault, and finally locked up in the Ontario Archives.

At one time, according to a report by Mr. J. M. Murray,¹⁵ the bundle had contained "a small incomplete journal." Since this also had been lost, my wife and I drove all over Southwestern Ontario in search of it — only to find it among manuscripts in our own university library. Joyfully we found that it contained the first part of the Alnwick journal. At Hillhouse Farm on the Grand River we saw a medal given to Norton in Quebec. Further investigation

¹⁰*Ponteach, or The Savages of America. A Tragedy* (Chicago, Caxton Club, 1914) with a biographical sketch by Allan Nevins.

¹¹See "The Charivari and Levi Adams," *Dalhousie Review*, XL, 1960, 34-42.

¹²*Tecumseh, or, The Warrior of the West* by an English Officer (London, 1828).

¹³*The Huron Chief, and Other Poems* (Montreal, 1830. See *Queen's Quarterly* LXV, 1958, 495-506).

¹⁴*The Journal of Major John Norton 1816*, edited with Introductions and Notes by Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman. (Toronto, 1970).

¹⁵"John Norton" in *Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records* XXXVII (1945), 7-16.

took us to his mother's home in Dunfermline in Scotland and to his father's Cherokee country around Chattanooga in Tennessee and Georgia, for Norton was of Cherokee-Scottish origin and the first part of his *Journal* was devoted to a thousand-mile "Voyage" down the Ohio to his father's Cherokee homeland.

In London, especially in the austere offices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, we traced Norton's career as a friend of the rich English philanthropists who founded the British and Foreign Bible Society. For them Norton had translated the Gospel of St. John into Mohawk.¹⁶ Through the courtesy of the Duke, we gained a coloured reproduction of the portrait of Norton which hangs among pictures of famous men in Syon House at Brentford, in the outskirts of London.¹⁷ On the Surrey downs near Dorking we stumbled upon the remains of Old Bury Hill, former home of Norton's friend Robert Barclay, the Quaker brewer, where the Canadian Norton had been a welcome visitor: here we had tea with cordial people who live there now.

Back in Canada, we identified the path up which Norton climbed to join General Sheaffe in winning the Battle of Queenston Heights.¹⁸ And in the Mohawk Chapel near Brantford we found by chance some of Norton's words about the Gospels¹⁹ inscribed at the base of the memorial window donated by Queen Elizabeth II; it is just above the tomb of Joseph Brant.

Norton fought a duel in 1823, and, having courageously accepted the blame, disappeared from view somewhere in, or beyond, the land of the Western Cherokees.²⁰ His goal had been the newly-opened Sante Fé trail. I have not given up hope of finding his unknown grave. And, in lighter mood, I look for the day when I can hold in my hand Norton's lost translation into Mohawk of *The Lady of the Lake* which Walter Scott's brother mentioned to the Bard in a letter from Quebec in 1814.²¹ Scots in the rather similar dress of the Mohawks! That indeed would be a discovery worth a cheer.

CARL F. KLINCK

¹⁶*Nene Karighwiyoston Tsinihorigghoton Ne Saint John*. London, British and Foreign Bible Society, [1804?]

¹⁷*Journal*, Champlain Society ed., frontispiece.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 304-310.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, lxviii. From *Ne Roowenna Teyoninhokarawen*, London [1805].

²⁰*Journal*, p. xcvi.

²¹*Ibid.*, xx-xxi.