

Section C

Unit 4

Italian & Jewish Canadian Literature

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An Overview

Presently Canada has the world's fourth-largest Jewish population. But the immigration of Jews to Canada was a very strenuous process. Growth of the Canadian Jewish community occurred with the beginning of the pogroms of Russia in the 1880s, and continuing through the growing anti-Semitism of the early 20th century, millions of Jews began to flee the Pale of Settlement and other areas of Eastern Europe for the West. Although the United States received the overwhelming majority of these immigrants, Canada was also a destination of choice due to Government of Canada and Canadian Pacific Railway efforts to develop Canada after Confederation. Between 1880 and 1930, the Jewish population of Canada grew to over 155,000.

The Jewish communal body called Kehillah proliferated under Abraham De Sola, who founded the Hebrew Philanthropic Society. The participation of Jews in the politics of Canada was brought to the world's front when Henry Nathan, Jr eventually became the first Canadian Jewish Member of Parliament. He was part of the delegation to Ottawa to agree on the colony's entry into Confederation.

Soon the country saw the growth of various political and social organizations headed by the Jews. In 1919, the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) was formed. It was an amalgamation of many minor associations. Its purpose was to take up the cause of the Jewish immigrants and to assist their representation in the country. The organisation was instrumental in voicing its concerns over the immigration policies of Canada during the two World Wars and The Economic Depression.

Now the Jewish population in Canada is around 351,000. Of this a good half of the population lives in Toronto, the largest Jewish population centre. Montreal lost its chance after the fear whether Quebec might leave the federation following the rise during the 1970s of nationalist political parties in Quebec, as well as a result of Québec's Language Law. According to the 2001 census, 164,510 Jews lived in Toronto, 105,765 in Montreal, 17,270 in Vancouver, 12,760 in Winnipeg, 11,325 in Ottawa, 6,530 in Calgary, 3,980 in Edmonton, and 3,855 in Hamilton

Jewish Canadian writing proper

Perhaps the most curious feature of Canadian Jewish literature is its tale of two cities—Montréal and Winnipeg—while Toronto, with the largest Jewish population in the country has, by comparison, suffered from a failure of imagination. Having fled pogroms in Eastern Europe from the 19th century onwards, Jews arrived in Montréal. There they were largely confined to a ghetto between French Roman Catholics on the east side and English speaking Presbyterians on the west. Their new territory near the shores of the St. Lawrence River ironically reminded them of some of the Christian forms of persecution they had fled. The cross atop Mount Royal and the names of such streets as St. Urban and St. Dominique confirmed to them that anti-Semitic history would not simply disappear after a transatlantic voyage. In part, these geographic and historic circumstances account for the particular strengths, ambivalences, and creativity of Montreal's Jewish community and with Canadian society at large. As a result the mildly threatened Jewish community founded strong cultural institutions to preserve and develop their heritage. The Jewish Public Library, established in 1914, served as a meeting place for aspiring writers and stimulated discussions about the directions that writing and ideas would take. Under the able leadership of David Rome, writers and readers were encouraged to participate in new literary ventures. Similarly, the Saidye

Bronfman Centre fostered cultural activities in drama and the visual arts. All these helped to yield a rich crop of talented young writers.

Jewish writing primarily began after the First World War, with poets such as Hyman Edelstein and Jacob Segal composing in Yiddish and carrying over their linguistic heritage from Europe. A.M. Klein, the founding father of Jewish Canadian literature, translated this Yiddish word by combining archaic English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and French. Though Klein was primarily a poet, his only novel, *The Second Scroll*, best exemplifies his entire oeuvre and encompasses many of the themes taken up by later writers. By using a mythic structure he tries to incorporate the entire modern Jewish experience from European pogroms to various countries in the Diaspora to the creation of the State of Israel—all viewed from Montréal's particularistic point of view. In his last volume of poetry, *The Rocking Chair* his linguistic multiplicity led him to explore further identification with his French Canadian milieu.

Through the 1930s and 1940s fascist movements strengthened worldwide and the Duplessis era in Quebec reflected the anti-Semitism of the times which led writers like Klein, Irving Layton and Mordecai Richler to react to these anti-Jewish sentiments. Canadian Jewish writers would call upon the Eastern European tradition of Yiddish literature as well as the earlier Hebraic roots for dealing with persecution and reaffirming high moral values.

Jewish Canadian literature explores the highly problematic nature of the formation and the formulation of Jewish Canadian identity. The quest pattern in *The Second Scroll* is carried through Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* and *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, covering vast terrains of Canadian and diasporic geographies in their mythic, historic and anti-heroic quests. The sons and daughters of the Jewish immigrants recognised that they must accommodate not only the Canadian mainstream but also the

Jewish heritage they had initially rejected. This paved the way for a strong satiric bent in much of the writing produced during that time. Layton and Richler directed their satire against Jewish, English Canadian and French Canadian stereotypes and hypocrisies. Leonard Cohen fused fiction and poetry to give preference to spontaneous forms of worship rather than the familiar forms in order to re-instill the original Hebraic sense of holiness in the place of bourgeois values of contemporary Jewishness.

The apprenticeship novel is the another dominant feature of Jewish Canadian literature, since the initiation of a protagonist reflects the coming of age of a young society from its immigrant roots to its adjustment to the Canadian mosaic and Duddy Kravitz of Richler is one of the most celebrated Canadian Jewish protagonists. Montreal's Jewish writers like David Sloway, Robyn Sarah and Seymour Mayne who repeatedly portray the clash between the allures of the New World and the old Jewish ethical values of humanism tried to revive the once vibrant Jewish culture of the city. They carried on where Klein and Layton left off.

In addition to the Anglophone writers of Montreal there are the major francophone writers like Monique Bosco, Naim Kattan and Regine Robin. In both her poetry and prose, Bosco laments her Jewish past (Jewish suffering and exile from Babylon to Europe's Holocaust) and her sense of uprootedness and isolation as Woman, Jew and francophone. Robin too tries to come to terms with her Yiddish and French backgrounds. Kattan's works deals with a different cosmopolitan outlook, drawing from Iraqi origins, a Parisian education and his adjustment to Canada. These writers' preoccupation with wandering and homelessness arises from a kind of linguistic ghettoization within the dominant Anglophone culture of North America.

Some Jewish writers outside Montréal like Norman Levine have been attracted to that city's rich background. In his realistic and naturalistic prose, Levine focuses on the

artist's troubled relationship with his working class parents. In his autobiographical stories about his life in Cornwall in England, he examines his role as Jewish Canadian outsider amidst British writers and painters. Winnipegger Jack Ludwig too has written about Montréal in *A Woman on her Age* by casting an ironic eye on class struggles between Westmount arrivistes and the older poorer life around St. Lawrence and that too under the influence of Joyce and Woolf. Ludwig's fiction shows some of the same energy as Richler's; both writers use their particular cities against a backdrop of British and American culture. Adele Wiseman's novels explore tragic and comic dimensions of immigrants trying to adapt to the Canadian landscape. Although much of the Yiddish sensibility had declined, younger writers such as Rhea Tregebov continue to offer newer directions in prairie poetry.

In her autobiographical *Raisins and Almonds* Fredelle Bruser Maynard recounts her prairie childhood by balancing her Jewish upbringing and Christian friendships. Likewise, Eli Mandel explores his Jewish roots in Saskatchewan's agrarian spaces by reaching out to his vanished childhood home on the prairies. He as well as Henry Kreisel pays tribute to A.M. Klein through their works. Kreisel's first novel, *The Rich Man*, published immediately after the Second World War, tries to come to terms with the Holocaust, a theme also in his second novel, *The Betrayal*, which ends with a quest into a northern Canadian wilderness. That quest represents a kind of dead end for the first generation of Canadian Jewish fiction. Kreisel's short story "The Almost Meeting" focuses on Kreisel's search for Klein, in which the younger writer tries to pay homage to his mentor.

In the 1990s the future of Canadian Jewish fiction hinged on two writers—Matt Cohen and Anne Michaels. Cohen was by far the more prolific and his words focus on the local Ontario terrain as well as the European Jewish history. Although the Holocaust remains to be a central event for younger writers, they seek different approaches from

their more distanced stance. Richler, Cohen and younger writers have had to stake out another territory removed from mainstream Jewishness in order to withstand the overshadowing of American Jewish writing.

Michael Ondaatje is the strongest influence on Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*, a powerfully poetic novel that is both about and not about the Holocaust. This double edged approach may very well constitute an elated answer to Klein's silence and Kreisel's "Almost Meeting." In the first half of the novel, Michaels portrays the life of the protagonist Jakob Beer during the early 1990s who takes refuge in a Greek island after his family have been murdered by Nazis. In the second half the novel shifts to Toronto and focuses on immigrants adjustments to a new way of life in the 1950s. Earlier Layton, Cohen and Solway dwelt on Greek islands not merely to escape from Montreal's harsh climate but also to seek Mediterranean roots. (Hebraic and Hellenic)

The recent writing of Matt Cohen and Anne Michaels would seem to indicate that there is still a possibility for Jewish writing in Toronto. Their blend of magic realism also appears in the short stories of Helen Weinzwieg, while Phyllis Gottlieb's poetry and fiction combine elements of science fiction with a secular approach to Chasidic fiction. Cary Fagan's works like *The Animal's Waltz* elaborates upon the distancing techniques of younger contemporary writers confronting European roots before and after the Holocaust.

When earlier writing by non-Jews tended to depict the image of the Jew in negative terms, more recent fiction by major authors like Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Carol Shields and Ann Marie MacDonald portray them in a more positive, realistic and favourable light. Ironically Jewish writers have been more scathing in their satire of the bourgeois, materialistic values of the nouveaux riches that lack sensitivity to any spiritual past.

Absence marks other genres as well. Though there are isolated efforts in drama, they do not stand in comparison to a highly visible Jewish presence in the United States. Nathan Cohen and John Hirsch established an early critical sense of Canadian theatre and later the plays of Jason Sherman depict the ambiguities and confusions of a young Canadian Jew coming to terms with his liberal identity in the face of Israeli power and politics. Kenneth Sherman, Rhea Tregebov, Robyn Sarah, Shel Krakofsky and several younger poets open the future for Canadian Jewish poetry. In non-fictional prose no journal in Canada has succeeded in establishing a Jewish intellectual presence comparable to *Commentary*, *Partisan R*, and several New York magazines, in which New York intellectuals as Lionell Trilling, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin and Leslie Fiedler created an American Jewish dialectic without any Canadian counterpart. Jewish writing in Canada is characterized by an overwhelming sense of absence, from fugitive fragments in Klein's work right up to the work of younger writers at the end of the 20th century.

Further Reading:

Abella, Irving. *A Coat of Many Colours*. Toronto: Lester and Orphen Dennys, 1990.

Greenstein, Michael. *Third Solitudes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989.

Tulchinsky, Gerald. *Taking Root*. Toronto: Lester and Orphen Dennys, 1992.

Cohen, Leonard

Leonard Cohen; popularly known as the 'grocer of despair' or as 'the fashionable embodiment of Euro-rock,' was born at Montreal on 21st September 1934 as son of Masha Klein and Nathan Cohen, a businessman. His love of folk music, western guitar and the bohemian life later made him an international icon of mystery and love. His collaboration with the writers of *CIV/n*, a literary magazine started by Louis Dudek, gave him an exposure to the new Canadian aesthetic that replaced conservative forms and subjects with original and sometimes controversial material. Layton became his mentor, for whom poetry had to be prophetic and alive and his impact was lasting on Cohen, whose first boom, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, a collection of romantic lyrics on love and loss was published in 1956. In it he sought to give mythic time a poetic place in order to link fables of the past with personal situations in the present. This goal would shape much of his later writing.

Then he went to New York and Columbia University, only to come back to Montréal in 1957 where he worked in his uncle's clothing factory during daytime and recited his poetry at late-night cubs. By December 1959, he was again off on a Canada council grant to Hydra, an island in Greece, where he bought a house, fell in love and wrote poetry, fiction and also songs. Life on Hydra, a world of artists, writers, singers, and lovers was creative and stimulating. It was also idyllic and dangerous with depression and drugs competing with romance and illusion. In 1961 he visited Cuba during the critical period of the Bay of Pigs invasion and found himself caught up in political turmoil and social unrest. The result was some of his best poetry including the satiric "The Only Tourist in Havana Turns His Thoughts Homeward."

With the publication of *The Spice-box of Earth* (1961), a startling work of romantic frankness and promise that became a Canadian bestseller, Cohen emerged as a

captivating, exotic figure on the Canadian poetry scene. His first novel *The Favourite Game* (1963) is an ironic autobiographical work about growing up in Montréal, with a focus on the discovery of the young hero's identity as a writer. Cinema, sex and history are the novel's principal tropes, which his second novel the more ambitious and experimental *Beautiful Losers* (1966) would elaborate. Both novels confirm Cohen's belief in the power of language to change the world. but the sexual candour, surreal treatment of Canadian history, and extended cinematic metaphors in *Beautiful Losers* left the readers dazed and confused and so the sales of the book was highly disappointing.

Next he tried his hand at song writing. Cohen's first album, Songs of Leonard Cohen, appeared in January 1968. Though twelve albums followed over the next thirty years, his biggest songs were late in his career which appeared I albums like *I'm Your Man* (1988) and *The Future* (1992). In 1993, he won the Juno award for Male Vocalist of the year.

Since the early 1970s, Cohen became a student of Joshua Sasaki Roshi, a master of the Renzai Zen Movement. Following the rigorous practices of the movement helped Cohen to reform his earlier life of drugs and depression, Cohen's popularity has risen and fallen. In 1969, he rejected the Governor General award for Poetry. Though he fell on difficult times in the 1960s, he recovered his creativity as he renewed his spirituality in the mid 1990s. Throughout this period he published poetry, often creating controversial texts like *The Energy of Slaves* (1972), where the image of a razor blade introduces each poem. A collection of poetry and song, entitled *Stranger Music* met with a positive reception.

Though the writing remained to be a struggle for him, it was only through writing that he could resolve his inner conflict between desire and art. Life for Leonard Cohen is the confrontation between the spiritual and the lived, shaped by the battle between desire and reality. Cohen's faith, expressed in faith, expressed in music, poetry or prose, has always been to 'love the shapes of human beings, the fine and twisted shapes of the heart.'

Cohen, Matt (Mathew; pseudonym 'Teddy Jam')

Novelist born at Kingston on 30 December 1942 and died at Toronto on 2 December 1999; Cohen lectured briefly at McMaster University before turning to write full time. His fictions range from the realistic to the surreal, using literary style as much as the plot as the medium through which character can be revealed. His early novel *Korsoniloff* (1969), for example, records the problems that a young untenured professor experiences as he is pulled in contrary directions by academic roles and a private desire for wholeness. The brittle fables in *Columbus and the Fat Lady* (1972) and *Café Le Dog* (1983) continue this inquiry into social disparities, though dealing more comically with them.

Having demonstrated his talents as a short fiction writer, Cohen then devoted more time to the realistic novel. *The Disinherited* (1974), a multi-generational chronicle, which initiated a series about life in the fictional town of Salem, tries to come to terms with the Anglo-Protestant sensibilities that shaped Ontario and Canadian social and political values. With *The Spanish Doctor* (1984) Cohen turned to his Jewish inheritance. In his work he tried to adapt the conventions of the historical novel to a tale of interfaith strife in medieval Spain, characterised by rivalries born of desire, betrayal and competing systems of knowledge, and finally of spiritual quest. *Lives of the Mind Slaves: Selected Stories* appeared in 1994 and the poignant, award winning *Elizabeth and After* in 1999. His authorship of several children's books including *Night Cars* (1988) under the pseudonym Teddy Jam was revealed only after his death. His unfinished reflections on his own career, *Typing* (2000) appeared posthumously.

Cohen, Nathan

Journalist, critic; born at Sydney, NS, on 16 April 1923 as the son of Fanny and David Cohen and died at Toronto 26 March 1971. Though Nathan Cohen initially headed for the law school, during the 1940s and 1950s he became a feisty, influential drama critic for CBC Radio, an arts columnist and entertainment editor for the Toronto Telegram and Star and chair of the popular television program Fighting Words (1953-62). He translated Yiddish poetry and prose and published occasional articles in Tamarack R and elsewhere.

Faessler, Shirley (1915-1997)

Daughter of Avrom and Becci Rotstein, Faessler was born in Toronto on 3 September 1915 and died in Toronto on 24 March 1997; this novelist gained critical attention through the stories published in *Atlantic Magazine* and the *Tamarack Review*. Like her stories, her novel about the Romanian Jews whose daughter in the 1930s married a Gentile was praised for its authenticity of urban and cultural detail.

Fagan, Cary (1957-)

Cary Fagan born in Toronto on 29 June 1957 as son of Belle Menkes and Maurice Fagan. In his writings Fagan deals with events in urban lives. His works include *History Lessons* (1990), that include stories about the memories and the myths of history that shape people's lives, novels like *The Animals' Waltz* (1994) and *The Tailors House* (1996) that deal respectively with post war Vienna and pre-war Poland, and with differences between obsession and young love. He was honoured with the City of Toronto Book award (1991) and the Jewish book committee prize for fiction (1995).

Klein, A.M. (Abraham Moses 1909-1972)

A.M. Klein, whom Louis Dudek once called "the most autobiographical poet writing in Canada" is also one of the pioneers of Jewish Canadian literature. He was born in Ratino, Ukraine, as son of Yetta and Kalman Klein, Orthodox Jewish immigrants who fled Russia for Montreal in 1910. Though he graduated in law from University of Montreal Law School in 1933, his true passion was for writing and by 1920s he had already published poems and articles pertaining to the plight of the dislocated Jewish community.

As editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Klein vehemently criticised the nationalist resentment against Ashkenazi Jews as Anglophones, the religious bigotry of the catholic clergy, and the anti-Semitic proliferation as a result of the the Hitler regime. In Quebec in 1941, the influential gentry of anti-Semites threatened to confiscate the property of a synagogue purchased by Jewish immigrants. The synagogue was finally built and was ready to open in May 1945 when it was set afire by arsonists, and nearly burned down. The criminals were never arrested. Klein wrote, "The dubious honor-burning synagogues-which hitherto characterized only Nazi cities, is now shared by the capital of our province." He penned down his support for the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the Canadian war effort during World War Two. He believed that this was central to the struggle against fascism and Nazism. His interest in the socio-political environment was later reflected in his literary works.

Klein's childhood in Montreal ghetto bestowed upon him a fine knowledge of Hebrew, Yiddish, the Torah and the Talmud and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which bore a lasting influence on his works. In the early 1940s Klein became increasingly interested in modern poetry through associations with writers like Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, Miriam

Waddington, Patrick Anderson and John Sutherland, who launched the first generation of important Canadian modernist journals. His literary reputation is primarily based on his only novel *The Second Scroll* and four books of poetry *Hath Not a Jew...* (1940), *The Hitleriad* (1944), *Poems* (1944) and *The Rocking Chair*.

Marta Dvorak opines that Klein's works call attention to:

... the specificity of the Jewish people and their need for a national homeland, well before the creation of the modern state of Israel, at a time when Jews held a vulnerable minority status locally as well as internationally: not only in Montreal but in the world. Through his writing and translations, Klein made available to a general public the works of Montreal's dynamic Yiddish and Hebrew culture, part of an already richly kaleidoscopic population.

Klein's only novel, *The Second Scroll*, was a result of his research trip to Israel made at the request of the Canadian Jewish Congress. It recounts a Canadian journalist's quest for his mythical and messianic uncle, Uncle Melech, a mysterious wandering Jew who embodies the collective Jewish soul. The journey is parallel to the Jewish people's quest for a homeland. The novel, which traces the Jewish people's wanderings throughout Europe, North Africa and Canada in search of a new homeland, is profoundly anchored in a vision of peoples intermingling in an international community in flux, of which the two poles -- geographically opposite but ontologically similar -- are those two lands of welcome, those two promised lands: Canada and Israel, both kaleidoscopes of origins, colors, languages and customs. Reflecting this blend of the ancient and the modern, of faith and the social sciences, this fusion of Oriental and Western cultures, Klein's novel features an abundance of polyphonic prose, foreign words, neologisms, and an accumulation of various perspectives.

The association of the novel with the bible is well worked out. The title in itself draws a parallel with the first scroll, that of the biblical Pentateuch. The fraternal conflict between the narrator's father and Uncle Melech dates back to that of Cain and Abel. The novel consists of five chapters and five glosses as in the five books of the Old Testament. When the young narrator pines to have a photograph of his uncle so that he can emulate him, he is reminded of the second commandment forbidding any mortal worship. The narrator's search for his uncle is a search for his roots. He must transcend the vastness which separates the new world and the old; his Canadian origins from Uncle Melech's trans-national boundaries. The Atlantic which was transcended by all Jewish immigrants to Canada is but a "futile bucket" that failed to extinguish the fires of the Holocaust.

The two major symbols used to depict the geographical dissemination are that of the ocean and the airplane. The chapter "Leviticus" compares his journey over the Atlantic to a 'new birth', playing over the word, "borne". The instance might be of the narrator achieving a higher realm of understanding, a higher cause for his quest.

My very levitation seemed a miracle in harmony with the wonder of my time, through my mind there ran the High Holiday praise for God for that He did 'suspend worlds on without-what,' even as my plan was suspended, even as over the abyss of recent history there has risen the new bright shining microcosm of Israel. (39)

In *Third Solitudes*, Greenstein finds a parallel between the final chapter and Leviticus.

By shrinking time and oceanic distances, Klein's airplane fosters an illusion of centring, but the old man's interpretation must be taken with a grain of salt. Since he appears "bearded like antiquity...not of this world," he is not

of “our century”. Thus, rather than being brought together by the airplane’s speed, the Diaspora’s time zones prolong routes, messianic presence, and redemption. (22)

Kriesel, Henry (1922-1991)

Born at Vienna, Austria on 5 June 1922, Henry Kriesel was the first writer to bring the experience of the immigrants to modern Canadian literature. He left Vienna in 1938, after the Nazi annexation of Austria and went to England. In May 1940 Britain interned refugees who had German or Austrian nationality and sent several hundreds of them to internment camps in Canada. Henry Kriesel, an 'enemy alien' was kept in New Brunswick and Quebec camps and was released in November 1941. His personal knowledge of fascist pre-WWII Austria together with the experiences of internment of 18 months makes his work a rich diasporic and poignant account of Jewish immigrants' plight in Canada.

Henry Kriesel is the author of two novels, *The Rich Man* (1948), and *The Betrayal* (1964), and of a collection of short stories, *The Almost Meeting* (1981). Some new as well as hitherto uncollected writings have been published in a volume edited by Professor Shirley Neuman titled *Another Country: Writings by and about Henry Kriesel* (1985). He has also written many essays and articles on literature and culture. His essay "The Prairie: A State of Mind" (1968) is generally regarded as a seminal study of the literature of the Canadian West, and has been widely re-published. His short stories have been reprinted in many anthologies, notably *The Best American Short Stories* 1966; *The Best modern Canadian Short Stories*; *The Spice Box: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing*; *The Oxford Anthology of Canadian Literature*. He has also written plays, and his writings have been translated into a number of foreign languages.

Though the opening line of Kriesel's *The Rich Man* draws a close parallel to Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", the protagonists are incomparable. The work tells the story of Jacob, an Austrian immigrant and his nerve to break his thirty year working routine in Toronto. He returns to Vienna in 1935 to visit his family, where he projects himself as

an illusory rich man while he is nothing but an ordinary cloth presser in a Toronto factory. Music plays an important role in the progress of the plot. “Coming for to carry me home,” in the background sets the mood for Jacob’s return to Vienna. This is succeeded by the Blue Danube Waltz which depicts the conflict between the old and new worlds and a news report declaring the political situation of the time like, the rearming of Germany, the celebration of King George V’s accession to the throne, and the opposition of the United States Chamber Of Commerce to President Roosevelt’s reform legislation. The conflict between illusion and reality widens as the novel progresses.

Kriesel successfully portrays “the linguistic homelessness” experienced by the Jewish immigrant in Canada. For Jacob the most expressive word is the Yiddish “*noo*.” Exiled from his mother tongue, he feels a linguistic absence which forces him to use gestures. The interaction between Jacob and his boss, Mr. Duncan shows the linguistic and hence imperialistic supremacy of the employer. Where words fail, Jacob is forced to resort to the aid of his hands. This dialectic between the hands and the words throws light upon the occasional Marxist inclination in the novel.

Like a child, the immigrant laborer who is at a loss for words requires the assistance of mother tongue and expressive fingers; later those same hands, synecdoche parts that play no part, suffer from paralysis when they confront his family’s adversity. Like his voice in the wilderness of history, Jacob’s hands come up empty in the same void. (*Third Solitudes*, 56)

Jacob’s chance meeting with the French artist Tassigny depicts the same dilemma. While the artist explains the image of waves and its underlining relationship to the contemporary political condition, Jacob understands the bareness of his language which

is unaccustomed to metaphors. He tries to fill this void by purchasing the painting of Tassigny, *L'Entrepreneur* further projecting his illusion of a rich man. The cubist dream of a faceless giant and its attempt to force him back to his degraded position Michael Greenstein describes it:

In this ghoulish nightmare, destiny overpowers the individual who has lost his free will to the forces of history; the nightmare becomes reality so long as Jacob maintains his illusions about wealth in an impoverished world. Jacob dreams fit into Alvarez's formulation of Holocaust literature by disguising the fate of paralyzed marginal man. (57)

Jacob soon comes face to face with the faceless monster once he reaches Vienna. He is welcomed by a storm guard with his black swastika. The dilapidated condition of his family urges him to relapse into the comforts of childhood especially when he accompanies his nephews to a cave.

The cave episode represents a retreat into primitivism where the innocence of childhood may be corrupted; escape from pervasive racial hatred proves impossible even in this natural ghetto where shadows on the wall forebode catastrophe. In contrast to the openness of the Atlantic crossing, claustal spaces in the cave or factory suggest the central element of the rich man's enclosed ego—the inability to enter an “I-Thou” dialogue. (58)

At the circus the crowd is compared to a herd of sheep captivated by the political propaganda of the bugler and the barker. Robert Koch, a former journalist is the only person who can command clarity of vision. The crowd including Jacob and his brother Albert is immune to the political agenda propagated by the biased power wielders. It is

with this immunity that Jacob faces the news of his brother, Albert. The silence that ensues between Koch and Jacob while revealing the news of death is equivalent to the “Silence and noise, isolation and crowds, the ocean separating European tragedy from American innocence—all of these themes and images surface as Jacob prepares to depart for Canada’s distant shores and abandon his family to Hitler.”

Levine, Norman

Norman Levine was born on 22 October 1923, as son of Annie Gurevich and Moses Mordecai Levine, Polish Jew immigrants. He began his self-imposed exile at the age of twenty-six to in St Eves. His polished personal voice in autobiographical fiction originates in the remembered past of urban Jewish poverty and estrangement. The works which gains its undeniable power from a distinctive narrative voice and its sense of detachment typifies his radical isolation. The narrator of the stories tells the stories from the point-of-view of an observer who keenly follows the world through bifocal lenses, simultaneously witnessing an emotionally barren present juxtaposed with a richly remembered, but irretrievably lost past. The hero is often a lone figure, emotionally cut off from others, unable to bridge the gap between him and those closest to him. Since the stories are reticent, undemonstrative and sparse in descriptive detail, the reader directs himself more to the narrator's reflexive mind than to the tangible world being described. All the stories in his collections—as well as many of their titles—convey a mood of pervasive isolation.

Levine's fame rests mainly on his fiction including the novels *The Angel Road* (1952) and *From a Seaside Town* (1970), and his volumes of short stories like *One Way Ticket* (1961), *I Don't Want to Know Anymore Too Well* (1971), and *Selected Stories* (1975), *Thin Ice* (1979), *Why do You Live So Faraway?* (1984), *Champagne Barn* (1984) and *Something Happened Here* (1991). He published the volumes of poetry such as *Myssium* (1948) and *The Tightrope Walker* (1950) before his fictional works and another volume titled *I walk by the Harbour* in 1976.

In *From a Seaside Town*, Levine discusses the conflict between regionalism and universalism. Joseph Grand, the hero of *From a Seaside Town*, is a travel writer,

narrator, liar and a marginal man. He dwells in Carnbray, an English seaside town. He introduces us to the small circle of relatives and companions who figure in his life. As he explores the sequence of events that led him to his present state of limbo, it becomes apparent that his crisis is not merely financial but also a crisis of personal identity. A Canadian Jew, Grand has spent a lifetime seeking to submerge his past. Now as a consequence, he discovers that he belongs nowhere.

The novel opens with a warning to Grand to be aware of the constraining influence of his wife. He is threatened to be dragged down by her plainness. Grand's routine revolves around the postmen and their delivery. He keeps two wrist watches on his desk; one set in Ottawa and Montréal, the other that of his locality. This temporal tight rope of time pulls him between the time zones, just as he is trapped between his past and present. The diligence with which he tries to give a precision to time can be compared to his struggle to have a concrete identity. His reflections on his days are a series of confessions, and he confesses, that the unfamiliarity of his surroundings satisfies the travel writer in him. Any strong geographical association reminds him the fragility of his own existence and identity.

Greenstein thus pens down the diasporic dilemma felt by the protagonist:

Joseph tight-rope walks between genres, traditions, and contradictions. He is a two-dimensional travel writer or three dimensional novelist, static regionalist or universal wanderer, Jewish or Gentile, Canadian or British, the mirror along the roadway or the mirror with the postcards in his room, mimesis or self-reflection. (80)

Ludwig, Jack

Professor emeritus of English literature, writer born in Winnipeg on 30 Aug 1922 as son of Fanny Dolgin and Misha Ludwig, a mime and menswear retailer; Ludwig won attention both as a novelist and as a sports writer. His novels include *Above Ground* (1968), *Confusions* (1963) and *A Woman of Her Age* (1973). His works on sports are *Hockey Night in Moscow* (1972), *The Five Ring Circus* (1976), *On the Montreal Olympics* and *The Great American Spectaculars* (1976) on the Kentucky Derby and other festivities. His novels, realistic in technique, deal with Jewish characters' search for the meaning and identity amid the confusions of the modern world. Though he was not a native of Montreal he has been attracted to that city's rich background and so uses Montreal as the setting for his novel *A Woman of Her Age*, which shows the direct influence of Woolf and Joyce. In this novel he casts an ironic eye on the class struggles between Westmount arrivistes and the older, poorer life around St. Lawrence. His award winning short story, "Requiem for Bibul" discusses this dichotomy further. First published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the work brought Winnipeg's ghetto life to the attention of the wider American audience.

In his first novel *Confusions* (1963), Jack Ludwig talks about a pan-American Jew who returns home to Ryan Building, in a search for his fraternal counter part. In the opening of the novel, Ludwig confesses to his readers:

Confusion is but "a half novel," the other half being the reader or the cleaning lady. "Just two halves make a city"—past and present, inside and outside ghetto walls. This invitation to reader-oriented criticism continues beyond halves into multiples, the many-faceted, iconoclasts sub-versions of irony ... a thirteen dimensional diaspora holds the necessary angel and

charwoman, deferred homecomings and traces of origins, confusions and contradictions, blackbirds from the ghetto's gutter scattered oats, migrating across margins. (Greenstein 89)

Above Ground (1968), Ludwig's second novel rejects the confusions and satire of his first novel and celebrates life. A *Bildungsroman*, the novel depicts the life of the protagonist, Josh. The name is revealed only in the final chapters, thus symbolizing the 'coming of age' or 'the identity formation' of the character. The three chapters -North, East, West—indicates his journey from Winnipeg to California to New York. In this journey, the young boy learns to transcend his prosaic existence. Through his father he had inherited a love of woman and music. Back in hospital he understands that Maggie, Zora, Alvira Drummond, Nina, Gila and Mavra are all one. While engaged to Maggie he has an affair with Zora. Despite all this assistance, Joshua struggles to understand the concept of infinity to transcend his prosaic existence. He is encapsulated and oscillates between the past and the present.

Michaels, Anne

Poet, novelist born in Toronto on 15 April 1958 as daughter of Rosalind and Isaiah Michaels. Her popularity rests mainly with her two volumes of poetry and her celebrated first novel. Her first volume of poems, *The Weight of Oranges* (1986) won the Commonwealth Prize and her second collection of poems, *Miner's Pond* (1991) grabbed the National Magazine Award, the Canadian Authors Association award for poetry and a nomination for the Governor General's Award. Michaels' first novel *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) falls into two parts, telling the interlocking generational stories of Jakob Beer, an orphaned survivor of the Holocaust, and Ben a student who becomes fascinated with Beer's life. Mainly because of its poetic luminosity, *Fugitive Pieces* was an international

success and won the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award (1996), the Trillium Award (1977) and the Orange Prize (1997). Anne Michaels' works proves that there is yet a possibility of Jewish writing in Toronto, where there is so little usable past compared with Montreal.

Wiseman, Adele

Novelist and playwright born in Winnipeg on 21 May 1928 and died in Toronto on 1 June 1992 as daughter of Ukrainian parents Chaika Rosenberg, dressmaker, and Pesach Wiseman, tailor; her formal studies took her into social work and teaching and the family tales led her to writing essays, plays and fiction. Some of her later books made clear her appreciation of the creative process. *Old Woman at Play* (1978) is at once a tribute to her mother's doll making talents, and a meditation on her own craft. It also articulates the relation between the two creative acts and underscores the necessity of a connection between mother and daughter, between generations.

The autobiographical *Confessions of a Book Molesting Childhood and Other Essays* (1987) draws on a rich strain of irony to celebrate how community offsets social marginalization, as specific example, being how Jews have been treated throughout history.

In plays such as *Testimonial Dinner* (1978), Wiseman explores ways in which the past and present co-exist; she confirms that the past precedes and inevitably shapes the future of people's lives. Wiseman's novels explore tragic and comic dimensions of immigrants trying to adapt to the Canadian landscape. Her most successful and award winning novel *The Sacrifice* (1956) reiterates the tale of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac, turning the biblical figures into modern day immigrants to a Canada that this Abraham

cannot comprehend. Instead of fulfilling his patriarchal promise, he belittles himself by committing a mad act of murder. In her later years, Wiseman published some works for children like *Kenji and the Cricket* (1988); her *Selected Letters* to her life long friend Margaret Laurence were edited by John Lennox and Ruth Panofsty in 1997.

Mordecai Richler

Richler was born in 1931, St. Urbain Street in Montreal to be brought up ‘to manhood in a hairier, more earthy Montreal.’ He graduated from Baron Byng High School and was later enrolled in Sir George Williams College to study English where he was also writer-in-residence in 1968. But without completing his study, he left for Paris, France at age nineteen to pursue a literary exile. In 1972 he returned to Montreal as he was worried about “being so long away from the roots of my discontent.” He now lives in Eastern part of Quebec, where he raised his five children.

Richler’s literary works are characterized by linguistic and thematic influences derived from successive waves of immigration. An iconoclast with a vehement disapproval for the elite and the pompous, Richler satirised Quebec and Canadian nationalism and also the government subsidized Canadian literary movement. In his interview with Marlene Kadar, he reveals his diapproval for the phrase ‘ethnic writing’. He comments:

My initial response is anger because I find the term tiresome and pejorative. What is ethnic writing, and why is a Scots Canadian ‘ethnic’? Or why is Jewish ‘ethnic’? Or Ukrainian? This is country made up of many people, thirty per cent of whom are neither English nor French. Within twenty years the majority will not be English or French. (*Other Solitudes*, 42)

Richler’s work focuses the problems of ethnic segregation, anti-Semitism, morality, alienation and victimization of Jews in the new world. His works include *The Acrobats* (1954), *Son of a Smaller Hero* (1955), *A Choice of Enemies* (1957), *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), *The Incomparable Atuk* (1963), *Cocksure*

(1968), *The Street* (1969), *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1971), *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* [screenplay] (1974), *Joshua Then and Now* (1980), *Joshua Then and Now* [screenplay] (1985), *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989), *Barney's Version* (1998). In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the protagonist Duddy is a poor boy raised in the city of Montreal. He is obsessed with his passion for power and money. His desire is finally manifested in his strong will to procure some land, which he believes is the ultimate asset that can materialize his identity. In his urge he tries to delude the truth. Yvette, his girl friend remarks: "You almost killed yourself running for that land." Duddy is always on the run. Greenstein remarks:

... running takes on a sinister, escapist note when juxtaposed with illness as in the episode involving Virgil's final epileptic fit: "Duddy ran, he ran, he ran"; on the other hand, running can be more hopeful when associated with his promised land: "Duddy was always ahead of them, running, walking backwards, jumping, hurrying them, leaping to reach for a tree branch", seizing at dizzying space, but unwittingly sawing off the branch which he is sitting. (145)

While on his summer job in a hotel at St. Agathe he chances on the land he wants to possess. Soon he returns to Montreal to start a film company. The endeavor becomes a huge success and he starts to buy the portion of the land. Duddy then makes a profit on ten pinball machines from Virgil, an epileptic, who is then offered a job on the distribution side of the movie business, and all he has to do was show the movies. A couple of months later, Virgil experiences a seizure while driving and is paralyzed from the waist down. Yvette leaves Duddy to take care of Virgil full time. This accident leaves Duddy to show the movies seven days a week and try to produce movies at the same

time. When Duddy's uncle Benjy dies, this acts as a trigger for Duddy who then experiences a nervous breakdown and doesn't leave his room for a week. This self exile distances him from his clients and soon he loses his business. Once he survives his nervous breakdown, Duddy purchases the lost land. But his success was based on a theft. He had stolen the money from Virgil, and this provokes Yvette and Virgil as they leave him forever. Despite his occasional setbacks Duddy is relieved that he accomplished the goal of owning the land.

Virgil, Uncle Benjy, and Jerry Dingleman act as foil to the protagonist, who is always on the run. The demon in Duddy is unleashed when he goads Jerry the 'boy wonder', "FASTER, YOU BASTARD, RUN, DINGLEMAN, LETS SEE YOU RUN ON THOSE STICKS". This urge of Duddy to raise himself from the commoners to the class of an imperialist is further displayed when he chooses a name for his cinematic role: *Dudley Kane*. Though the literal allusion is to the movie *Citizen Kane*, the homonymic overtone is to that of the biblical character Cain.

Further reading:

Linda Hutcheon. *Other Solitudes*. Toronto: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1990.

Arnold Davidson. *Canadian Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990.

Dr. Sabitha

JEWISH CANADIAN POETRY

Jewish Canadian Writing is the most impressive of Canada's ethnic literatures, though Jews comprise a very small percentage of the national mosaic—around 2% of the

Canadian population. In fact, any study of Canadian writing must take into consideration the important fact of Jewish contribution to the culture and identity of the Canadian Nation. Through Poetry and Fiction the Jews have struggled and moved into the mainstream of Canadian Writing.

Long before the First World War began, Jewish poetry began to appear in Canada. Jews fleeing pogroms in Tsarist Russia arrived in Canada and settled mainly in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. To them, Yiddish was their mother tongue. They also knew the language of their origin. Most of Canadian Yiddish literary activity has emanated from Montreal or Toronto. In Montreal, writers settled around the Jewish Public Library, an extraordinary institution founded in 1914 by the renowned writer Reubin Brian and Judah Kaufmann. Later, the influx due to the Holocaust brought survivors, including famous writers like Melechi and Rachel Korn. Together they set a foundation for a vital, creative and imaginative Jewish literature.

J. I. Segal (1896-1954) one of the first Jewish poets wrote poetry with an international perspective for a worldwide public. **A. S. Shkolnikov** (1896-1962), **A. Almi** (1892-1963), **Ida Maze** (1893-1963) and **Sholem Shtern** (b.1907) followed this leader among poets. Together they established Montreal as the center of creativity. Sholem Shtern's epic "In Kanada" deals with the immigrant experience.

Writers after World War II demonstrate how the Holocaust became the dominant theme in Jewish writing. In fact, many critics feel that Jewish poetry became more intense distinct and powerful after the Holocaust. Survivors wrote of harrowing personal experiences. Others depicted the suffering and loss of dear ones. Still others wrote of narrow escapes from barbed wire and gas chambers.

Rachel Korn, who escaped from Poland hours before it was annexed by Hitler, was born in Galicia, grew up as part of the Jewish neighbourhood of non-Jewish people. She

was attached to the land and the people. She first wrote in Polish but later shifted to Yiddish. Her early work focused on themes and imagery that were close to the earth. She was deeply interested in human issues. The poet employed such tough language in her poetry that readers mistook her to be a man. Rachel Korn wrote dark poetry towards the later part of her career but it was strangely undespairing considering the fact that she had lost her husband, her mother and two brothers to the Germans. Her poetry has been translated from Yiddish by Seymour Mayne in *Generations* (1982) and the Auschwitz poems of Joseph Rogel.

Earle Birney (1904-1995) came under the direct influence of E. J. Pratt and was consequently innovative and experimental. He had an abiding love for language. His volume *David and Other Poems*, won the Governor General's Award for Poetry. The title poem "David" which won wide acclaim features the rugged and dangerous geography of Canada's West. The poem is about a brave young mountain climber who slips on the ice and falls to his death and his friend feels guilty as he was partly responsible for it is powerfully evocative. The last lines of the poem;

I said that he fell straight to the ice where they found him,
And none but the sun and incurious clouds have lingered
Around the marks of that day on the ledge of the Finger,
That day, the last of my youth, on the last of our mountains.

(OC 113)

The second collection *Now is Time* (1945) also won the Governor General's Award. Birney's bleak and pessimistic attitude has been influenced by the World Wars.

A. M. Klein (1909-1972), a poet, journalist, and novelist, was a man of many talents. A lawyer by profession, he struggled to make Jewish culture meaningful in a Canadian context. He was called the Father of Jewish Canadian Writing while in McGill

University. Fascinated by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, he became an ardent advocate of modernism. He published his poetry in Canadian and American periodicals.

Klein's love of language and history speak powerfully in his poetry. The poem "Heirloom" was written in memory of his father. His father did not bequeath him wide estates, only some holy books with no pictures, Still he is proud of his "noble lineage" and his "proud ancestry"

When reading in these treatises some weird

Miracle, I turned a leaf and found

A white hair fallen from my father's beard. (OC 127)

"Portrait of the Poet as landscapes" is a haunting meditation on the fate of the poetic vocation. He calls the poet "the nth Adam taking a green inventory/in word but scarcely uttered, naming, praising . . .".

The son of Jewish immigrants, Klein keenly observed European and Canadian anti-Semitism. The years between 1930s and 1940s saw a period of intense anti-Semitism in Quebec which Klein decried. The Catholic clergy also fuelled the hostility. Canada refused entry to German refugees who were fleeing from Hitler. Klein, the editor of *The Jewish Chronicle* at the time, publicly denounced the situation and sued prominent Canadians who criticized Jews. Canadians also set fire to a newly built synagogue. Klein attacked with more outspoken brashness in prose and savage verse. The hostility later tempered down in the post-War era after the Depression, and Canada began to accept its Jewish minority.

Several volumes of poetry were written on the Jews, anti-Semitism and their history. *Hath Not a Jew* (1940) is an enduring part of his legacy. The title brings back the inhuman treatment meted out to Shylock in Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. The poem "Design for a Medieval Tapestry" deals with the history of the Jews. The two

volumes, *Poems* and *Hitleriad*, published in 1944 speak of the anxieties he felt over current events and the plight of the Jews. In fact, the *Hitleriad* is a mock-epic savage satire on Hitler and his Nazi cohorts. The poem conveys the bitterness so terribly that the mock epic is deprived of its humour.

Klein received the Governor General's award in 1948 for *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*. The volume deals with domestic culture and other Canadian subjects. He was editor of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* from 1932 to 1955. The magazine sent him on a mission to Israel after which he wrote his novel *The Second Scroll*. Toward the last years of his life he retired into an enforced silent period till death. In 1956, he was awarded the Lorne Pierce Medal by the Royal Society of Canada. Klein is a literary giant and a pivotal figure in Jewish Canadian Literature. His lasting and genuine contribution to the multicultural fabric of Canadian culture continues to influence the Jewish ethnic community. On his death the Quebec Writers Foundation instituted an A. M Klein prize for Poetry. Glen Rotchin and Seymour Mayne also published an anthology of poems *A Rich Garland: Poems for A. M. Klein*.

Klein, Canadian Jewry's foremost man of letters, was also Irving Layton's (1912-2006) poetic mentor. Klein coached Irving Layton, an immigrant Jew raised in Montreal, for his Latin matric examination. Klein inspired in him a love for poetry and opened up before him the possibilities of a literary vocation. He praised Layton's Latin book *Here and Now* (1945) generously, but criticized it for the lack of Jewish themes.

Irving Layton broke into the Canadian poetic scene in 1945 with rebellious vigour to challenge all conventions. It was "potential dynamite in the closed chamber of Canadian Society" (Cameron 180). What followed was an abundant creativity with over eight hundred poems, forewords, books, letters, book reviews and essays. His literary career spanned nearly four decades and he created the image of a larger than life

personality, which had a mythic potential. He attacked hypocrisy in all its forms including the lies of poets. He did not believe in what he called the “immaculate conception of Poetry” (*EOBN* II). For him Poetry was vital, earthy and passionate. In the process he also finds that Christianity is one among the life deniers. His contempt for Christians is evident in the poem “For Mao Tse-Tung: A Meditation on Flies and Kings”:

I pity the meek in their religious cages

And flee them: and flee

The universal sodality

Of joy-haters, joy-destroyers. (*CP* 439)

The influences on Layton were Klein, the European writers and various philosophers like Marx, Heraclites and Nietzsche. Crucial to his work is the dialectical encounter of the understanding of the Dionysian and Apollonian principle, which, according to both Nietzsche and Layton himself, produces art. His parents, friends and teachers also influenced him.

The dialectical tension of defining and redefining the self creates a multiplicity of selves; these are the central, and connecting motifs of his work. The poet is the prophet, “God’s recording angel loosed in a roaring desert” (*FR* 32), visionary, clown, Adam, the Nietzschean Superman and various other personae. He is also the artist who is happiest in the process of creation. All contraries merge in him. He is the fabulist who gives meaning to natural processes: “I am their mouth; as a mouth I serve” (*CP* 121).

Layton’s study of violence and evil presents a disturbing world where man is a savage killer. Layton, who grew up in an anti-Semitic neighborhood, uses his cultural authority to denounce the injustice perpetrated on humanity especially on the Jews by Hitler, the evil of Stalin and others, man has urge to destroy. “Evil has become our normal climate” (*CP* 270). “Evil is not external but within” he says in the opening poem

of *The Gucci Bag*. Man is a predator who willfully and thoroughly destroys, more hideous than all the animals. As he says:

God make the viper, the shark, the tsetse fly,
He made the Hyena, the vulture, the stork,
By the time he made man,
He had the combination down perfect. (*SP* 201)

Yet Layton affirms life in all its variety and searches for meaning and beauty in the actual process of living. The poet incorporates into himself all the evil and suffering in the world and like the prophet teaches his flock a way out of the darkness.

Layton has written over 50 volumes of poetry. His collection of poems *A Red Carpet in the Sun* received the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1960. Layton was also nominated for the Nobel Prize.

Joseph Rogel (b. 1911) is a poet and translator. His "Poems for My Mother" appeared in 1979. **Miriam Waddington** (1917-2004) wrote simple poems that celebrate the natural world as an antidote to the fragmentation and ugliness of the industrialized city. The volumes *Green World* (1945) and *The Second Silence* (1955) contain a series of lyrics that reflect the rhythms of the speaking voice. A prairie poet, she was deeply conscious of nature, its rejuvenation and the solace it offered. Nature to her was a teacher. She finds morality in bee keeping in her poem "Advice to the Young":

There is morality
in bee-keeping
it teaches how
not to be afraid
of the bee swarm

it teaches how
not to be afraid of
finding new places
and building in them
all over again. (OC 192)

Some of the poems are political in nature. Her poetry tries to bridge the inner and the outer. Searching for her roots in the poem “Driving Home” and looking for a home outwards, she comes full circle to realize that home is where she is. *Say Yes* (1969) broadens her subject matter to include Europe and the Middle East. *The Price of Gold* and *The Visitants* speak of aging and death. In her youth, she was part of a Montreal circle that included Layton and Dudek. Her volume *Green World* won the Segal Award for Poetry. Her poem “Jacques Cartier in Toronto” is featured at the back of the Canadian \$100 bill released in 2004.

Simcha Simchovitch (1921) is a Toronto Yiddish poet and an award winning novelist. He is a Holocaust survivor. He is a teacher, librarian and curator at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto, Ontario. He wrote *Selected Volumes* (1990), *The Remnants: Poems 1999*, *The Song That Never Died: The Poetry of Mordecai Gebertig*. Many of his poems have been set to music. His awards include the J.I. Segal Award 2004 and Canadian Jewish Book Award 2004.

Eli Mandel (1922-1992), renowned poet and critic born to Russian-Jewish parents, was raised on the Prairies during the Depression. *Stony Plain* (1973) and *Out of Place* (1977) recount memories of his life in the Prairies. He was honoured with the Governor General’s Award for Poetry in 1967 for *An Idiot Joy* and made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1982. He was a teacher who inspired many upcoming writers. His early poems were allusive and heavily rhetorical with classical and biblical allusions.

Later he became more colloquial and still later with *Black and Secret Man* (1964) one finds personal introspection and speaks of overtly Jewish element in his poetry. The poem “Envoi” talks about terrible knives running through the whiteness of his veins:

Politics pierce my heart
on a floor Littered with history
I shiver while wardens shovel in
lunatics sentences, rag upon rag. (OC 229)

The poem “On the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Auschwitz: Memorial Services, Toronto, January 25, 1970 YMHA Bloor and Spadina” mourns the memories of Auschwitz. “The hall / a parody a reminiscence a nasty memory” (OC 231) and graphically describes the “smoke from chimneys and ovens / a bad picture....” (OC 232). Commenting on the harrowing realities of war in the poem “The Madwomen of the Plaza de Mayo”. Mandel comments:

A soldier is a man who is not a man.
A fence, a spike
A nail in somebody’s eye.
Lost man. (OC 234)

Milton Acorn (1923-1986) drew inspiration from the Confederation poet Archibald Lampman. Like him, he was active in socialist causes and was a spokesman for the working class people. His authentic voice could replicate the cadences of everyday life. His trademark poem “I’ve Tasted My Blood” recounts the lives of people, stricken by poverty and fraught with hardship.

Playmates? I remember where their skulls roll!
One died hungry, gnawing grey perch-planks;
one fell, and landed so hard he splashed;

and many and many
come up atom by atom
in the worm-casts of Europe. (OC 236)

He admits that his poems are no aspirins for the conditions of present day life. “Knowing I Live in a Dark Age” is a commentary on how the poet is forced to live.

Knowing I live in a dark age before history,
I watch my wallet and
am less struck by gunfights in the avenues
than by the newsie with his dirty pink chapped face
called a shabby poet back for his change. (OC 237)

He writes of small trivialities in the poem “On Saint - Urban Street”, of a janitor who has

one laughing babe at home
and two girls, for lack of room,
in the orphanage.
On holidays they appear
with their soul-smashed faces. (OC 237)

He was nicknamed the People’s Poet. He won the Canadian Poets’ Award in 1970 for his volume *Love and Anger* and the Governor General’s Award for poetry in 1976 for his collection *The Island Means Minago*. An annual award is named after him. The Canadian Film Board has produced two films on his life.

Phyllis Gotlieb (b 1926) is a well-known poet and novelist. She is called the “mother of Canadian Science Fiction” as she has a penchant for incorporating extra-terrestrial themes in her novels. Compared to her novels, her poetic output is less. She was a member of the League of Canadian Poets and the editor of *Transverisons* from 1995 to 2000. Her themes are existential and her style is literary. The poem “What I Know”

shows her intense consciousness of life and emotions but the fact is that she does not and cannot believe in abstract ideas:

I know where there is love deep as a river
and I know how to swim in it, thank God
And also the bitterness of the seas it can decant into
. . . .
. . . .
and though I know how to love a soul alive
I'm damned if I know how to make a soul rejoice
I give up on it. I don't know anything.

(*Selected Poems*, www.tspace.library.utoronto.ca)

Gotlieb also presents the common realities and contradictions of the lives of people. Desperate faces, monstrously coarse old women and crumbled old Jews populate his poetry. The poem “Late Gothic” is one such. It begins:

From the window of my grandfather's
front room above the store I could see
over the asylum wall through the barred window
a madwoman raving, waving
pink arm sleeves (OC 247)

And in “Three-handed Fugue” she talks of an army of cleaning-women with mops and buckets praising Jehovah in terms of bleaches and starches. The images are taken from common life and from her Jewish background. Some of her poetry collections have striking titles—*Within the Zodiac* (1964), *Red Blood Black Ink White Paper: New and Selected Poems 1961-2001*. (2002).

Joe Rosenblatt (b. 1933) celebrates man, nature and the animal world. A poet, artist and editor, he understands the sanctity and underlying oneness of all organic forms. Animals for him have human attributes and there is beauty and vigour in his vocabulary. The themes are a combination of mysticism and contemporary science. The images are original and he experiments with language. The volume *Bumblebee Dithyramb* (1972) contains chant poems that emulate the vibrant energy of nature. *Top Soil* (1976) won the Governor General's Award for Poetry. The *Sleeping Lady* is a sonnet sequence, while *Brides of the Stream* (1983) contains lyrical poems that exhort us to appreciate the beauty of nature and not to dissect it. He also published several volumes of drawings.

George Jonas (b. 1935) is a Hungarian born poet and journalist whose themes centre on the Middle East, counter terrorism, law and aviation safety. His books are rich with family love and have been the basis for two films.

Robert Kroetsch, a major postmodern writer, is famous for his seminal works. Primarily a novelist, his writing is realistic but combines elements of myth and literary allusions. His texts resist one single reading or interpretation and seriously challenge traditional literary practices. Kroetsch is also an accomplished poet and literary critic. *Completed Field Notes* (1989) is a collection made of excerpts from his famous long poems, such as "The Seed Catalogue," and *The Lovely Treachery of Words* (1989) is a collection of his critical essays. Both his poetry and critical writings are postmodern in that they subvert tradition, fragmented and opened ended. Linda Hutcheon calls Robert Kroetsch "Mr. Canadian Postmodern".

Leonard Cohen (1934-) a close friend of Layton, Cohen is a postmodern poet whose work explores themes of religion, isolation, sexuality relationships and the emptiness after the holocaust. He compares mythologies and sets his own Jewish cultural

tradition against the Christian. He was called the poet laureate of pessimism and the godfather of gloom by his companions. Lines such as the following warrant the title.

Frankly I don't believe
anyone out there
really want us to solve
our social problems

I base this all on how I feel
about the man next door
I just hope he doesn't

Get any uglier. (*OC* 308)

bill bisset (b. 1939) is a talented writer who writes in an experimental and anti-conventional manner. A revolutionary young man, he dropped out of the University to live as a free agent, painter and writer, unencumbered by academic restraints. The same spirit is revealed in his poetic style. A visual element permeates his printed poetry. The use of sound effects and the conversational elements in his lines make them unique—we hear the concrete sound of poetry. He is more interested in sound rather than meaning. The aural effect conveys an explicit sensory experience that strains language to its utmost. In his subject matter he can be mystical and mundane, humorous and sentimental. Often he writes on political themes and he can put on an ironical stance. In the poem “the wonderfulness uv th mountees our secret police” he denounces the Mounties, the secret police who open mails, who tear “my daughters dolls hed off/looking for dope. . .” and he warns the public. He describes them as working for the CIA. The poet asks the “mountees” to stick to protecting the weak and the elderly and helping the children and the sick.

instead theyve desertid th poor

n elderly and are protecting

the capitalist crooks (OC 361)

bisset writes in a clipped conversational style with no capitals. He started the *blew ointment magazine* to give voice to his newfangled ideas. Chanting and bare foot dancing was his trademark during poetry readings. The relationship of poetry and music is seen in his life also. He was part of a musical band called the Luddities. Responses to his poetry are varied. He was a highly controversial poet due to his style and unorthodox attitude. The initial hostility has somehow lessened and in 2006 *Nightwood Edition* published a poetic tribute to bisset—*radiant danse uv being*. There were contributions from more than 80 writers including Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen, Patrick Lane and several others.

David Solway (b 1941) is an ardent believer in the Jewish faith, heritage and history. A poet, educationist, theorist and literary critic, he has written several volumes of poetry. He is renowned for his polemical outspokenness and defense of Zionism. He has invented several poetic personae. Andreas the Greek poet is one such whose work he has apparently translated. Many of his themes are religious and the imagery is biblical. Some of his volumes are titled *Modern Marriage*, *Bedrock*, *Chess Pieces*, *The Poetry of Andreas Karavis*. In 2007, he was awarded the A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry for the volume *Reaching for Clear: The Poetry of Rhys Saravan*.

Seymour Mayne (b. 1944) poet and translator published over fifty works of poetry and literary criticism. He has also edited several anthologies. His works mainly reflect his Jewish concerns. The terror of war the realities of existence and worn out religious routines are his themes. In the poem “Before Passover”, the grandmother rummages for

bread in the old flat. They had gone to Canada imagining bread grew on trees and was ready for picking. Instead in 1919,

Early winter nights later in Montreal
they returned from work and underpay,
their snowy three-sided shadows
marching them into silence. (OC 427)

Very Stone House is a small Press dedicated to Canadian Poetry which he do-founded with fellow poet Patrick Lane and bill bissett. In 2007, Mayne was awarded the Louis L. Lockshin and Brenda Freedman Memorial Award in Poetry for his book *September Rain*.

Joseph Sherman (1945-2006) was an outspoken poet whose vital visual, performing poetry made him popular. He was very passionate about Jewish causes. He was a humanitarian concerned about the suffering of man all over the world. The poem “First and Last” reflects the hapless fate of the unfortunate baby victims of Hiroshima:

I was born on August 4th 1945,
and on August 5th,
while I suckled in tranquility,
Hiroshima played host
to the first Atomic Bomb.
God, to think of all those people
who woke with me,
only once. (Sherman, *Birthday*, www.brokenjoe.blogspot.com)

Sherman published over seven volumes of poetry. *Birthday* (1969), *Lords of Shouting* (1982), *Transcription* (1998), *American Standard and Other Poems* (1999), *Beautiful Veins* (2006) are a few of his collections. He was named to the Order of Canada in 2003.

Ellen S. Jaffe (b 1945) is of Jewish-Russian decent. She deals incisively with varied subjects that range from the Vietnam War to 9/11, aging parents, childbirth, grandmothers and sports. There is passion and humour in her poetry. The collection *Water Children* received an award from Hamilton Arts. The title poem is an intimate dialogue between a mother and her aborted child. (Buddhist women refer to aborted babies as water children)

Water child, I bring you . . .
coloured ribbons to tie up my prayers
You live, still floating in some sunless sea
out of reach . . . out of reach. (www.poets.ca)

Family relationships are important to her. Hence she is uniquely compassionate and uncompromising. She also interweaves political sensibilities with the personal in her poetry.

Robyn Sarah (b. 1949) has written over ten volumes of poetry. She began publishing poetry when she completed her studies. Her work is formal and deals with daily experiences. Very observant, she is able to quietly see greatness in small things. Her poems work at the intersection of different realities. The collection *Question about the Stars* (1998) incorporates text from Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (1988). Robyn Sarah has also written critically on poetry. She is a novelist and a short story writer. She has won awards for her short story and she has won the CBC literary competition for poetry. *A Day's Grace* (2003), *Becoming Light*, *Anyone Skating on That Middle Ground* (1984) are some of her other poetry collections.

Anne Michaels (b. 1958) falls in line with the tradition of Canadian novelist-poets. Her collection *The Weight of Orangee* (1986) won the Commonwealth Prize and *Miner's*

Pond (1991) the Canadian Authors Association Award. *Skin Drivers* is her third Divers collection. Currently she teaches in the University of Toronto.

Conclusion

Contemporary poets publish their work in *The Parchment*, a Jewish literary journal, which publishes the work of new writers alongside established ones. **Merle Nudleman** won the Canadian Jewish Book Award for her first volume of poems “Borrowed Light”. **Danielle Adler**, at the age of 18, published her poem “Exotic Land of my Ancestors”. **Douglas Barbour** concentrates on vocal sound effects. The Toronto poet **Ron Charach**, a practicing psychiatrist, published the volume *Elephant Street*. He is currently working on a poetry collection *Glocken Spiel* that will feature “Holocaust by Proxy”. **Rochelle Mass**, poet, editor and translator, published *The Startled Land*. **Karen Shenfield**, poet, writer and filmmaker wrote *The Law of Return*. Many others like **Rhea Tregobov** and **Glen Rotchin** are on the way to becoming major poets. *Essential Works: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Poetry* has been edited by Seymour Mayne and *Jerusalem: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Poetry* is another volume compiled by him along with Glen Rotchin.

Jewish themes have centered around immigrant acculturation, the Holocaust, Zionism, the birth of Israel and a fear of assimilation. There is invariably a nostalgia for the lost land and for the banished traditions of European Jewish Life. Though the Jews in Canada consider Montreal as the Jerusalem of Canada, the fascination and longing for the long-lost city has not died. Several poets from Klein to the present have written on the city. Jewish themes have also been more or less the same from the past to the present. Regardless of the language French or English, Hebrew or Yiddish, Jewish Literature in Canada characteristically reflects an internationalism, a minority sensibility and the profound influence of the Holocaust. Jewish poets have thus articulated Jewish

experience that has penetrated the Canadian sensibility, and earned for Jewish writing a major place in Canadian Literature.

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DR. ESTHER JAYANTHI

III.4 ITALIAN CANADIAN AND OTHER EUROPEAN WRITING: AN OVERVIEW

III.4.1 INTRODUCTION:

At the time of World War I, Canada was a nation with only a population of about eight million people. However, in the next eighteen to twenty years, there was an increase of around two and a half million more people leading to political, social and other problems. At the same time, along with these changes, Canada had also demographically changed. The domination of the English and French has now changed considerably to include a number of different kinds of ethnic groups. Thus, Canada's demography itself had changed considerably by the time of the Second World War. Most of the population that came into Canada was from Europe. The political instability of Austria, Hungary and Ukraine led to the vast scale migration of these groups, which settled in the western regions of Canada. Although much of the demography changed due to immigration, there had also been early European settlers in the land. One such example is that of the Italian Canadian. As far back as 1497 John Cabot, an Italian had navigated to the coast of Newfoundland and staked the land for Britain. Later Giovanni da Verrainano had reached Atlantic Canada for the French regime. Italians had also served in the armies of British and French posted in Canada. The period from 1775-1800, saw a number of Italians who came for trade purposes to the land, and settled to mostly in the region of Montréal.

The early nineteenth century saw the immigration of a number of Italian artists and artisans. This also led to the settlement of musicians who later on became teachers of music or performers in various bands. Subsequently, the latter half of the nineteenth century set the trend for immigration of peasants and labourers. The growth and development of industries and railways increased the number of immigrants. As the immigration increased, there were also reports of exploitation and mistreatment of the

Italian immigrants. Based on some of the reports the Italian commissioner, Egisto Rossi demanded that immigration be stopped until the issue of exploitation was investigated thoroughly.

The earlier immigrants had been mostly farmers and labourers. However, Italy's social conditions led to poverty and poor economic conditions led to a great number of people with different backgrounds emigrating to Canada. According to statistics, in the period before World War I, around 119,770 had entered into Canada and most of these were young men. After World War I, it was estimated that about 29,000 immigrants had entered Canada. A great number of Italians had occupied territories in and around Montreal and Toronto but by 1940s many other Italian Canadian families had established colonies in the Okanagan valley and other urban centres of Canada. Italian immigration dipped around 1940s and 1950s. The period of depression was tolerable for most Italians due to their strong family ties and yet during the World War II, Italians had to face hostility due to the general enmity towards fascism. This hostile environment let many Italians change their family names.

The 1950s resulted once again in a boom in the immigration of Italians. This happened as the post war period led to a shortage of labor. Many men came on contracts of a year or so for jobs and then paved the way for immigration of complete families. In 1967, when new immigration laws came in there was once again a decline in Italian immigration. Thus in 1981 the largest Italian population was in the regions of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. The 2006 census indicated that Italian Canadian population to be 1.4 million, which placed them as the fourth largest group in Canada and has influenced a great deal of art and culture. A number of earlier immigrants had settled in colonies which were popularly called as 'Little Italys'. Over the years, however, many Italians began to live independently in Canadian neighbourhoods. Although earlier

immigrants had been in low level jobs, later generations due to their educative backgrounds became part of the professional set-up of the country. Italian immigrants also began to establish small community aided bodies as well as other societies such as 'The Order of Italy', 'Centre for Organizing Technical Courses for Italians' (COSTI, 1960), and 'The Italian Canadian Benevolent Corporation' (ICBC, 1971). The community also established a political party -- the National Congress of Italian Canadians-- in 1974. The first Italian newspaper was published in the nineteenth century in Montreal and thereafter several others had been inaugurated. Italian Canadian is the fourth largest immigrant group.

LITERARY BEGINNINGS:

As most other literary forms, the Italian Canadian writing too had begun with log books and other small journals maintained by the early explorers. Since the literature of this kind is meagre and rudimentary, the first important writing one could consider is the Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Bressani's *Breve Relazione* (1653). The work endeavours to depict Canada from an Italian point of view. Although there were other literary works produced, none of them could be considered as truly reflecting the Italian consciousness. Most of the writing was by travelers or visitors to the country. Many of them also published in journals or newspapers in Italy. One work worthy of mention is Francesco Gualtieri's brief social history, *We Italians: A Study in Italian Immigration in Canada* (1928).

LITERATURE OF 1940S:

Mario Duliani's *La Ville sans femme* (1945) was a record of his experience in an internment camp during World War II. This was later translated into English and published by Antonio Mazza in 1994. Among the first few writings, one name that is noticeable is that of the woman writer, Elena Maccaferri Randaccio. Her *Canada Mia Seconda Patria* was published in 1958 under the pen-name Elena Albani. Although the 1950s saw a flourishing number of Italian magazines and periodicals, literary writing was scanty.

THE 1960S AND 1970S:

The Italians in Canada (1969), was a social history published by Antonio Spada and which for the first time canonized some Italian Canadian writers. Some of the writers mentioned in the volume were Mario Duliani, Elena Albani, John Robert Colombo, Jean Bruchesi, and Guglielmo Vangelisti. The Toronto journalist Gianni Grohovaz published some poetry in the seventies and his narrative *Strada Bianca* was posthumously published in 1989. This was the period that could be called as the period of renaissance in Italian Canadian writing. By this period a great number of writers had completed education and had begun to participate in the intellectual circles of the country. At this point of time Robert Harney's articles on the immigration of Italians to Canada began to make their appearance. This paved the way for the emergence of a number of researchers such as Franc Sturino, Bruno Ramirez, John Zucchi, Roberto Perin, Gabriele Scardellato and Franca Iacovetta. Yet another momentous happening during this period was the international conference on the theme "Writing About the Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada" which was held in Rome (1984). The papers of this conference were later edited by Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino and published under the title, *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada* (1989).

MODERN ITALIAN WRITING:

1975 was a historic event in Italian Canadian writing when Pier Giorgio Di Cicco an editor for *Books in Canada* published the anthology, *Roman Candles*. This was followed by Frank Paci's *The Italians* (1978) and *Black Madonna* (1982). *The Italians* was seen as a trend setting work and became a best seller within months of its publication. Marco Micone had published *Gens du Silence* (1980) an Italian work published in French and later on *The Tough Romance* in 1979. *Gens du Silence* had an English publication in 1954 and was titled *Voiceless People*.

There was no looking back after this and a great deal of literature of this ethnic minority began to be published and very soon carved a niche for itself. Some of the writers and works worth mentioning are Mary di Michele's *Mimosa and Other Poems* (1981), D'Alfonso's *Black Tongue* (1983), Mary Melfi *A Queen is Holding a Mummified Cat* (1982), Fulvio Caccia, *Irpinia* (1983), Filippo Salvatore, *Suns of Darkness* (1980), Maria Ardizzi published *Made in Italy* (1982), and Caterina Edwards *The Lion's Mouth* (1982).

Two very recognized and prominent writers of this group are Caterina Edwards and Pasquale Verdicchio. Caterina Edwards was born in England and grew up in Calgary. After the publication of *The Lion's Mouth* (1982) she published a number of short stories in various literary journals. She went on to publish *Whiter Shade of Pale* and *Becoming Emma* in 1992. Earlier to this her play, *Terra Straniera* was highly acclaimed when it was staged at the Fringe Theatre Festival in 1986. Guernica Editions later published the play with the title *Homeground* (1990). Pasquale Verdicchio who belongs to Naples grew up in Vancouver. His first collection of poems, *Moving Landscape* was published in 1985. He is also a translator translating a number of Italian poets such as Antonio Porta, Giorgio Caproni, and Alda Merini into English. He has a number of critical essays on film (*Devils in Paradise*, 1997) and literature (*The Southern Question*, 1995). His other poetry

collections are *A Critical Geography* (1989), *Nomadic Trajectory* (1990), and *Approaches to Absence* (1994).

GERMAN CANADIAN & MENNONITE WRITING:

The German Canadians are immigrants from different regions of Europe, namely Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. Though many of them initially spoke German or dialects of the language, a majority learnt English and adopted to the new country into which they had emigrated. According to studies done the first Germans came into the region of Nova Scotia in 1750. Some of them later moved into the Northern regions. German immigration between 1830-1880 was largely into the region of Ontario while from 1880 -1910 it was into the western Canadian regions. Although regular creative writing did not crop up, many short pieces appeared in the German language newspapers such as *The Berliner Journal* and *Der Neu-Schottländische Calender* (1788-1801). Early church bulletins too carried some literary pieces. One of the significant works during this period was a volume edited by Gerhard Friesen titled, *Hier laßt uns Hütten bauen* published in 1984. This contained about fourteen writers and much of the writing although didactic had overtones of Romanticism and Classicism.

Along with these German works were publications by Mennonites which initially was writing focusing on the break from the home land and the alienation in the new land. Some such works are Dietrich Neufeld's diary, *Ein Tagebuch aus dem Reiche des Totentanzes* (1921; translated as *A Russian Dance of Death*, 1977), Hans Harder's *In Wologdas weissen Wäldern* (1934; translated as *No Strangers in Exile*, 1979), and Arnold B. Dyck's educational, autobiographical novel *Verloren in der Steppe* (1944; translated as *Lost in the Steppes*, 1974).

There were some writers who were familiar with both English and German and one such example is Felix Paul Greve who reinvented himself in Canada as Frederick Philip Grove. Important writers at the time of World War II was Carl Weiselberger (1900-70), Charles Wassermann (1924-78) and Henry Kreisel. Weiselberger was the art and music critic for the *Ottawa Citizen* and he also wrote a number of short stories that were published in various newspapers. On the other hand, Wassermann was a reporter and broadcaster whose short write-ups gained popularity as they served the past and present identities of the German Canadians. Kreisel who was born in Austria had several short stories and novels. Two of his remarkable works are *The Rich Man* (1948) and *The Betrayal* (1964). This trend of German Canadians to write in English moved one step further with the entry of young writers such as Henry Beissel and Derk Wynand. Beissel's works dealt with Indian and Inuit themes. His works are *Cantos North* (1982) and *Kanada, Romantik und Wirklichkeit* (1981). Derk Wynand began to translate works such as that of H.C. Artmann and he was also one of initiators of modernist poetry. Other writers worthy of mention are Andreas Schroeder, Rolf Windthorst and Valentin Sawatsk. Some anthologies too were published such as *Ahornblätte* and *Nachrichten aus Ontario*.

IRISH, SCOTTISH AND WELSH LITERATURE

A large number of Irish and Scottish people immigrated to Canada in the nineteenth century. The economic depression in Wales during early twentieth century led to an increase in the number of Welsh immigrants. These immigrants being largely English speaking assimilated into the Canadian Anglophone culture and most of their literary output has been considered as being part of mainstream literature. In the past two decades, however, many universities are having a separate section of Irish Canadian literature. Some of the important writers belonging to this group are Thomas D'Arcy Mc

Gee (*Canadian Ballads*, 1858) Alexander McLachlan (*The Emigrant, and Other Poems*, 1861), Brian Moore, Morley Callaghan, and Alice Munro.

OTHER EUROPEAN WRITING:

Among the other European writers who came to Canada were the Icelanders who fled their country due to volcanic eruptions. Many of these immigrants settled in the region of Manitoba. Some of the early recognized writers of this group are Thorsteinn Thorsteinsson and Sigurbjorn Johannson who wrote in Icelandic language about the Canadian immigrant experience. Stephán Stephansson innovated the Icelandic literature with new imagery and experiences drawn from his Canadian experience and he was awarded the title of poet laureate of Iceland for his literary output. Much of this ethnic writing became known in Canada because of translations carried out by Watson Kirkconnell in the volume *Canadian Overtones* (1935). The second and third generation writers began to assimilate into the Canadian culture and many of them began to write in English. Laura Goodman Salverson published her autobiography, *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* (1939) as well as a romantic novel, *The Viking Heart* (1923). Two of the most important contemporary writers of Icelandic background are W.D. Valgardson and Kristjana Gunnars. The works of W.D. Valgardson are collections of short stories, *Bloodflowers* (1973), *God is Not a Fish Inspector* (1975) and *Red Dust* (1978), a poetry collection, *In the Gutting Shed* (1976), and the novel, *Gentle Sinners* (1980). Much of his writing is postmodern and realistic. Gunnars blends myth and history in her poetry, *The Settlement Poems* (1980), and short story collection, *The Axe's Edge* (1983).

Hungarians who came to Canada as farmers and miners produced some literature. The first known works are John Szatmari's epic poems (1900s) and collection of poetry by Hungarian Canadians titled *Mezel Virágok (Prairie Flowers, 1919)*. Later writers such as

George Jonas have published in English, yet some of the older poets such as Ferenc Fay, Robert Zend and George Faludy still write in Hungarian. Hungarian Canadian writers formed an association in 1969 and this group has published several anthologies.

Another European group that has made its presence felt in Canada are the Poles. The best-known writer of this group is Louis Dudek. Some of the post-war Polish writing to be mentioned are Waclaw Iwaniuk's *Ciemny Czas* (1968; translated as *Dark Times*, 1979) and *Evenings on Lake Ontario* (1981) and Josef Skvorecky's *The Bass Saxophone* (1977) and *The Engineer of Human Souls* (1977, translated in 1984).

Canadian ethnic writing has been strengthened by the many European groups and in a way, the full sense of multiculturalism and mosaic has been the identification of these varied group of immigrant voices.

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