

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
THE PROPHET AND THE COKEBOTTLE
A STUDY OF IRVING LAYTON'S POETIC
VISION OF COMMON LIFE

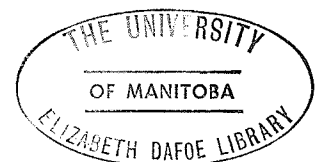
by

JEAN DOMINIQUE FERRARI

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
April 1973



ABSTRACT

THE PROPHET AND THE COKEBOTTLE A STUDY OF IRVING LAYTON'S POETIC VISION OF COMMON LIFE

by

JEAN DOMINIQUE FERRARI

The bulk of Layton's work has a striking unity. Of course, all poems do not converge towards one precise unmovable point; but, though we might be tempted to isolate groups of poems and attach to them contradictory meanings, they all combine to give Layton's poetry a dominant general character. The same basic synthesis which enables critics to classify poets as "Romantics", "Symbolists", or "Surrealists", should enable us to see that Layton's poetry is characterized by its materiality. Layton's poems spring from his actual, ponderable, corporeal experiences in a world of solid objects, physical facts, and organic processes, and they are the incarnation of concrete, realistic ideas. My purpose in this thesis is to analyze one aspect of this materiality. The title of the thesis claims to reflect this aspect.

Apart from the fact that it is the theme of a poem ("Intersections"), the cokebottle is directly related to the idea of materiality pervading Layton's poetry. It also symbolizes the vulgar character of the world chosen by the poet. Together with the idea of vulgarity and materiality, the cokebottle suggests common daily life. In this study I analyze these various ideas within a social context; and the cokebottle also represents this social context. Beyond that unimportant image, it is the whole mechanism of society which is eventually involved and the whole world of concrete objects.

Another dimension is added to the concepts of materiality, reality, and empiricism when the poet is visualized as a prophet. These concepts are not used by the poet for their own sake, nor for his own sake. They are the basis of the message he delivers to his fellow men. Layton's purpose is indeed an attempt to reach people through the medium of poetry just as the prophet tries to reach men by means of his admonitions and revelations. Consequently, Layton's poetry has to be considered in a social context, as a function of the poet's prophetic role. This consideration is essential in order to define his work and view it in the light in which the writer would like it to be viewed.

The first chapter of the thesis, which is both the introduction to the thesis and to the poet's philosophy, deals essentially with the poet as prophet in a contemporary social context. The second chapter analyzes the empirical attitude of the poet which leads to the formation of his philosophy and to the establishment of his ethical values. The third chapter shows how human relationships and the feasibility of a sound life are dependent upon social reality. Aesthetics is the object of the fourth chapter, a chapter which indicates how for Layton beauty is to be found in a concrete environment. The thesis in no way exhausts what Layton finds in reality, concreteness and materiality. The conclusion hints at further developments of the idea of concreteness and materiality in the realm of the organic environment.

I wish to thank the Canada Council for a grant enabling me to study at the University of Manitoba. I also wish to thank Mr. Mane, Mr. Ferrieux, and Alan Gibson for their support and encouragement.

I am grateful to Dr. Peter Noel-Bentley for his syntactical corrections, stylistic suggestions, for his desire for clarity and for his timely interventions in the limitation of the scope of this thesis.

I WANT
TO WRITE POEMS
THAT CAN BE READ
BY
BUTCHERS
AND
BANKERS.

(Irving Layton, Aphs Section of The Whole Bloody Bird, p. 84)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER I: THE POET'S VISION	1
CHAPTER II: THE POET'S EMPIRICAL ATTITUDE	15
CHAPTER III: SOCIAL REALITY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS	33
CHAPTER IV: DOWNTOWN BEAUTY	57
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	73
NOTES	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

CHAPTER I: THE POET'S VISION

The bulk of Layton's work has a striking unity. Of course, all poems do not converge towards one precise unmovable point; but, though we might be tempted to isolate groups of poems and attach to them contradictory meanings, they all combine to give Layton's poetry a dominant general character. The same basic synthesis which enables critics to classify poets as "Romantics", "Symbolists", or "Surrealists", should enable us to see that Layton's poetry is characterized by its materiality. Layton's poems spring from his actual, ponderable, corporeal experiences in a world of solid objects, physical facts, and organic processes, and they are the incarnation of concrete, realistic ideas. My purpose in this thesis is to analyze one aspect of this materiality. The title of the thesis claims to reflect this aspect.

Apart from the fact that it is the theme of a poem ("Intersections"), the cokebottle is directly related to the idea of materiality pervading Layton's poetry. It also symbolizes the vulgar character of the world chosen by the poet. Together with the idea of vulgarity and materiality, the cokebottle suggests common daily life. In this study I analyze these various ideas within a social context; and the cokebottle also represents this social context. Beyond that unimportant image, it is the whole mechanism of society which is eventually involved and the whole world of concrete objects.

But how does Layton contemplate the cokebottle? He does not content himself with accepting it as part of his world, he looks into it for truth. Matter and daily life, the concrete structures defining the spatio-temporal world of today's society are the sources of the poet's

philosophy of life as well as the sources of his inspiration. The poet's vision is within a material universe, the vision of all that has the reality of the cokebottle. Before considering reality, though, the poet experiences it; he comes to the awareness of its existence through the medium of his senses, his experiences. The philosophical and poetical values of reality, of matter, are revealed to the poet through empirical involvement. Before considering common social reality in relation with human relationships, and in relation with poetry and beauty, this thesis deals therefore with the empirical attitude of the poet.

Another dimension is added to the concepts of materiality, reality, and empiricism when the poet is visualized as a prophet. These concepts are not used by the poet for their own sake, nor for his own sake. They are the basis of the message he delivers to his fellow men. Layton's purpose is indeed an attempt to reach people through the medium of poetry just as the prophet tries to reach men by means of his admonitions and revelations. Consequently, Layton's poetry has to be considered in a social context, as a function of the poet's prophetic role. This consideration is essential in order to define his work and view it in the light in which the writer would like it to be viewed.

This relation between poet, as prophet, and society expresses itself in terms of commitment and responsibility. In his foreword to, successively, Balls for a One-Armed Juggler¹ and The Swinging Flesh,² Layton writes:

The truth is this: instead of remembering they are prophets, the poets have swapped roles with entertainers and culture-peddlers. They have refused the crown of thorns. Because he is a prophet the poet must take into himself all the moral diseases, all the anguish and terror of his age, so

that from them he can forge the wisdom his tortured fellow men need to resist the forces dragging them down into the inhuman and the bestial.

My place is beside the Jewish visionaries, scholars, poets and rebels who are no less contemptuous than I am of the wealthy exploiter, the affluent boor, the moralizing fraud. The Philistine Jew is part of what's wrong with the world, a modality of its sickness. But the disorder is general. Man is the diseased animal.

As a poet Layton feels he has to fulfill a certain number of duties towards man, art, and the poet himself. His poetry is oriented towards a well-defined motivated purpose: the desire to cure man, the "diseased animal". To understand that attitude one has to revert to Layton's conception of the poet and of the part that he plays in society. A poet, to Layton, must be born a poet. He bears a mark which distinguishes him from other people. He is sent either by God, gods, chance or fate to humanity. Who sends him does not really matter. What matters to Layton is that the poet is a chosen individual entrusted with a message to deliver to his fellow men, because he has been endowed with special attributes which enable him to bring light to humanity. Layton speaks therefore of the prophetic part he has to play and of the poet's sacred fire. His attitude indeed reminds us of the biblical prophets or, as he himself says, of Jewish visionaries. Like them his purpose is to cure, to help man get rid of the crippling effect of our mechanical civilization, of the frustrations and envies which prevent man from seeing the truth the poet is offering. In his foreword to Balls for a One-Armed Juggler, Layton writes:

What must concern the artist today, above all, is the organized nature of twentieth-century wickedness. Certainly this wickedness builds on evil that has existed in human beings from earliest beginnings; but present-day pressures have created a

type of "massenmensch" -- homeless, estranged, degraded -- to whom violence and cruelty offer the only relief from his nagging feelings of resentment and inferiority. (p. XX)

And in his foreword to Swinging Flesh Layton adds:

To feed anodynes to the teeming masses, now increasing by fifty millions each year; to brainwash them with propaganda; to stunt and cripple them in order to reconcile them to a boring mechanical civilization -- this increasingly is becoming the main function of government today. Can you imagine a Proust arising in the Soviets of today and tomorrow? Or a Paul Valery? A Joyce, Faulkner, Thomas Mann, or D.H. Lawrence? What would be their use? Who would read them? Who would understand them? (p. XIII)

Thus, like the prophets inside the city's walls, Layton shouts at the people, warning them, telling them about what is good and what is bad, and forecasting future events which would depend upon their response to his words. Few poets have insisted as much as Layton has upon this role of a poet as judge and leader. And still, to associate Layton with prophets, visionaries and other poets, even if it is only in a formal way, might appear inappropriate to a casual reader. How can even an angry prophet speaking in the name of truth indulge in the shocking attitudes and bold statements he is so fond of? The primary and essential answer is partly given by the poet himself: "The time of warnings and also for protest is past. Today the poet can only curse".³ Layton as a prophet claims that to curse is now the only way to reach people. Things have come to such a point that he deems himself and the world in a near state of emergency. The poet therefore actually needs brutally to shake the individual into a new awareness. For this he has to shock the reader in the manner of Diogenes' masturbating in a public place and spitting on his friends' faces. All that Layton writes is not to be taken to the letter. It would be as irrelevant to do so as to consider Diogenes' behaviour as only a means to reveal, in an offensive and bold way, one side of his personality.

Cynical and outrageous behaviour was for Diogenes what poetry is for Layton.

Layton's overtly realistic manner of expression testifies of his desire to vulgarize poetry, to make it a dynamic part of daily life. Layton deals with elements such as the mechanism of society, its setting, the repercussions of economic, political and ideological principles upon the individual as part of a group and upon the group as a whole. To sing the beauty of nature as a reaction against increasingly material and anti-natural forces turns out to be equally preposterous and indeed irresponsible. Today more than ever before the poet has to become an apostle in a struggle against the pollution of the mind, thus has to act like a rebel. In the foreword to The Shattered Plinths, Layton writes:

Let gentility cry out on me
because I write verses neither
Wordsworth nor Keats might have conceived
yet in god's name let's have done with lies.

Let us know the worst, that is the compelling cry of our most influential writers and film-makers. If we know the grim, unpalatable truths about ourselves we might in time learn to restrain our most destructive impulses. We can strive to accomodate ourselves to each other's egotism and for the sake of common survival modify or direct it into less apelike manifestations. Men will never create a world flowing with milk and honey or even one that will provide all its inhabitants with the minimum conditions for their physical and moral health, but they ought to be able to keep it reasonably clear of poisonous weeds and polluted waters. (...): Man is an exceedingly tough animal and for all his wickedness a creative one. (p. 14-15)

Revolutions, not mild-mannered sophisticated poetry, have brought changes. Layton knows that the roots of errors and evil lie in the very depth of each human being, that therefore the poet has to assume the responsibility of striving to make man more aware of his true nature and of the true nature of the society in which he is living. The poet cannot be merely

a passionate pamphleteer with moody spells and sentimental moments.

At first, as befits a prophet, Layton lashes out at man's sins. What Layton basically wants is to free man from a spiritual alienation brought on by a materialistic and mechanistic society and by inhibiting moral principles. Because of our distorted selves, the result of a civilization which creates artificial needs, we are harmful to each other; and the poet points out those harmful distortions. Those sins, or rather as Layton puts it, those unpleasant truths about ourselves, spring from our excessive attachment to materialistic values. Men are led by vanity, egotism, envy, desire for power, into the pursuit of materialistic interests. We are all possessed by particular cravings, needs and forces which must find outlets and which in the present situation make us rush in wrong directions. The dangerous individuals, to Layton, are those incapable of perceiving, experiencing and enjoying life in a spontaneous, unprejudiced, even candid manner. Those individuals satisfy their needs by creating a set of values contrary to the development of the poet's sound and true world. To Layton society should consist of healthy men soundly enjoying themselves. Because our civilization is based upon money, success and the rational, it prevents us from experiencing life in a natural way as the unspoilt, carefree African Negro does, to use Layton's own image:

Progress. Build stinking Chicagos in the Congo; or dull monolithic Moscows and Leningrads. Build the mindless vacancies of suburbia and people them with manipulating politicians, squint-eyed lawyers, vendors of chromatic bumpaper, successful meat and poultry merchants, halitotic public relations and ad men. With shrieks and neurotic commissars. With the disordered progeny of those who lust after money and power. With gastric ulcers, distended livers, cardiac disease, alcoholism, insanity. For these the African Negro, the last of the Dionysians, is asked to exchange his wonderful sensuousness, his rich uncorrupted instincts, and his exuberant rhythms.⁴

So this primitive man in fact represents for Layton the Dionysian element in life, man's non-rational, natural and instinctive side. As a prophet, therefore, Layton builds his message upon the idea that there is one aspect of man, the Dionysian, the instinctive, emotive, joyful, imaginative, intuitive, passionate and even insane aspect of man which must be preserved because it is threatened by perverted and degenerated men, a mechanized society and materialistic values.

But the poet goes beyond this idea of preservation. If he is a prophet, he is also at the same time a poet. He will not only speak in the name of a liberated man, but also in the name of art, because for him the two are closely connected. If our civilization goes on progressing the way it does, says Layton, art and the artist will become unnecessary elements, nobody being any longer able to recognize and understand them. Nobody will be able to appreciate art because society will have killed those elements of appreciation and enjoyment which man originally possesses. Layton warns of the enslavement of man, of the disappearance of art, of the destruction of artistic feeling and artistic response, and of the negation of the Dionysian element without which there can be no artistic creation. At the same time Layton's message aims at the liberation of the individual, that is to say at the recognition, unfettering and expansion of Dionysian values in order to counterbalance stifling intellectualism and rationalism.

It is interesting to measure Layton against the traditional image of the prophet. The values he is upholding may appear rather unusual. For him the merely rational and intellectual belong to man's repressive and bestial nature, whereas the physical, the passionate, even the

irrational belong to man's creative and good nature. Action motivated by the intellect alone (or still worse by a dogmatic intellect) is dangerous and destructive, and is opposed to action motivated by a balance of intuition, intelligence and genuine passion. The intellect, in isolation from the physical, emotional and passionate characteristics in man, creates only an efficient, mechanized society and stifling moral and ideological principles; beauty and a true art of living can only spring from the senses and imagination. For Layton, at least in our contemporary society, it is basically intellect and reason which dictate the behaviour of Christians, communists and technocrats; and he shows complete distrust of and utter contempt for them. His attitude is very well summed up in an aphorism from the second section of The Whole Bloody Bird. In this passage, Layton points out how he cares for man such as he is. He states that the true artist instead of trying to exploit, to rationalize or simply to entertain man, must accept his intrinsic existence and be fully satisfied with it:

Man lies on a sick bed. Christians
would keep him there; communists
would drive him off it with blows;
technocrats would feed his groans into
an apparatus for generating electricity;
artists, however, are fascinated by
the sugar crystals in his urine. (73)

This aphorism makes it clear enough that Layton does not claim to draw his inspiration from a god, from artificial or material ideologies, or from vaguely defined spiritual and supernatural values, but from concrete matter. He does not conceive of the poet as a bright meteorite fallen from the sky and stranded on the earth or as a nonetheless bright calculating body building up systems, but as a man deeply embedded in

everyday life, a man belonging to the street in which he lives and to the earth. Layton does not breathe an ethereal air; he breathes the smells escaping from the earth. He does not watch falling rain through window panes; he is disintegrated into sand on the road by it:

or where my wet limbs cannot be seen
when under the firtrees I sit out the rain

There think how the mindless rain
will spill me into the sands of the road⁵

The truths in the name of which he speaks are derived from social reality, the concrete aspects of things, the tangible and immediately effective nature of human values. His message springs from the very organic character of life, from the world revealed through and beyond physiological processes. Those are the basic aspects which his poetry will reflect. It is essential, moreover, to understand them as a means of organic communion between the poet and nature or earth. For Layton, the contemporary man is, as it were, a landless peasant; a man who has lost contact with his earthly roots, with earthly elements in himself, with the nourishing soil.

Layton's poetry shows how the Dionysian is the only essential element in man to counterbalance his intellect; he shows how the Dionysian is connected to the earthly, the natural, and the concrete. His poems are both message and example, denunciation and indication of the direction to take. The concrete and empiric aspect of the poet's philosophy will materialize itself through the use of what we could call vulgar themes. It will be interesting to see where those themes come from what they mean and contingently symbolize and eventually what they lead to. The fact that the word "vulgar" is given so much emphasis in a poetical context should not be surprising here. Since Layton's values so boldly upset traditional

values, since he opposes so daringly the irrational, which he exalts, to the rational, it is easy to foresee that the formal aspect of his poetry will reflect those unusual tendencies. By classical standards, standards we have traditionally been used to, Layton's poetry can indeed appear anti-poetical. If poetry, traditionally, as Layton will have it, provides us with diversion, thanks to bucolic, romantic, surrealistic or purely symbolic themes and images, Layton's poetry is focussed upon common, natural, organic elements which the poet considers as the only true aspect of life, and not upon magnified scenes, objects, ideas or feelings. We will not therefore be presented with a peaceful, ethereal or even decent world, but with a harshly matter-of-fact world, a world of gutters and a world of guts. With Layton we often enter a garden of roots and thorns; we are made to contemplate not a golden field of daffodils, but a blade of grass making its way through the crust of the earth. We see gardens peopled not by eagles, deer or doves, but by snails, toads and worms. The poet does not present us with man ecstatic with the thought of his beloved on the shore of an Alpine lake, but with man passionately imposing his virility upon woman. He does not ask for a quiet harmonized peaceful world, but for a violent, sporadic, passionate, even at times a demonic one. The word "vulgar" is meant here then in the most liberal sense of the word.

Common matter, common images, and common themes are present in most poems written by Layton. Those three elements could be said to form the background matter of his poetry. Everything else is, as it were, superimposed. "Common" means here ordinary and everyday, the familiar in private or public places. Layton sometimes specially insists upon

things that are hidden because deemed improper, unworthy or undignified. Describing a restaurant,⁶ he writes about people's artificial behaviour, their empty speeches, the stains on the table and the crumbs on their laps. While dealing with children in a matter-of-fact way,⁷ he describes their "peeing" at night behind a shack as a beautiful instant. Allusions to "Chinese food" and "Pizzapie"⁸ are juxtaposed to evocations of messianic characters and biblical scenes. One of his poems⁹ describes the frustration of a man angrily leaving a church because the Virgin's halo would not light up after he put the required coin in the slot. The street or the family scene is not seen through preconceived principles or through his desire to transform it, to give it a special attractive quality or to make it fit his purpose. On the contrary, the poet tries to render the scene he is describing as bare, as crude, as prosaic as it is, often with a frank objectivity. Layton's poetry is the result of a carefully worked out spoliation. Looking for truth, the poet finds it in the reality lurking behind the façade or lying at our feet:

The truth is dung, bubonic plagues
And London a stinking midden;
The maids unwashed and credulous,
The men coarse, or refined and corrupt
Reading their folics.¹⁰

From vulgar and common matter the poet also draws beauty, as he suggests in "Composition in Late Spring",¹¹ where he writes that "Beauty buds from mire". Vulgar matter is often also used for more humanistic purposes, as one can deduce from the following lines from "For the More Devotional":¹²

A man in clothes
is dangerous;
naked, arse in the wind and all,
he's a tolerable animal.

Layton looks for the matter of his philosophical and poetical message still closer to the earth, in organic matter. In fact, for Layton, common matter and organic matter cannot be opposed or even isolated from one another; they complete one another, each fulfilling a precise and related purpose. It is difficult to define what Layton means by organic because of the variety of elements which that word can include. Basically the word "organic" suggests movement and function in the frame of an actual organic process. It is not so much the form as the substance of nature which the poet describes. He never speaks of the beauty of a flower or of natural scenery; he speaks rather of what is behind beauty. It is the actual process leading to the birth, the expansion and death of the flower which attracts him, even the practical function of the plant if it has one. Nature as such is of no interest for Layton; it is the cycle of nature which fascinates him not the yellow leaf but the yellowing of the leaf. Layton thinks of leaves as functioning creatures (and, at times, of functioning creatures as leaves). In "Chokecherries"¹³ the poet writes:

I think of them, the leaves, as hoplites
 or as anything ingloriously
 useful
 suffering, dying...

The relation between poet and nature is more likely to be organic than aesthetic. It is the poet's appetite that is stirred and that dominates his feelings in front of the beautiful red chokecherries. And if he actually resists the temptation to eat them, he endows nature with his desire to do so:

In the sun
The chokecherries are a deep red
They are like clusters of red jewel.

They are too regal to eat
And reduce to moist yellow pits.
I will let the air masticate them

And the bold maggot-making sun.¹⁴

It is movement, the movement of the instant which fascinates the poet. When he describes animals, insects, he describes them in the process of dying or in the process of living expressed under its most simple form. In "The Lizard"¹⁵ the description of sudden movement as image of life is particularly striking. Two signs of life retain the poet's attention: the throbbing of the belly of the animal and the sudden dart to swallow the insect it is about to gulp:

And the neat, heraldic emble
on the wall of my whitewashed villa
is - presto! - changed into a miniature boat:
tiny oars of invisible galley-slaves
move it toward the waiting moth.

A pause: a sudden stretch of the neck
and the dark spot's gone.

Man is also dealt with in the same organic way. For Layton the evocation of man's organic functions is closer to reality than the evocation of his mere naked beauty. In reference to man, besides the idea of death, one essential meaning of "organic" is in connection with physical essence, with health, health depending upon physiological processes. One can enjoy life only if one has a healthy body, the poet seems to say; and organic disturbances are associated with Dionysian or even intellectual failure. In "Gathering of Poets"¹⁶ the poet tells about unhealthy men and unsuccessful poetry, to his mind at least:

Each one accompanying death
With mincing steps, with horrible gestures.
And their poems? The pepperminting of bad breath.

To one of his female companions in "Suzanne",¹⁷ Layton writes that she has given him the "notion of poetry as visceral sanity".

The sexual theme and the images it involves, naturally, give the organic subject its full and definitive significance. The image of man in the act of lovemaking is at the center of Layton's poetry. Sex is related to the essential aspects of life for Layton: health, potency, joy, passion, capacity for perception and sensation. Layton does not indulge in the sexual image as such, as too many people tend to believe too easily, but uses it as an image for the perception, understanding and enjoyment of life and as an image for life itself. Layton cannot be said to indulge in erotic descriptions for the sake of salaciousness. When a poem deals with sex, it deals with the type of passionate, physical life revealed through it; it is not a sophisticated lingering pleasure which is described, but the craving, the ejaculation, the tension, the act, the explosion, life and death.

CHAPTER II: THE POET'S EMPIRICAL ATTITUDE

Every poet has his own world. Layton defines his in the introduction to the Collected Poems 1971: "My country", he says, "is wherever there are concrete objects to touch, feel and enjoy". This idea of concreteness is indeed the essential characteristic of Layton's poetry. It manifests itself through different forms and can be said to be relentlessly present. It reveals itself to the reader, on its most accessible and readily graspable level, through the use by the poet of common matter with vulgar images picked up in the proximate environment of the poet and by means of ideas derived from daily experience. It is very important to understand the relation between the poet and the immediate common social life around him.

The poetical universe of a poet includes a certain number of elements which give to that universe its consistency, character and originality, and which set limits to it while thus defining it. Yeats' world, for instance, can be said to be mainly characterized by three precise facts from which the poet's work is derived: a tradition, a philosophy, a woman; more precisely, Irish legends and folklore, spiritualist and occultist philosophy, and Maud Gonne.¹ The equivalent characteristics in Layton's poetry are not as easily defined. In fact, in his case, it is nearly impossible to make out such particular points. Yeats severs himself from society by focussing his attention upon elements which blatantly lack concreteness, as seen from Layton's point of view. Yeats' social vision passes through a nebulous tradition, his philosophical vision is based upon occultism, and his vision of love is derived from his sole and platonic experience with Maud Gonne. On the other hand, Layton's world

is simply and entirely that of common life; it is constituted by the addition, day after day, step after step, of his experience and observations within society. His vision is not derived from a few individual discoveries around which his whole self clusters, but is derived from his daily experience with people. It is usually possible to associate the name of a woman, a lover, with most poets, but it is not possible to do so with Layton. Layton's attention and passion are not directed towards one special female partner but towards women as a whole; it is not from one woman alone that he will derive his inspiration, one particular woman with her own character, her own definition, but from womankind. Whereas poets traditionally extol one woman they love, or man they admire, Layton extols one aspect he loves in women or one aspect in men he appreciates above all. It is therefore unmistakably one aspect common to all men that will be the object of his poetry, and not one particular aspect of an individual.

As early as his childhood a precise vision of the world formed itself in the poet's mind. He is Jewish and grew up in a poor district in Montreal. His father, a most eccentric character, died when Layton was still under ten, and his mother alone had to run the dingy grocery store and feed her four children. The street became his second house; he met with prostitutes, drunkards, hucksters, as he himself says, and those people deeply impressed him, as did the fights he regularly had with children from Jewish-hating communities. It seems that it was with the awareness of a mature mind that Layton received the impact of what he witnessed. He saw what was the part in society played by whores, he saw how they engendered both lust and scorn. Every day, he could see people

acting through contempt, meanness, envy, greed. He saw the hatred engendered by antisemitic feelings. He saw a world, as Layton eventually concluded in his introduction to the Collected Poems 1971, which was "not only cock-and-cunt" but "also battle". Had he lived in a more sophisticated district, belonged to a richer class, those elements would not have shown through as clearly as in his environment. Of course he later discovered this more sophisticated world he could not understand as a child. But in early childhood he could only judge from appearances and attitudes; uglier facts lurking behind those attitudes were soon perceived by him. He saw that people were shamelessly and hypocritically using goodness or at least rightness as a cover for their hatred; he saw that beyond the Jew-hating kids of Montreal were supposed to be good Christian principles. De Bullion Street, St.Catherine Street and St.Denis Street formed a social microcosm for Layton, and, when the war broke out in Europe and Jews were being slaughtered, it did not take long for Layton to realize that the microcosmic world in which he had been living as a child was indeed an exact image of the macrocosmic world. He made the same type of discoveries as regards love (between men and women) and greed. He came to know more about the men visiting the prostitutes of De Bullion Street. They had families, wives they were supposed to love; to use two favorite words of Layton, he saw how "diseased" on one side and how "stale" on the other was this love. He was able to fathom greed, the greed of people trying at first to emerge from poverty and then the greed of people trying to reach the top; he saw the base efforts of people as they exploited each other, of men as they spoke in the name of some superior truth for the sake of the people but who used at the same time these very people as tools. His

denigration of those dark sides of human nature explains why famous figures such as Stalin and Hitler are so fiercely and grossly disparaged.

Layton drew several essential conclusions from those early experiences. Reality, social microcosmic reality, had never to be discarded as improper or undignified; on the contrary it had to be considered as a true and safe foundation for human thought and activity. His experiences also taught him to keep a wary eye on men as well as on the dignified principles they uphold. It is in this context that we can speak of Layton's empirical attitude, this attitude being based upon actually definable common-life observations and experiments, not upon fictive or idealistic principles. We derive from Layton's poetry the feeling that all values which fail to grow and develop out of the observation of microcosmic facts are erroneous and deceptive because they are disconnected from the real, concrete and immediate aspect of everyday life.

In this recognition and acceptance of ordinary life rendered through vulgar images, Layton is aiming at a set of concrete values in several essential domains. The moral tradition is the first element in those values. Tradition on the ethical level is for Layton symbolized by and is dependent upon the Bible. And Layton finds that religion, or at least some sense of Christian morality, has not prevented the world from creating monsters, and has not prevented men from following these monsters. Layton cannot forget that Hitler and Stalin are products of western civilization and that western civilization itself is, at least as far as we can see, essentially a product of a certain Christian moral tradition. Layton concludes that man cannot be trusted and a Christian no more than anyone else. Powerless rabbis and priests whose actions Layton deems

inadequate and futile, become objects of derision and sometimes Layton's feelings for them manifest themselves in a coarse way. In "To the priest who kept my wife awake all night, farting",² it takes Layton only four rhymed verses to get rid of a priest and what he represents:

Some use a primitive gong, others a bell;
This devout priest does equally well
To call his parishioners to early Mass
By loud, insistent trumpeting of his ass.

"gong", "bell", "farting" have all a common point: they are noisy, loud, but insubstantial and vain. We are free to draw all the conclusions we want as regards Layton's attitude as it is suggested here towards religion, but the essential conclusion is obvious enough.

His attitude is hardly more kind towards other religions. In aphorisms included in The Whole Bloody Bird Layton writes:

If Christianity is the religion of slaves,
Buddhism is the religion of the slaves of
slaves. (p. 95)

In several poems Layton points out both the irrelevance and the barrenness of Buddhism in an equally irreverent manner, and his position towards divinities or rather saviours is bluntly summed up in another aphorism:

It is no longer possible
to believe
in saviours
that neither laugh
nor
screw.³

This passage indicates how Layton in matters of belief and faith wants saviours and other prodigious characters to be considered in a realistic way; he strongly objects to their being magnified, idealized and cut from the actual contingencies of everyday life. The purpose of these bold presentations is to demystify and even to demythologize traditional human

figures, so that new considerations of them would have more effective repercussions upon ordinary life. For Layton pure veneration alone of supernatural beings leads to nothing or rather has led for individual men to stunted self images.

Layton's views towards popular beliefs and faiths do not always have an aggressively destructive character. In "Orpheus"⁴ Layton indicates how he opposes idea and fact in matters of moral principles:

God was not Love nor Law,
 God was the blood I saw,
 The ever-flowing blood
 staining water and sod.

Layton makes it clear enough here: God is not an abstract notion of love nor an equally abstract notion of justice. Considered in these ways, as it usually is, the image of God is disconnected from common life. Layton's attitude springs from the simple opposition between abstraction and concreteness, an opposition which is carried through the poem. God is not the supernatural being we try to discern while praying or while in a holy place; for Layton belief in such a being is ineffective and empty. The starting point for an effective attitude which could support a belief that would result in an immediate social action would be directly to connect God's image, the abstract notion, with staining blood, the real fact. In "Discourse on Christian Love"⁵ Layton continues to evoke this discrepancy between abstraction and concreteness in religious matters particularly as regards love and charity. This poem facilitates the understanding of Layton's conception of human charity. All through the poem Layton rails at immortal literary figures famous for their grand theories about love but who were incapable of making people in their immediate environment happy:

Frantic love of the Divine
 Burns out common affection:
 So it was that Augustine
 Thinking concubinage sin
 Abandoned child and wife
 To essay the holy life.
 And Gentleman John Milton,
 Regicide and Puritan
 Wrote a Christian epic
 But turned his daughters sick.
 (...)

Kierkegaard was another
 Who made a noisy pother
 About love, love, love—though none
 Had a heart so squeezed from stone.

At the end of the poem Layton concludes how much easier it seems to be to discourse upon love "than to delight one's neighbour".

This reasoning should not be dismissed as petty, but should be viewed in the light of Layton's desire to see principles closely connected with facts. Layton is placing here the temporal man above the immortal man. He deems the instant and what happens during it more important than whatever is beyond it. It is action which matters, action which has a direct repercussion upon the present, the actual. Layton quotes Jesus as an example of positive behaviour for his successful personal actions. Only such men can perpetuate sound, impelling, human ethics. The image of Jesus leads us towards the consideration of the influence which characters famous for their doings, the effects of which are (or have been) concretely felt and experienced by the masses, have upon Layton's thought and poetry. In "Whom I Write For",⁶ Layton affirms that he abolishes, ignores, everything he has not come into contact with. With respect to his philosophical stand Layton shows through the poem that he cannot any longer believe in words and theories and that therefore his purpose is to extol contemporary "Jesuses" or decry contemporary "Judases" instead of

writing long dissertations on moral principles. In the following lines we see Layton preoccupied with facts, and with the elements and the persons motivating them:

For I do not write to improve your soul;
 or to make you feel better or more humane;
 Nor do I write to give you any new emotions;
 Or to make you proud to be able to experience them
 or to recognize them in others.
 (...)
 I write for the young man, demented,
 who dropped the bomb on Hiroshima;
 I write for Nasser and Ben Gurion;
 for Krushchev and President Kennedy;
 (...)
 I write for Castro and Tse-Tung, the only poets
 I ever learned anything from;...

The contrast between the first and the second paragraph is striking. In the first paragraph Layton describes a poet and a reader isolated from the world, alone within the confines of their own personalities. But Layton refuses to address the intimate, sophisticated, psychological life of the reader while analysing the subtle intricacies of man's mind. Where would that lead for Layton? In such type of relationships both poet and reader ignore the public social world in which they are living. In the second paragraph, on the other hand, instead of evoking psychological features (soul, conscience, feelings, emotions), Layton simply evokes characters who stand at the very opposite of the reader mentioned earlier. They are public figures, having a public role, acting upon the public and influencing if not determining the life of their contemporaries. Layton writes for the persons who are involved, who play a role in contemporary society. Whether those actions are good or bad, tend towards liberation or enslavement does not matter in this context. What it is essential to understand is that for Layton these types of actions, Krushchev's,

Kennedy's, the "demented" bomber's, are those which give a shape and consistency to the present world, which make our present world what it is, good or bad. The sophisticated reader lives and dies and does nothing which can really alter something in the world.

Tradition and knowledge alone are not reduced to everyday experience by Layton. Man also is reduced to a more concrete essence. In an aphorism entitled "Anti-Cartesian" Layton writes: "My parents screwed therefore I am".⁷ This also, to be objectively appreciated, has to be considered in the light of Layton's philosophy. If he proceeds to a desecration of holy rites and holy figures, he also proceeds to a desecration of the too decent and artificial images men want to have of themselves and others. Those images can be as dangerous as an unrealistic image of the godhead. We touch here another shocking aspect of Layton's poetry: the poet's deliberate use of obscene images in order to vulgarize man. What strikes him at first is that man is a perverted animal: "Let us face it man is an unnatural animal".⁸ Layton is preoccupied by man's organic natural functions. The acts of eating, evacuating and sex are images which he cannot forget and which he considers as basic facts about man. Layton's position in this domain is very well summed up in "Questions".⁹ The poem is divided into three questions, the first two contrasting with the third one, which is in fact a disguised answer to the two previous questions:

Questions

Why is it
that when a man says
he's a realist
his mouth, his eyes,
at once
become fierce and ugly
and he looks
as if he's about

to wipe out
your whole family?
And why is it
when a woman says
"I love you"
her mouth begins
to work curiously
as if she were getting ready
for a meal?
And why haven't the poets
made more
of the fact
that man is the only animal
who sings
and has haemorrhoids?

What is made to stand out here is first the discrepancy between a dogmatic classification and description of reality and reality itself, and secondly the misunderstanding which flows from this discrepancy. In the poem Layton asks what the relation between the realist's thought and his action, between his concept and fact really is; what the relation between the expression "I love you", its supposed meaning and the actual action of the woman really is. Layton deplores the lack of plain, direct understanding among men. Men do not sufficiently take into account the common down-to-earth essence of each other's being, ignoring it because blinded by an idea or an abstract desire. Layton would certainly agree with the "realist", but instead of an open-minded sympathetic individual he finds a sectarian, a violent one on top of that. In the name of what kind of reality is the realist speaking then? There is for Layton only one type of reality about man, and awareness of it alone results in drawing men closer. One must face common reality as a fact, not as an idea, says Layton in the third question. Man must be conscious of his real nature, man must make more of the fact that "man is the only animal/who sings/and has haemorrhoids" because then man is dealing with common reality

concretely affecting him.

Layton is not looking for grand empty theories but for a conception of man which would entail immediate practical results. He chooses to consider man in a very matter-of-fact way, pointing out his down-to-earth nature before extolling his intellect; he deals with an immediate palpable aspect of man familiar to each individual. Of course, in this poem Layton fully realizes that man experiences joy and suffering, that he is therefore different from an animal. He does not use this difference to oppose the two of them, nor to differentiate them in an absolute way, nor even to raise one above the other by contrasting them; he simply adds the fact that man sings and has haemorrhoids to the acknowledged fact that he is also an animal. The poet has gone through too many distracting experiences to deny man's animalistic nature; and the images of the atrocities which took place in concentration camps hover over all his poetry as symbols of man's beastliness. And it is such happenings that Layton wants to avoid at any cost.

Sex too, at times, as it is an intrinsic part of man's nature, becomes a means to reach man and Layton uses it as a ferocious tool. In "The Equalizer"¹⁰ sex is made to have one common positive aspect: it draws all men low. It is not so much the lowering of man which is dwelt upon as the equality of all men in this situation:

Her mind
is like her cunt
-spongy

With the sponge
between her thighs
she wipes away
all distinctions
(...)
There

There's no base or noble
 exalted or low;
 all are laid low there
 all lie equal there.

Layton is not aiming merely at a systematic degradation of man but at something more fruitful too. His use of the image of female sexual organ in such a bold way is a means of stirring up an elementary awareness: the contemplation of ourselves on a basic physical concrete level at first, then the consideration of this aspect as an element of primary importance. Moreover, Layton does not only want us to acknowledge the vulgar or common aspect of our being, he also wants to indicate in his poetry how a true and sound philosophy of life can be developed out of this acknowledgement. Beyond this apparently shocking attitude the poet is merely suggesting a new and safer (because simpler) style of life.

In "Homage to Lucullus"¹¹ the poet again contrasts two aspects of people's life. The behaviour of some girls when they are still virgin is opposed to their way of living once they are no longer virgin. The girls as virgins write sad sterile verses until spring comes; then, discovering the pleasures of love, they forget about writing. Their intellectual activity is not very much valued by the poet as an image of life. The girls were not aware of the positive functions of their organic capacities and failed to experience life in a truly fertile way. As for their poetry, it leads to nothing or worse to all sorts of incongruous attitudes and false or even dangerous conception of man:

Ah, Lucullus is that sun!

For espying them,
 before long
 he's taught them the pleasures
 of love;

they've other sheets for soiling
and they leave off
writing their empty
verses.

Without being a hedonist Layton is a strongly temporal man. If we all had lived within the temporal image of our physical selves, as Layton suggests in "Homage to Lucullus", Hitler, among others, might not have been as successful as he was. In "For the More Devotional"¹² Layton writes:

If they had photographed
Hitler's ballocks,
plastered the pictures
in the German Wallachs
or advertised his rod
like any dog's stiff and red
there'd be fewer
rotting for the Fuhrer.

In "Homage to Lucullus" Layton also indicates that in his choice of the vulgar and common aspect of life he is also looking for new themes for poetry itself. Poetry must be derived from concrete common matter in immediate connection with the poet. In "The Poetic Process"¹³ Layton indicates how he considers the phenomenon of poetic creation; this poem could indeed be regarded as Layton's credo in matter of poetry. The poet's idea is to show that in his poetical process, he objects to facing things with preconceived principles. He advocates empiric impartiality in the face of human happenings as well as in the face of nature and ordinary things. A cloud is a cloud, a wall a wall, a snake a snake. Poetry must come from the intrinsic nature of the cloud, wall or snake, not from the imaginary elements they might suggest:

Faces I too have seen in clouds
And on the walls of an outhouse
And this morning I saw a frog
deadstill, showing its moist grey
Belly to some twigs and dry straw;

And a young terrified grass-snake
 That threw off M's and bright S's
 At the exact ferns as it streaked
 Across my black boot into sedge

In the first two lines Layton is alluding to traditional poetry which ignores reality. For the traditional poet, the cloud and the wall of the outhouse as such do not really matter. It is the faces which he sees on them which make him consider those elements as poetical subjects; alone, accepted as they are, they would be of no value. For Layton this attitude comes very close to being a capitulation, a failure to recognize facts as such, for what they are and objectively can mean, a failure to give them the emphasis they deserve. Layton himself confesses having experienced the impact of exterior objects in a traditionally imaginative way, in this poem: "Faces I too have seen in clouds"; but in the course of the poem he also tells how this way of looking at things was a failure. In the last stanza, at the end of his experience, he concludes: "So I come back to the white clouds/ And the outhouse wall". The faces have clearly been dismissed and the fact alone recognized as the only true source. The first stanza itself already indicates this hostility of the poet towards an ethereal transfiguration of reality, in the carefully worked out harsh contrast between the first two lines and the rest of the stanza. What happens there is, in the poem's context, the beginning of the evocation of the experience leading to the choice of considering only the true essence of facts. The juxtaposition is too blatantly casual not to be given the emphasis it deserves. A dead frog, a frightened snake are vulgar matter for poets; still they are what Layton sees, what strike him as poetical, close to life, what eventually assume a very important meaning for him. He feels closer to the dead frog and the snake than to the

imaginary faces in clouds because their condition is partly his, including their very status as earthly animals, the very reality of their lives. One lies dead, remote, ignored, the other has to flee, frightened. The drama of their existence is within reach, almost palpable, the sad reality of their life inevitable.

The poet's intention to limit himself to what he sees and to what is as such, becomes more explicit in the following stanzas of "The Poetic Process". Always preoccupied with the aspect of life which directly affects us, he considers the reality transcribed by a traffic cop into his notebook, not as poetry of course, but as possible matter for poetry:

To make a distinction, I think
Then that the poet transfigures
Reality, but the traffic cop
Transcribes it into his notebook.

The allusions to unwashed and credulous maids and coarse men in the third stanza is a development of the same type of allusion to the frog and the snake found in stanza one:

The maids unwashed and credulous,
The men coarse, or refined and corrupt
Reading their folios.

Layton finds himself face to face with those maids just as he finds himself face to face with the dead frog, and in his mind the two are related in their representation of an exact state of things. Of course, in the fourth stanza Layton admits again, directly this time and more explicitly, that he also once attributed to the gods or to some other kind of spirit the imaginary signs or figures he saw through the forms of real things and that he contemplated what he saw as a fact loaded with symbolical meaning and not as an actual object or phenomenon:

Sure I've come upon calyxes
 And calicos, and melonrinds,
 And fruitstones that reminded me
 Of the bleeding head of soldiers;
 I've sworn then by the blood and gall
 Of Christ and shouted eureka
 Till seven beavers watered me,
 Putting out the fires.

After those moments of enthusiasm, however, the poet confesses how he quickly resettled into a more realistic frame of mind. It is difficult to say what the image of the seven beavers might exactly represent, though it represents an industrious down-to-earth animal particularly apt to restore the poet in the right type of world. The number "seven" has metaphoric overtones of perfection. And in the next stanza, the last one, Layton writes:

So I come back to the white clouds
 And the outhouse wall. One may see
 Faces anywhere if one's not proud.
 The big words? I'd rather find lips
 Shaping themselves in the rough wood;
 Or connect my manshape's shadow
 Floating like a fish under me
 With-fish!

He has learned his lesson and will make his poetry derive from facts and objects directly connected with himself. This poem indeed explains Layton's choice of poetical themes in relation to his practical and empiric philosophy of life. It indicates how the poet has been through several stages, eventually to concentrate upon the image of his own physical being in an entirely factual way and finally to consider this way of thinking and looking at things as the only ground to reach a poetry respecting the true essence of things, a poetry presenting not a fictive beauty but the intrinsic beauty of those very things. This determined intention to see poetry in such common facts without ever attempting to

go beyond the limits of their essence is so strong that it could result in leaving the fact as it is, simply to feel it and to live it without writing any poem at all. And Layton acknowledges this extreme consequence of his attitude in "To a Beautiful Unknown Girl".¹⁴ The poet tells how he is struggling to write a poem when he suddenly sees "a beautiful unknown girl" as she walks towards him holding a "French poodle in her long graceful arms"; after throwing his "imperfect lines" away, he concludes "She was the poem I had wanted to write":

All morning I struggle to write a poem

I thought of my childhood
that had rolled like a button under the bed
and was lost forever
of(...)
(...)
of my mother dying in the hospital
of(...)
of God finally unmasking himself
on a public square like Zorro

Of love which I had forgotten to take out
from the drawer where I keep my neckties

But when the beautiful unknown girl
(...)

This is a logical consequence since Layton claims to give the temporal fact and the direct impact it has upon our life such exclusive importance in the poetic process as well as in life. There is no point in describing the girl any further; such description would add nothing either to the poem (as Layton conceives it) or to the poet's feelings, the important thing being that her momentary palpable existence be stressed to overthrow all previous sterile and contrived attempts to write a poem.

Layton's extremist position in this domain can, on the other side, have completely different consequences from those resulting in the making

of this poem. The result can be the description, as poetic matter, of a vulgar fact of human life as it happens in "Anti-Romantic".¹⁵ The poet celebrates his lover's urinating behind a bush and wonders why such things are never mentioned by Wordsworth about Lucy or by Keats about La Belle Dame Sans Merci. Those poets are charged with lying by omission and Layton contrasts the emptiness of the abstract feelings expressed in their poetry to his impartial description of common human life and the concrete sensation he draws from his beloved's action:

The poets are such bad liars.
 (...)
 Yes, and they've solid interests
 in mournful birds, in clouds, in mists.
 Did La Belle Dame Sans Merci a-shit?
 Keats nowhere ways it.

You, love, fat, fat-assed, pissed away
 The odour was that of cut hay;
 The flood came towards me with brown mirth
 O waterfalling earth! O Light!

CHAPTER III: SOCIAL REALITY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

In the previous chapter I have indicated how the poet looks for his values within the immediate existing social context, how he develops his philosophy from the existing state of things from the observations of the actual essence of facts and actions. In this chapter we will see how the poet sometimes moves beyond such individual observation of life to a consideration of the social world as a whole and of the relation which exists between the actuality of this world and the individual. The contemporary world of things and beings is no longer regarded as a medium for experience but as an element in its own right, playing among individuals a part of its own which shall be defined in this chapter. My purpose will be therefore to examine how the consideration of ordinary facts of everyday life common to everybody and the consideration of common facts of the human condition can and should, according to Layton, improve the daily existence of each individual and of human relationships. As in the preceding chapter, common matter remains at the roots of this reality; it remains the central element to which the poet refers, the only true and effective object of poetry and of life.

The poems that will be quoted in the following pages are almost all derived from the very core of what composes daily life. All of them deal with people, constituting not only Layton's humanity but everybody's humanity. People in the street, on the beach, in a restaurant, a newsboy, a whore, a "clochard", a film star, a president's wife, a lawyer, the poet's mistresses: this choice is arbitrary and is only meant to be representative. I could have chosen a poem about his wife reading a newspaper, neighbours noisily working, acquaintances inviting him and

talking over a glass of wine, other street scenes, a charwoman, a teacher. Layton directly presents us with the real microcosmic world I was writing about at the beginning of the previous chapter; now, of course, he uses it for a different purpose. The poems we shall be dealing with have not been casually written; they are all transcriptions of social traits or social actions which fit into the poet's view of the relations between the individual and society and between social individuals themselves. As Layton feels involved in contemporary social problems, he draws his inspiration from this concrete living world around him. By portraying contemporary common characters close to the reader, by presenting him with realistic facts, Layton wants to immerse him in reality, in the immediate concrete moving world. The reader, the individual, must look for his values and for truth in it, just as the poet himself does.

The poem "Newsboy"¹ is a perfect example of this attitude of the poet in his conception of the relationship between the individual and life around him. The newsboy becomes the spokesman of this reality; he is the link between the people and the whole moving, gyrating, throbbing, sweating world around them. The poem is a representation of the opposition between the people receiving the news and the news itself, with the news as a hinge between the two. Layton makes the gap which exists between the people and the news, the individual and social reality, quite clear. The sickly isolation of the individual, the limited narrow world to which he sticks, the safe defensive position behind which he has withdrawn himself, are very well rendered in the first stanza of the poem:

Neither tribal nor trivial he shouts
 From the city's centre where tramcars move
 Like stained bacilli across the eyeballs,

Where people spore in composite buildings
From their protective gelatine of doubts,
Old ills, and incapacity to love
While he, a Joshua before their walls,
Sells newspapers to the gods and geldings.

The town itself seems to be severed from the rest of the world. The image of the "eyeballs" is significant, since it gives an image of the town as a small world of its own, on its own. People are confined within the four walls of their houses just as the town is confined within its small restricted spherical dimensions. It seems to us that this world appears to the poet to be composed of cells within cells. It should not be surprising then to see the newsboy compared to a Joshua, holding like a trumpet in front of him the paper containing the news, and trying at the top of his voice to shatter the partitions of those cells. The fact that he should be likened to a prophet can have very deep repercussions in this context. As for the prophet, the newsboy's position is endowed with ethical values. The god in the name of whom the prophet is speaking is replaced by the news and what it represents, that is to say social, contemporary and historical reality and the values the poet has attached to it. Besides, the newsboy's role is exalted, while the people ignoring the news, unaware of what it could mean to them, are made to appear unhealthy, sick, apathetic, lacking enthusiasm and faith in life. Though they are nowhere explicitly expressed, it is possible to make out the ethical terms of the message which the newsboy is made to deliver beyond the news itself: to abolish barriers and artificial appearances, to be more genuine in our dealings, to live to the throbbing rhythm of the world, to regard social reality as a source of values helping us discover life. Openness, genuine acceptance of the newsboy role, would confer on the people a new awareness,

would add another dimension to their stunted lives. The details of the news do not really matter; it is the vitality, the motion, the concrete life, the worldwide reality which they reveal which matters.

There seems to be no limit to the importance Layton wants to give the newsboy. In the third and fourth stanzas the newsboy becomes the indirect creator of the news and the direct motivation for its happening:

For him the mitred cardinals sweat in
 Conclaves domed; the spy is shot. Empiric;
 And obstreperous confidant of kings,
 Rude despiser of the anonymous,
 Danubes of blood wash up his bulletins
 While he domesticates disaster like
 A wheat in pampas of prescriptive things
 With cries animal and ambiguous.

His dialectics will assault the brain,
 Contrive men to voyages or murder,
 Dip the periscope of their public lives
 To the green levels of acidic caves;.....

I mentioned also at the beginning of chapter two Layton's reluctance to create a world of his own which would not be a world common to everybody. The newsboy in this poem illustrates this desire for vulgarization - "Rude despiser of the anonymous". By vulgarizing it, life is being concretized and therefore built, a present palpable life common to everybody. That is why the newsboy can, in a sense, master the world, carrying words, facts, faces, scattering them, sowing them among the crowds. His part is really meant to contrive people to have some sort of reaction, to be effective, even if, as the poet says at the end of the poem, the newspaper will eventually serve to shelter a "somnolent face" from the sun.

It is interesting to note that, after all, this newsboy may be but the poet himself, since he is in fact made to play the part Layton wants the poet to play. What is Layton doing if not precisely trying to show us

this living humanity, within and outside the news, to impose it upon us, to "assault" our "brain" with the "dialectics" he inflicts upon his images? Layton is indeed a newsboy gathering himself his own news, the information he receives, and handing it out to us under the form of poems which are precisely given the same purposes as the news. And indeed, because of their contemporary impersonal and common character, many poems could simply appear as commentaries upon social facts or individuals, with a meaning more or less obvious, more or less implied.

In the immediate wake of "Newsboy" one would recall poems such as those about Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy or Aristotle Onassis. Those poems are not simple reports, of course, far from being so; they testify to the poet's desire to implicate us in the human "milieu" in which we are living and to his desire to treat subjects which can reach everybody and which can arouse the reader's interest and stimulate him. One of the poems dedicated to Marilyn Monroe is entitled "Earth Goddess".² The popular theme of the poem, the poet's unpretentious and realistic manner in dealing with it, are perfect examples of Layton's attitude in the face of the mass of daily events. Could there be, for a poet, a more hackneyed and familiar image than a cinema star's to praise female beauty and above all to exalt everyday life's beauty? But Layton goes beyond the mere evocation of the actress's beauty; it is through Marilyn Monroe herself that he conveys a message, transmits an idea, and not through the evocation of a long passionate love with a woman, nor through an incantation to Venus or to the rose. Whereas the newsman is simply interested in appearances, he presents us with a report about such and such things in which the actress is involved. The poet, Layton, chooses the concrete features in her which

can affect us and can make us partake of Marilyn's love for life, as it is described in the poem, make us love life, everyday life in our turn. Unlike Venus she is real and actually present, and so must be the part she plays. She has something to teach, even if it is only the attachment to temporal reality, and the poet becomes her spokesman. Therefore Marilyn, too, just like the newsboy and his news, has to be made an intrusion into the life of his contemporaries. Thanks to the poet's work, her image must strike common humanity.

In the poem the poet praises the star's down-to-earth and accessible qualities which he opposes to the attitude of those denying the present. Through the praise of her character, he disparages all human attitudes, all purposes, which deter us from experiencing present life; opposing Christian or Puritan principles, he makes us reexamine values which overlook or discard what can be found in the temporal, contemporary world:

You make absurd for us
 All love that's chivalrous:
 There is more wisdom
 In your shapely bum.
 (...)
 For those denying sex
 Or lost in politics
 For the intellectual
 (...)
 For the smelly puritan
 Or the sulky christian
 (...)
 For the inhibited
 Twisted by a simple need;
 For all those who hate
 Man's natural estate.

To all those people Layton wants Marilyn to show how to live in the present, how to laugh, how to rely on the tangible aspects of life, on what they see and touch. To all of them, he wants her to teach how to "delight" in life and "praise" it. Marilyn Monroe can also be said to be used here as an

image for the beauty that can be found in a vulgar world:

Wench, you teach the race to know
Forms forbidden Plato,
A music of the stars
Locked from Pythagoras.

But the poet is not satisfied with the simple presentation of her being; he wants Marilyn to be an image of the way facts, events and people have to act upon the individual, to be seen in particular when he appeals to her to act directly upon each of us in the last two lines of the quotation below. What I am stressing here is why Layton gives so much importance to contemporary figures he exalts. Finally, then, the figure of Marilyn Monroe takes on mythological significance in the general frame of the poet's philosophy:

O Cinema Goddess
More lovely than Venus,
More explosive than
Deirdre or Helen;
O beauteous wench, embrace
Me in an hour of grace,
Bounce me like the ocean
On each surprising limb;
Then let your kisses fall
Like summer rain on all;...

All other poems about individuals having a relatively public life, sharing part of their intimacy with the man in the street, are in the same vein as this poem and the poet uses them to present an everyday social reality as the only true and essential medium for our life. As Layton is showing us this small universe teeming with activity, it is interesting to note, how reality becomes in fact synonymous with public matter and therefore with vulgarity.

From a high, brilliant public level we sometimes go down to a more intimately familiar and quiet type of poem in which the poet is directly

and more personally involved. Many poems develop from scenes the poet witnesses himself or even scenes in which he participates, not as a poet but as a plain human being, as the man next door chancing upon such or such person, involved in such or such affairs or case. In one of his early poems, "To the Lawyer Handling my Divorce Case",³ Layton describes how he is brought face to face with his lawyer. The atmosphere is subdued, the poet, though hardly describing anything material, easily imposing upon us the banal image of the situation - two men sitting on each side of a table, a lawyer and his customer (it could be a professor and a student, an employer and his employee). It is, and we are made to feel it, a relation of superior to inferior - "Me...undersized" - superior at least because more experienced and knowledgeable; but this hierarchy is sufficient for one of the two to play a more definite part:

When he inserts his nail file into his vest pocket
 And peers at me over his clean fingernails
 In that instant I have plummeted the infinite distance
 Between I and me -
 When my lawyer addresses me
 We smell each other's absurdity
 But for the time being mine
 Has a name and a file number of more than six figures.

For once Layton is the object, the one being handled and classified; in the face of the lawyer's behaviour, he finds it difficult to say whether he experiences disappointment, disillusionment, or simply astonishment.

So we observe a communication taking place on two levels. Layton cannot refrain from questioning the attitude of the lawyer towards him, the lawyer who wants to stick to a business-like, matter-of-fact type of communication; and he cannot help feeling the absurdity of their attitude towards each other. Layton is very conscious of the barrier the lawyer tries to set between his customer and himself. He fully realizes to what

point the lawyer is attempting to create an artificial hierarchy only concretized by a file number. He knows that on a tacit level his protagonist diminishes in himself his image in order to dismiss him more easily:

If at all, he thinks of me as a soiled fingernail,
Or the not-so-smart, or as simply unlucky;(...)

Layton, on his side, sees how the consideration of a set of different values from the one the lawyer is artificially establishing could bring the two men together on an even level:

Of course my humanness makes him uneasy;
He does not ask me for my private conception
Of him and his wife
And their intelligent dog;
I might never have heard of Nagasaki
Or debated the soul's immortality.

"Wife", "Nagasaki", "Soul's immortality" are part of the world shared by the two men. This world should be the medium of their relationship, not the one the lawyer artificially creates. Layton therefore suggests that if men fail to communicate sincerely, it is because they do not situate themselves in a universal context, a thing that they can do only if they are open to the flood of events agitating humanity, if they try to overcome their petty problems, if they accept together with their fellow men the major issues of the human condition, - in a word, if they face what I call social reality. As Layton says in "For Some of My Student Militants":⁴

History
is not
 histrionics
or hysteria; it is the strict
verdict
 when you are safe and quiet
in your graves
 your children
and grandchildren's skeletons

crumbling beside you.
 it is reality
 as you could never
 see it.

We can easily find in "To the Lawyer Handling My Divorce Case" the ideas underlying many other poems. At least the idea it contains is another reason for the poet to deal with vulgar matter since it is made to play such an important part in man's life.

Many other poems can be mentioned in relation to "To the Lawyer Handling My Divorce Case", particularly "Mrs. Potiphar",⁵ a poem in which relationships are similarly criticized in acknowledgement of a world truer and closer to real facts than the world privately and falsely established between the protagonists. The poet does not appeal to social reality to bring about a greater recognition of the human being next to us; he rather resorts to everything that lies behind what we all "seem", to the intimate reality of things within each man. Though the topic of this poem has no special public character, since it is dealing with the private life of a special person and no longer with a public figure, Mrs. Potiphar is definitely to be regarded as a common character, one among the mass, and the issue which is involved is certainly of public interest. In the poem we have a glimpse of an aspect of a couple's life, the sexual relationship of Mrs. Potiphar and her husband. The relationship between the two is very close in tone to the previous relationship between the poet and his lawyer. The main difference is that we are dealing with a male-female relationship and that the basis of this relation is quite different. In the previous case we expect a normal, business-like type of confrontation and we are shown the absurdity and artificiality of such situation, the poet suggesting how it might be altered. In "Mrs. Potiphar" we expect a truly deeper and

more sincere confrontation since we are shown sexual life between husband and wife. But we meet with the same misunderstanding as before. Mrs. Potiphar assumes the customer's role and her husband assumes the lawyer's. Mr. Potiphar acts according to a pattern of behaviour shaped by the set role of the husband. They are husband and wife, not male and female human beings; Layton and his lawyer are customer and lawyer and not intrinsic human beings brought face to face with each other. Both Mrs. Potiphar and Layton are aware of their opposites' refusal to come to terms with total recognition and acceptation of the other; yet they both ask for it. The lawyer and Mr. Potiphar isolate themselves into an easy egotistic world, and Layton and Mrs. Potiphar wish they would break the envelope into which their antagonists have selfishly enclosed themselves.

In the poem, Mrs. Potiphar suffers from dissatisfaction, disappointment and frustration after the act of love. She is filled with disgust:

The worst is at night when I lie beside him,
 When the sheets are hot and sticky,
 And it is all over with me,
 And the vomit is forming at the bottom of my throat.
 (...)
 We are none of us what we seem.
 Lies. Lies. Lies.

Her misery and weariness reach its climax when she says the last two lines. She questions relationships which are not based upon mutual understanding and in this case, as earlier, the protagonist makes it clear that such understanding can be achieved through a concrete and factual consideration each of the other, through an acceptation of the concrete specific reality of the other, of the situation in which the protagonists find themselves. This is the kind of recognition Mrs. Potiphar is asking for, recognition leading to love, tenderness through passionate physical contact:

Why don't you always kiss me like that...
 Why don't you spit on me
 On my adulterous teats

Try not to be afraid
 Try not to hate me

In this poem, Layton insists above all upon Mrs. Potiphar's role and does not directly implicate her husband. But the husband too appears to be living in a world of his own, less consciously than the lawyer, of course, in a dull mechanical way and therefore again in an inhuman way. All these poems are glances at individuals who compose the humanity to whom the newsboy is selling newspapers, a small but strongly present humanity where such criteria as good and evil, sin and virtue, have been replaced by general and individual, positive and fictive, specifically human and unnatural matter. Layton is not interested in saying why and how such man is sinful, wicked or virtuous, but in saying how and why he has lost contact with his concrete natural human roots; these roots he can come into contact with again through a new awareness of common and tangible facts, by being permeable to what lives and moves around him.

Layton wants our pattern of behaviour to be based not upon a set of principles, of laws, making distinctions between what one has to do and what one must not do but upon an awareness, a consciousness of our imperfections, of our weaknesses, of our fragility. Layton asks for a recognition of the human being such as he is, with what is good and bad, ugly and beautiful, vulgar and dignified in man. Layton, the lawyer, Mrs. Potiphar, her husband, are imperfect beings. Mrs. Potiphar asks for her imperfection to be appreciated too. Layton would like the lawyer to uncover his own imperfection. Layton himself is asking for a recognition of his own imperfection, and if he refers to universal facts in a universal

context, it is to show aspects of imperfection and weakness in the world which may help the communication of the two men on an individual level. Marilyn Monroe is the image of what is beautiful and enthusiastic in man; "Nagasaki", the lawyer, Mrs. Potiphar, her husband are the not-so-brilliant images of reality. Still, all these facts and characters have to be accepted, put together and contemplated as the true reality of life and made to foster and preserve, a natural and free form of life.

If Layton shows the importance of the reality of this world, of the human condition, of the individual, if he tells how this reality should intrude upon people's life and be taken into account, an action necessary for both the lawyer and Mrs. Potiphar's husband, he also writes about the way people sever themselves from this reality, why they are unable to appreciate its value. In "This Machine Age",⁶ a poem which has been alluded to in the first chapter, the poet gives us a tragicomic image of an individual's filling his life with machine-processed sensations and satisfactions. The poem is comic because of the ludicrous behaviour of a man who has entered a church and who tries to make the machine lighting the Virgin's halo work by kicking it and cursing; it is tragic because of the motivation of his attitude:

For fifteen cents
 the label read,
 the Virgin's halo
 would light up
 for three minutes.
 ...
 He gave the machine
 a careful kick
 to bring the lights
 of the circle out.
 It didn't.
 "Damn it!" he shouted,
 "Why doesn't light up?"

He kicked again
and muttered something
I didn't hear.

The man has a totally wrong conception of the nature of his action. Instead of expecting something from the Virgin or even from a machine, he expects something from a mechanical virgin. His religious feelings, if it is still possible to speak of religious feelings, have lost all their authenticity. The Virgin has lost all her meaning for such a man. It is pitiable to see what the man is looking for in the church and still more pitiable to see his angry and selfish reaction. Layton does not oppose any other attitude to the one of the man in the church, but his implicit judgement of what is happening is sufficiently clear.

For the poet, what the man does is even worse than bigotry. In the case of bigotry one replaces the image of reality with a more fictive image; but in this case the individual becomes a mere intermediary between money and the machine. It is no longer a question of religion at all; reality itself is being altered, an alteration which is much worse than any kind of bigotry. We could ask ourselves what would Marilyn Monroe's image mean to such a man. And the poet precisely intends the reader to react by asking himself such questions. Marilyn would be a sex machine to which he would give some money in exchange for some pleasure. Such a man is filling his life with matter which has no longer any human particulars in it; he cannot draw any value from that inhuman reality. If the character of the facts of everyday life is altered and dehumanized, then man himself with his specific nature is doomed. Because of this threat Layton sticks to what is concretely, specifically, realistically human. If reality empties itself of its meaning, then man himself is dehumanized.

If it is made to lose its original character, then man loses his too. All sorts of factors can participate in this dehumanization of man and make him forget about his real nature.

In "The Real Values"⁷ Layton shows us some of those factors:

Rabbi, why do you move heaven and earth
to blow breath
into this lifeless body,
drowned under the surfeit
of Chinese food and pizzapie?

The good life destroyed him:
distilleries, supermarkets.
Long ago he packed away his soul
in the clothing industry.

The image of the rabbi and of what he represents is here no more than a means to indicate to what point and in what direction man has lost himself. The first line of the second verse paragraph above all shows what Layton is tacitly alluding to. Man has been, as it were, put to sleep by "good life". Marilyn Monroe, Nagasaki, Stalin, a starving man - all that has no longer any meaning for him. If the rabbi's words have become helpless and useless, so have the potential significance of those images which the poet suggests. In the meantime people fill their lives with pizzapies, whisky, discussions on hairdoes and investments. It is with bitter irony and anger that Layton writes:

Isaiah, hop to it, Moses-
bring on the condiments, the plum sauce-

Your noble gas
about Torah, Halachah
affords a passing tingle
to worshippers breathless with emulation,
especially to wives and daughters
musing on fabled hairdos.

We can make out here part of the reason why Layton wants to spit intrinsic

human facts into man's face, why the poet presents him with crude images. To the people of "The Real Values" feeding on vain fraudulent edible facts, Layton opposes the attitude of the man whom he himself embodies in "Women of Rome".⁸

In Rome Layton ignores the ruins and monuments. Caesars, Popes, great artists, even Mussolini are hinted at, but the poet does not draw very much from the static magma of the past. Naturally people like those he is alluding to in "The Real Values" would be delighted (or feel themselves obliged to be so) and would fill their stay in Rome with as much ancient stones and history as possible, with maybe a glimpse at the Pope to top it all off. There is no point in contemplating dead life, Layton seems to suggest. Only specific human reality is true and pregnant with meaning, and the beauty of the Roman girl walking in front of the poet is the image of this truth. She, not the stones, attracts him. He wants to know her, not Caius. She is dynamic reality and leads somewhere; but dead historical figures regarded from a tourist's point of view lead nowhere for Layton:

City of Caesars and Popes,
 Rome's imperial statues split and crumble.
 Time and the rains that called their bluff
 Have stood them there useless and formal.

(...)Look at Caius' metal finger
 Pointing to- where?

(...)But that Roman girl
 With the voluptuous neck and back
 Is real enough in a shifting world.

"Women of Rome" is a typical example of the poems written by Layton in Europe (Italy, Greece, Spain and France essentially), on a tour, since most of them deal with vulgar topics and extol common human reality. It

is humanity which retains his attention while he travels, characters and scenes which he haphazardly comes upon.

Layton finds it useful to depict men in irreverent positions, and he follows a similar pattern when dealing with common street scenes. Poems like "Women of the Back Streets of Europe" and "An Old Nicoise Whore" give a more definite shape to the poet's concept of reality, concept primarily derived from poems such as "To the More Devotional" or "Anti-Romantic". In "Women of the Back Street of Europe",⁹ Layton exposes the reality of the suffering life of poor obscure women:

Swept to one side by the broad avenidas and boulevards
they stumble into dark, evil-smelling houses
or bend over the pasta and sardinas

Or you will see them in the hidden lanes and alleys
dressed in black, looking prematurely old,
looking like dry blots the sun has made in mockery

And I have gone with them up a hill that leads
To the Castello San George where consumptive girls are
 skipping
and as they skip and dance, dampen my cheeks with tears.

This poem too must be opposed to "The Real Values". Here is reality, here is that concreteness of life, that common life which Layton is often alluding to: "the arthritic fingers" of those poor women, their "evil-smelling houses", the skipping and dancing consumptive girls, the poet's tears. Layton is not, as it may be too easily believed, attracted by the so-called dirty, shocking, unpleasant aspect of reality. For him reality is, before all, objectivity, humanity in its barest attire. If Layton lends his tears to these ignored women and sick girls, he also lends them to the old Nicoise whore after she has been telling him about her life as they are walking along a quay in Nice:

And as she spoke to me on a crowded quay
 And reminisced about her well-spent years
 I mourned with her her shrivelled face and body¹⁰
 And gave what no man had given her: tears.

As those last poems indicate, women are an essential part of social reality. And Layton does even more than stick to the facts when he deals with his intimate relationships with them. An important number of poems, which can hardly be classified elsewhere than in a chapter dealing with social reality and common matter, are about male-female relationships in a very factual and actual fashion. Those relationships are not love relationships as would be expected from a poet; Layton can hardly indeed be said to have written love poems as such, that is to say as we traditionally conceive love poems to be. Many of those poems are rather plain, vulgar descriptions, and their place in this chapter dealing with common matter and vulgar images is quite appropriate. Earlier in this chapter I defined how the poet describes confrontations between men and how he was looking for an unsophisticated, plain relation between men based on a common knowledge and consciousness of the concrete reality of our condition. Layton's behaviour with women will roughly approximate this directness. Of course the realistic terms of the relationships between the poet and women will be quite different since Layton is confronted with females. I have mentioned also the importance for Layton of sexual intercourse within the frame of relationships between men and women. When Layton talks about his female partners in his poems, everything is almost exclusively centered upon the sexual act. That sex should be given so much emphasis excludes much romance, of course, and does not leave much room for imaginary scenes or even intricate psychological analysis. When Layton meets with a woman and sexual intercourse is a possible alternative to any other type of

relationship, a single question arises: will sexual intercourse be achieved? If it is achieved, all is well, the relationship is successful; if it is not, the woman is dismissed and the relationship is a failure. Layton cannot conceive of a woman without at the same time conceiving of her sexual function. It is important to know that I am not here dealing with the poet's whole approach to sex, but simply with his attitude towards women as individuals whom he meets on common terms in everyday life.

This is a domain where the reader may well be shocked and dismiss Layton on sexual grounds and particularly tax him with sexual obsession, dirty-mindedness, unacceptable and free coarseness; and indeed some poems could put off even a broadminded, well-intentioned reader, poems such as "The Convertible" and "Olives for Jay Macpherson".¹¹ "The Convertible"¹² is so direct, so outspoken, so bare, so vulgarly down-to-earth, that it is like a slap on the face. Within eight short lines the poet tells how he is greeted by a woman in her car, how they settle to make love, only briefly annotating a few significant facts oriented towards as he says "the gathering":

Her breath already smelled of whiskey.
She lit a cigarette
And pointed to a flask in the glove compartment
Then our mouths met.

She placed a hand on my groin;
She hadn't bothered to remove her wedding ring.
Her eyes closed with a sigh.
I was ready for the gathering.

You, Dulla, may prefer maidenheads;
But give me the bored young wives of Hampstead
Whose husband provide them with smart convertibles
And who are reasonably well-read.

It is in such cases that we are most tempted to judge the poet himself, the man, rather than his poetry, his work, at first, because the poet

directly involves himself in the experience which he is describing, and then because such an experience can be so easily open to moral criticism and subjective appreciation. Such poems must of course be essentially considered as statements, as instances illustrating Layton's assertions; their scope is therefore to arouse a reaction in the reader, to shock him, then set him thinking. The poem has to be accepted and we must go beyond our first legitimate reaction. It is certain that within his frame of realistic humanity Layton wants his poems to be as true and real as facts are. If our criticism of the form of the poem, as poem, can be justified, we must take into consideration the subject of the poem as being a truly common, even if poetically vulgar episode.

The woman the poet has is bored; she wants to have sex. That a bored woman in want of sex should become the subject of a poem does not simply reveal an aspect of Layton's comportment towards sex and the women in the present poem. It also reveals the woman's attitude itself as well as the attitude of a whole group like her for whom sex has a definite importance in their relations with men. Besides, we cannot even say that Layton is approving of the situation here. He certainly draws profit from it, but his poem has overtones of irony. There is indeed an underlying criticism of the type of relationship between husband and wife, and it is through this criticism that we find the poet's evaluation of the importance of sexual relationships and his acknowledgement of their necessary inevitability. In "The Way of the World"¹³ Layton writes:

As for the wife
 a little alcohol parts her thighs.
 Do not blame her(...)

There is of course a link between those two lines and "The Convertible".

In "The Way of the World", Layton opposes the comportment of wives and husbands to that of lovers, and shows that in both cases sex is a determining factor responsible for wives' dull life, on one side, and for lovers' happiness, on the other. We must not forget either that the poet's attitude is motivated by his own experience and this experience taught him that "cock and cunt" had their essential share in people's life, diseased or not.

Does this mean that Layton does not believe in a love other than carnal, that he deems a less concrete form of love impossible because of our very nature? No, although sometimes the poet does give that impression. His attitude can be simply explained in the light of the empirical stand analyzed in the previous chapter. Layton wants to start at the beginning, and the beginning between a man and a woman is what is real, concrete, palpable: sex. Then says Layton, and only then, can we consider further developments; but if there is no agreement on this precise factual point, if this is not taken first into due consideration, as it is the most accessible and actual element between two persons of opposite sex, how is it possible ever to go beyond? A poem like "The Convertible" is not a sign of Layton's chaotic conception of humanity; it is, on the contrary, a sign of his awareness of an existing chaotic state of things. He tries therefore to set some order into this social world, putting landmarks where everybody can see them. One of the aphorisms contained in the second section of The Whole Bloody Bird is dedicated to the relationships between husband and wife:

The minimum
Which any wife has the right to expect
from her husband
is a life-long adoration
of her mind and body. (85)

The poet knows how to make an equal share between mind and body. This passage shows to what point the importance of the body is valued; it also indicates that, juxtaposed to the sexual relationship, the spiritual relationship is necessary for a lasting union.

But why does sex have a primary importance in Layton's poetry? If we forget for a while that a woman is a human being with specific sexual organs, if we consider her as an individual before all, then we can understand better Layton's first step. His first step is to put a woman on the same level as the "lawyer"; just as he strips what stands between the lawyer and himself, he strips what stands between a woman and himself, and eventually directly strips both man and woman to get to their core, to get to the concrete reality between them and in them. Layton wants the lawyer to stop playing his artificial role: he wants him to stop considering his customer as a number on a file. Instead, the lawyer should let the knowledge of who all men really are, of where they stand, modify his behaviour towards his customer. He should be more frank, more direct, more in sympathy with him. As Layton is perfectly conscious that before being a female, a woman is a human being, he has towards her a similar attitude to the one he has in front of the lawyer; but though he asks for the same thing on the same terms, the means are going to be different. The concrete reality between him and a woman and not only between them but within themselves is of a different order: it is sexual. If, to reach the satisfactory type of relation with the lawyer, Layton has to appeal to or simply thinks of facts such as Nagasaki, death or intimate common problems, to reach the same satisfactory relation with a woman Layton simply appeals to sex, to flesh, to their being man and woman in physical terms. It is easy to see that it

will be as difficult for Layton to be successful in his communication with a woman through sex, as it is in his communication with the lawyer through the elements to which he appeals. But if the communication on a concrete level is truly achieved, then the success of any further spiritual communication is ensured. This is why the poet very seldom goes beyond the description of the sexual aspect of relationships between man and woman in his poetry. And here is how once more he shows us how essential human facts and reality as a whole determine social relationship.

We see in this chapter why Layton asks for a recognition of ordinary reality, that is, the reality embodied by the news, the reality of the street where the individual is living. It would be totally erroneous to believe that Layton is describing commonplace familiar social scenes for their own sake. Through the social scenes Layton wants to reach the deeper reality within the individual, the one which is privately connected to each individual (Layton's, the Lawyer's, Mrs. Potiphar's) as well as the one common to all men (bestiality, sex).

All the poems in this chapter show that Layton is essentially concerned with the life of the man in the street, with the feasibility and freedom of man's life. If Layton accepts the facts and things composing our modern world, the newspapers, the big town, mechanical gadgets, Nagasaki, if he accepts twentieth-century man, the lawyer, the emancipated lady, the cinema star, the poor women in obscure streets in poor towns, he also goes beyond this mere acceptance. The poet raises the problem of freedom and alienation, of truth and error. We successively see people imprisoned in their town (in "Newsboy"), people imprisoned in their principles, in their beliefs, and letting life go by (in "Earth Goddess"); we see the lawyer,

Mr. Potiphar secluded within their protective envelope. On the other side, free people are made to stand out; these include the poet, Marilyn Monroe, the Nicoise whore, or people aware of freedom and yearning for it (Layton in front of his lawyer, Mrs. Potiphar). In "This Machine Age" and "The Real Values" we come to people lost in futile agitation, people "drowned under the surfeit of Chinese food", drowned under all the modern amenities, under the pettiness, the disintegrating action of modern life and its slow destruction of man's real sense of himself and of truth. Layton in Rome, the Nicoise whore, the poet in Hampstead, offer a meaningful contrast to "drowned" people. In "Women of Rome" the contrast is carried out sufficiently clearly in the poem itself; on one side we see people lost among the ruins, on the other, the poet and the Roman lady. On one side, chaos, vain agitation, stumblings, on the other a well defined, well constructed action, a free meaningful act. It is worth stressing again that the free meaningful act takes place within the same world as the world where people stumble. Human relationships are always analyzed within the social context common to everybody. Man's freedom and the higher truth are always appraised within the relationships between man and his familiar environment, between man and his contemporary society.

To be true to each other, to recognize and love each other, to live truly (that is to say for Layton, joyfully), men must free themselves, they must shed their false skins, rid themselves of their mistaken beliefs, be aware of the futility of material life; all this they can achieve only if they accept, at first, the world they are living in, the real nature of man.

CHAPTER IV: DOWNTOWN BEAUTY

If common humanity and the vulgar world of things and beings form the ground for the poet's philosophy, they also form the ground for the beauty inherent in his poetic vision. I have already observed that Marilyn Monroe's image can be regarded as the symbol of the beauty of an everyday social reality and in the last poems mentioned in the preceding chapter ("Women of Rome" and "Women of the Back Streets of Europe"), we can see how the poet associates the vulgar with the beautiful, the physical with the aesthetic, the common and concrete with the deeply emotional.

The most plain and direct statement of this concept of beauty, or at least of one aspect of it, beauty out of a little human fact, is to be found in the short poem with the title of "Beauty".¹ The poem is about a story told to the poet by a woman "who keeps house" for the Laytons. She tells about a detail, a small usual event in her life as a young child in Russia, an event which she remembers as a beautiful instant, and the poet summarizes her story:

They didn't have toi-
lets but had to go
out and pee over
a rail with bare bot-
toms in the dead of
winter.

So at night
she and her three
sisters would go for
a last one before
turning in and sit
on the freezing rail
inside a sort of
roofed shed but open
it was

and listen
to the shepherds play
their sad pipes.

Hoh chee, Mrs. Layton,
It was so beautiful!

The poet is far from rendering the scene idyllic in order to show how beautiful it is. The poem is brief, sketchy and contains only particularly realistic images. What the girls perform has nothing romantic in it; neither has the place nor the unpleasant evocation of the cold. It is only once the poem is over that it is possible to see what the poet is aiming at, the last two lines giving us the hint. It is only when "Omah" (the charwoman) makes her remark that the poem suddenly assumes a different aspect. The whole scene is transformed and can now be imagined with intimate understanding and appreciation. Here is what Layton calls beauty, and here is where he finds it. It springs from this little, isolated, specifically human concrete fact. No comment is made by the poet; the only comment is contained in the title. Nothing needs be added: the lesson is quite clear, unconsciously given by a poor naive Russian woman and consciously transcribed by a much concerned poet. This poem completes the hints contained in the two poems I have been alluding to at the end of the preceding chapter. The action of the girls, in the story, has the same aesthetic and emotional significance as the beautiful Roman girl the poet is watching. Beauty is something very well delineated, concrete and intimate. It is not a dogma nor an abstract symbol, but something lived, something concretely experienced, experienced with the guts, with a shudder, with the pure simplicity of a humble individual. Beauty is drawn from common facts, its place being within the confines of the realistic frame of those facts.

In the last stanza of "Women of Rome" the poet writes:

Among ruins and travellers' cheques
 Stay always lovely, my Italian lady;
 Though tomorrow the heart of Jesus
 Bleeds into a garish night
 Where St. Peter's keys blink green and red
 And the mad bicyclists are everywhere.
 In the pale palazzos of my mind
 Dance on a marble terrace floor
 Lie down on my ghostly mental bed.

If this lady's loveliness is at all abstracted, as the last three lines might suggest, the abstraction is only made for the purpose of perpetuating the reality of the instant pleasure, and the lovely lady remains the lady originating grace and pleasure in the frame in which she appeared to the poet, nothing more, nothing less. Closer to Omah's story is the brief allusion to beauty in "Women of the Back Streets of Europe". The images evoked by the poet in this poem, if less familiarly concrete than in the charwoman's narrative, are nonetheless particularly touching and distressing; in a poem in which the main impression is a feeling of poignant suffering, the poet succeeds in endowing those women with what is, so far, an unrecognized and uncelebrated painful appeal. "Desperate Beauty which the poets have ignored!" writes Layton, moved by the genuine, forlorn, desperate quality of the lives of these women.

If the beauty of the lives of people who appear down and out is only alluded to in "Women of the Back Streets of Europe", in "Clochards"² it is the main theme of the poem, a development of what the poet is hinting at in "Women of the Back Streets of Europe". "Clochards" is such a perfect blend of realism, vulgarity and beauty, that it is difficult to say which is the prevailing element. There is no direct reference to any of these elements and the very feeling of beauty which we experience while reading the poem has always an edge of ambiguity, but these elements are unmistakably

present. The feeling of ambiguous beauty is perhaps the main achievement of this poem - the balanced communion between emotional beauty and actual suffering, between what is felt and what exists, the readers' feelings and the clochards' existence. Could there be a theme more vulgar than the poetic evocation of Parisian clochards? Layton chooses those outcasts, the dregs of Paris' streets, and turns one moment of their lives into a beautiful poetic vision which is at the same time painful, because strictly faithful to the harsh facts of their lives. Thanks to his scrupulous selection of concrete images modelled on the reality of the scene, the poet weaves around the clochards their ambiguous beauty:

Like wounded birds that fall from a height
 in ever-decreasing circles
 they've finally come to rest on benches
 and in the doorways of old churches;
 or like the pitiful leaves of autumn
 a sudden wind shoves into a ditch
 and passes over, they lie in the unwanted
 intimacy of misfortune, only their sordid rags
 the fluttering banners of their separate selves

In this first stanza the poet describes the clochards' search for a place to spend the night. The poet's use of the image of the birds is poetic in itself; it can not quite correspond to the actual search of the men on the bum and may not give an exact image of the reality of the scene. But the attribute "wounded" modifies the whole metaphor without marring the image of the movement of birds before they alight. And thus the movement which might have had otherwise only a graceful and harmonious connotation is frankly tinged with pain and weariness in the image of the exhausted descent of the birds who settle somewhere not to suit their fancy but because of an urgent need, a desperate necessity.

The traditional image of autumn leaves, image of melancholy and

dejection, is also made to have a different meaning, a very precise scope. It is directly applied to the tramps and its purpose is to render their action, their situation, as true as in reality it is in such circumstances. As with the previous image, the image of the leaves to illustrate the clochards' activity is initially poetically appealing, but that feeling of pure poetic beauty is altered by the evocation of the part the wind is made to play. Layton does not simply contemplate the image of the falling leaves; he also follows them on the ground, tracks them until they are "shoved" by the wind "into a ditch" and left there. The image claims to be more objective and thus makes the distress of the clochards still more palpable. They are the objects tossed here and there, and not a means for poetical diversion. The image shows how dependent these clochards are upon circumstances and also how forlorn they are after the wind has "passed over them". Those images therefore serve to illustrate reality and to make reality as perceptible and as substantial as possible and as true and representative as it is in the facts. We are here witnessing a process leading to factual poetry and not to poetized facts, and this poem is an illustration of how successful this process can be, how it perfectly harmonizes humanity, reality, beauty and poetry.

In the second stanza the poet sees the clochards through the night. Though he does not resort to poetical images as in the first stanza, one cannot help being attracted by the beauty of the plain image of the sleeping tramps, not in spite of their misery, nor even because of it, but simply because the poetry is made so real through the association of the palpable humanity of the men with the near hostile reality of their environment:

And one wraps himself in a newspaper
 which the wind will read for him
 through the long, monotonous hours.
 It is they who know the hours of the dark
 when the auto's spurt and snort in the empty street
 puts another stone under their troubled heads;
 when the diamond stars appear close, close
 and sometimes ungraspable and far away,
 and the body weightless yet somehow full of cares

The third and last stanza contains a series of antiphonal or antithetic images very closely knitted together and strongly made to stand out:

They sleep like flowers in the crevices of streets
 whose ragged edges abrade and pain,
 making them raise their innocent grizzled heads
 through all the periods of the moon;
 who like themselves outcast, a poor clochard,
 owns the waning night which no one wants.
 And in the dawn the birds whistling them awake,
 they sleepily brush the dream's deposit
 of cold dew from their tatters

It is easy to see how the process is working, at first in the first two lines, then in the third and fourth, in the fifth and sixth and eventually in the seventh, eighth and ninth lines. Let us merely consider the most striking oppositions. The image of the flowers in the first line may appear somewhat out of place in a realistic context, as far as clochards are concerned at least, but this potentially pleasant image is already partly changed by the appearance of the crevices and definitively altered, in the following line, by the description of the uncomfortable, pain-inflicting character of those crevices. Line nine, "from their tatters", has the same effect upon lines seven and eight, the reference to the tatters pitilessly dragging our sentimentality down to reality, to facts, after the poetic evocation of the birds whistling the clochards awake, and the image of "the dream's deposit of cold dew". The word "cold", though, plays here the same part as the end of the verse, "from their tatters", in the

contrast to the earlier poetic image of "the dream's deposit" of dew. The same type of counterpoint is achieved in the preceding two lines: the clochards own the poetic night, yes, but the night "which no one wants".

The poet is therefore far from giving himself up to unrestrained glorification of the clochards, of their misery, of their picturesqueness, or even of their exotic nature. The tone is subdued, even resigned, and if it is possible to create sympathy for the clochards, that sympathy is never imposed upon us. The poet's purpose is not to idealize either the scene or the image of the clochards; his purpose is to present to us a concrete human aspect of humanity and to render it in a significantly moving way, thereby making it at the same time beautiful. The poem is characteristic in that it springs from an emotion directly connected with temporal, realistic facts and not from an emotion connected with reality only through imagination and memory or through a purely aesthetic feeling. As for our appreciation of the poem, it is both emotional and aesthetic. The poem is an artistic enaction of principles found in other poems. It particularly reminds us of the following line in "Composition in Late Spring":³ "Beauty buds from mire". It is out of such assertions that Layton's poems grow, and those poems indicate to what point Layton can be a successful artist as well as a prophet, an angry man and a social rebel as shown in chapter one. The achievement of this poem lies in the veracious and successful use of a vulgar theme out of which beauty has been made to spring. Layton remains always faithful to his attachment to the most realistic aspects of life. He shows how back-street poetry can be something other than dirty, simplistic or cheap. As he says, there is much truth and beauty behind the placated façades which line main streets.

Much truth, reality and beauty are to be found not only in the back-streets, but also in some places unimportant, unnoticed and still always here and there within our reach. Beauty manifests itself out of concrete and accessible elements as in "Intersections",⁴ a short poem about an empty cokebottle half thrust in the ground and which the poet discovers by chance, and contemplates with all the pleasure that one might experience by unexpectedly meeting with beautiful scenery and what it might suggest to the beholder:

The small swelling of the empty cokebottle
just showing above the nicked grass:
the one curving presumably forever,
the other yellowing with the season.

The bulge is like a piece of coloured glass.
Ochre. Ochre and wan. With it the knoll
fixes a vacant stare on eternity. Uncovered,
the bottle lies like a short runway for the sun.

The impatient golfer looking for a lost ball
is not looking for that. Still it is more than
beautiful: as is the brilliant spray with the girl
watering the impermanent border of a lawn
holds out to him like a painted fan.

The poet is opposing here his lucky discovery to the impatient search of the golfer. He implies that the golfer had rather chance upon the cokebottle, which "is more than beautiful", than waste his time in the vain search for the ball. At the end of the poem, the poet picks up another detail in line with the previous one. The image of the cokebottle alone might have been considered as simply haphazard, but the poet adds the image of the spray of water, which, though a common detail of everyday life, is considered by the poet to be beautiful: though we appreciate the intrinsic beauty of the poem, the casual succession of the two vulgar images and the pertinent intrusion of the busy unaware golfer clearly indicate the

intention of the poet to point out to us how beauty can be achieved, where it can be found, and how it can be enjoyed. It is difficult here, too, to find something more banal, more unimportant than the two images evoked in the poem. Those images are used by Layton as an instance of how to look for beauty, how to be in the mood to be able to perceive as beautiful ordinary objects or scenes. If poet and everyday man can be said to possess this simple sense of beauty, then it is easy to see how all things can be visualized through it. The golfer does not carry this unpretentious sense of plain elementary beauty within himself; he is simply engrossed in his search. For him there is nothing beautiful to be found on the golf course; he is very liable to be one of those Layton directs himself to in the "Prologue to the Long Pea Shooter":⁵

And say nothing long, say nothing loud
To charm and please that motley crowd
of cultured hags who like a poem
To waft them far from spouse and home
Or bring a fine synthetic gloom
Into their modernized living-room;...

"Intersections" is a fine example of how vulgar objects can arouse in the poet a feeling both of aesthetic and emotional beauty and give birth to a poem which is at the same time a work of art and the expression of an idea.

What is contained in "Intersections" is further developed in a longer poem, written quite recently, and entitled "To Write an Old Fashioned Poem".⁶ The poem is a good illustration of Layton's attitude towards art, because it deals with the roles of both the real and the fictive in the creation of art, and because of the way Layton deals with both reality and fiction in a single poem, in a half-serious, half-detached way. It is the simple sense of beauty mentioned earlier which is at stake in the poem, the poet's capacity for perceiving life just as he perceives the cokebottle.

The poet is juggling with several images, at times crudely, at times in a more refined way, but never quite convincingly. Being in a state of weariness the poet is challenging himself and in this challenge two things are tempting him, to let himself be carried away by lulling, harmonious, enjoyable fictive images, or to face life, as when he was young, its reality, its tangibility, its veracity and matter-of-factness with the strength he then had, with enthusiasm and a healthy sensibility. At the beginning of the poem the poet does not quite know what he is going to come up with:

To convince myself I could still do it:
 write an old-fashioned, pre-Castro poem
 with figures of speech, nostalgia, and sensitive notations
 on natural phenomena, beauty, love (young or middle-aging)
 or mystical yearnings for the blood gouts of the spurting Christ,
 that mythical God-centred haemophilic,
 I slowly like Gray's ploughman made my way to the park
 where I could observe chairs dozing in the noonday heat
 or rocking themselves to sleep; chaises lounges, red-canvassed,
 gathered in small insurrectionary groups at corners,
 and the pigeons thinking they were made of my mould
 or poets like me crapping over everything
 but more especially, as the accumulating evidence showed,
 on the moustache and stiff upper lip of Albert I.

The poet puts together, with seeming indiscrimination, several poetical themes: "pre-Castro" poems, nostalgic poems, poems on mystical yearnings, eventually to refer to the chairs in the park and finally even to insert a vulgar note ("poets like me crapping over everything"). The challenge therefore takes place as soon as the poet reaches the park. We meet with realistic and even crude notations which do not have much in common with what the poet was saying at the beginning of the stanza. The next two stanzas reflect the same type of duality. In the second stanza the poet pretends to be under the spell of his own fantasies, making it quite clear

in the humour of his remarks that he does not fool himself:

I sat down, feeling my years all over,
 and hoped despite the wear and tear on my testicles
 a green tree was growing inside me...
 and I invented a replayable delicious fantasy
 in which Algerian poetesses adored me and came away with me
 because they loved the colour of blue
 and my eyes were true blue except where the whites showed through
 - but that was all right because they didn't care for freaks.
 And I felt great, great, for the leaf-lighted twigs
 were dropping their colourful odours in a blaring
 noon hour overture which the delirious wing-wonderful birds
 snatched up in their beaks...

Here is the fantasy, the world of dreams, the colourful fairyland, which we find impossible to believe in, because of the presence of pertinent material contingencies and because of the self-mocking tone of the poet. Layton shows in the above lines the failures of a fictive artistic universe, if common facts are taken into consideration.

In the last stanza the poet therefore reverts to a world closer to him in actual terms:

let me describe, let me annotate
 like a medieval scholar who has just regained his sight
 the lawny grass in the centre of the public park
 how it smells, how it tickle-cools my instep,
 how the murderous French children pull it up by the roots
 and the barbered poodles inelegantly shitting on it
 spot it with numerous tiny baskets of green-gold blades
 while the young mothers wheel themselves around
 in their infants' perambulators, the sun
 vanishes like a yolk behind the eggwhite clouds
 breezes flake and spume across the sky;
 and the ancient Nicoise ladies opposite me
 sit more quiet than small noonday birds,
 their wrinkled skins delicate as garlic peels
 and their thin legs tucked under them like memories.

I would like to lay a stress on the importance of the second line quoted in the passage above. Layton clearly interprets recovery of sight, a sense of perception as if things were being seen for the first time after a long blindness, as an image for impartial recognition and elementary

perception of the ordinary outer world. This stanza is opposed to the previous one in which the poet was in fact in a state of blindness, seeing imaginary things, creating extravagant worlds, eventually to turn them into ridicule. Algerian poetesses, extraordinary trees and birds, all can be very amusing, but they are vain artistic matter. What counts is what the poet sees when his eyes are open; and thus he sees the park as much more intimately attractive, more moving, more pleasing than it was made to appear in the previous stanza through the eyes of an exuberant imagination and through an emphatic description. The end of the stanza (and poem) lists concrete details, creating thereby a palpable, familiarly pleasant atmosphere. And out of those common, even vulgar details, the poet creates an emotionally appealing and even beautiful scene. The poodles' excrements, the young mothers in their childrens' carriages, the egg image for the setting sun, the garlic-peel image for the skin of the old ladies, are aspects of common humanity; humble unnoticed scenes triumph once more.

It is difficult to leave this chapter without mentioning a few poems about animals, which are within the confines of this theme of vulgar scenes and beauty. I shall only insist here upon the much praised poem, "The Bull Calf". A bull calf is indeed, a priori, a strange poetic image. But of course this is not surprising; the animals chosen by Layton are part of our daily life or at least belong to a group which has no particular poetical connotations. Animals are no exception. We find them in Layton's poetry as he finds them in his life, not in exotic islands, but in his hometown, in Montreal, in his street, around his house or even inside it. The scene about the bull calf takes place on a Canadian farm. The treatment

of this poem is quite realistic and it contains a poignant emotional beauty.

In "The Bull Calf",⁷ the poet, finding himself in a farmyard, witnesses the slaughter of a bull calf a few days old. The innocent animal is killed because there is "no money in bull calves"; the farmer has to get rid of it. Layton does not exploit the motivation of the situation to make his poem more appealing. He cannot be said directly to appeal to our anger because of the men's purpose and action nor to our pity towards the young animal, nor can he be said to use those elements as means to convey the beauty of the poem. The situation in this poem is strongly reminiscent of a similar situation, at least as far as death of an animal is concerned, in Musset's death of "le pélican".⁸ In this poem Musset describes the death of a pelican surrounded by his hungry progeny, on a remote island. The scene sinks into pathos, the poet rendering the death of the bird as tragic and as poignantly dramatic as his skill as a poet enables him to do. In comparison Layton's poem is so plain, so direct, so factual, that Musset's poem appears somewhat overdone. Whereas in Musset's poem nothing is derived from actual authentic visual experience, nothing goes beyond it in Layton's. Visual truth and matter-of-factness enable Layton to create a beauty which appears much more genuine and therefore which can be more appreciated than the fictive beauty of the flamboyant poem.

Layton's poem is made of systematic brief annotations all centered upon the animal. The beauty of the poem comes precisely from this bare description, the stripped annotations, the sense of actuality with which everything is rendered. It comes from the spoliated reality of the death of the animal. In fact the poem could be said to derive its emotional beauty entirely from the observation of dynamic scenes, our feeling and

appreciation springing from such visual facts as the action of the sun upon the animal and upon the scene as a whole, in the first stanza. In the second stanza the poet's uneasiness and emotion are not directly expressed but merely suggested by his gestures and the movement of his eyes:

The thing could barely stand. Yet taken
 from his mother and the barn smells
 he still impressed with his pride,
 with the promise of sovereignty in the way
 his head moved to take us in.
 The fierce sunlight tugging the maize from the ground
 licked at his shapely flanks.

"No money in bull calves," Freeman had said.
 The visiting clergyman rubbed the nostrils
 now snuffing pathetically at the windless day.
 "A pity," he sighed.
 My gaze slipped off his hat toward the empty sky
 that circled over the black knot of men,
 over us and the calf waiting for the first blow.

The poet uses the same process, only more forcefully, in the description of the dying animal in the third stanza. Death itself assumes an optical character as the bull calf is made to see the world around him narrowing progressively until he can only see the mallet with which he has been struck; then this, too, disappears and we know he is dead:

Struck,
 the bull calf drew in his thin forelegs
 as if gathering strength for a mad rush...
 tottered... raised his darkening eyes to us,
 and I saw we were at the far end
 of his frightened look, growing smaller and smaller
 till we were only the ponderous mallet
 that flicked his bleeding ear
 and pushed him over on his side, stiffly,
 like a block of wood.

In the last stanza the poet describes the burying of the bull calf. We are also to witness this through visual images, in particular when the poet notes how the sides of the calf bulge and flatten as it reaches the

bottom of the pit. The poet's eye is like a mute camera, and we visualize the poem and draw our feelings from a series of short filmed sequences representing the different stages of the situation:

We dug a deep pit and threw the dead calf into it.
 It made a wet sound, a sepulchral gurgle,
 as the warm sides bulged and flattened.
 Settled, the bull calf lay as if asleep,
 one foreleg over the other,...

We find no comment at all, all through the poem, except for two very short remarks made first by one of the men ("No money in bull calves"), and then by the clergyman ("A pity"). What the poet wants to convey is conveyed through his camera-like eye, and upon the choice of the images being focussed. It is indeed difficult to doubt that the poet had in mind this camera principle, above all in the two striking descriptions of the receding world as the calf dies and of the fall into the pit as he hits the bottom. This poem is characteristic of Layton's poems about animals, how animals are considered as common matter and is characteristic, once more, of the successful association of realism and art through the frequent use of a visual technique which excludes human remarks and all direct expression of the poet's soul, and technique which merely sticks in a stern way to facts.

The poet does not therefore only accept the city, the cokebottle, on existential grounds, he accepts them on aesthetic grounds without, however, losing sight of his conception of the relations between man, the artist, and reality. Layton has been criticized for the choice of his poetical matter, but as far as art alone is concerned matter does not count. What counts is the way matter is used to create a successful work of art. "Clochards" and "The Bull Calf" precisely demonstrate how there

is no noble nor base matter for the artist but simply life, all life, the tramps', the calf's, the mere existence of the cokebottle.

Still, that Layton attaches ethical values to his concept of beauty cannot be denied. As Layton demonstrates in "To Write an Old-Fashioned Poem", one must discern between a true and a false or deceptive beauty. Beauty is misleading when it is only lulling, when it is only something which pleases. A beautiful poem should do more than simply give personal satisfaction. True beauty is beauty faithful to life; it is an art of praise, of reality, of present life. While evoking aesthetical and emotional appreciation, it produces a sense of partnership, of involvement with the poet and the life he depicts.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The ultimate purpose of this study is not to find archetypes but a form of life. This search for a form of life is perhaps the only way of solving Layton's enigma. Because they are looking for archetypes, critics have most of the time failed to give proper interpretations to the bulk of Layton's poetry. Therefore the statement I made at the very beginning of the thesis might seem very personal. The unity I claim exists is tightly connected to a philosophy of life, a style which is revealed through, to use the most general term concerning the whole of Layton's poetry, materiality.

Although some American critics have been able to recognize the positive character of the so-called impure poetry of Pablo Neruda, few Canadian critics appear to have wondered whether there was a positive character to the vulgarity and materiality of Layton's poetry. How can critics such as Mr. D. Junkins, Richard Sommer, Barry Callaghan and many others be taken seriously when they attach themselves to meaningless details which they isolate from the context of Layton's philosophy, and treat as separate entities. Suffice it for Layton to deal with topics which are as close to the poet as they are to the critics, and the critics, apparently blinded by the proximity of these topics, are unable to go beyond the literal meaning of what the poet presents. They try to find psychological, when it is not financial, reasons for the poet's choice of subjects which too blatantly seem for them to attract public attention.

The review of *The Selected Poems* by Mr. D. Junkins¹ is very symptomatic. At one place he writes about "The Convertible":

One problem here is that the dullness prevents any appropriate response from the reader. Does anyone really care about the poet corkscrewing into "her small wicked body"?² Should the reader say, "Wow! Layton's screwing the young wives of Hampstead!"? One genuine response could be a lament that the poet isn't even enjoying himself. The fault, then, is not the braggadocio, or even in the writing, which in the above examples is clear and sparse and to the point. It is the question of the relevance of the subject matter(...)

Layton's own sins and weaknesses do not concern us, says the critic; still Mr. Junkins speaks of "Braggadocio", therefore clearly judging the poet's behaviour. As for me, I still do not understand why Mr. Junkins should consider it a granted fact that Layton is showing off here. In the face of such critical performances one can understand why Layton taxes the critics with, among other things, being "castratos". What concerns Mr. Junkins is the wrong choice of the poetical matter. One cannot write a poem about a wheelbarrow, allows this critic, unless it is connected to something beyond it. But it would be no more irrelevant to write a poem about a wheelbarrow simply for the object's sake than to write a poem about sexual affairs for their own sake or still worse for the sake of boasting or of writing something witty. Mr. Junkins' statement has so much common sense behind it that one wonders whether anything has ever been written without any idea beyond it, unless it was written by a simple-minded person. But Mr. Junkins fails to carry his own observation through to its logical conclusion.

In his review of The Shattered Plinths, Richard Sommer³ also finds fault with Layton's exhibitionism. Layton writes what he thinks will attract the reader's interest, says Mr. Sommer, for the purpose of selling more books:

Perhaps indignation over Auschwitz and Treblinka is easier. When it is juxtaposed with the dedication to L.B.J. which Layton evidently

hopes will provoke greater interest and more book sales, it is simply contemptible.

The contradictions here will probably correspond to a like ambivalence in Layton's audience, and will make his book a commercial success.

Now unless he holds this statement from Layton himself, I do not see how a serious critic can say such things. Mr. Sommer adds that Layton is an envious, frustrated, hypocritical individual:

He envies the "strong men" who, exempt from the demands of real moral intelligence, are able to act without restraint.

Layton is one of a vast company of uncommitted encouragers and spectators of violence, entranced by a vulgarized Nietzschean image of the cruel superman, whether Lyndon Johnson, General Dayan or Mao.

Once more it is the man who is judged through his work by the critics and not the work itself in function of the main themes. Of course it does not even dawn upon these critics that Layton might choose contemporary, popular, familiar topics, not for their own sake, but because they fit into the poet's philosophy. Layton does not commit himself from any political or ideological point of view when he speaks of Nagasaki, German concentration camps or Lyndon Johnson's policy, no more than he intends to make propaganda for Marilyn Monroe, advertise the propensity for sex of bored young wives or brag about his own sexual deeds.

Barry Callaghan⁴ in his review of Nail Polish focusses his attention upon the sexual aspect of Layton's poetry and appeals to Freudian principles to explain Layton's sexual obsession, because it is an acknowledged fact for Mr. Callaghan that Layton is obsessed. This critic's attitude is very symptomatic too; instead of trying to give a meaning to the characteristic features of Layton's poetry within the poet's work, the critic pulls up poems and sentences out of their context and analyzes them in the light

of criteria which have nothing to do either with the man, his poetry, or even poetry as a whole.

As critic after critic write more or less the same thing, as hardly anything positive has been written even in favorable reports, I have found myself alone with a body of work which has aroused and continues to arouse much noise, much controversy, but with nothing stable enough for a start. Of course critics have spoken of vulgarity, of sex, but have never been beyond the simple analysis of such elements.

That Layton is a serious writer is of no doubt to me. I have tried to come to his work as simply as possible, analyzing it through the poet's ideas, which were clear to me from the outset. Two things struck me at first: the image of the vulgar object, the cokebottle, and the image of the prophet. That two such elements should be found side by side is already both an enigma and a challenge. This study has been an attempt at solving the apparent incongruity. The essential clue is certainly to be found in the idea of the prophet. Layton does not claim to bring a new message to humanity as a thinker or a philosopher, but as a poet. To Layton poetry seems to have recently been the exclusive domain of either intellectualism, academicism or sentimentalism. This poetry is blatantly disconnected from the down-to-earth concerns of the man in the street, from the unimportant scene or object, the ugly, the improper, or the undignified. At the same time, in a world of crumbling values, ineffective principles, mechanical motions, in an age of madness, of greed and of alienation, Layton feels he has to find safe concrete basis. His search explains how and why prophet and poet meet. Layton goes down into the street not only to vulgarize poetry, to weave it around and for prostitutes, butchers and bankers, but

also to find, in that street, values which he might use to offer to man as the only urgent alternative to a dehumanizing world. Man and life are Layton's sole concerns and he wants to preserve both in their unadulterated natural forms.

Layton's originality is to be found in the way he looks for new values, in his choice of the world where he finds them. Layton's empirical method is not a means to reach superior truths through distilled experiments. It is a realistic way of solving concrete problems through everyday experiences among people:

By walking I found out
Where I was going.

By intensely hating, how to love.
By loving, whom and what to love.

By grieving, how to laugh from the belly.

Out of infirmity, I have built strength.
Out of untruth, truth.
From hypocrisy, I weaved directness.

Almost now I know who I am.
Almost I have the boldness to be that man.

Another step
And I shall be where I started from.⁵

Layton is a prophet because he shares what he feels and discovers with everybody and not simply with the happy few. He is a prophet because he warns man without distinction of age, class, colour, wealth or poverty, whether worker or intellectual, of the dangers of our modern society and of the dangers of ignorance about our nature. He is a poet because he teaches how to live, how to praise life, how to greet it like a carefree child, how to look at banal objects like cokebottles.

Out of materiality Layton wages war against materialism, out of

society against our social system, out of man against man. This was essentially the matter of chapter three of my study, and one can see how this matter is closely connected to chapters one and two. I would be tempted at one point to bring together Layton's and Camus' philosophy of life drawn from the absurdity of life. This common point, of course, is to be found only in the aspect of Layton's philosophy described in chapter three, and to Layton's acceptance of the human condition as a means to transcend it. Although Layton distrusts man, he sees his salvation through man himself. Layton is close to Camus' philosophy in the sense that in view of rendering life possible and fostering more genuine human relationships, he does not appeal to out-of-the-world deus-ex-machina devices, but to the reality of this world, to our nature and our condition. Layton's view of social relationships is only a fraction of his philosophy, a fraction which happens to have common points with existentialism.

Of course materiality, the mere consideration of what exists, provides a safe ground for the poet, and the form of life he draws from materiality is essentially temporal, existential. But Layton is a poet, and materiality does not necessarily end up with a down-to-earth, matter-of-fact form of life. Layton shows that beauty can be created out of the common and the concrete, and emotion deeply experienced.

In this thesis I have limited myself to a study of the poet's philosophy of life, to the consideration of the material aspect of his poetry within a social context; this is in fact but a first step towards a more complete analysis of the poet's work. Nature, man, sex are also treated by the poet alongside the characteristics I have pointed out in this work. In a logical continuation Layton proceeds to a description of

an organic nature, an organic man, an organic form of sex, an organic form of life, and to a definition of a perception and sensation of life transcending the organic. After developing a pattern of social life out of his experiences within society Layton develops a pattern of sensorial life out of his own concrete sensorial experiences, and remains all the time utterly faithful to what is concrete and factual, perpetuating and achieving a strong unity based upon materiality, temporality and concreteness.

NOTES

CHAPTER I - THE POET'S VISION

- ¹ Foreword to Balls for a One-Armed Juggler, p. XIX-XX.
- ² Foreword to The Swinging Flesh, p. X.
- ³ Ibid., p. XII.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. XII-XIII.
- ⁵ "The Warm Afterdark", Collected Poems 1971. p. 366. First included in: A Red Carpet for the Sun.
- ⁶ "Stocktaking on the Day of Atonement", *ibid.*, p. 221. First appeared in The Swinging Flesh.
- ⁷ "Beauty", *ibid.*, p. 95.
- ⁸ "The Real Values", *ibid.*, p. 49.
- ⁹ "This Machine Age", *ibid.*, p. 48.
- ¹⁰ "The Poetic Process", *ibid.*, p. 156.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 157. First appeared in Cerberus.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 23. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.
- ¹⁴ "Red Chokecherries", *ibid.*, p. 85. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 290. First included in The Laughing Rooster.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107. First included in Music on a Kazoo.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209. First included in Music on a Kazoo.

CHAPTER II - THE POET'S EMPIRICAL ATTITUDE

¹ I am not here systematically opposing Layton to Yeats. I am simply comparing the poetical universes of the two poets. As regards Yeats' attitude towards women, it is a fact that in his old age Yeats referred in his poems to women in general, to a more indefinite form of physical passion and even to sex. Layton even pays tribute to Yeats in "No Shish Kebab" (Collected Poems 1971, p. 46) for the transcription by Yeats in his poems of the sexual passion aroused by Maud Gonne, at first, and then by a wider and more vague impulse in his old days. But although women aroused the same passion in the two poets, they do not belong in the same experience.

² Collected Poems 1971, p. 550. First included in Nail Polish.

³ The Whole Bloody Bird. Aps section p. 83.

⁴ Collected Poems 1971, p. 152. First included in The Cold Green Element.

⁵ Ibid., p. 272. First included in The Laughing Rooster.

⁶ Ibid., p. 78. First included in Balls for a One-Armed Juggler.

⁷ The Whole Bloody Bird. Aps section p. 90.

⁸ Ibid., p. 95.

⁹ Collected Poems 1971, p. 269. First included in Balls for a One-Armed Juggler.

¹⁰ The Whole Bloody Bird, p. 140. Not included in Collected Poems.

¹¹ Collected Poems 1971, p. 262. First included in The Laughing Rooster.

¹² Ibid., p. 157. First included in Cerberus.

¹³ Ibid., p. 156. First included in The Cold Green Element.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 433. First included in Periods of the Moon.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 363.

CHAPTER III - SOCIAL REALITY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

- ¹ Collected Poems 1971, p. 53. First included in Here and Now.
- ² Ibid., p. 194. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.
- ³ Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 580. First included in Nail Polish.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 280. First included in The Black Huntsmen.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 48. First included in Balls for a One-Armed Juggler.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 49. First included in Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 374. First included in The Swinging Flesh.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 400. First included in Periods of the Moon.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 410. First included in Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 244. First included in A Laughter in the Mind.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 206. First included in The Swinging Flesh.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 182. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.

CHAPTER IV - DOWNTOWN BEAUTY

- ¹ Collected Poems 1971, p. 71. First included in Love the Conqueror Worm.
- ² Ibid., p. 390. First included in The Periods of the Moon.
- ³ Ibid., p. 122. First included in In the Midst of my Fever.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 150. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 58. First included in The Long Pea Shooter.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 462. First included in The Shattered Plinths.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 22. First included in The Bull Calf and Other Poems.
- ⁸ "La Nuit de Mai". Alfred de Musset. Poésies Complètes. Ed. La Pleiade, 1933, p. 312.

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

¹ D. Junkins, "Review of the Selected Poems". The Far Point, 3 (Fall, Winter 1969), 61-69.

² This quotation is from "Woman", Collected Poems, p. 208.

³ R. Sommer. "The Civilized Killer", Canadian Dimension, V5 (June, July 1968), 33-35.

⁴ Barry Callaghan. "A poet in his pride: Layton as Messiah". Saturday Night, (March 1972), Review of the Collected Poems 71.

⁵ "There Were No Signs", The first poem of the Collected Poems 1971. First included in Balls for a One-Armed Juggler.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS BY IRVING LAYTON

1- POETRY

Here and Now. Montreal: First Statement Press, 1945.

The Black Huntsmen. Many poems are only slightly modified versions of poems published in the two earlier volumes. Toronto: Contact Press, 1951.

Cerberus. Poems by Louis Dudek, I. Layton, Raymond Souster. With a Foreword by I. Layton. Toronto: Contact Press, 1952.

Love the Conqueror Worm. Toronto: Contact Press, 1953.

In the Midst of My Fever. Palma de Mallorca: The Divers Press, 1954.

The Long Pea-Shooter. Montreal: Laocoon Press, 1954.

The Blue Propeller. Toronto: Contact Press, 1955.

The Cold Green Element. Toronto: Contact Press, 1955.

Music on a Kazoo. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956.

The Bull Calf and Other Poems. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956.

The Improved Binoculars. Selected Poems with an Introduction by William Carlos Williams. Highlands, North Carolina: Jonathan Williams, 1956.

The Improved Binoculars. 2nd Ed., with thirty additional poems. Highlands, N.C.: Jonathan Williams, 1957.

A Laughter in the Mind. Highlands, N.C.: Jonathan Williams, 1958.

A Laughter in the Mind. 2nd Edition, with twenty additional poems and a Note by the Author. Montreal; Editions d'Orphee, 1959.

A Red Carpet for the Sun. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959. Also, Highlands, N.C.: Jonathan Williams, 1959.

Balls for a One-Armed Juggler. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963.

The laughing Rooster. With a Preface by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964.

Collected Poems. With a Foreword by the Author. McClelland and Stewart, 1965.

Periods of the Moon. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.

The Shattered Plinths. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968.

Selected Poems. Ed. with a Preface by Wynne Francis. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

Nail Polish. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

The Collected Poems. With a Foreword by the Author. This volume approximately includes 80% of the total number of poems written by I. Layton up to that date. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

Lovers and Lesser Men. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

2- POETRY AND PROSE

Now is the Place. Poems and Stories. Montreal: First Statement Press, 1948.

The Swinging Flesh. Poems and Short Stories. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961.

The Whole Bloody Bird. Prose, Aphorisms and Poems. With a Foreword by the Author. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

Engagements, The Prose of Irving Layton. A collection of the short stories from The Swinging Flesh, and of Layton's Forewords, Prefaces, and Introductions to his volumes of poetry, editions, and edited material. Also, a selection of Articles, Reviews, and Letters by the Author. With a Preface by Layton. Edited by Seymour Mayne. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972 (332 pp.).

3- EDITIONS CONSULTED

Canadian Poems 1850-1952. Edited with Louis Dudek. Toronto: Contact Press, 1952.

Love Where the Nights are Long. With a Foreword by the Author. Canadian Love Poems. Selected by I. Layton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962.

NOTE:

Of Layton's whole work only the following books are still in print:

The Swinging Flesh.
Love Where the Nights are Long. (Edited)
Periods of the Moon.
The Shattered Plinths.
Selected Poems.
The Whole Bloody Bird.
Nail Polish.
The Collected Poems of Irving Layton.
Engagements: The Prose of Irving Layton.
Lovers and Lesser Men.

4- Articles and Correspondence consulted and not included in Engagements.

"Interview with Irving Layton", with Lawrence J. Resnitsky. Le chien d'or/
The Golden Dog, 1 (January 1972).

"Interview with Irving Layton", with Tom Laing. Northword Magazine
 (July 1971), 43-47, 62-64.

"Correspondence", The Canadian Forum, XLI, 494 (March 1962), 281-282.

"Correspondence", The Canadian Forum, XLI, 496 (May 1962), 41-42.

WRITINGS ABOUT IRVING LAYTON

1- Books about Irving Layton

Mandel, Eli. Irving Layton. Toronto: Forum House, 1969.

2- Passages in Books

Beattie, Munro. "Poetry 1935-1950", Literary History of Canada, eds. Carl F. Klinck et al. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, 751-784 (Layton, 781-83).

Frye, Northrop. The Bush Garden: Essays on Canadian Imagination. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. 40-42, 52-53, 68-70, 95-97, 115-118.

Jones, D.G. Butterfly on Rocks: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. 11-12, 21-23, 128-133, 134, 136, 138-139, 163, 165, 183.

Pacey, Desmond. Creative Writing In Canada, Rev. Ed. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961. 163-167.

3- Articles and Reviews about Irving Layton

Avison, Margaret. Review of Here and Now. The Canadian Forum, XXV, 292 (May 1945) 47, 48.

Bukowski, Charles. "The Corybant of Wit", Evidence, 9 (1965) 112,117 (Review of The Laughing Rooster)

Callaghan, Barry. "A poet in his pride: Layton as Messiah". Saturday Night, (March 1972), (Review of the Collected Poems 71).

Carruth, Hayden. "That Heaven-Sent Lively Rope-Walker, Irving Layton". Tamarack Review, 39 (Spring 66) 68,73 (Review of Collected Poems).

Cogswell, Fred. "Eros or Narcissus: The Male Canadian Poet", Mosaic, I, 2 (January 1968), 103,111.

Christopher, A.G. "Correspondence". The Canadian Forum, XXXVI, 426 (July 1956), 86.

- Davey, Franck. "Black Days on Black Mountain", The Tamarack Review, 35 (Spring 65) 62,71.
- Dobbs, Kildare. Review of The Improved Binoculars, The Canadian Forum XXXVII, 439 (August 1957) 115-116.
- Doyle, Mike. "The Occasions of Irving Layton", Canadian Literature .54 (Autumn 1972) 70-83.
- Dowden, Graham. Review of The Whole Bloody Bird, Quarry, XX 1 (Winter 1971), 45-48.
- Dudek, Louis. "Correspondence", The Canadian Forum, XXXVI, 425 (June 1956), 68
- "Layton on the Carpet", Delta 9 (October-December 1959) 17-19
- "Layton Now and Then: Our Critical Assumptions", Queen's Quarterly, LXIII (Summer 1956), 291-293.
- "The Montreal Poets", Culture, XVIII, 2 (June 57) 149-154.
- "Patterns of Recent Canadian Poetry", Culture, XIX, 4 (December 1958), 399-415.
- "The Transition in Canadian Poetry", Culture, XX (1959) 282-295.
- Francis, Wynne. "A Critic of Life: Louis Dudek as Man of Letters", Canadian Literature (Autumn 1964), 5-23.
- Gnarowski, Michael. "Of Prophets and Multiple Visions", Yes, XIII (December 1964), 1-3.
- "Anti-Intellectualism in Canadian Poetry", Canadian Author and Bookman, XL, 3 (Spring 1965), 3-5.
- Hale, Barrie. Books in Review: "Baggy-Pants Rhetoric", Review of The Swinging Flesh, Canadian Literature, 9 (Summer 61) 66-67.
- Junkins, Donald. Review of Selected Poems, The Far Point, 3 (Fall, Winter 1969), 61-69.
- Kenner, Hugh. "Beast-Type sockdolagers", Poetry, XCIV, 6 (September 1959), 413-418 (Review of A Laughter in the Mind).
- Maclure, Miller. "Poets in Review", The Canadian Forum, XXXVI, 424, (May 1956), 35-37 (Review of The Bull Calf and Other Poems).
- Mandel, Eli. "Poetry Chronicle: Giants, Beasts and Men in Recent Canadian Poetry", Queen's Quarterly, LXVII (Summer 1960), 285-293 (Review of A Red Carpet for the Sun).

- Purdy, Al. "The Collected Poems of Irving Layton", Quarry, XV, 3 (March 1966), 40-44.
- Smith, A.J.M. "The Recent Poetry of Irving Layton: A Major Voice", Queen's Quarterly, LXII, (Winter 1955-56), 587-91.
- Smith, Patricia Keeney. "Irving Layton and the Theme of Death" Canadian Literature, 48 (Spring 1971), 6-15.
- Sommer, Richard. "The Civilized Killer", Canadian Dimension, V, 5 (June, July 1968), 33-35 (Review of The Shattered Plinths)
- "Replies", Canadian Dimension, V, 7 (December 1968-69), 2
- Taylor, Michael. "God's and the Poet's Poet", Edge, 6 (Spring 1967), 100-107 (Review of Collected Poems).
- Wilson, Milton. "Turning New Leaves", The Canadian Forum, XXXV, 417 (October 1955), 162-64 (Reviews of In the Midst of My Fever and of The Cold Green Element).
- "Turning New Leaves", The Canadian Forum, XXXIX, 468 (January 1960) 231-32.
- Woodcock, George. "A Grab at Proteus", Canadian Literature, 28 (Spring 1966), 5-21.

OTHER READINGS

1- Works of General Relevance Consulted

Frye, Northrop. The Modern Century. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967.

----- Fables of Identity. Studies in Poetic Mythology. New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.

Klinck, Carl Frederick. Literary History of Canada. Canadian Literature in English. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965.

Pacey, Desmond. Ten Canadian Poets. (Charles Sangster, G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, A. Lampman, D.C. Scott, E.J. Pratt, F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Earle Birney, A.M. Klein). A group of biographical and critical essays. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1958.

Smith, A.J.M. Masks of Poetry. Edited with an Introduction by A.J.M. Smith, General Editor: Malcolm Ross. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1968. (New Canadian Library).

2- Anthologies

Ross, Malcolm. Poets of the Confederation. (Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott). Edited and with an Introduction by Malcolm Ross. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960. (A New Canadian Library Original).

Wilson, Milton. Poets Between the Wars. (E.J. Pratt, F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Dorothy Livesay, A.M. Klein). Edited and with an Introduction by Milton Wilson. Toronto, Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1967. (A New Canadian Library Original).

----- Poetry of Mid-Century 1940-1960. Edited and with an Introduction by Milton Wilson. General Editor: Malcolm Ross. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964. (A New Canadian Library Original).

Mandel, Eli. Poets of Contemporary Canada 1960-1970. Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, Joe Rosenblatt, Leonard Cohen, George Bowering, John Newlove, Margaret Atwood, Bill Bisset, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Michael Ondaatje. Edited and with an Introduction by Eli Mandel. General Editor: Malcolm Ross. Toronto, Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Limited. (A New Canadian Library Original).

Geddes, Gary. 15 Canadian Poets. (Earle Birney, Al Purdy, Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, Leonard Cohen, D.G. Jones, Alden Nowlan, Margaret Avison, Eli Mandel, Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn MacEwen, John Newlove, George Bowering, Victor Coleman, Michael Ondaatje). Edited by Gary Geddes and Phyllis Bruce, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1970.

3- Other poets' works

Pratt, E.J. Collected Poems 2nd Ed. With an Introduction by Northrop Frye. Toronto, McMillan Co. of Canada 1958.

Birney, Earle. Near False Greek Mouth. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1964.

----- Selected Poems 1940-1966. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1966.

----- Rag and Bone Shop. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

Cohen, Leonard. Selected Poems 1956-1968. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1968.