UNIT-1

CANADIAN POETRY

Structure

1.0 Objectives

- To introduce the students to an understanding of the phases of Canadian poetic culture;
- To familiarize them with the representative poets of the different periods;
- To help them understand Canadian response towards nature.
- To enable the students to gain a knowledge of Canadian spirit in poetry.

1.1 Introduction

Canadian poetry over the last two centuries divides roughly in four main periods : the pre-Confederation period, the Confederation period, the modernist period and the postmodernist period. Each period has the same integrity, the same skilful moderation that is aware of the continuity of its heritage and a recalcitrance of personality. This division of Canadian poetry does not mean the water-tight compartmentalization, rather, it is a continuous growth of Canadian poetry contributing to the cumulative identity that is Canadian. Canadian poetic culture is a growth having its first stirrings of poetics culture, emergence of a national poetic culture, transitional poetic culture, modernist poetic culture and post modernist or contemporary poetic culture.

1.2 Pre-Confederation Period

The pre-Confederation period had the first stirrings of a poetic culture before Canada became a nation. This was the beginning of Canadian poetry spanning from the later years of the eighteenth century to the Confederation of 1867. The poetry of this period was lively and loyal and dealt with the life of the early Canadian settlers. The early settlers had the culture of exiles. Sometimes they were angry at their fate and sometimes hopeful that they might return before they died to their American homes from where they had come after American Revolution (1775-83). Besides this, there was also the feelings of excitement to have discovered a new land. The pre-Confederation poets expressed this sense of loss and displacement of an immigrant and the excitement of discovery of an explorer. They depicted the hardships and difficulties of the early settlers and hatched a graph of rise and progress of a new country. Besides these facts, they also focused on the prospects of the possessor of a new country.

1.2.1 The First Stirrings of the Poetic Culture

The first stirrings of the poetic culture took place in the farthest west. Though this phase includes poets such as Robert Hayman, Joseph Stansbury, Standish O'Grady, Oliver Gold-smith, Charles Heavysege, Charles Sangster and Charles Mair, the beginning of importance was made by three Charles. Called in his own time "Canada's national bard" and the "first important national poet", Charles Sangster (1822-1893) became, by virtue of two books published in his thirties, the unofficial poet laureate of his day. He was born at the Navy Yard in Kingston, Upper Canada, in 1822. His father died while he was still an infant. At fifteen he went to work full time at Fort Henry where he was employed to make cartridges. Of the loss of schooling, which might have given him better preparation for a career as a poet, he said that, like many leading Canadians, he was a 'self made man'. He had not the advantages of a classical education. All that he possessed mentally had been acquired by careful reading of the best authors (chiefly fiction).

Having begun to write poems for newspapers and magazines such as *The Literary Garland* and the *Anglo-American Review*, Sangster quit Fort Henry in 1849 to become the editor of the *Courier* at Amherstburg. Unfortunately, the paper collapsed when its publisher died and in 1850 he took more menial employment with the Kingston *British Whig*, remaining for the next fourteen years. Despite the arduousness of his tasks, he managed to write *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay and Other Poems(1856)* and *Hesperus and Other Poems*, and *Lyrics(1860)*. The presence of love poetry in each collection reminds us of the association of two books with Sangster's two marriages: the first to Mary Kilborne, who died eighteen months later and the second to Henrietta Meagher. Thereafter he wrote two volumes of poetry which he had hoped to send for publication but it did not happen so.

A. Sangster

Sangster was the first Canadian poet to achieve recognition in Canada in his life time. Adward Hartley Dewart, in his introduction to *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864) stated that Sangster occupied 'first place' among the peers. In 1882 Sangster became a charter member of the Royal Society of Canada and in 1890 an honorary member of the Society of Canadian Literature. Having chosen to work in the tradition of the English Romantic poets, Sangster responded to his immediate landscape

more directly than his predecessors. In his poems, particularly *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay*, Sangster depicted his native environment yet he did not use a native form or idiom. *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* is derived from Wordsworth, however, Sangster took for his model one of Wordsworth's late and less powerful poems, *The River Duddon*, a sequence of static and picturesque sonnets about a river journey. In a word, it can be said that Sangster wrote for his fellow Canadians and about them and with a Canadian range of attitude. Sangster is really a national poet. Writing among and for people whose reserve is stern, he has audience in view and records his experiences and aspirations with caution.

B. Heavysege

The second poet of pre-Confederation period is Heavysege, a Montreal poet who wrote for the world and for himself. He wrote of subjects entirely connected with Canada or North America. His natural imagery is Canadian and his range of feeling recalls the Byronic after- glow that he received in England from which he emigrated. Heavysege was born in Liverpool and came to Canada in 1853 in the age of thirty seven. His preoccupation was with drama which was not intended for the stage. In fact, he was preoccupied with the cabinet drama of the romantics. *Saul* and *Jephthah's Daughter* are his two dramas besides poetry. *Saul* is a cabinet drama which is closer to *Paradise Lost* than to stage plays. He prepared a text of *Saul* for a NewYork actress. He had considerable powers as a realist, even as a bitter humorist. It is remarkable to note the dialogues in the play, particularly the dialogues that he gives to the devils who play a large part in the tragedy. Like other nineteenth-century dramatists in the Elizabethan tradition, his approach to tragic character is unsufficiently realistic. Heavysege chose this subject symbolising the struggle, loneliness or sacrifice of the early settlers. Heavysege has put together certain essential ideas : the contrast of human and civilized value with nature disregard of them in a primitive country for God to disappear behind the mask of nature, and the symbolic significance, when that happens, of human sacrifice and the mutilation of the body.

C.Charles Mair

The third Charles, as we know, is Charles Mair, known for his verse drama, *Tecumesh* (1886) in which he skilfully handles the native Indian myth. His *Tecumesh* applies the same pattern to Canadian history. This drama has the same theme of sacrifice – the sacrifice of Tecumesh to which every thing else leads up. The various conflicts between his own fierce loyalties and the vacillations of his friends and enemies are merely the struggles of a doomed victim. It is remarkable to note that it is not only a struggle in his poetry that he pronounces but as a first political poet, he expresses also the claim of equality with the colonial masters.

Mair's drama is roughly the equivalent in the "Indian" sphere of Divine Mother's writings in Nature sphere. Here the Indian is seen as one of Nature's Children, living a jolly carefree life until the advent of the White man. It would be in the fitness of things to say that here Indian-as-victim- motif begins to surface, but the main emphasis is on the peacefulness and good behaviour of the Indian. In fact, Sangster, Heavysege and Mair, preferred native myth and carried the same object of sketching the Canadian events of history.

What is noticeable in the pre-Confederation poets is that they brought with them British traditions and endeavoured to draw a sketch of Canadian history and rural life in their poetry. In fact, they remained imitative in their treatment. They expressed an immigrant's sense of loss and displacement or

an explorer's excitement of discovery, pre-Confederation poets initiated the struggle to find suitable language and forms to describe new experiences in a new landscape.

1.3 Confederation Period

The second phase of Canadian literature marked the Confederation period which brought the emergence of a national literature. Near the Confederation, Canada gained poets who were national. Charles G.D.Roberts, his cousin Bliss Car-man, Archibald Lampman and D.C.Scott are often called the poets of the Confederation. Their prominence between 1867 and the Great war, their concern with nationalism and their inter-related lives make them truly members of a school of poetry. They, born near the Confederation of 1867, came to their maturity in the 1890s. They drew on the Romantic and Victorian heritage of Britain and America and that was why their work became of imitative nature.

1.3.1 Emergence of a National Literature

Despite the fact that they were influenced by both British and American models, they evolved styles and attitudes, which gave rise to more nationalist literature. They continued the themes of the pre-Confederation literature and endeavoured to investigate the experience the early settlers had. These experiences of the early settlers gave a consciousness of exile and isolation, a sense of inchoate identity and ambivalent feelings about nature that seemed hostile and indifferent.

It is customary, in calling the roll of Confederation poets, to commence with Roberts, as the oldest and as the author of *Orion and Other Poems* (1880) which is a landmark in this country's literary history. The other three members of the principal group were, however, all born within the next year or two and the importance of *Orion* is simply that poetry could be written in Canada. It is possible therefore to begin with Lampman and gain the advantage of encountering at the outset the best corpus of poetry and the most attractive of the four personalities.

A. Lampman

Lampman was born in 1861 at Morpeth, in Western Ontario and died in Ottawa in 1899. The writing of poetry dominated his life. Like his life, his poetry exhibits a consistent wholeness, which makes a chronological arrangement of his poems. The heart of Lampman's poetic achievement, which in turn is the dominant fact and central achievement of his life, consists of a small group of nature poems. These poems are the product of his excursions at all seasons of the year, into the Ontario woods and fields. His first collection, *Among the Millet* was published in Ottawa in 1888 and the second, *Lyrics of Earth*, in Boston in 1895. At the time of his death he had arranged to publish a third collection, *Alcyone* but his friend D.C.Scott cancelled publication of *Alcyone* and in the following year brought out *The Poems of Archibald Lamp-man*.

The striking note in Lampman is his loving indebtedness to Coleridge, Words-worth, Shelley, Keats, Arnold and Tennyson.. His poems exhibit that in a large overriding sense he is consistently Wordsworthian. Like Wordsworth, he finds his consolation, his sense of the divine, his sensuous delight, all in the countryside, the world of farm and forest, lake and rock and stream.Though Lampman seems to be a pale imitator of Wordsworth, he has many things of his own in his poetry. Lampman refuses to give specific content to his dream or to allow his dreaming to lead him towards philosophic or theological concepts. It is nature, and we may say with some confidence only nature, that induces in him the trance

of insight into the life of things.

The nature poems of Archibald Lampman have two juxtaposed worlds, which form the two halves of the poems. In the first half of the poems, he is seen gloomy and experiences a strange, fleeting emptiness in life. Sometimes this design is presented with partial harmony and peace. But the second half of the poems presents a world, endowed with joy and peace, where a new hope springs. In his poems Lampman draws a line of demarcation between two lives and exalts the moral quality felt in nature. Lampman's main need was "to escape from the garrison of a culture" that was oppressive, to escape from the boredom and sterlity, "to embrace the wilderness of nature" "Lamp-man's verse", says Jones, is "a direct echo of Wordsworth." Like English poet, Lampman had "an excessively benevolent conception of nature and an excessively passive conception of man's relationship to her". But in order to overcome the morbidity and get a solace, it is not always nature that he alternates with society. Lampman desires the Emersonian unity with the universe but cannot allow himself to have it. "Conscious stress" plagues him; he wants to experience the "elemental joy and to be part of the "eternal movement of life, but he has a kind of complex, ambivalent feelings and sensitivity towards nature". However, throughout in nature, he experiences some mystical "Power" and this experience is expressive of the awakening of self. It is noteworthy that this experience is absent while the poet marches in the city . These two aspects- the evil power in city life and the "blessed power" in nature, thus constitute the poems of Lampman.

B. Sir Charles G.D.Roberts

Another important poet of this phase is Sir Charles G.D.Roberts (1860-1943). He became the first Canadian man of letters whom his own countrymen and the world at large could recognize. He accepted the editorship of *The Week* in 1880, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1890 and of the Royal Society of Literature in 1892. Roberts's best poetry, which is combined and constructed out of his youth, combined many of the common elements of Confederation life : an English and Loyalist background, a rural boyhood in close contact with the wilderness, and a broad classical education given by his parents. While completing his degree, he began writing poetry. By the time he was twenty three, Roberts had published his three books of verse. The first of these *Orian*, received international praise and Matthew Arnold among others saw it as distinctively Canadian. Robert's *Orian12* is typical of early Confederation poetry in its predominantly Romantic form. In attempting to express a vision of human experience in mythological terms, it recalls *Endymion* and *Prometheus Unbound*. It is close in scale to the classical poems of Tennyson and Arnold but lacks focus on moral issues. As a whole this collection has a sequence of five mythological narratives — *Orian, Ariadne, Launcelot and the Four Queens, Memnon* and *Sapho*. They represent Roberts's participation in an enormously popular nineteenth century fashion which stems primarily from Shelley and Keats.

Roberts's sense of identity with the whole group of Canadian writers meant that all were heartened by the recognition he received. He was an indisputable Man of Letters. Everything that it lay within his powers to do for literature in Canada, either by intention or by happy accident, he accomplished. The affectionate encouragement he gave to his friends was an extension of the pride and pleasure he took in the literary efforts of his own family. Roberts combined tradition and innovation. His history of Canada, his excursions into travel guides, his translations of French-Canadian fiction and verse, his regional tales of adventure, his animal stories, all these amount to demonstrate Canadian history and landscape and the Canadian sensibility. Roberts's patriotic endeavour is also evident in his

participation in making Confederation a spiritual as well as a political act. Regarding the literary future of Nova Scotia, he holds "We must forget to ask of a work whether it is Nova Scotian or British Columbian, of Ontario or of New Brunswick, until we have inquired if it be broadly and truly Canadian". It was he who perceived that the terrain of Canada which conditions Canadian life, would be the primary subject-matter for Canadian poetry.

As a poet of recognition in Canada and outside Roberts, demonstrated that Canadian literature was a growing concern. Being a prolific writer of voluminous work he became worthy of respect for all Canadian writers. His true role can now be appreciated and a genuine admiration can be achieved for the spirit in which he conceived and carried it out. He was quite literally Canada's first man of letters and the knighthood he received in 1935 was not an inappropriate honour. He had done something for the concept of the Dominion.The best of Roberts is to be found in his descriptions of Canadian landscape. In these he is capable of recording impressions with the fidelity of a genuine devotion, of evoking the *genius loci* of the Fundy shore, of catching the turn of a Canadian season. In a small handful of such descriptive pieces he achieves memorableness. Among them are a group of sonnets like "The Sower", "An Old Barn", "Salt Flats", "Pea-Fields", "The Potato Harvest", "The Mowing". The titles of these sonnets are self evident to unfold Roberts's attitude towards nature.

C. Bliss Carman

The next important poet of Confederation period is Roberts's cousin, Bliss Carman (1861-1929). He passed through the same high school and the same university, a couple of years after Roberts. He too read widely in ancient literature and to the English poets of the nineteenth century. His most effective poetry is that which reflects his emotional flux in harmony with the kind of romanticism he encountered in his youth and the Transcendentalism of his distant kinsman, Emerson. It is noteworthy that Carman wrote of feelings not thoughts unlike Lampman and Roberts. In his poetry, he gives impressions, not descriptions. He began to write as a poet of senses in love with music and imagery. He was also in love with the nature immediately about him. However, even the earliest poetry of Carman is easily distinguishable from *Orion* and the following poems. Carman sought to maintain the note of *Low Tide on Grand Pre*, throughout the entire volume. The note which is a prominent feature of his poetry excels not only Canadian poetry but the poetry in general.

Carman's beauty of music is the most remarkable merit in his first collection *Low Tide On Grand Pre*. Undoubtedly, it is one of the most musical volumes of verse.The reader feels fascinated and excited by such magical phrases as "Golden Rowan of Menalowan" or "The Trail Among the Ardise Hills". Sometimes, more often in the work of his youth, entire poems have a musical perfection. He has a variety of poetry and appears as a poet of very extraordinary range due to the many kinds of poetry he has written. Here it is also important to clarify that Carman is not versatile in his choice of subjects. In fact, he turns from one of his nature lyrics to one of his elegies and then to one of his dreamy meditations. What strikes one is not the change in subject but the sameness in manner. He always tries to cast almost exactly the same spell. It is this spell that makes the readers become uneasy and consequently the spell ceases to take effect.

D. Duncan Campbell Scott

The fourth important Confederation poet is Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947). It is noteworthy that when Canadian count Confederation poet they say in one breath Lampman, Carman

and Roberts and only after a marked pause, Duncan Campbell Scott. E.K.Brown explains that it is so because Roberts gave the lead to the group and that his mellow classical pieces mingling myth and landscape and his homely local pictures fixed for the time what the range of Canadian poetry was to be .The next two names were accepted by Scott himself "When I was beginning to write," he remarked in a recent letter, "I was not aware of any such thing as Canadian literature, but I did dream of starting a Canadian literature and I joyously hailed the efforts of Lampman and Carman as the beginnings of it." It is a kind of tribute to Roberts, Lamp-man and Carman. In fact, it is exceedingly revealing. Roberts set the course and warmly welcomed those who rivalled him recognizing especially the values in Lampman and Carman. The three of them, whatever their differences in temperament, were drawn to many of the same kinds of subjects and to forms if not the same at least closely akin. Where one was known and approved, the others needed only to be known to be approved also. D.C. Scott was never to be wholly at home in their world, no matter how he might try to write in their fashion, no matter how well he might come to know them - and he was to become one of Lampman's closest intimates. In a word, it is Scott's originality which explains why the readers took long time to appreciate and consider him that he was one of the chief masters of Canadian literature. In 1893, just after he had passed his thirtieth year, he brought out his first collection, *The Magic House and Other Poems*. In his work, including his first collection, there is a mixture of restraint and intensity. If we go through these poems we would find it is to be struck by the predominance of the dark and the powerful – night, storm, the wilderness, the angry sea.

1.4 Modernist Period

1.4.1 First Phase

Canadians were impelled to write description either of landscape round about them or of the peculiar circumstances in which they lived. Preoccupation with landscape and with local history has been strong upto the present time. The mark of regionalism is upon almost all the Canadian writing. Canadian poetry has been above all poetry of landscape in which the most successful performances have usually been those that presented an exact picture. In this description of Canadian nature, the poets have failed to be original and if there has been originality at all, it has been narrowly limited. In the early generations with whom imaginative writing began, there was a tendency, to depend on English and American authors whether in prose or verse in short for the presentation of all general problems of human experience.

Beginning around 1880, a movement to write about Canadian nature had been developing with a notable measure of success. The result of this movement was of mixed nature as the Canadian poetry was partly appreciated and partly ignored. There was a general agreement that Canadian poetry was charming and graceful, but most readers felt that it was something that could rightly be ignored in favour of other writing, English or American, that had greater interest, intensity and significance. The critics were of the opinion that Canadian poetry was not a self-contained development. Canadian poetry bears strong marks of romanticism and transcendentalism, milder aspects of symbolism before 1900 and later a superficial contract with imagism. The main forces that were stirring in English and American poetry after 1900 had, however, but little effect in Canada : nothing of the sharpness and firmness of Robinson and Frost had crossed the border; nothing of the sophisticated simplicity of the Georgians had come over from England; Pound was someone to sneer at, Sandburg someone to laugh

about.

A. E.J.Pratt

Pratt was one of the first moderns to be recognized by the audience. He, being influenced by the Group of Seven as he had met them frequently at Toronto Arts and Letters Club, gave voice to Canadian landscape. He knew MacDonald, Lismer, Jackson, Harris and Johnston. By 1922, he had met Fredrick Varley at the club and the two became close friends. Pratt's attempt of giving voice to Canadian landscape was also influenced by Carl Sandsburg's Chicago poems, which made imagism return to Canada. This influence is clearly discernible in Pratt's *Newfoundland verse* in which he gave a new bold, vigorous and direct vision of Canada.In order to understand Pratt's poetry, we would have to keep in our mind Pratt's intention of describing the landscape of North Pole. His *Newfoundland Verse* records his child encounters with the tragedies of Newfoundland seafaring life. As he later wrote, he was puzzled by "the ironic enigma of nature in relation to the Christian view of the world"

The Darwinism that dominated the intellectual climate of Pratt's formative years seemed to offer more comprehensible explanations of the natural world and man's place in it than those Pratt found in religion. Although Christianity continued to provide him a rich store of images, his poetry came to express, what Sandra Djwa called, an "evolutionary vision". The key point of Pratt's poetry is his interest in all forms of strength and power. His major poems consist of subjects like : dinosaurs, whales, the luxury liner *Titanic*, a transcontinental railroad. This interest is articulated in Pratt's poetry in a central metaphor of evolution, wherein human intelligence gradually replaces brute nature as the most powerful force in the world and where a moral order is projected to supplant a natural one. He views the bedrock of existence to be in the natural forces of wind and rock. There water nurtures life, but must also kill in order to feed "the primal hungers of a reef". The poet is spellbound by primordial forms of life, by nature "red in tooth and claw," which from a human vantage point appears wantly cruel and destructive. In the early poem "The Shark", Pratt creates a symbol of something terrifying and malignant in nature, a creature "tubular, tapered, smoke-blue." more frightening than a vulture or wolf because its blood is cold. Pratt repeatedly makes the reader shudder as he or she is forced to consider the origin of life in elements and forces remote from human intelligence and emotion. But at the same time, the poet marvels at the evolutionary process that produced human beings with their capacity for wonder, joy, and compassion.

To Pratt, nature is a part of cosmic process – amoral and without intelligence. Humankind has evolved out of nature but does not conform to its laws, for it has intelligence and will and a capacity to choose the way to live. Pratt's most rousing affirmation of humanity in the face of an amoral, mechanistic cosmos is found in "The Truant." a long poem published in his last collection of lyrics, *Still Life and Other Verse*(1943). In this poem the god of the universe is called the great Panjandrum (a pretender to power), and his world is the mechanical order of the cosmos. Man, the truant, is brought protesting to the throne of the Almighty by the Master of the Revels and made to give an account of himself and his irregular ways. The Master of the Revels assures the Panjandrum that tests have been done and that man consists of the fundamentals, "calcium, carbon, phosphorous, vapur." However, man has a will and concepts "not amenable to fire" and will not obey the laws of the cosmic dance.

Most of the poetry of E.J.Pratt has been a kind of summing up of the first phase of Canadian poetic imagination. In that phase Canada appeared in a flat Mercator projection with a nightmarish

Green land, as a country of isolation and terror, and of the overwhelming of human values by an indifferent and wasteful nature. Pratt wrote ten long poems which deal with different phases of the evolutionary process – in *Titans* with the evolution of superior forms of animal life, in *Brébeuf and His Brethren* with civilization, in *The Titanic* with human technology, and in *Towards the Last Spike* with the development of Canada as a nation. The conflict in these poems is man versus nature, or, perhaps more precisely, the conflict between highly evolved, sophisticated forms of life and primitive, less-developed forms. Pratt grew up beside the North Atlantic, and the struggle with a harsh environment blind to human purposes was printed indelibly on his spirit. Accordingly, his imagination is most fully engaged when he is writing about those stark, primordial forms of nature which threaten to destroy civilization – the shark, the iceberg, the pitiless savages of the forest, the granite cliffs of a rocky coastline on which human beings continue to endure. As Northrop Frye has observed, there is a kind of innocence to the epic conflicts that Pratt describes because there is enmity without hatred. The enemy is outside the human community; the conflict is part of the evolutionary process.

B. Earle Birney

Earle Birney(1904-95), the first major poet from Western Canada, is closely related to E.J.Pratt and some of his early verse particularly "Atlantic Door" and "Pacific Door" are quite imitative of Pratt. Luis Dudek and Gnarowski in their book, *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* hold that Birney is an individualist and his real father is E.J.Pratt as one may gather from the method of "Pacific Door" and from the ideas in "Vancouver Lights". However, he develops his own vein of profound travel poetry as well as a form of satiric poetry which bears relationship to F.R.Scott's early satires. He is the most profoundly experimental in his use of poetic forms. Birney moves from the pre-modern through modern to postmodern. Birney is an eclectic poet who employs a variety of forms– the narrative poem, the nature lyric, the meditation, satire and ode. Birney had a serious commitment to his poetry. His first book *David and Other Poems* was published in 1942, and his second, *Now Is Time* in 1945. His first book catapulated Birney into the Canadian literary scene and earned him the Governor General's Award for poetry. In 1962 and 1964 his two volumes of poetry — *Ice cod Bell or Stone : A Collection of New Poems* and *Near False Creek Mouth : New Poems* were published respectively . These collections demonstrate a more relaxed colloquial tone, and provide a glimpses into his personal life as well. Besides these collections Birney produced some thirteen collections of verse and two novels *Turvey*(1949) and *Down the Long Table*(1949). With poems like "David". "Bushed", "Vancouver Lights", "The Bear on the Delhi Road" and "November Walk Near False Creek Mouth", Birney creates some important landmarks in Canadian poetry. Specially these are the works of the poet as mountain man, and they bring their unique voice and vision to the national literature.Birney's most famous poem, "David", published in *David and Other Poems*(1942),The dark side of mountain life (the harshness of winter, madness, death) is dramatized in "Bushed" also, where a man living alone in the woods loses his sanity. He is convinced that the wilderness has intelligently chosen to destroy him. One of Birney's best known pieces is "November Walk near False Creek Mouth," a long meditative poem on the human condition. In Birney's canon this is a summary poem bringing together his perennial preoccupation with Nature's indifference to humanity, the instinct in people for violence, and the inadequacy of human cultures structured solely on material gain. Here he also gives expression to his cosmic vision of life's cycles and man's inconsequence in terms of geological time.

The poetry of both E.J.Pratt and Earle Birney (Earle Birney was a pre-modernist, modernist and postmodernist in his approach and advanced respectively in the course of time) establish the fact

that it is not nation but an environment that makes an impact on poets, and poetry can deal only with the imaginative aspects of that environment. A country with almost no Atlantic seaboard, which for most of its history has existed in particular one dimension; a country divided by two languages and great stretches of wilderness so that its frontier is a circumference rather than a boundary; a country with huge rivers and islands that most of its natives have never seen; a country that has made out of stops on two of the world's longest railway lines: this is the environment that Canadian poets have to grapple with. In older countries the works of man and nature, the city and garden of civilization, have usually reached some kind of imaginative harmony. But the land of Rockies and pre-Cambrian Shield impresses painter and poets alike by its raw colours and angular rhythms, its profoundly unhumanised isolation. With a sense of national consciousness, the Canadian painters and poets got inspiration from the environment of their country. This kind of approach became a movement in the history of Canadian literature and the leaders of this movement – F.R.Scott and A.J.M.Smith – not only advocated but demonstrated in his poetry. Later a flock of poets and writers joined this literary venture and treated Canada as a landscape of their poetry. It is still "The Lonely Road" to A.J.M.Smith, and "A Country Without a Mythology" to Douglas Le Pan. This aspect of modernist poetry would be dealt with in the next chapter which records the modernist sensibility in F.R.Scott's and A.J.M.Smith's poetry.