

THE NATURE ELEMENT  
IN  
CANADIAN POETRY

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## ABSTRACT

This document and the accompanying video-tape entitled, "The Nature Element in Canadian Poetry," together constitute a Thesis-Equivalent in Education, at Sir George Williams University. The video-taped programme was produced to teach collegial level students in literature the basic developments in Canadian nature poetry from the first English settlements to the end of the nineteenth century. Only poetry written in English was considered. A Pre-Test, administered to a sample of 54 students of an average age of 18, indicated that the sample had a very low knowledge of the subject matter of the video-tape, as only 1.85 percent of them successfully completed the test, and the group mean score was only 11.8 percent. A Post-Test, administered after the sample had experienced the video-taped programme, indicated a greater knowledge of the subject matter presented, as 48 percent of the sample successfully completed the test, and the group mean score was raised to 47.2 percent. From an evaluation of the students' responses to the tests, it was indicated that the video-tape programme, transmitted to the students via television, was effective for facilitating the cognitive development of collegial level learners in the area of Canadian nature poetry.

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CHAPTER ITHE DEVELOPMENT OF CANADIAN NATURE POETRY1. INTRODUCTION

"Canadian poetry is at best a poetry of incubus and cauchemar, the source of which is the unusually exposed contact of the poet with nature which Canada provides."<sup>1</sup>

In this Chapter, the development of English Canadian nature poetry from the time of the first English settlers to the end of the nineteenth century will be illustrated. Excerpts from the works of poets who best characterize each of the stages of this development will be used to exemplify the periods considered. This document provides the background information for the video-tape which accompanies it. It is not meant to be a thesis on Canadian literature.

2. EARLY SETTLER PERIOD

"From its beginnings the 'literature' of Canada was stamped by a struggle against the climate and against the land itself";<sup>2</sup> nowhere is the truth of this statement

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<sup>1</sup> Northrope Frye, The Bush Garden (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1971) p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> David Galloway, "The Voyagers," in Literary History of Canada, ed. by C.F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) p. 6.

more evident than in the poetry of the early settlers. Each new wave of early immigrants faced the same problems; particularly the cold winter which was foremost in their complaints. Northrope Frye, an outstanding Canadian literary critic, writes that "the outstanding achievement of Canadian poetry is in its evocation of stark terror. Not a coward's terror, of course; but a controlled vision of the causes of cowardice. The immediate source of this is obviously the frightening loneliness of a huge and thinly settled country."<sup>3</sup> It is of interest to note the settler's creative response to the hostile environment they encountered.

Joseph Stansbury (1740-1809) emigrated to the thirteen colonies from England; however, due to political pressures, he fled to Nova Scotia in 1777. Voiced in the following excerpt from a love poem written to his wife, Cordelia, is a representative expression of the terror experienced by many United Empire Loyalists living alone in a strange land.

#### To Cordelia

Believe me, Love, this vagrant life  
 O'er Nova Scotia's wilds to roam,  
 While far from children, friends, or wife,  
 Or place that I can call a home  
 Delights me not; - another way  
 My treasures, pleasures, wishes lay.

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<sup>3</sup> Frye, Bush Garden, p. 138.

In piercing, wet, and wintry skies,  
 Where man would seem in vain to toil  
 I see, where'er I turn my eyes,  
 Luxuriant pasture, trees and soil.  
 Uncharm'd I see: - another way  
 My fondest hopes and wishes lay.

Oh could I through the future see  
 Enough to form a settled plan,  
 To feed my infant train and thee  
 And fill the rank and style of man:  
 I'd cheerful be the livelong day;  
 Since all my wishes point that way:

But when I see a sordid shed  
 Of birchen bark, procured with care,  
 Designed to shield the aged head  
 Which British mercy placed there -  
 'Tis too, too much: I cannot stay,  
 But turn with streaming eyes away.

Oh! how your heart would bleed to view  
 Six pretty prattlers like your own,  
 Expos'd to every wind that blew;  
 Condemn'd in such a hut to moan.  
 Could this be borne, Cordelia, say?  
 Contented in your cottage stay.

'Tis true, that in this climate rude,  
 The mind resolv'd may happy be;  
 And may, with toil and solitude  
 Live independent and be free.  
 So the lone hermit yields to slow decay:  
 Unfriended lives - unheeded-glides away. 4

Separated from family and friends and all that was familiar to him, Stansbury naturally felt as if he was a hermit in a desolate land. He found some measure of release through his verses which "are all evidences of [his] dissatisfaction with the present life."<sup>5</sup> Stansbury's poetic expression

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<sup>4</sup> Winthrop Sargent, ed., *The Loyal Verses of Joseph Stansbury and Dr. Jonathan Odell* (Albany, N.Y.: Munsell, 1860), p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> R.E. Rashley, *Poetry In Canada - The First Three Steps* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1958) p. 5.



seems an appropriate and representative comment on the hardships endured by the early settlers, many of whom were forced to emigrate from their homelands.

Sixty years later, Standish O'Grady (1793-1841) came to Canada. O'Grady, an Irish immigrant who attempted to farm near Sorel, wrote poetry which most clearly typifies the creative output of the early settler period. "His entire mental and spiritual furniture is alien; he is formed by his experience with his own country, its historic past, the interpretations placed on it by his friends, his parents, and his reading. His concept of human dignity, his religion, his interpretation of nature and man's relation to it; all these are established before he comes to Canada and continue to operate after he comes. The period of immigration is not a period of constructive thinking but a dissolution of ideas, manners, and customs in which he unwillingly gives up much and slowly replaces it with little."<sup>6</sup> O'Grady published "The Emigrant, A-Poem, in Four Cantos" in Montreal in 1842. The following excerpts, which are taken from this poem, forcefully describe an early settler's feelings towards a winter in Lower Canada.

Thou barren waste; unprofitable strand,  
Where hemlocks brood on unproductive land,  
Whose frozen air on one bleak winter's night  
Can metamorphose dark brown hares to white!

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<sup>6</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada-The First Three Steps, p. 2.

Here forests crowd, unprofitable lumber,  
 O'er fruitless lands indefinite as number;  
 Where birds scarce light, and with the  
     northwinds veer  
 On wings of wind and quickly disappear,  
 Here the rough Bear subsists his wintry year,  
 And licks his paw and finds no better fare.

. . .

One month we hear birds, shrill and loud  
     and harsh,  
 The plaintive bittern sounding from the  
     marsh;  
 The next we see the fleet-winged swallow,  
 The duck, the woodcock, and the ice-birds  
     follow;  
 Then comes drear clime, the lakes all  
     stagnant grow,  
 And the wild wilderness is rapt in snow.

The lank Canadian eager trims his fire,  
 And all around their simpering stoves retire;  
 With fur clad friends their progenies abound,  
 And thus regale their buffaloes around;  
 Unlettered race, how few the number tells,  
 Their only pride a cariole and bells!

To mirth or mourning, thus by folly led,  
 To mix in pleasure or to chaunt the dead!  
 To seek the chapel prostrate to adore,  
 Or leave their father's coffins at the door!  
 Perchance they revel; still around they creep,  
 And talk, and smoke, and spit, and drink, and  
     sleep!

. . .

With sanguine sash and eke with Indian's mogs,  
 Let Frenchmen feed on fricassees or frogs;  
 Brave Greenland winters, seven long months to  
     freeze,  
 With naught of verdure save their Greenland  
     trees;  
 Bright veiled amid the drapery of night,  
 In ice-wrought tapestry of gorgeous white,  
 No matter here in this sad soil who delves;  
 Still leave their lower province to themselves.<sup>7</sup>

O'Grady's poem has achieved a modicum of success. Desmond Pacey, a noted Canadian critic, comments that this work "has a distinctive conception of man's lot on the earth, a conception engendered by the peculiar features of the Canadian terrain."<sup>8</sup> The abundance of negative adjectives, coupled with the harsh tone of the above lines, clearly indicates that the early settlers were aliens to this vast and cold land. The native peoples did not consider the country to be either barren or fruitless for they saw, as did later poets, the natural beauty and richness of which they were an integral part. The early settler was not yet at ease in the natural habitat which surrounded him. "Before a nature poetry could develop it had to wait until the duration of settlement had allowed for some constructive interaction between the new conditions of life and the people who were involved in them."<sup>9</sup> Not until the settlers began to harness the natural power which surrounded them could they view it with anything but terror.

Oliver Goldsmith (1794-1861) was the first native born poet to receive critical notice abroad, due perhaps to the fact that he was the great-nephew of the famous Anglo-Irish poet, Oliver Goldsmith, author of

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<sup>8</sup> Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1961) p. 1f.

<sup>9</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 22.

"The Deserted Village."<sup>10</sup> The Canadian Goldsmith was "the inhabitant of a small colonial society which had reached a provisional stage of cultural maturity and self-consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith felt that a response to his great-uncle's work was necessary and thus he composed "The Rising Village: A Poem" which was published in London in 1825. This poem artistically chronicles the first noticeable change of attitude in the outlook of the settlers upon their environment. The opening stanza describes the early emigrant from England who suffered from what we now call the "American Dream:"

What noble courage must their hearts have  
fired,  
How great the ardour which their souls  
inspired,  
Who, leaving far behind their native plain,  
Have sought a home beyond the western main;  
And braved the terrors of the stormy seas,  
In search of wealth, of freedom, and of ease!

The settlers arrived and were immediately hit full force by the reality of the situation in which they found themselves:

Oh! none can tell but they would sadly share  
The bosom's anguish, and its wild despair,  
What dire distress awaits the hardy bands  
That venture first on bleak and desert lands;

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<sup>10</sup> Fred Cogswell, "Literary Activity in the Maritime Provinces, 1815-1880," in Literary History; ed. by Klink, p. 119f.

<sup>11</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 273.

How great the pain, the danger and the toil  
Which marks the first rude culture of the  
soil.

The following lines are similar in tone to those of O'Grady's poetry, in which "man is dwarfed by an immensely powerful physical environment which is at once forbidding and fascinating."<sup>12</sup> Goldsmith aptly describes the terror felt by the pioneers, and conveys their feelings of inferiority towards their surroundings:

When looking round, the lonely settler sees  
His home amid a wilderness of trees:  
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,  
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;  
Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,  
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades.

"This feeling of inferiority helps to account for the absence of real experience from the immigrant verse. These people refused to see what they had achieved but eagerly sought to replace the temporary necessity with something increasingly better."<sup>13</sup> These men had not yet learnt to focus upon the beauties of their own land. The images they described were not inspired by what they actually saw before them but by memories of their homelands behind them. Goldsmith continues his saga by taking the reader through

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<sup>12</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Rashley, Poetry in Canada, p. 10.

the agony of building a home in the wilderness, through to the ecstasy of a successful, partial conquest of nature. He details how man learnt to cope with and finally appreciate his natural environment. The following stanza demonstrates an attitude which is both romantic and positive, it is similar in tone to later pre-Confederation poetry:

How sweet it is at first approach of morn,  
 Before the silvery dew has left the lawn,  
 When warring winds are sleeping yet on high,  
 Or breathe as softly as the bosom's sigh,  
 To gain some easy hill's ascending height  
 Where all the landscape brightens with  
     delight,  
 And boundless prospects stretched on every  
     side  
 Proclaim the country's industry and pride.<sup>14</sup>

"Goldsmith's theme states clearly the consciousness of a society that has come to the end of a period. His function is to express the accomplishments, discover what values are to be found in it, and record them."<sup>15</sup> "The chief significance of *The Rising Village* is that its author has recognized the poetic possibilities of the Canadian social scene."<sup>16</sup> Goldsmith "represented the flowering of a small provincial culture rather than the first roots of a

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<sup>14</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *The Rising Village: A Poem* (London: Sharpe, 1825) p.1f.

<sup>15</sup> Rashley, *Poetry In Canada*, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Pacey, *Creative Writing*, p. 12.

national culture."<sup>17</sup> His work is representative of the transition in the poetry of the early settler period to the pre-Confederation period of poetry.

### 3. PRE-CONFEDERATION PERIOD

Unlike the poetry of the earlier period, the pre-Confederation poetry was characterized by a style that was both romantic and idealistic. This change in poetic attitude was due, in part, to the parallel change in lifestyle and philosophy of the developing society. Man had begun to make his presence felt on his environment. Villages and towns testified to the fact that the settlers were there to stay. They felt that they were now a part of the land on which they lived. Life was much easier for them than it had been for their fathers. They had time to relax and to look around them, to enjoy the wonders of nature and the beauty of the abundant rivers, lakes and forests. This new freedom, coupled with their high spirits, contributed to the sense of nationhood that eventually led to Confederation. The poets, spokesmen for their people, reflected this changing mood.

Charles Sangster (1822-1893), one of these poets, was born at Kingston, Ontario and received recognition as the leading poet of his time.<sup>18</sup> "Sangster's Canada is a

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<sup>17</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Rhodenizer, Canadian Poetry, p. 26.

larger concept than the local setting of the pioneer poets; the society he is conscious of is large and secure."<sup>19</sup> His work is typical of the pre-Confederation period in that "his emphasis is still on the double loyalty to Britain and Canada, but it is Canada now, rather than the local scene"<sup>20</sup> upon which the early settlers concentrated. The following excerpt from "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay" is Sangster's description of the Thousand Islands and demonstrates the romantic tendencies of the poetry of the pre-Confederation period:

The silver-sinewed arms of the proud Lake,  
Love-wild, embrace each islet tenderly,  
The zepthers kiss the flowers when they wake  
At morn, flushed with a rare simplicity;  
See how they bloom around yon birchen tree,  
And smile along the bark, by the sandy shore,  
In lovely groups - a fair community!  
The embossed rocks glitter like golden ore,  
And here, the o'erreaching trees form a fantastic bower.

. . .

And now 'tis night. A myriad stars have come  
To cheer the earth, and sentinel the skies.  
The full-orbed moon irradiates the gloom,  
And fills the air with light. Each Islet lies  
Immersed in shadow, soft as thy dark eyes;  
Swift through the sinuous path our vessel glides,  
Now hidden by massive promontories,  
Anon the bubbling silver from its sides  
Spurning, like a wild bird, whose home is on the tides.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Sangster, The St. Lawrence And the Saguenay, And Other Poems (Kingston: Creighton and Duff, 1856) pp. 9-17.



Poets such as Sangster, gave their people a favourable view of the country in which they lived. From the poet's description of his travels, the settlers began to piece together a total picture of the diversified land which was to become Canada. "Nature is seen in detail as an object of interest in itself and as a source of idea, and it finds, through the romantics, a more fluent and accurate expression than that of the pioneers."<sup>22</sup> The nature element, however, remains an external force in the poetry of the pre-Confederation period. Sangster's "gift of imagery and descriptive power"<sup>23</sup> allowed him "to give expression to the national feeling which was to eventuate in Confederation."<sup>24</sup> The people, however, were still not yet completely at ease in their habitat.

Charles Mair (1838-1927) born at the Scottish settlement of Lanark, Ontario, was a member of the "Canada First" party and a pioneer of westward expansion.<sup>25</sup> His work does not display as many romantic characteristics as does the work of Sangster; nevertheless, his loyalty is to Canada alone and he is one of the "first distinguished

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<sup>22</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Rhodenizer, Canadian Poetry, p. 37.

members of a native Canadian school"<sup>26</sup> of poets. His work marks the transition from the pre-Confederation to the Confederation period of poetry. In the following lines from "Winter," Mair's poetry is seen to be "traditional and full of accurate observations"<sup>27</sup> of the impact of winter on the social life in the settlements:

When gadding snow makes hill-sides white,  
And icicles form more and more;  
When niggard Frost stands all the night,  
And taps at snoring Gaffer's door;  
When watch-dogs bay the vagrant wind,  
And shiv'ring bine herd close in shed;  
When kitchens chill, and maids unkind,  
Send rustic suitors home to bed -  
Then do I say the winter cold,  
It seems to me, is much too bold.

. . .

When great pines crack with mighty sound,  
And ice doth rift with doeful moan;  
When luckless wanderers are found  
White stiff in wooded valleys lone;  
When ragged mothers have no sheet  
To shield their babes from winter's flaw;  
When milk is frozen in the teat,  
And beggars shiver in their straw, -  
Then do I hate the winter's cheer, <sup>28</sup>  
And weep for springtime of the year.

Frye has commented that human beings "may become hurt and

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<sup>26</sup> A.J.M. Smith, ed. The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. xxvii.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. xxviii.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Mair, Tecumseh, A Drama And Canadian Poems (Toronto: Briggs, 1901) pp. 218-220.

whimper that nature is cruel to them; but the honest poet does not see cruelty: he sees only a stolid unconsciousness."<sup>29</sup> Mair was an honest poet for he recognized the climate's harshness but was able to project beyond.

The pre-Confederation period can be characterized as "a parallel organization of the emotional, intellectual, and religious worlds into a sort of citadel of civilized security well within the control of its creators,"<sup>30</sup> thus presenting a definite contrast to the poetry of the early settler period.

#### 4. CONFEDERATION PERIOD

The era of Confederation was a most important period for Canadians. In the field of poetry, a turning point was being reached. "With the Group of the Sixties - poets born near the Confederation of 1867 who came to their maturity in the 1890's: Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Duncan Campbell Scott - Canada gained poets who were national. A Canadian literature was being created."<sup>31</sup> Here were proud Canadians writing poetry that was elegiac and often nostalgic, and which represented "characteristic moods ...

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<sup>29</sup> Frye, Bush Garden, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Ralph Gustafson, ed., The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967) p. 24.

scarcely possible to the pioneer."<sup>32</sup>

Charles G.D. Roberts (1860-1943) was born at Douglas, New Brunswick, and was the first poet to exhibit the characteristics of the period. His most important contribution to the development of Canadian nature poetry was not in his actual writing; however, his poems highly influenced the younger poets of the day. As Pacey has written, "whatever may be the ultimate verdict upon Roberts' own poetry, his importance as a stimulus to others can never be questioned ... he urged Canadians to recognize the greatness of their destiny and to do their part in fulfilling it."<sup>33</sup> The following is an excerpt from Roberts' "The Potato Harvest"<sup>34</sup>:

A high bare field, brown from the plough,  
and borne  
Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky  
Washing the ridge; a clamour of crows that  
fly  
In from the wide flats where the spent  
tides mourn  
To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-  
torn;  
A line of grey-snake-fance, that zigzags by  
A pond, and cattle; from the homestead nigh  
The long deep summonings of the supper horn.  
Black on the ridge, against the lonely flush,  
A cart, and stoop-necked oxen; ranged beside

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<sup>32</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 40f.

<sup>34</sup> Charles G.D. Roberts, Poems (Boston: Page, 1907) p. 56.

Some barrels; and the day-worn harvest-folk,  
Here emptying their baskets, jar the bush  
With hollow thunders. Down the dusk hillside  
Lumbers the wain; and day fades out like  
smoke.

In this excerpt, we see that "the most significant difference from the preceding poetry is the withdrawal of man from the scene as an organizing centre to become a recorder of experience."<sup>35</sup> Nature was now being managed by man who could stand outside the experience and objectively render the scene in poetic terms.

Archibald Lampman (1861-1899) was born at Morpeth, Ontario and spent most of his life in Ottawa, attached to the Civil Service. He "is supreme in his great subject, the landscape - the landscape of Ontario - the natural beauty of the world and the sorrow and loneliness of man who inhabits it."<sup>36</sup> In the following lines from his poem "November," there is "an attempt to understand and communicate the relation between the poet and nature ... it makes articulate the significance of experience in this environment."<sup>37</sup>

And all around me the thin light,  
So sere, so melancholy bright,  
Fell like the half-reflected gleam

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<sup>35</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> Gustafson, Penguin Book, p. 24f.

<sup>37</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 80f.

Or shadow of some former dream;  
A moment's golden reverie  
Poured out on every plant and tree  
A semblance of weird joy, or less,  
A sort of spectral happiness;  
And I, too, standing idly there,  
With muffled hands in the chill air,  
Felt the warm glow about my feet,  
And shuddering betwixt cold and heat,  
Drew my thoughts closer, like a cloak,  
While something in my blood awoke,  
A nameless and unnatural cheer,  
A pleasure secret and austere. 38

Roy Daniels has written that "under the smooth recording of the natural scene, there is frequently an identifiable tension of opposites, a need for resolution .... The fundamental pulse in Lampman is between apprehensive weariness on the one hand and the reassurance of renewed strength on the other."<sup>39</sup> Lampman's best works are characterized by dream-like sequences such as those in the above excerpt and by the tension of opposites, of "wariness" and "renewed strength," which are present in the last half of this piece. These lines, typical of Lampman's work, are also typical of Confederation period poetry. Poets of this era were "trying, in necessarily vague ways, to bring to conscious recognition the spiritual substance which life in this environment had developed."<sup>40</sup>

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38 Duncan Campbell Scott, ed., The Poems of Archibald Lampman (Toronto: Morang, 1900) pp. 158-160.

39 Roy Daniels, "Lampman and Roberts," in Literary History, ed. by Klinck, p. 396.

40 Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 77.

This "spiritual conscious" is also to be found in the work of Bliss Carman (1861-1929), born at Fredericton, New Brunswick. As with his cousin, C.D.G. Roberts, Carman was most affected by the scenes around his native province. A.J.M. Smith has written that in some of Carman's work "there is an unforgettable quality that makes itself felt as a strange and troubling mixture of the beautiful and the sinister."<sup>41</sup> The following excerpt from "The Old Grey Wall" is a fine example of this mixture:

Time out of mind I have stood  
 Fronting the frost and the sun,  
 That the dream of the world might endure,  
 And the goodly will be done.

Did the hand of the builder guess,  
 As he laid me stone by stone,  
 A heart in the granite lurked,  
 Patient and fond as his own?

. . .

Ah, when will ye understand,  
 Mortals who strive and plod -  
 Who rests on this old grey wall                   42  
 Lays a hand on the shoulder of God!

In the above poem, Carman exhibits his talents for evoking the dualities of serene beauty and mystic evil which reside in many natural scenes. For the Group of Sixties poets,

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<sup>41</sup> Smith, Oxford Book, p. xxxv.

<sup>42</sup> Bliss Carman, By The Aurelian Wall, And Other Elegies (Boston: Lamson Wolfe, 1898) p. 74.

"nature was not a cult nor a literary manner; the significance of life was its meaning in terms of the natural environment."<sup>43</sup> In the following excerpt from "Low Tide on Grand Pré," a poem ranked among Carman's best by this reader, this significance of life is clearly displayed.

The sun goes down and over all  
These barren reaches by the tide  
Such unelusive glories fall,  
I almost dream they yet will bide  
Until the coming of the tide.

And yet I know that not for us,  
By any ecstasy of dream,  
He lingers to keep luminous  
A little while the grievous stream,  
Which frets, un comforted of dream; -

A grievous stream, that to and fro,  
Although the fields of Acadie  
Goes wandering, as if to know  
Why one beloved face should be  
So long from home and Acadie!

. . .

The night has fallen, and the tide ...  
Now and again comes drifting home,  
Across these aching barrens wide,  
A sigh like driven wind or foam: <sup>44</sup>  
In grief the flood is bursting home!

"Here is displayed at its purest his particular gift: the capacity to create an effect of haunting melancholy by the use of slow, involved, troubled verbal melodies, and of symbols of decay and desolation drawn from the scenery and

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<sup>43</sup> Rashley, Poetry In Canada, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup>

Bliss Carman, Low Tide on Grande Pré: A Book of Lyrics  
(New York: Webster, 1893) pp. 11-14.



climate of his native province."<sup>45</sup> Carman's work, as did that of other Confederation poets, contributed to the prevailing attitude in Canadian poetry. An apt summary of this period is found in Smith's commentary on this stage in the development of Canadian nature poetry. Smith writes, "though the romantic spirit which animates their [Confederation poets] classical forms is out of fashion just now, it cannot be denied that they established a national school of reflective nature poetry and achieved a standard of excellence unattained in Canada before and only rarely equalled since."<sup>46</sup>

##### 5. SUMMARY

The earliest poetry to be written in Canada, in English, was the product of individuals who were alien to the environment in which they found themselves. These people were in the centre of a conflict with nature and viewed it, in their poetry, as the natural enemy. The earliest verses were crude attempts to describe the settler's feelings of terror towards the land and climate. Once a more permanent settlement was established, man began to feel more confident that he could manage nature without being overcome by it. Later poetry, that of the pre-

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<sup>45</sup> Pacey, Creative Writing, p. 50f.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, Oxford Book, p. xxxiv.

Confederation period, was more romantic and idealistic in style. An increasing amount of poetry concerned with the land itself was written. The poets reflected the thoughts of the people, and as a nationalistic feeling developed, so did the poetry tend to regard nature more favourably. With Confederation came the birth of a group of poets who were to make the greatest impact on Canadian poetry. They wrote in elegiac and nostalgic tones and were proud to be Canadians. Here were the first national poets. The nature poetry of this period was a recording of the experience of man in contact with nature, it was written from the observer's viewpoint as opposed to the pioneer poetry which had been written from the participant's viewpoint. "Nature is seen by the poet, first as unconsciousness, then as a kind of existence which is cruel and meaningless, then as the source of cruelty and subconscious stampedings within the mind .... Nature is consistently sinister and menacing in Canadian poetry. And here and there we find glints of a vision beyond nature, a refusal to be bullied by space and time, an affirmation of the supremacy of intelligence and humanity over stupid power."<sup>47</sup> In this quote, Northrope Frye succinctly summarizes the early stages of a still growing body of literature.

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<sup>47</sup> Frye, Bush Garden, p. 141f.

CHAPTER II

A SUMMARY

1. SHORT TITLE:

The Nature Element In Canadian Poetry.

2. FULL DESCRIPTIVE TITLE:

A Video-Taped Presentation of the Stages of Development of Nature Poetry Written in English in Canada from the Time of the First English Settlers to the End of the Nineteenth Century.

3. AUDIENCE:

The video-tape was shown to students of an average of eighteen years of age, engaged in studies in the field of literature at the collegial level. All participating students had already taken basic courses in literature at the high school level.

4. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

4.1 Of the Video-Taped Presentation:

A basic objective of the presentation was to provide the learners with the fundamental information needed to acquire an overview of the subject matter. By providing a whole picture of the stages of growth of Canadian nature

poetry at the outset of the course, it was assumed that the students would be able to better understand the relationship of the individual pieces of poetry studied later during the term, to the complete field under consideration. Another objective of this presentation was to enable the students to become aware of the general development of Canadian nature poetry. By providing specific cases in point, it was further assumed that the learners would be able to transfer the information presented in the programme to other poems encountered during the term, and thus utilize the knowledge gained. The degree to which these objectives were realized is discussed in Chapter III.

#### 4.2 Of the Evaluation:

##### 4.21 The Producer's Perspective:

Since this thesis-equivalent was part of the producer's ongoing learning process, and since evaluation is essential to the learning process, the objective of the evaluation was to determine whether or not the objectives of the media presentation were successfully met. It was necessary for the producer to determine whether he had gained the skills necessary to create an educationally viable television presentation. The evaluation (discussed in Chapter III) indicated that the producer had successfully manipulated these skills, since the Post-Test gain made by the learners was significant.

#### 4.22 The Learner's Perspective:

The objective of the evaluation, from the learner's point of view, was to reinforce the learning-situation. The students could evaluate their comprehension of the material presented by feedback in the form of a test grade.

### 5. METHODS OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES:

#### 5.0 The Use of Television:

Before stating the methodology for achieving the objectives of the media presentation, it is necessary to explain why television was chosen as the presentation medium. First, television utilizes all five methods of presenting information, sound, picture, line graphic, print and motion. Also, learners are familiar with the medium of television and are used to receiving information from it. Television can be received by remote groups of learners or individual learners, through cable or broadcast methods, at the same instant. No other medium offers this potential flexibility. The normal environment for the reception of televised information is a lighted room, thereby enabling students to take notes while a programme is being received. Film, though it also offers the five modes of information presentation, cannot be transmitted to many places at one time and furthermore, it requires a darkened room.

### 5.1 Of the Media Presentation:

To present an overview of the subject matter, the material was presented, first, in an historical perspective. Specific examples of poems of each of the early pioneer, pre-Confederation and Confederation periods were presented. Carefully edited segments of an interview with the noted Professor of Canadian Literature, Dr. Michael Gnarowski, were used to provide commentary on the works presented. Visuals depicting Canadian nature scenes were used to "complement" the poems.

### 5.2 Of the Evaluation:

#### 5.21 The Producer's Perspective:

The objective of the evaluation from the producer's perspective would be met if the learner's had, in fact, experienced a change in behaviour due to their exposure to the programme and evaluation. Since the learners significantly increased their performance from the Pre-Test to the Post-Test, as indicated in Chapter III, the programme was assumed to be successful.

#### 5.22 The Learner's Perspective:

The video-taped presentation was preceded by a Pre-Test evaluation (Appendix A, p.35) which was structured to determine the student's reasons for taking the course,

their interest in the subject matter, their familiarity with the subject matter and their attitude towards the material. After the learners had experienced the media presentation, a Post-Test (Appendix A, p. 38) was administered to evaluate the objectives of the programme.

### 5.23 Notes For the User:

As a means to facilitate the objectives of the media presentation, a pamphlet entitled "Notes For the User" (Appendix B, p. 43) was provided for the teacher. These "Notes" were part of the complete learning package which included the video-taped programme, the Pre-Test and the Post-Test. The "Notes" had a primary function of introducing the video-tape to the teacher. They state explicitly the educational objectives of the programme and suggest guidelines for the teacher, ensuring that the students obtain maximum value from the programme.

## 6. PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS:

In order to complete the production described herein, the use of Television Studio "A" of the Centre for Instructional Technology, Sir George Williams University, was required. This included the basic lighting equipment, sound equipment, switching and video-tape recording equipment and telecine facilities. Approximately fifteen hours of Studio time was needed for lighting, run-through, re-

hearsal, final video-taping and editing of the programme. As well, a crew of twelve persons, solicited from students at the University and a technician to supervise the technical maintenance were used.

7. COSTING:

The following is a detailed list of the expenses incurred in the production of the accompanying video-tape:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>
10 rolls, 35 mm. Slide Film	\$19.59
Processing of Slide Film	15.50
Graphic Supplies	4.04
Film Rental, "Morning on the Lievre"	1.00
Overhead Projection Acetates	8.25
Transportation to Film Board	5.40
Photocopying of Scripts	10.00
	<hr/>
TOTAL COST	\$63.78
	<hr/>

It is assumed in this costing that the Studio time was paid for by the Department of Education.



8. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Smith, A.J.M., ed., The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EVALUATION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The video-tape was taken to a local CEGEP, Vanier College, for testing. Since the programme was an introduction to Canadian Nature Poetry, and since the testing was undertaken in April (towards the end of the school year), a poetry class would already have covered the material in the video-tape. For this reason, and because of the availability of test groups, three prose classes were used in the evaluation.

The students tested were registered in one of the following three classes: (1) Canadian Short Story, (2) Modern Man - The Victim, and (3) Three Canadian Cultures. A total of fifty-four students were tested. Each class was told that they were participating in the evaluation of an educational television programme that was part of a Thesis - Equivalent in Education. They were given a Pre-Test to determine their entering behavior level (Appendix A, p. 35) and were told not to guess at answers they did not know. The questionnaires and answer sheets were collected and the audience was shown the video-taped presentation. A Post-Test was then administered to determine the change in behavior of the test groups. The exact same procedure was followed as for the Pre-Test.

## 2. PRE-TEST VALIDATION

In order to determine the content validity of the Pre-Test, it was given to Mrs. Karen Wood, a specialist lecturer in Canadian Literature at Sir George Williams University. She was able to verify that the Pre-Test did cover a representative sample of the subject matter in the videotape. She further determined that the objectives of the presentation (Chapter II, p. 22) were adequately covered.

Subsequently, the Pre-Test was given to a group of ten collegial instructors in Literature, familiar with the subject matter being tested. They were asked to answer all questions asked, without guessing, and they achieved a mean score of 16. A perfect score was 17. Finally, a contrasted group of ten collegial students who were not familiar with the subject matter were given the Pre-Test, and they scored a mean of 2. In consideration of this evidence, the concurrent validity of the Pre-Test was assumed.

## 3. PRE-TEST RESPONSES

From the responses to the first question, it was found that fifty-six percent of the audience fell within the age group intended, namely, 18 years. The interest of the audience in Canadian Poetry was found to be marginal, as fifty-seven percent of them rated their interest as low or very low, while another thirty-one percent claimed only

average interest. This attitude may have resulted from a lack of familiarity with the subject matter, since 45 students (eighty-three percent) rated their familiarity as low or very low.

TABLE 1  
SCORE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

SCORE	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 17	
PRE-TEST	(40) 74%	(11) 20%	(2) 4%	(1) 2%	(54) 100%
POST-TEST	(9) 17%	(12) 22%	(13) 24%	(20) 37%	(54) 100%

$$\chi^2 = 53.9, \text{ df} = 3, p < .001$$

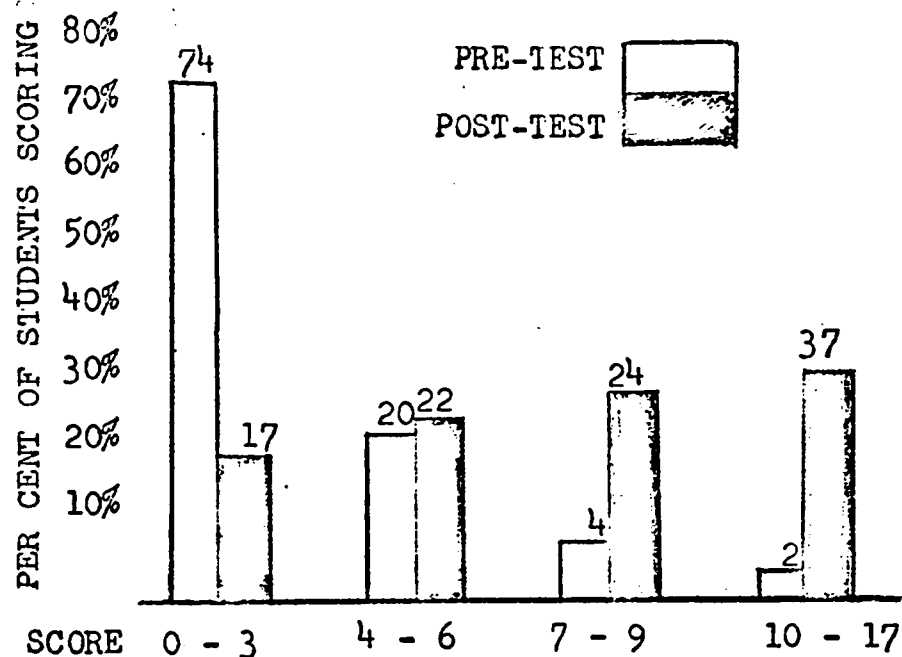
#### 4. PRE-POST-TEST RESPONSES

The next eight questions were used to test the student's knowledge of specifics presented in the videotape, and these questions appeared in both tests. Students were first required to match poets given to the periods they represented. The second section of questions were used to determine whether or not the students had acquired the intellectual skills needed to identify the main characteristic of each period. A third section of the test was used to evaluate the learner's ability to transfer knowledge acquired from the programme. Students were required to

identify the period in which a given poetic excerpt was found.

FIGURE 1

BAR CHART OF FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS



While Table 1 represents the comparative Pre-Post-Test frequency distributions, it can readily be seen from Figure 1 that the slightly skewed distribution of scores in the Post-Test 7-17 cell categories differs greatly from the highly skewed distribution in the 0-6 categories of the Pre-Test. Given the respondent's low familiarity with the subject matter as indicated by the Pre-Test (Appendix A, p.35), the significant gain in Post-Test mean scores (Table 2) can be attributed to the video-taped presentation. Interestingly, however, the positive gains of the Post-Test respondents

TABLE 2  
PRE-TEST POST-TEST COMPARISON

	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
MEAN	2	7.67*
STANDARD DEVIATION	2.45	3.83
VARIANCE	6.00	14.67

\*  $t = -12.097$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $p < .001$

appears to have accrued, for the most part, to those who perceived the programme as stimulating or highly stimulating (Table 3). The conclusion that emerges from this

TABLE 3  
POST-TEST FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

(COMBINED CELLS)

PROGRAMME EFFECT	MEAN SCORE	SCORE	0-6	7-17	
STIMULATING OR VERY STIMULATING	9		(7) 25%	(21) 75%	(28) 100%
NO EFFECT	8.27		(4) 36%	(7) 64%	(11) 100%
BORED OR VERY BORED	4.40		(10) 73%	(5) 27%	(15) 100%

$\chi^2 = 7.17$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$

study, therefore, is that television, when viewed as a stimulating medium, may be highly effective in facilitating

the cognitive development of collegial level students in  
the area of Canadian Nature Poetry.

APPENDIX A



THE NATURE ELEMENT IN CANADIAN POETRY

PRE-TEST

1. AGE:  
(a) 16 - 18 (b) 19 (c) 20 (d) 21 (e) Over 21
2. SEX:  
(a) MALE (b) FEMALE
3. My main reason for taking this course was  
a) my interest in the subject matter.  
b) the teacher's reputation.  
c) that it fit into my schedule.  
d) that it was reputed to be an easy course.  
e) because it was required.
4. I took this course because the one I wanted was filled.  
a) TRUE  
b) FALSE
5. I would rate my interest in Canadian Poetry as  
a) very high (b) high (c) average (d) low (e) very low
6. I would rate my familiarity with Canadian Poetry as  
a) very high (b) high (c) average (d) low (e) very low

Use this answer code for the next three sections

- a) Early Settler Period
- b) Pre-Confederation Period
- c) Confederation Period

Match the following poets to the period of writing in which they are best known.

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 7. Wilfred Campbell   | 11. Charles Mair     |
| 8. Bliss Carmen       | 12. Standish O'Grady |
| 9. Oliver Goldsmith   |                      |
| 10. Archibald Lampman | 13. Charles Sangster |

Match the following main characteristic to the period of poetry it characterizes.

14. A fear of nature expressed through poetry.
15. A romantic treatment of subjects.
16. A love of nature expressed through poetry.

Match the following excerpts of poems to the period they represent.

19. I passed through the gates of the city,  
And I heard the small birds sing,  
I laid me down in the meadows  
Afar from the bell-ringing.

In the depth and the bloom of the meadows  
I lay on the earth's quiet breast,  
The poplar fanned me with shadows,  
And the veery sang me to rest. .

Blue, blue was the heaven above me,  
And the earth green at me feet;  
'Oh, Life! Oh, Life!' I kept saying,  
And the very word seemed sweet.

20. Oh, none can tell but they who sadly share  
The bosom's anguish, and its wild despair,  
What dire distress awaits the hardy bands  
That venture first on bleak and desert lands;  
How great the pain, the danger, and the toil  
Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.  
When looking round, the lonely settler sees  
His home amid a wilderness of trees:  
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,  
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;  
Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,  
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades.

21. The Spring is gone - light, genial-hearted Spring!  
Whose breath gives odor to the violet,  
Crimsons the wild rose, tints the blackbird's wing,  
Unfolds the buttercup. Spring that has set  
To music the laughter of the rivulet,  
Sent warm pulsations through the hearts of hills,  
Reclothed the forests, made the valleys wet  
With pearly dew, and waked the grave old mills  
From their calm sleep, by the loud rippling of the rills.

22. State briefly, on the answer sheet, the change in attitude  
of Canadian poets towards nature from the Early Settlers  
to Confederation poets.

THE NATURE ELEMENT IN CANADIAN POETRY

PRE-TEST ANSWER SHEET

Circle the Correct Answer

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. a b c d e  | 12. a b c d e |
| 2. a b c d e  | 13. a b c d e |
| 3. a b c d e  | 14. a b c d e |
| 4. a b c d e  | 15. a b c d e |
| 5. a b c d e  | 16. a b c d e |
| 6. a b c d e  | 17. a b c d e |
| 7. a b c d e  | 18. a b c d e |
| 8. a b c d e  | 19. a b c d e |
| 9. a b c d e  | 20. a b c d e |
| 10. a b c d e |               |
| 11. a b c d e |               |

21. \_\_\_\_\_

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## THE NATURE ELEMENT IN CANADIAN POETRY

### POST-TEST

Use this answer code for the next three sections

- a) Early Settler Period
- b) Pre-Confederation Period
- c) Confederation Period

Match the following poets to the period of writing in which they are best known.

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Wilfred Campbell  | 5. Charles Mair     |
| 2. Bliss Carmen      | 6. Standish O'Grady |
| 3. Oliver Goldsmith  |                     |
| 4. Archibald Lampman | 7. Charles Sangster |

Match the following main characteristic to the period of poetry it characterizes.

- 8. A fear of nature expressed through poetry.
- 9. A romantic treatment of subjects.
- 10. A love of nature expressed through poetry.

Match the following excerpts of poems to the period they represent.

11. I passed through the gates of the city,  
And I heard the small birds sing,  
I laid me down in the meadows  
Afar from the bell-ringing.

In the depth and the bloom of the meadows  
I lay on the earth's quiet breast,  
The poplar fanned me with shadows,  
And the veery sang me to rest.

Blue, blue was the heaven above me,  
And the earth green at my feet;  
'Oh, Life! Oh, Life!' I kept saying,  
And the very word seemed sweet.

12. Oh! none can tell but they who sadly share  
The bosom's anguish, and its wild despair,  
What dire distress awaits the hardy bands  
That venture first on bleak and desert lands;  
How great the pain, the danger, and the toil  
Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.

When, looking round, the lonely settler sees  
His home amid a wilderness of trees:  
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,  
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;  
Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,  
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades.

13. The Spring is gone - light, genial-hearted Spring!  
Whose breath gives odor to the violet,  
Crimsons the wild rose, tints the blackbird's wing,  
Unfolds the buttercup. Spring that has set  
To music the laughter of the rivulet,  
Sent warm pulsations through the hearts of hills,  
Reclothed the forests, made the valleys wet  
With pearly dew, and waked the grave old mills  
From their calm sleep, by the loud rippling of the rills.
14. State briefly, on the answer sheet, the change in  
attitude of Canadian poets towards nature from the Early  
Settlers to Confederation poets.

The following questions are in reference to the form of  
the programme.

Use this code for answers 18-22.

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| a) Highly stimulating | (Turned me on!)        |
| b) Stimulating        | (Some positive effect) |
| c) Mediocre           | (No effect)            |
| d) Boring             | (Some negative effect) |
| e) Very boring        | (Turned me off!)       |
15. I would rate the complete programme as:
16. I would rate the visuals in the programme as:
17. I would rate the audio portion of the programme as:
18. I would rate the subject of the programme as:
19. This programme has encouraged me to:
- Investigate this subject further
  - Consider investigating this subject further
  - Do nothing
  - Consider finding a new field of interest
  - Find a new field of interest

THE NATURE ELEMENT IN CANADIAN POETRY

POST-TEST ANSWER SHEET

Circle the Correct Answer

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1. a b c d e  | 11. a b c d e                                     |
| 2. a b c d e  | 12. a b c d e                                     |
| 3. a b c d e  | 13. a b c d e                                     |
| 4. a b c d e  | 14. Answer in space provided<br>at bottom of page |
| 5. a b c d e  |   |
| 6. a b c d e  | 15. a b c d e                                     |
| 7. a b c d e  | 16. a b c d e                                     |
| 8. a b c d e  | 17. a b c d e                                     |
| 9. a b c d e  | 18. a b c d e                                     |
| 10. a b c d e | 19. a b c d e                                     |
|               | 20. a b c d e                                     |

14. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PRE-TEST / POST-TEST RESPONSES

1. AGE:
 

(a) 16-18	(b) 19	(c) 20	(d) 21	(e) Over 21
34	14	2	3	1
  
2. SEX:
 

(a) MALE	(b) FEMALE
34	20
  
3. My main reason for taking this course was
  - a) my interest in the subject matter. 29
  - b) the teacher's reputation. 6
  - c) that it fit into my schedule 12
  - d) that it was reputed to be an easy course 2
  - e) because it was required 5
  
4. I took this course because the one I wanted was filled.
 

a) TRUE	b) FALSE
12	42
  
5. I would rate my interest in Canadian Poetry as:
 

a) very high	(b) high	(c) average	(d) low	(e) very low
0	6	17	18	13
  
6. I would rate my familiarity with Canadian Poetry as:
 

a) very high	(b) high	(c) average	(d) low	(e) very low
0	1	8	21	24

Use this code for the next three sections:

- a) Early Settler Period
- b) Pre-Confederation Period
- c) Confederation Period

Match the following poets to the period of writing in which they are best known.

7/10 Wilfred Campbell  
(c) 4/9

11/5 Charles Mair  
(b) 4/28

8/2 Bliss Carman  
(c) 2/34

12/6 Standish O'Grady  
(a) 2/39

9/3 Oliver Goldsmith  
(a) 4/31

- 13/7 Archibald Lampman  
(c) 9/27
- 14/8 Charles Sangster  
(b) 2/33

Match the following main characteristics to the period of poetry it characterizes.

- 15/9 A fear of nature expressed through poetry.  
(a) 16/38
- 16/10 A romantic treatment of subjects.  
(b) 11/20
- 17/11 A love of nature expressed through poetry.  
(c) 8/20

Match the following excerpts of poems to the period they represent.

- 18/12 Archibald Lampman, from "Life and Nature."  
(c) 7/15
- 19/13 Oliver Goldsmith, from "The Rising Village."  
(a) 16/36
- 20/14 Charles Sangster, from "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay."  
(b) 2/8

- 21/15 State briefly, on the answer sheet provided, the change in attitude of Canadian poets towards nature from Early Settlers to Confederation poets.  
(SEE CHAPTER I) 3/27

The following questions are in reference to the form of the programme.

Use this code for answers 18 - 22.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| (a) Highly stimulating | (Turned me on!)        |
| (b) Stimulating        | (Some positive effect) |
| (c) Mediocre           | (No effect)            |
| (d) Boring             | (Some negative effect) |
| (e) Very Boring        | (Turned me off!)       |

- /18. I would rate the complete programme as:  
(a) 4 (b) 24 (c) 1 (d) 8 (e) 7

- /19. I would rate the visuals in the programme as:  
(a) 7 (b) 28 (c) 12 (d) 3 (e) 4



- /20. I would rate the audio portion of the programme as:  
(a) 3 (b) 17 (c) 18 (d) 8 (e) 8
- /21. I would rate the subject of the programme as:  
(a) 4 (b) 24 (c) 10 (d) 8 (e) 6
- /22. This programme has encouraged me to:  
a) Investigate this subject further.  
5  
b) Consider investigating this area further.  
18  
c) Do nothing.  
27  
d) Consider finding a new field of interest.  
3  
e) Find a new field of interest.  
1

(Note: Numbers refer to the number of correct responses to the question).

APPENDIX B

THE NATURE ELEMENT  
IN  
CANADIAN POETRY

NOTES FOR THE TEACHER

Lawrence Vatch

Department of Education

Sir George Williams  
University

April, 1973

1. INTENDED AUDIENCE:

It is intended that this television programme be shown to students in a collegial level course of study dealing with Canadian poetry. The learners should already have mastered basic courses in literature at the high school level, and should be of an average of eighteen years of age.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENTATION:

The students will, after viewing the presentation, be able to select examples of poetry reflecting the effects of nature and be able to analyze these poems to determine what particular period of development is being represented. By being able to identify specific examples of nature poetry, the learner will have demonstrated a knowledge of specifics. The learners will be able to state, briefly, the change in attitude of the poets toward nature as time progressed. The learner will be able to evaluate his comprehension of the material presented by feedback from you and other students regarding the discussion.

3. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION:

At the outset of the programme, the mood is set by a sequence involving animals in their natural environment. Leading from this a poetry reading of the period of early settlers is given by a young Canadian poet, Jim Hornsby.

Dr. Michael Gnarowski, Professor of Canadian Literature states in an interview, the characteristics of the period and of nature poetry in general. Specific reference is made to the poems being read in the programme. Sequences follow for the Pre-Confederation and Confederation periods involving readings with visuals of Canadian nature scenes, and commentaries by Dr. Gnarowski. The poets and poems dealt with (in full or in part) in this programme are:

- (a) EARLY SETTLER PERIOD:
  - (i) Standish O'Grady, "The Emigrant"
  - (ii) Oliver Goldsmith, "The Rising Village"
- (b) PRE-CONFEDERATION PERIOD:
  - (i) Charles Sangster, "The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay"
  - (ii) Charles Mair, "Winter"
- (c) CONFEDERATION PERIOD:
  - (i) Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, "The Potato Harvest"
  - (ii) Bliss Carman, "Low Tide on Grand Pre"
  - (iii) Archibald Lampman, "November"

4. BEFORE SHOWING THE VIDEOTAPE:

Before the videotape is shown to your class, be certain to view it yourself. This should be done as a single uninterrupted programme, at least the first time through.

5. SHOWING THE VIDEOTAPE:

The programme should be shown in one continuous

presentation. It can be stopped on the second viewing, if the need arises, for discussion. The lights in the room should be left on so that the learners can take notes during the programme.

6. AFTER SHOWING THE VIDEOTAPE:

Allow the students a time pause to collect their thoughts and then encourage (if necessary) discussion on the programme. You may wish to prepare lead questions to use in the discussion. Both the content and the form of the presentation should be dealt with, with emphasis on the content.

7. REFERENCE MATERIAL:

Literary History of Canada, Carl F. Klinck, editor, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.

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APPENDIX C

THE NATURE ELEMENT  
IN  
CANADIAN POETRY

SCRIPT

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Department of Education

Sir George Williams  
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April, 1973



PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
1	T - C	Film Clip: NFB: Death of a Legend	Film Sound Track
2	T - C/ Char. Gen.	Mix: Film & Char. Gen. Titles	Film Sound Track
3	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : This programme is designed to introduce you to early Canadian nature poetry, the most important subject found in the beginnings of the Canadian literary culture.
4	CAM 2	Profile Shot: NARRATOR	Dr. Michael Gnarowski, Professor of Canadian Literature at Carleton University and noted Canadian critic, editor and author, will comment on the poets who most effectively used the nature element in Canadian poetry.
5	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	Canadian literary critic Northrope Frye has written, "I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature. It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest." The work of Standish O'Grady exemplifies the terrors felt during the early settler period. O'Grady was an immigrant from Great Britain trying to carve a home out of the natural obstacles that faced him. The following excerpt from "The Emigrant," published in 1842, describes O'Grady's first reaction to a winter in Lower Canada.

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
6	T - C	Film-Clip: NFB: Promised Land	<p><u>POET:</u>          "Thou barren waste;          unprofitable strand,          Where hemlocks brood          on unproductive land,          whose frozen air          on bleak winter's night          Can metamorphose dark          brown hares to white!</p> <p>Here forests crowd,          unprofitable lumbers          O'er fruitless lands          indefinite as number;          Where birds scarce          light, and with the          north winds veer          On wings of wind, and          quickly disappear.</p> <p>Here the rough Bear          subsists his wintry          year,          And licks his paws          and finds no better          fare."</p>
7	CAM 2	Profile Shot: NARRATOR	<p><u>NARRATOR:</u> Dr. Gnarowski, could          you tell us how the early          pioneer immigrants treated the          nature element in their work,          especially with reference to          the Frye comment?</p>
8	CAM 3	Close-up: Gnarowski	<p><u>GNAROWSKI:</u> Answers question.          Refers to: fight for life vs.          nature; lack of spiritual con-          tact with nature; artificiality          of poetry; characteristics of          pre-Confederation poetry; com-          parison of O'Grady and          Goldsmith; transition to          Goldsmith's type of poetry.</p>

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
9	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : The first native born Canadian poet to receive critical notice abroad was Oliver Goldsmith. His contribution to Canadian Literature was the poem "The Rising Village," published in London in 1825. The following excerpt from "The Rising Village" exemplifies the changing attitude in the outlook of the settlers upon their environment.
10	T - C	Slides: NFB: Year of the Land, 1967.	<u>POET</u> : "How sweet it is, at first approach or morn, Before the silvery dew has left the lawn, When warring winds are sleeping yet, on high, Or breathe as softly as the bosom's sight," To gain some easy hill's ascending height Where all the landscape brightens with delight, And boundless prospects stretched on every side Proclaim the country's industry and pride. Here the broad marsh ex- tends its open plain, Until its limits touch the distant main; There verdant meads along the uplands spring, And grateful odours to the breezes fling; Here crops of grain in rich luxuriance rise, And wave their golden riches to the skies; There smiling orchards interrupt the scene Of gardens bounded by some fence of green; The farmer's cottage, bosomed 'mong the trees,

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PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
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Whose spreading branches  
shelter from the breeze;  
The winding stream that  
turns the busy mill,  
Whose clanking echoes  
o'er the distant hill;  
The neat white church be-  
side whose walls are  
spread  
The grass-clad hillocks  
of the sacred dead,  
Where rude-cut stones or  
painted tablets tell,  
In laboured verse, how  
youth and beauty fell;  
How worth and hope were  
hurried to the grave,  
And torn from those who  
had no power to save.

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11 CAM 1 Medium Shot:  
NARRATOR

NARRATOR: Northrope Frye ex-  
plains the great effect that  
the physical environment had  
on our early poets in the  
following manner:  
"The environment in 19th cen-  
tury Canada is terrifyingly  
cold, empty and vast ... the  
nature confronting him presents  
him with the riddle of uncon-  
sciousness in nature is the  
riddle of death in man. Hence  
his central emotional reaction  
is bound to be elegiac and  
sombre, full of loneliness and  
fear ...."  
Goldsmith's poetry is more  
romantic than that of O'Grady.  
While the images described by  
men like O'Grady were inspired  
by memories of their homelands,  
Goldsmith's work describes what  
he actually saw before him, the  
Canadian scene.

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12 CAM 2 Profile Shot:  
NARRATOR

Dr. Gnarowski, is Goldsmith more  
characteristic of the pre-  
Confederation poets or early  
settler poets?

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
13	CAM 3	Close-up: GNAROWSKI	<u>GNAROWSKI</u> : Answers question. Refers to: nature given physical and spiritual significance; surface descriptions; transition of the poetry into a "Canadian" style.
14	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<p><u>NARRATOR</u>: Unlike the poetry of the earlier period, the pre-Confederation poetry was characterized by a style that was both romantic and idealistic. This change in poetic attitude was due, in part, to the parallel change in lifestyle and philosophy of the developing society. The settlers had begun to make their presence felt on the environment. They had time to relax and look around them, to enjoy the wonders of nature and the beauty of the country. The poets, spokesmen for their people, reflected the changing mood of society.</p> <p>Charles Sangster, one of these poets, received recognition as the leading poet of his time. His work is typical of the pre-Confederation period in that his emphasis is still on the double loyalty to Britain and Canada, but it is Canada now, rather than the local scene upon which the early settler poets concentrated. The following excerpt from "The St. Lawrence And the Saguenay" is Sangster's description of the Thousand Islands and is replete with the romantic tendencies of the poetry of the pre-Confederation period.</p>

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
15	T - C	Slides: NFB: Year of The Land, 1967	<u>POET:</u> "The silver sinewed arms of the proud lake, Love-wild, embrace each inlet tenderly, The zephyrs kiss the flowers when they wake At more, flushed with a rare simplicity; See how they bloom around you birchen tree, And smile along the bank, by the sandy shore, In lovely groups - a fair community! The embossed rocks glitter like golden ore, And here, the o'er arching trees form a fantastic bower. Red walls of granite rise on either hand, Rugged and smooth; a proud young eagle soars Above the stately ever- greens, that stand Like watchful sentinels on these God-built towers; And near yon beds of many coloured flowers Browse two majestic deer, and at their side A spotted fawn all innocently cowers; In the rank brushwood it attempts to hide, While the strong-antlered stag steps forth with lordly stride, And slakes his thirst, Undaunted, at the stream.
16	CAM 2	Profile Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR:</u> Dr. Gnarowski, was Sangster successful as a romantic trying to deal with the power of nature?

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
17	CAM 3	Close-Up: GNAROWSKI	<u>GNAROWSKI</u> : Discussion of the works of Sangster.
18	CAM 2	Profile Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : Was Romanticism the main characteristic of the pre-Confederation period?
19	CAM 3	Close-Up: GNAROWSKI	<u>GNAROWSKI</u> : Discusses pre-Confederation Period and makes the transition to Mair.
20	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : Mair's work marks the transition from the pre-Confederation to the Confederation period. In the following excerpt from "Winter," Mair's poetry is seen to be traditional and full of accurate observations of the impact of winter on the life in the settlements.
21	T - C	Slides: NFB: Year of the Land, 1967	<u>POET</u> : When gadding snow makes hillsides white, And icicles form more and more; When niggard Frost stands all the night, And taps at snoring Gaffer's door; When watch-dogs bay the vagrant wind, And shiv'ring kine herd close in shed; When kitchens chill, and maids unkind, Send rustic suitors home to bed - Then do I say the winter cold, It seems to me, is much too bold. When winking sparks run up the stalk,

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PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
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And faggots blaze within  
 the grate,  
 And, by the ingle-cheek,  
 I talk  
 With shadows from the  
 realm of fate;  
 When authors old, yet  
 ever young,  
 Look down upon me from  
 the walls,  
 And songs by spirit-lips  
 are sung  
 To pleasant tunes and  
 madrigals, -  
 Then do I say the winter cold  
 Brings back to me the joys of  
 old.  
 When great pines crack with  
 mighty sound.  
 And ice doth rift with dole-  
 ful moan;  
 When luckless wanderers are  
 found  
 Quite stiff in wooded valleys  
 lone;  
 When ragged mothers have no  
 sheet  
 To shield their babes from  
 winter's flaw;  
 When milk is frozen in the  
 teat,  
 And beggars shiver in their  
 straw, -  
 Then do I hate the winter's  
 cheer,  
 And weep for springtime of  
 the year.

22 T - C

 Film-Clip:  
 Promised  
 Land

When ancient hosts their  
 guests do meet,  
 And fetch old jorums from the  
 bin;  
 When viols loud and dancers'  
 feet  
 In lofty halls make mickle din;  
 When jokes pass round, and  
 nappy ale  
 Sends pleasure mounting to  
 the brain;



PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
			When hours are filched from night so pale, And youngsters sigh and maids are fain, - Then do I hail the wintry breeze Which brings such ripened joys as these.
23	CAM 3	Close-Up: GNAROWSKI	<u>GNAROWSKI</u> : Continuation of Mair discussion and lead into Con- federation Period (Roberts).
24	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : Charles G.D. Roberts was born at Douglas, New Brunswick, and was the first poet to exhibit the character- istics of the Confederation period. His most important contribution to the development of Canadian nature poetry was not in his actual writing, but on the influence his writing had on the younger poets of the day. He urged Canadians to recognize the greatness of their destiny and to do their part in fulfilling it. The following is an excerpt from Roberts' poem "The Potato Harvest."
25	T - C	Film-Clip: NFB: The Drylanders.	<u>POET</u> : A high bare field, brown from the plough, and borne Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky Washing the ridge; a clamour of crows that fly In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn; A line of grey-snake-fance, that zigzags by A bond, and cattle; from the homestead nigh

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
			<p>The long deep summonings of the  supper horn.  Black on the ridge, against the  lonely flush,  A cart, and stoop-necked oxen;  ranged beside  Some barrels; and the day-worn  harvest-folk,  Here emptying their baskets,  jar the bush  With hollow thunders. Down the  dusk hillside  Lumbers the wain; and day fades  out like smoke.</p>
26	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<p><u>NARRATOR</u>: Bliss Carman was also  born in New Brunswick and was a  young cousin of Roberts.  Carman was more typical of the  Confederation period than his  cousin, and was trying, in  necessarily vague ways to bring  to conscious recognition the  spiritual substance which life  in that environment had de-  veloped. For Carman, and the  other poets of the early 1860's,  nature was not a cult nor a  literary manner; the signifi-  cance of life was its meaning  in terms of the natural environ-  ment. Carman's talents are best  displayed in his poem "Low Tide  on the Grand Pre."</p>
27	T - C	Film-Clip: NFB: Heli- copter Canada	<p><u>POET</u>:  The sun goes down and over all  These barren reaches by the  tide  Such unelusive glories fall,  I almost dream they yet  will bide  Until the coming of the tide.</p> <p>And yet I know that not for us,  By an ecstasy of dream,  He lingers to keep luminous  A little while the grevous  stream,</p>

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
			Which frets, uncomforted of dream;
			A greivous stream, that to and fro, Although the fields of Acadie Goes wandering, as if to know Why one beloved face should be So long from home and Acadie!
28	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : Where once there was an overt fear of nature there was now an expressed love of nature in the poetry. The Confederation poets were diametrically opposite in their views of nature compared with the early settler poets.
29	CAM 3	Close-up: GNAROWSKI	<u>GNAROWSKI</u> : Discussion of Carman and Lampman.
30	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<u>NARRATOR</u> : Archibald Lampman was born in Ontario, also in the early 1860's, and spent most of his life in Ottawa with the Civil Service. His supreme ability is in recording the natural beauty of the country and the sorrow and loneliness of man in this habitat. As did the other Confederation poets, Lampman expressed the feeling that nature was now being managed by man who could stand outside the experience and objectively render the scene.
31	CAM 2	Profile Shot: NARRATOR	In the following excerpt from "November," Lampman attempts to understand and communicate the relationship between the poet and nature.

PLAN	CAMERA	VIDEO	AUDIO
32	T - C	Slides: NFB: Year of the Land, 1967	<p><u>POET:</u>            And all around me the thin light,            So sere, so melancholy bright,            Fell like the half-reflected            gleam            Or shadow of some former dream;            A moment's golden reverie            Poured out on every plant and            tree            A semblance of weird joy, or            less,            A sort of spectral happiness;            And I, too, standing idly there,            With muffled hands in the chill            air,            Felt the warm glow about my feet,            And shuddering betwixt cold and            heat,            Drew my thoughts closer, like a            cloak,            While something in my blood            awoke,            A nameless and unnatural cheer,            A pleasure secret and austere.</p>
33	CAM 1	Medium Shot: NARRATOR	<p><u>NARRATOR:</u> The earliest poetry to            be written in Canada, in English,            was the product of individuals            who were alien to the environment            in which they found themselves.            These people were in the centre            of a conflict with nature and            viewed it, in their poetry, as            the natural enemy. The earliest            verses were crude attempts to            describe the settler's feelings            of terror towards the land and            climate. Once a more permanent            settlement was established, man            began to feel more confident            that he could manage nature            without being overcome by it.            Later poetry, that of the pre-            Confederation period, was more            romantic and idealistic in            style. An increasing amount of            poetry concerned with the land</p>

PLAN CAMERA

VIDEO

AUDIO

itself was written. The poets reflected the thoughts of the people and, as a nationalistic feeling developed, the poetry mirrored nature more favourably. With Confederation came the birth of a group of poets who were to make the greatest impact on Canadian poetry. They wrote in elegiac and nostalgic tones and were proud to be Canadians. Here were the first national poets. The nature poetry of this period was a recording of the experience of man in contact with nature, it was written from the observer's viewpoint quite opposed to the pioneer poetry which had been written from the participant's viewpoint. Nature is seen by the poet, first as unconsciousness, then as a kind of existence which is cruel and meaningless, then as the source of cruelty and subconscious stampedings within the mind . . . . Nature is consistently sinister and menacing in Canadian poetry. And here and there we find glints of a vision beyond nature, a refusal to be bullied by space and time, an affirmation of the supremacy of intelligence and humanity over stupid power. The nature theme has been and continues to be a major element in Canadian poetry.

34 Char. Gen. Credits

Film Sound Track  
(Legend)

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