

CANADIAN LITERATURE

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Writers who wrote in English:

- Alice Munro (short-story)
- Maris Gallant (short-story)
- Malcolm Lowry
- Morley Callaghan
- Robertson Davis
- Northrop Frye (a critic)

multiculturalism ("ethnic mosaic") - a policy of a great number of cultures

Slovene writers:

- Ted Kramolc (short-story, novel): Potica za navaden dan
- Rudy Wiebe: The Temptation of the Bear

- Mordecai Richler
- Joseph Skvorecky

Literatures in English

the Englishes - many variants of English

decolonisation of the mind

19th century:

pax Britannica: A great part of the world was under the Britains:

- West Africa: - Wole Soyinka (Nigerian)
 - Chinnoa Akebe: Things Fall Apart
 - Ben Okri (Nigerian)

- East Africa: - Ngugi

- South Africa: - J.M. Coetzee
 - Nadine Gordimerapartheid

the Dutch
Afrikaans
the Boer War

- Northern Africa (Sudan, Egypt, Somalia)

- Australia: - Patrick White
 - Peter Carey
 - Murray Bail
 - David Malouf

- Caribbean (former West Indies): - Derek Walcott (St Lucia) Nobel Prize
 - V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad)
 - George Lamming
 - Jamaica Kincaid
 - Wilson Harris
 - Louise Bennett

- New Zealand: - Katherine Mansfield
 - Janet Frame

- Maori: - Witi Ihimaera
 - Keri Hulme

- the Pacific region:
 - Polynesia (extends from Hawaii) → New Zealand (The Cook Islands, Fidji, Samoa...): - Albert Wendt
 - Subramani (of Indian origin)
 - Melanesia
 - Micronesia

- South -East Asia (English is used as lingua franca):
 - Malaysia (colonies: west coast: Penang = Georgetown)
 - Fernando Lloyd

- Singapore: - Edwin Thumboo (of Chinese origin)
- Burma (= Myanmar): no authors because of the totalitarian rule

- Malta

- Gibraltar

- India:
 - Sri Lanka (=Ceylon): - Michael Ondaetje

Native:

- Maori (New Zealand)
- Aborigine (Australia)
- Inuit = Eskimos (Canada)

Transcultural authors (India):

- Salman Rushdie (satanic verses) - "Midnight's Children"
- Hanif Kureishi: - "Intimacy"
 - "The Little Buddha of Suburbia"
- Vikram Seth
- Anita Desai
- Kamala Das
- Amitar Gosh

older ones:

- Mulk Raj Anand
- Reja Rao
- R. K. Narayan

They live in England but write about their own cultures:

- Salman Rushdie
- Hanif Kureishi
- Ruth Praver Jhabwala
- David Dabydeen (Guyana)

- Bharati Mukherjee (accused of being too European and American)

Critics:

- Homi Bhabha
- Gyan Prakash
- Frantz Fanon

They talk about:

- post-colonialism
- hybridity
- transculturality

Post-colonialism appeared relatively late within the context of such processes as narrative poetics and semiotics in early 70s.

Seminal book: *The Empire Writes Back*: This book was produced by several authors. They came from the periphery (as far as the Academe is concerned). Post-colonial literatures represented some sort of margin. The main point of this book is that there is no escape from the global power structures because there is no escape from the language, discourse and writing. The colonies have been the part of the process of conjugation. The term 'post-colonial' is used "to cover all the cultures affected by the Imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day". Within this context, every national literature has, along with their special regional characteristics, many things in common with the literatures that were formed in the same post-colonial way.

The authors of the book identified four major models of writers, which have emerged out of the post-colonial process. They also include Afro-American literature.

1st model: It comprises American literature and West Indian literatures.

2nd model: black writing (it extends from African-American, Afro-Caribbean and other "black" writing around the world; Aborigines)

3rd model: Commonwealth literatures (the authors stress the link with Britain)

4th model: authors are much more in favor of hybridity (it is considered a central aspect of the post-colonial experience; more nationalistic)

hybridity = contact

Louise Bennett: *colonization in reverse* (she claims that post-colonial literature has to be as hybrid as possible - it makes it difficult to understand by the non post-colonial readers)

The 3rd World Literatures

The 4th World Literatures - native literatures (Aborigines)

The introduction of the post-colonial paradigm resulted in the reexamination and rewriting of the English literary canon → new literary histories, anthologies. Post-colonial paradigm went along with the process of the decanonisation (it is a process that was not initiated by post-colonial paradigm but rather parallel; decentralization, demarginalization, deconstruction).

paradigm → a non-Eurocentric attitude

The language: a dialect

The language is a hybrid, which is why we can use the term English in the plural → Englishes. English has to be used as a form of literary expression. The language was a powerful means of colonization.

"The limitations of one's world are the limitations of one's language." by a German philosopher

literary hybrid; linguistic hybrid

Englishes

- Pidgin English:

- Tok Pisin (talk Pidgin) - Papua New Guinea
- Creol:
 - Patois (a combination of French English and native language) - in the Caribbean region
 - Pomfrets

Parts of Canada:

- Ottawa
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- British Columbia
- Yukon
- Northwest Territories
- Quebec
- Newfoundland
- Nova Scotia
- New Brunswick

Margaret Atwood: *Survival*

(a collection of essays discussing individual literary works; it links them with the question of Canadian identity; she discusses that Canadian literature is not merely an extension of British and French literature but that there is a special Canadiness of this literature)

Canadiness = a typically Canadian content of the literary work

Margaret Atwood:

Canadiness alone cannot be decisive when trying to define the Canadian national and spiritual elements because literary work should be more than nationalistic. In Canadian literature, the defeat is of a far greater importance (of Canadian history, various explorers, military leaders) than the success of Canadiness. We can speak of the myth of defeat (setting, history, social development).

In 1991, Atwood published a sequel to her book of essays Survival entitled Strange Things. In this book, she says that the question of the Canadian identity and literature, if it at all exists, are non-questions because the identity and literature have ascertained itself internationally and she gives a metaphor with a dog who is trying to catch its tail → Canadian literature does exist but it is difficult to explain. She sees Canadian literature as established.

In Canada, there have always been two major groups of literary critics:
1st group stresses the national features of Canadian literature from 19th century onwards.

- Susanna Moodie
- Bliss Carman

Canada is different from America. Canadian writers should concentrate on Canadian literature. These critics were very patriotic.

Northrop Frye took the side of the so-called 'nationalists'. In his book The Bush Garden (1971), he defined a Canadian identity. He was Atwood's teacher. Even Frye stresses that Canadian features are indeed important in any literary text in Canada, but at the same time, these features have to contain high aesthetic norms and values.

Frye talks about the 'colonial schizophrenia' - the Canadian writers are split between British and new Canadian values. Cultural cringe - pro-British orientation

Frye goes on to say that the pioneers who came to Canada and gradually settled the bush, wilderness, had an experience of 'utter dread' because of the terrible loneliness and isolation. He says that Canada was settled and civilized in a less usual way than America and Australia.

Frye looks at the history of the settlement. He says that in America, there was a constant desire to reach the 'last frontier' which was in the west. This was a very physical and geographical notion, however, this concept of

expansion, after the settlement of the wild west, was extended from the physical to the metaphysical level. The spirit of expansion remained on a spiritual level. He draws a parallel with Canada. Historically, Canada was settled by building military forts (each of them had a garrison) → Frye developed the idea of 'the garrison mentality' (new settlers lived in an isolated small space in which they wanted to preserve values; they didn't take this environment as part of their new environment; they wanted to be separated from the wilderness → Canadian literature is very different from the literature and values of America). They were failures in Canada and were trying to transform the world by trying to keep their personal integrity. Since these Canadian figures are failures, they are also not specifically individualistic. They are closer to an average person, coming to an everyday situation. Just because of that, Canadian literature can be, for the average people, more interesting than American.

The British political and cultural influence has been replaced by the American influence. Some writers have become concerned with this great Americanization of Canadian culture and literature. Both, Survival and The Bush Garden are important as they are both anti-American. Frye is more anti-American than Atwood.

Atwood's view:

Americanization of Canadian literature is a great potential danger but very frequently, the Canadians tend to look for the weaknesses of their own literature. Canadians should have a positive vision on the modern world. In most of her books, she criticized the raw materialism and anarchic liberalism in economy. The protagonists are mostly women. All of her women characters at a certain point decide to take a new path, to look back critically on the past.

Some critics claim that Atwood is a feminine author. Her heroines feel threatened in the society in which they live. They try to change and criticize themselves rather than be critical of the society.

Internationalist Marshall McLuhan:

He is important because he introduced the concept of the so-called '**global village**'. He defines the post-national character of a particular literature or culture. He used the term 'global village' in two books:

- The Mechanical Bride
- The Guttenberg Galaxy

Margaret Atwood:

In her book of essays *Second Words*, she says that Canada is now a better place for a writer to work in. There is no need for the writers to leave the country and go elsewhere (ex-patriotism). Canada has developed in a 'real country' (specific cultural identity and literature). She says ironically that in Canada one can succeed as a writer despite the fact that 'one is English or dead'. In Canada, she misses a greater self-confidence, enthusiasm, optimism and belief in its own creative power and potential, a feeling of belonging to a certain national entity. She sees these features as she sees them in America. She feels that Canadian national identity, as expressed in literature, is no longer under a question mark - it does exist. It has been asserted especially through the works of Canadian writers.

We (Canadians) reject the two extremes:

- the nationalistically oriented society and literature (it tends to develop into isolationism)
- a completely international (open) and transnational culture and literature

The balance between these two concepts has to be found. In 1988, free trade agreement was signed between US and Canada. Some see it as a danger to Canadian nationality, the others hailed it as a very positive phenomenon. Atwood sees it as a pragmatic move of the Canadian government.

The settlement (continuation):

In America, the settlement was carried out in waves (individual cities). In both countries, the settlement started in the east and moved to the west. In 17th

century, colonies were founded. They tried to copy the English civilization. In **1608**, the French came to Canada. Canada had been settled before with native people - Inuits and the Indians. The white settlers rejected to give right to the native people. In Canada, the settlers were eager to discover its natural resources and potential (farming, mining, fishing). Very soon, in 2nd part of 17th century, (before the American independence) the fighting was breaking out between the French and the British. The British were more successful, so that in **1759**, the English practically made the French admit the British rule in Canada.

1763 - capitulation of the French

The French were using the Indians in the wars.

At that time, the English decided to give the French certain rights (language - being equal to English; Roman Catholic Church - the leading church in Canada). The English admitted the French many important rights. The period of settlement was made in individual cities ('garrison mentality' - Frye - narrowness and isolation that governs the Canadian minds).

1778 - Britain signed a peace treaty with France because they wanted to have French as their allies in their war with America.

1776 - America's independence. During the war and the declaration, many refugees appeared in various colonies in America. They fled to Canada (increase the population).

2nd major influx of refugees was during the Civil War. Towards the end of 18th century, the British divided Canada into two parts:

- Upper Canada
- Lower Canada

The French province Quebec was given less political freedom because the British were afraid that the French influence would become too strong. Towards the very end of the 18th century, Canada was divided by the British into Lower Canada and Upper Canada.

In the beginning of 19th century, there was a post-colonial war (1812 - 1814). Many immigrants came from the US to Canada (more than a million - political reasons). They were pro-British (they wanted to remain under the British rule).

During the 1st half of the 19th century, many economic migrants started to come (from Ireland and Scotland). The mining was no longer successful. There was great famine and poverty. These were the peasants who did not own the land in Ireland and Scotland, but if they did, they went bankrupt. In 1850s, economic migrants from Europe (the continent) started to come (Germany, Italy, Habsburg Empire). The economic growth was noticeable in Canada. New parts of Canada were settled (North, North-West). There was a famous gold rush (also in the US and Australia). The visible symbol of the economic growth was the transcontinental railway (connection between the West and East seas). It represents the unity of Canadian provinces. In early Canadian literature, the building of the railway symbolizes a myth (of unification, political power).

The British had to suffer another shock to their imperial mind. In 1867, the Canadian provinces passed the law on the self-governing of the provinces, which represents a declaration of independence of Canada. The **North American Act** was not recognized immediately by the British. The Canadians had to wait until 1882, when the British Parliament did finally recognize Canada as an independent part of the British empire - **Canada Act**. The political representative of the Queen between Britain and Canada is a **Governor General** and has little executive power.

Despite the official political independence, there was still a period of colonial dependence and links with Britain. Whenever Britain was in war, Canadians and Australians had to participate (South Africa - the Boer War - they were fighting the Afrikaans). They also participated in WW1 and WW2.

The native population in Canada:

- Inuits (the Eskimos)

- Indians
- Metis (people of mixed origin - half French and half Indian)

Metis were politically much more organized than the Inuits and wanted more rights to be given to them. There was a Metis rebellion led by Louis Riel (towards the end of the 19th century).

Indians became politically organized and conscious only after WW2, when they wanted to have political rights. They also organized several rebellions, which had to be suppressed by the federal troops.

The Inuit population has been less visible on the political scene until recently. They are still waiting to be recognized. Some changes were made for the Eskimos in 1971 - multiculturalism - the policy of equal opportunities.

Population in Canada:

- 1/3 of British origin
- 1/3 of French origin
- 1/3 native peoples and other migrants from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy

In 1977, a special Act was passed regarding the citizenship which requires from the new immigrants: new immigrants have to live in Canada for 3 years, they have to know basic facts about Canada and English language.

About 1/5 of the population is bilingual (English, French). The French in Quebec has a special accent - Franglais.

A great concentration (80 %) of the population is concentrated in the provinces Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. The big cities are: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa (the capital).

The literature

The colonial period is characterized by **poetry** - the major genre.

The problem of publishing: We encounter it in all colonial countries. They had to depend on the publishers and distributors. Publishers were interested in selling their books.

Features:

- themes: Canada from an exotic point-of-view (**falsification** - the common feature of all the early colonial writing). They describe it from the European point-of-view. They reflect:
 - the fear of the European, unknown, "Other"
 - fascination with Canadian savage wilderness, the Indians, the Inuits
- Canadian painting: You see the landscapes of Canada which do portray the individual parts of Canada, but they seem to be painted as Scotland (in a totally English way).
- It was shorter.
- short stories (short, it carried the message)
- The readers' intellectual level was low. The writers were more able to appeal to people's emotions, rather than intellect, to keep the readers in attention for a short period of time.
- Many of the educated writers were English. They tried to transplant their own native culture, literature and architecture to the Canadian reality - falsification.

Along with the poetry, there were also several travel-logs published. These were semi-literary accounts, diaries of a particular person who came to Canada (important geographically, politically and literary).

Novels were very rare, but a few individual novels are quite interesting and quite good.

John Richardson: *Wacousta* (1832)

It is contemporary because we can compare it with the best fiction produced in England in this period (the end of the Romantic period).

Richardson was a British soldier. In the novels, he was able to incorporate the wars that he knew (French-Indian, British-Indian) - the actual facts. He is a very typical romantic writer who was not a writer by profession. He wanted to create a **historical novel** (actual historical material - the wars). His novels are considered **historical romances** (many facts are invented, there is a **code of chivalry**). There is a strong link with Sir Walter Scott (the code of medieval chivalry).

In the very beginning of the 19th century, writers became interested in the native population of Canada (the Indians and the Eskimos). There were explorers Simon Frazer and John Franklin (they traveled north). They wrote about the Indians and the Inuits. These natives were made quite popular. They were seen from a romantic point-of-view as noble savages.

In Richardson's novel, the natives are noble savages and are described as much better than the whites.

Noble savage is a romantic ideal - the natural man (closer to nature → better, uncorrupt by nature).

John Richardson (Wacousta) - the very first Canadian born novelist
He was a military officer in various periods of his life. In 1832, he wrote Wacousta (abridged publication) that brought him fame. In 1987, Wacousta was published in an unabridged original version. It is a novel that speaks about the relationship between the Indians and the white people - "frontier novels". The main protagonist is a man who is a representative of the 19th century **Byronic hero** (Byron).

Byronic hero:

- may have criminal intentions
- relatively likable
- want to carry out some kind of revenge

He is a typical romantic figure. He used Wacousta to hide his real identity. Gradually, we learn about his intentions. He wants to take revenge upon a

certain person, called De Haldimar, because this person has done him wrong in Scotland (they are now both in Canada). In Scotland, Wacousta was a nobleman in love with a certain woman. De Haldimar made him lose his land - he was forced to go to exile (Canada).

There is an Indian Pontiac, a noble character, a much better character than any of the so-called civilized white characters. Pontiac epitomizes the "noble savage". In the end, he is led by Wacousta to destroy two forts (Canadian), where the white settlers are and also De Haldimar. The two forts represent the civilisation and are eventually destroyed. (the whites - evil, negative, corrupt)

It is a **gothic novel**, because of its preoccupation with evil, sin, dark gothic atmosphere.

Parallels: Walter Scott - Richardson

the genre of the so-called historical novel - romance

Susanna Moodie (Roughing it in the Bush) - born in Britain, migrant writing

J. F. Cooper - frontier literature

- a typical gothic element = landscape (the Canadian landscape is very ominous, fear inspiring, the physical landscape shows the mind of a person - character)

- a gothic novel - popular in 1750 - 1830 (pre-romantic and romantic period)

Wacousta:

He is a typical gothic character - because of duality. On one hand, he appears as being a very positive character, on the other hand, his vengeance, dark, evil thoughts. He is **diabolical figure**.

Pontiac is described as so positive, much better than the civilized white settlers. The novel ends tragically.

Wacousta is thus a typical romantic hero who, above all, stresses his individuality (and this is a typical romantic feature). Richardson is not completely in favor of this romantic cult of individuality. He feels that it should be controlled and balanced by moderation (reason). If it is not controlled and balanced, then it ends in destruction as it does for Wacousta.

Some critics said that the novel is more about Europe, about the gothic values, but actually, it is about Scotland.

All the features are true for all the colonial literature writers.

Transcendentalists

Richardson speaks about the natural beauty of Canada and propagates the romantic concept of going back to nature.

Early colonial writers (naïve views) were interested in Indians and they saw them in a rather romanticized way as the noble savages. The more realistic image appeared towards the end of the 19th century.

- till now = rival

Metis - written by the natives themselves

A few non-native writers write about the Indians.

Rudy Wiebe:

He wrote a popular novel *The Temptation of the Big Bear* (the need of the white to accept their native legends).

It is in favor of their culture.

He feels that white settlers must follow their heritage, because only in this way they can "learn" the landscape (they become one with the land) - they came there as migrants.

The question remains whether people (non-native) can really revive the Indian myths and legends and if it is acceptable.

CANADIAN NOVELISTS

- John Richardson – wrote the major gothic novel called *Wacousta*
- Susanna Moodie – her best known novel is called *Roughing It in the Bush*

John Richardson

WACOUSTA can be linked with the frontier literature written by J.F. Cooper and is a gothic novel.

The author labeled it as a romance but the setting is very true to life. The novel also mentions the natives seen as 'noble savages' – uncivilized but nobler than the white settlers.

The novel reflects the duality of the human physic. The landscape contains evil that represents the evil that the main character called Wacousta fights against. Wacousta is a romantic Byronic hero (we do not know much about him but he has criminal intentions). He tries to take vengeance upon a man who had done him wrong back home in Scotland. This man is called De Haldimar and is stationed in a fort (a part of the garrison). So Wacousta directs his evil intentions upon the whole fort. In a sense the fort becomes the emblem of the European life and influence that needs to be destroyed.

Wacousta is a split personality (a divided self) between his individual vengeance and the requirements of the society. And what Richardson shows his readers is the final destruction of Wacousta. By that he wants to say that people like him are highly individual (and this individuality is a value) but when pushed to the extreme this individuality becomes destructive. As a result Wacousta destroys himself. Richardson suggests new romantic individuality limited with moderation.

Richardson was very successful with this novel but he never again managed to repeat it. The rest of his works are intended to become best-sellers (pot boilers) and practically all of them follow the same model: describing evil that is in the white settler rather than in the native. This black and white painting made his later novels less interesting.

Susanna Moodie

She came from England with her husband with the early Canadian settlers and is considered to be one of the first if not the first Canadian woman writer.

In her early period she presented more pro-British notions, but in her later works she identified herself with her new country. She wrote for a number of Canadian magazines such as 'The Literary Garland'. In her work, she uses various literary genres: gothic horror and romance, humor, local-color sketches, anecdotes etc.

She was the first woman to stress the difficulty of survival for a woman in this wild environment. She concentrates on her women characters coping with this new environment. They are mothers and wives but they also have professional ambitions (writers).

One of her drawbacks in some of her works was her passion for spreading the Protestant religion. Therefore she, among other things, took a very strong anti-slavery (abolition) stance.

She told the women coming to the new country not to be conformists. She said that in this new land class and mobility do not count for much. But she did stress democracy and the importance of education, esp. for women. She said education was what would give them power in the society (rather than being a part of some class).

In her second stage of her creativity (1850s, 1860s) she took a very strong anti-colonial stance. She stood for the Canadian right to have its own government (colonial political reform).

Unlike John Richardson she does not use the natives in her works although most of the writers of this period do include the discussion of the natives.

POETRY

Confederate poets believed Canada should become a federation of its various parts. They lived in the second half of the 18th century. The very first author of this movement was **Oliver Goldsmith**. He is considered to be the beginner of the Canadian poetry (with the poem 'The Rising Village').

Some other important authors were **Isabella V. Crawford, Archibald Lampman, Sir Charles Roberts and William Bliss Carman**.

What is interesting about this poetry is that it shows a certain delay of the European pre-romantic movement. The authors concentrated on nature: the landscape they portrayed was harsh on one hand but beautiful on the other. The poems talked about the vast open expanse of the prairies and man's loneliness.

This Oliver Goldsmith was the grandnephew of the English Oliver Goldsmith who wrote 'The Deserted Village'. He (Oliver from Canada) describes the moving of frontier towards the west. He is considered the very first native Canadian poet.

Village poetry is the poetry in which nature is the central theme but 'a village' also becomes very important.

Colonial period:

This period can be compared to British pre-Romanticism. Nature is a predominant theme (neo-classical form). By the 2nd half of the 17th century, artistic value rapidly increased in poetry. Other poets can be considered Romantic poets.

The main themes:

- struggle to survive in the hostile Canadian environment (physical struggle)
- man's loneliness
- the beauty of the Canadian countryside

- fear of the unknown (it is related to the natives): They see them as savages, violent people, not as noble savages.

The form of the poems:

At the beginning:

- simple
- doggerel verse (Goldsmith) - it consists of couplets

Crawford: relaxed, romantic form (to express their intimate, private feelings)

Goldsmith: He describes the village as an ideal (concept of the English village - it was considered epitome of civilization).

village (idyllic - sincere people) vs. city

mythopoesis: It is present in Canadian poetry. Poets deliberately set out to create myths in poetry. They felt that Canada was without myths and that every country needs myths with which people can identify.

Isabella Crawford wrote poems but also started experimenting with short stories. In them, she expresses the hardships of the early pioneers. These pioneers became legendary mythical figures. Canadian people can identify with them. She published her work in newspapers (2nd half of the 19th century). Her work was relatively well-known in Europe (England).

Sir Charles Roberts started with poetry but then switched to writing fiction. He is the beginner of the Canadian fiction.

Short stories were much more popular than novels because:

- the readership - readers were not well educated, they wouldn't be able to concentrate on the novel
- publications - in newspapers, magazines - easily published; The publishing market was controlled by the British publishing houses (novels were published in Britain).

Roberts developed a very specific type of the Canadian short story. In his stories, the main character is an animal with human characteristics. This

became a very popular game in Canadian fiction (E.T. Seton - a Canadian author - he has been the most extensively translated author; animals as protagonists).

Confederate poets brought in Canadian poetry three different approaches:

- **the narrative approach:** Many almost epic poems are produced. Even many lyric poems are not devoid of narrative elements (there is always a kind of plot, story, message that a poet wants to convey to the reader).
- **the anecdotal attitude:** Poets frequently use a certain anecdote for a starting point to make something more interesting.
- **the insistence on the local** - 'local color': The insistence is on vernacular. The term 'local' has a positive value (term 'regional' can also be used): e.g. William Faulkner (American author) is a regional author.

Ted Hughes:

He uses a similar technique like Roberts (he moves into the psyche of the animals in order to see from their prospective).

Charles Roberts:

He was the first author to have started to mythologize Canada. He saw the landscape (flora and fauna) as more than just the physical presence (place). He saw the geographical feature (lakes) as the possibility to express with them some sort of transcendence (= the element of the divine). This is not just a religious element - it should be understood in pantheistic sense. The pantheistic approach is a Romantic approach and is typical of other confederate poets as well. Roberts is in contrast with Oliver Goldsmith. Roberts' physical landscape becomes a reflection of his soul.

Archibald Lampman:

He is a typical Romantic poet who described the beauty of nature (country) vs. the corruption of the city. He introduced the natives for the first time in his poetry. In many of his poems he describes the clash between the native Indian and the white settler culture.

William Bliss Carman:

He is a Romantic author. He wrote long meditative poems which are sometimes written in the form of dramatic monologues. He was influenced by a Victorian author Robert Brown. He has the pantheistic approach seeing the beautiful, natural sights of Canada, the manifestation of God, transcendence. He is like John Keats, concerned with questions of death, life, love, mortality. He is excited at seeing the beautiful landscape.

Robert Service:

He grew up in England and Scotland and then moved to Canada. He wrote several collections of poems. For the first time, he wrote about the lower social classes. He uses humorous approach and irony.

Duncan Campbell Scott:

He can be considered a Canadian Victorian author. He is famous for the introduction of Indian themes. In his narrative poems, he used Indian legends. He described them as race on a verge of extinction. He saw them in an idealized, naïve, positive Romantic way. He also addresses the question of how to reconcile western civilization, which the immigrants brought with them from England, and the native culture. In his *On the Mission*, he shows the spreading of religion. He sees the missionaries in Canada as merely representing the economic greed and interests of the white members. Missionary work brings only disaster, death to the Indians. This poem is a ballad because of dark, gloomy atmosphere.

Rudy Wiebe:

He is a contemporary author. He wrote *The Temptations of Big Bear*. He also speaks of the Indians. He sees them as a very positive presence in Canada. He feels that the white contemporary Canadians should learn from the Indians in order to understand the land better. The Indians have the intuitive link with the land. He feels that the white settlers should also establish that. He thinks that the white settlers see the land just as the possibility for material exploration - Indians see more than just that.

Duncan Campbell Scott:

He introduced Indian themes in confederate poetry.

There are three groups of Indian myths and legends:

1. texts or tales that deal with creation (of the world, animals, plants) → creation of Man. They are animistic.
2. the mysterious: They are concerned with death and life after death, struggle between the forces of good and evil.
3. love songs, rituals (concerning hunting) and war songs

These subject-matters are present in the works of Archibald Lampman and D.C. Scott.

Oliver Goldsmith: *The Lonely Settler* (p. 1)

Goldsmith stresses the endurance of these early pioneers, their loneliness, how they fought the savage, dangerous Indians. The poem is full of fear of the unknown (landscape, Indians). There is the beauty of the landscape. The reasons for going to Canada were to gain wealth and religious freedom.

In the early 19th century, many people were dissatisfied with the System and they left Canada. There are the hardships of the pioneers who settled in the woods and experienced the solitude.

The poem is long and descriptive. This makes it pre-Romantic. At times, it is very pathetic, emotional and also didactic (it tries to teach the readers). The author addresses the settler to hold on. He concludes the poem by saying that the settler should remain strong but also religious.

Charles Roberts: *The Skater* (p. 3)

It is a Romantic poem. It is set in a typical Canadian countryside - winter landscape. The skater is also a pioneer. He enjoys. The skating (physical entertainment) becomes a metaphysical search of Man in the new environment in Canada. Not many didactic elements are used. He combines the physical exploration with the exploration of one's mind. The message: It symbolically describes Man's wish to go faster in life, to plunge into the

unknown but eventually also the fear of Man to go to the very end (to live life to the fullest) - physical and philosophical sense. Skater comes across the woods and is afraid of the unknown and he turns back. The countryside reflects the speaker's psychic.

Wilfred Campbell: *Indian Summer* (p. 4)

It speaks about the weather (through the description of the countryside it reflects emotions of the speaker).

Bliss Carman: *Lord of My Heart's Elation* (p. 5)

It is a meditative poem. The speaker wants to be elevated to a higher emotional state. He stresses the shortness of life and contrasts the images of day and night. This is one of the first Christian poems. It is pantheistic (the beauty of the landscape evokes the presence of God). In it, Man and nature are joined into one.

D.C. Scott: *On the Way to the Mission* (p. 6)

It is more narrative. It speaks about the clash between two worlds (white settlers, who are dominated by greed - money, and the Indians, who represent a part of the land, who suffer in this struggle). They are noble savages. They are even Christianized. They want their dead to be buried.

Robert Service: *The Cremation of Sam McGee* (p. 8)

The gold digger came to the north to prospect for gold. The landscape is much more different than in Tennessee (much crueler). When he dies, he wants to be cremated in order to be warm.

E. J. Pratt:

He represents a younger generation (period between the two wars). His poetry is new in Canadian canon because he avoids the 19th century Romantic tradition of poetry and concentrates on the landscape poetry - long narrative poetry - epic poetry. He can be compared to the Victorian poetry. If the Confederate poets are today identified as the beginners of national

literature, then Pratt challenged this concept of literary nationalism and argued that the values of Cosmopolitanism are more up-to-date.

The Montreal School: clear, powerful, strong images

They advocated compression and clarity. Pratt and the Montreal School took these American inspirations because they felt that this compression and clarity of style is particularly appropriate to convey in literature the essence of Canadian experience.

T. S. Eliot: *The Wasteland*

He speaks about the decay of the western civilization and he sees the west in terms of the mind and the body as a waste land from which no flower will emerge in spring.

E. J. Pratt was not able to write such poems because Canada was not yet fully established. There is a great similarity in the usage of form, style.

Pratt is considered to be old-fashioned. Some critics offer an answer in his mythopoesis. He deliberately wanted to establish, create myths in Canadian literature. He feels that a nation has to have a certain myth with which to identify.

Themes: He chose very diverse topics from various periods of Canada's history with the intention to create myths. The topics were specifically Canadian (the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Jesuit missionaries, hardships and the difficult existence of the fishermen in Newfoundland). Because of his education and of him being a minister, Christianity is an important theme in his verse. Along with that, there is this interest in the classical tradition. When he died (1960s), his death was mourned as that of a national hero.

***The Shark* (p. 11)**

It is made by Pratt into a symbol of something terrifying, malignant in nature, a creature of nature, which is more terrifying than a wolf or a vulture because

his blood is cold. Pratt questions the natural forces: wind, water. He says that shark is so terrifying - there is no human intelligence in him, no emotion.

Pratt is a poet of landscape, nature. In his poems, nature is even more important, powerful than Man. The animals (whales, dinosaurs) are better off than man because they do not think (they can be concentrated on sheer existence). When a person sees such an animal, he/she becomes aware of how dominant nature is and how fragile and insignificant Man's life is.

He is fascinated by power and strength (Titanic). Through mythopoesis he wanted to mythologize but unlike the Confederate poets, he saw life with irony. He was keen on bridging the gap between modern science and humanism. Modern science should be balanced by moral, ethical beliefs.

He is the author of:

1. lyrical poetry: *The Shark*: Pratt sees it as more powerful because it is more primeval (no emotions, no intellect).
2. long narrative epic poems (myth-making),
3. short stories.

Pratt had very interesting views on literature:

- He saw ideology as an important means for a novelist to create.
- He thought that moral ethic questions should be taken more seriously in consideration.
- He sees spiritual evolution as a kind of development of the sheer psychological and scientific evolution.

His short stories are written in Joycean manner - stream of consciousness, in an illogical way. He expresses the view that the world can best be perceived not intellectually but through the sensual experience.

He described the nature of civilization, forces of nature.

From Stone to Steel:

He traces the development from the tribal warfare to the 20th century (1940), when the league of nations was established. His Christianity becomes strongly expressed. The highest point that the human race has achieved is the appearance of Christ. For him, this sacrifice and love for the fellow person is the highest point in spiritual evolution. He asked himself whether or not the whole purpose of human evolution has not been lost because Christ was killed.

The Truant.

The truant is a man in nature in the cosmic process which is, in his view, amoral and without intelligence. The universe pays no regard to the existence of Man. His view of cosmos is very melancholic, which he sees as repeating itself. The machine is gaining metaphor (energy, rhythm, inertia). He is not so pessimistic because the man has the power, the capacity to choose and possesses the sense of love and brotherhood (mutual love = agape).

Come away, Death:

It was written during WW2 when Britain was bombed for the first time. There are self-destructive impulses at work in Man and the vision of future is somewhat apocalyptic. Technological savagery comparisons will result in the death of the civilization. He makes constant comparisons with the past (allusions). This is intended to create an image that destructive impulse is repeated.

Long narrative epic poems:

He wrote 10 long narrative epic poems and each of them deals with a certain phase of the process of evolution. He is very Canadian (landscape) and universal poet (philosophical questions).

Titans:

He describes the power of nature in terms of huge powerful animals (a whale, a giant squid). In this, he was influenced by Herman Melville's Moby

Dick. The poem as the sperm whale is very reminiscent of Moby Dick, a big white whale which represents nature, the power of nature, the amoral and mechanistic processes at work, there is a struggle between a man and an animal. The man is defeated. The whole ship goes under. Nature is shown as indifferent to Man's fate. After the ship sinks, the surface of the sea becomes calm as it was before.

Pratt's life contributed greatly to these poems. He grew in Northern Canada (harsh environment). There, he became influenced by the nature around him.

Other animals described in *Titans* are prehistoric animals (dinosaurs, apes). To describe a dinosaur in the 20th century situation is a very anachronistic thing. It cannot survive and finally, he kills himself by jumping off a cliff.

The Titanic (p. 11)

It was written in 1935. Pratt became fascinated by the struggle of the nature and the civilization, which is supposed to be a highly advanced one.

There is an irony: a man can control nature. This splendid sea-worthy ship sinks in a few hours. He describes the luxury and the technical advancement of the ship, but then gets to the central metaphor - a poker game. The gambling motive is the central motive in Man's life. The idea is that people are not the masters of their fate because each life is a game of poker. He also describes the iceberg, which is seen as beautiful, natural, powerful and dangerous. It symbolizes the brute power of nature, which people have tried to master through the advancement of technology. The crew considers the iceberg not a threat. The crew is too self-confident, but nature is more powerful and collision with the iceberg is fatal for the ship.

There is the instinct of Man's self-preservation in this great desire to survive and to help other people. The moral choice, in his view, eventually prevails over the egotistical desires of people, namely, quite a few passengers of various social layers are described and they are capable of great courage. They become heroes because they help other people, who are weaker than

themselves, to get to the lifeboats. Frank Davey, a critic, claims that "Titanic is a story of social responsibility, group action and group heroism".

Brébeuf and His Brethren

It describes a French Jesuit from the 17th century, who is sent from France to the so-called New France to Christianize the Indians there. It is a long narrative, epic poem. It includes the mythmaking (mythopoesis). This missionary becomes a mythical figure, a martyr, a hero, who in his attempt to 'civilize' the Indians, suffers, is tortured and eventually dies together with another brother of his. He becomes the hero, capable of self-sacrifice, but only as a member of a certain group (Church). The poem is written in iambic pentameter. It is divided into 12 sections, each of which describes a certain period of the Jesuit mission from the establishment to the final destruction. The epic is based on an actual historical fact (destruction of the mission by the Huron Indians). Brébeuf is made into a hero (group!).

Ironically, Pratt also sees their activity as a heroic folly (they were so few and they went to the Indians).

Towards the Last Spike

It testifies to the building of the transcontinental railroad. It aims at the unification of the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The theme in the process of building is the struggle of Man and its technological process against the power of nature, which Man would like to subdue. Here, nature appears in terms of sheer geographical obstacles (rivers, the Rocky Mountains). A very known passage from the poem is the description of the final part of the railway, when the workers have to cross the Rocky Mountains. The bridge is compared to a dragon, which has to be banished by Man in order to build the railway over its back. This passage also contains a detailed account of the meal consisting of oats that the Scots have to eat in order to gain energy to conquer, to defeat the sleeping dragon. There is the hostility and the bleakness of the Canadian landscape (northern vision of life).

Pratt was considered an icon because he created certain myths in literature. During the last three decades, he has come to be seen as too academic, too intellectual, as someone who was highly original but that he wrote outside the main stream of the 20th century modernism. He deliberately disregarded the literary fashions and he was old-fashioned.

Dorothy Livesay:

She started writing in 1930s. She is a socially committed poet. She was interested in the lives of workers. She expresses the sympathy towards the people who lack general education, because she feels that they cannot develop intellectually as they could otherwise. In the period from 1930s to 1950s, Christianity was an important theme. This can also be seen in the poetry of Malcolm Lowry.

Green Rain (p. 10)

She describes the images of her grandmother. She uses imagery in order to achieve synesthesia effects (these images suggest emotions). She describes how she lived with her grandmother in spring, her own youth. The only thing that exists is the image of her youth, her grandmother and the memory. In symbolist poetry, the green rain also denotes melancholy, sadness. It is a kind of an elegy. It commemorates the lost youth, the past.

Malcolm Lowry:

Under the Volcano (also a film) (p. 12)

Christ Walks in This Infernal District Too (p. 12)

It is a poem about Christianity in a modern context. There is a description of people who are physically decaying (they live in poverty, dirt, sin). Even nature despises Man for such a decay.

In Lowry's poems, we can find people like drunkards, prostitutes, criminals, pimps - people who suffer the effects of social order. Much of his writing is autobiographical.

Louis Dudek:

He was a Polish immigrant living in Canada. He tried to combine Marxism and Christianity. He feels that Christianity is spiritual teaching which can show people how to organize the world. He juxtaposes the past and the present in Spain and sees Lorca as a visionary figure who brings beauty and goodness to the world. The world depends too much on money and immorality.

Garcia Lorca

Evil is loosed upon world, and people who consider themselves good should join together as one in order to fight evil. Lorca is also a kind of prophet who links humanity with Christ.

George Woodcock:

He was an anarchist. He advocated a totally free society (it can be seen in his verse). He rejected the power of the state and was influenced by the 'Auden Group'. He was aware of alienation/split between the individual - the citizen and the State (personified). He was influenced by W. B. Yeats: *The Second Coming* (anarchic view). He is considered a regional poet (he comes from Saskatchewan).

Poem for Garcia Lorca (p. 15)

Lorca as an artist who represented all the positive elements in a man was sacrificed for some higher goals to remind people of totalitarian system. He represented Spain in the best possible way.

Al Purdy: *Remains of an Indian Village* (p. 14)

He is interested in the colonial period. He supports the native population in their fight for the recognition of their rights and cultural and national identity. He was educated and had good university training. He became freelance writer and traveled through Canada. In his verse, there is a great variety of Canadian landscape features. He was interested in the Canadian past and evoked the Canadian colonial past. He was convinced that the white settlers

all have a guilt complex because they almost exterminated the native population.

In the poem (elegy), he laments that this is an archeological sight, he can hear and imagine what had happened to the Indians.

James Reaney:

He tries to go back to the period of 'innocence' of Man (Blake, Wordsworth). He is a neo-Romantic. He too juxtaposed the past and the present. He works in dichotomies (innocence vs. corruption, greed vs. happiness, immorality vs. morality).

The School Globe (p. 16)

The poem represents a child who attends school. The whole world is represented in a school.

Alden Nowlan (p. 20)

Robert Kroetsch: *Stone Hammer Poem* (p. 17)

Phyllis Webb (p. 18)

Leonard Cohen (p. 21): In his poem, he expresses Man's dualism (desire to be free and a desire to be down to earth).

the kite - a symbol frequently used in Canada (desire for freedom)

Hugh Hood (short stories)

Margaret Atwood (also writes poems)

Michael Ondaatje: He started as a poet. His poems are published in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*.

The tradition of Canadian poetry consists of long narrative poems (Pratt). In these long poems, the analysis of the process of writing is often itself the subject of the poem. The recent 21st century poems show typography: the form of the poem shows something about the content - colloquial language,

they're epigrammatic. There is an influence of feminism and the Beat Generation (Jack Kerouac).

Short stories

First short stories were oral and were a part of folklore tradition of Indians and Inuits. Through oral transmission, these native short stories dealt with the myths and legends of a particular tribe. These stories are animal and religious stories.

Friderik Baraga - a Slovene priest who lived in Canada and wrote down the language of the natives.

Themes in the short stories:

- creation of the world
- religious themes: taboos, sacred objects and sacred sights, totems, rituals
- about the earth (about the natural phenomena: draughts, floods, winds)
- supernatural: how to control, cut to terms with the sun, the moon and the stars
- relationships between lovers and between generations

In 19th century, colonial short stories were written. Canada was still included in the stories by American authors (Longfellow).

Some of the early Canadian authors:

- E. T. Seton
- Clark Blaise: He has a humorous and ironic approach.
- Maris Gallant
- Hugh Hood
- John Metcalf
- Leon Rooke
- John Krizanc (of Slovene origin): He won the Governor-General Award for his play *Prague*.

They published the stories also in USA and Europe before they published them in the Canadian magazines.

Major novelists (fiction writers):

- M. Laurence
- M. Atwood
- M. Ondaatje
- Dorothy Livesay

They have in common the theme about women who are oppressed. They struggle and rebel against the society.

Laurence and Atwood deal with a process of liberating. They never force on to the reader their views but just suggest open possibilities.

Laurence:

She was the first major fiction author in Canada after WW2. She continued to publish up to the 1980s.

She was born in Manitoba - a small town and soon got her education. Soon after WW2, she went to Africa with her husband. While in Africa (10 years), her first published works are about the experiences in Africa. She lived in Somalia and Ghana. Her first major fictional work was *This Side Jordan* (1960).

Then, she started writing about a fiction town - Manawaka (about Canadian mentality). The region is very important.

- *The Stone Angel* (1964): The main protagonist is a woman called Hagar Shipley. She is 90 years old. She tries to maintain her independence. She is bedridden most of the time. One of her sons, with whom she lives, is determined to put her into a nursery home. She doesn't want to go there and escapes from them and goes up the coast from Vancouver. There, she spends two days. During that time, she is for the first time in her life close to nature and close to herself. During that time, she has memories of her youth and past, which she spent in Manawaka. She tries to come to terms with her

own life. They find her and take her to the hospital. Eventually, she dies there. She gained an insight into her life and changed to a large extent.

Hagar relives her life in a series of flashbacks. For the first time, she accepts the negative aspects of her personality (pride, constant wish to rebel). She realizes that they proved destructive (for herself and for the people around her). She is tormented by the memories of her wasted and unhappy life.

She is a tragic heroine because she knowingly caused her own 'fall' and unhappiness. The symbolism is the description of the statue of the stone angel (it has no eyes, erected by Hagar's father) over her mother's grave which symbolizes wilderness of the Canadian prairie (sightless). This angel is not so much to pay tribute to the dead wife as it is a sign of sightless pride that the dynasty (new settlers) proclaimed the right to the new land. This right is sightless.

There is a biblical allusion as far as her name is concerned (not directly). The allusion is of a woman (Abraham's wife) who is put to the wilderness where she is condemned to wander and where she is described as not being free (because of the society - marriage; philosophical sense - she is described as a toy in the hands of some greater power).

Hagar realizes that throughout her life, she refused to give or accept love in relationship with other people (pride). She married somebody to hurt her family, she did not give a helping hand to her brother, in her marriage, she did not show affection for her husband Bram and is sorry for the relationship they had, she refuses to show the love towards her sons, she tries to shape her sons' lives according to her own ambition.

There is some *autobiographical background*:

Margaret Laurence herself experienced such a strict, severe, oppressive person - her grandfather (uncommunicative). With the novel, she tried to describe and understand the older generation of Canadians - pioneers and why they repressed their every ambition, feeling, emotion. She indirectly

comes to the conclusion that this bleak, hostile environment is what made the then people so 'stone-like'. She called these old people 'rugged pioneers' (they had to survive in this environment).

Some critics emphasized the biblical allusions. They said that it is a novel, in which the heroine is haunted by guilt. By some other critics, Hagar is compared to Shakespeare's King Lear, who in his old age is haunted by what he had done wrong in his life.

At the beginning, Hagar is described as a very unlikable character, but as she gains insight on her journey, the reader increasingly sympathizes with her.

There are two levels of literary significance:

1. the social level:

The novel represents the tyranny and the oppression of the older generation over the younger generation. This applied to the Canadian context. Laurence claims that there is a lack of communication and that both sides should be able to understand the Other (tolerance) and not to act from their own position.

2. the personal level:

It is the psychological level - psychological dilemma (in which every person in his/her life finds him/herself) of how to establish a 'productive' relationship with other people. It is important to establish a communication, what you feel should not be repressed.

Hagar becomes true to herself.

- *A Jest of God*:

It is a sinister novel. The main protagonist is a female Rachel. She is a teacher who is on the verge of breakdown because of her repressed feelings and emotions. She is hysterical because she has only contacts with her mother and nobody else. She is tyrannized by her mother. She can't become liberated. Rachel starts to feel an urgent need to have children. She is

frustrated. She falls in love (platonic love) with one of her young pupils. Eventually, she meets a man - a teacher Nick with whom she falls in love and enters with him into a sexual and passionate relationship in order to get pregnant. On learning this, Nick ends the relationship. We learn that just like Rachel is dominated and fettered by her mother, so is Nick dominated by his father. They both can't grow up. The end is ironical. Rachel feels that she might be pregnant with Nick, but in reality she is not because she has a malign tumor. After the operation, she ironically confesses that she is now a mother (without a child).

Rachel does achieve a certain liberation - a physical departure from Manawaka and moving to Vancouver. Rachel takes her mother with her and considers her an adult child.

The whole novel is a kind of a self-discovery (a psychological journey into herself) - an introspective journey which leads to the ultimate self-knowledge, self-acceptance of the heroine.

- *The Fire-Dwellers*:

It is her very ambitious work in terms of the narrative technique, length and character portrayal. It is a study of the urban environment and its effects on the inhabitants. Because of this, many of the characters are nowadays dated.

- *A Bird in the House*:

It is about a pioneer in the bush. He is modeled on Margaret Laurence's grandfather. She tries to understand him. He is an archetypal figure of the authoritarian old man whom she hated and disliked, but now, she can understand him better.

- *The Diviners*:

It features a woman protagonist Morag who is an orphan. She is raised by the Metis family. She is an outcast. Laurence shows all the prejudice (racial, social) and injustices that she saw in Canada at that time (late 1970s). Being an outcast and failing in her marriage lead Morag to self-discovery, which she

achieves through art. She becomes a writer. Art enables her to gain perspective. *The Diviners* can be considered a *Kunstler Roman*.

Laurence uses many flashbacks, interior monologues and old photographs that serve her as starting points to look back to the past. This novel was very successful with the readers. She received the Governor-General Award.

Her popularity rests primarily with how she creates a character (the power of the characters).

Atwood's writing is more given to symbolism, myth, which is a more typical feature of 20th century Canadian literature.

Themes:

women who struggle with their personal fears, insecurities, who go through a painful process of self-examination in order to establish a meaningful pattern in their lives

Laurence:

Laurence's strength lies in creating fictional characters (portraits of women who go through a process of self-discovery and self-examination).

Margaret Atwood (1939 -):

She was born into a family who spent a lot of time in the bush (Ontario, Quebec). Her father was a biologist (insects). This influence of the bush - nature is visible in her novels. Nowadays, she is the most well-known Canadian author. She is seen by the feminist movement as its important representative. She started writing poetry, then moved on to the novels and literary criticism. She is very much different from Laurence as a writer. Atwood goes beyond the creating characters psychologically. In her works, mythology (symbolism) becomes very important. It is not unimportant that she was a student of Northrop Frye. This influence is paramount because she is fascinated by the myths and conventions that lie behind the objective reality. Her style is very imagistic and elliptical. She doesn't say too much.

Her style is complicated because she sees modern men as being a prey to continuous fears and paranoia that come from the irrational and threatening environment. She explores the rational vs. irrational mind. She feels that the two should come together in some sort of order.

In her novels, she describes the wilderness of the Canadian landscape. This examination only serves her as a way to examine the 'wilderness of self'.

Atwood wrote the journals of Susanna Moodie (19th century pioneer). In the book, Atwood explores the way Moodie entered and came to terms with the Canadian landscape, wilderness. Moodie came from England and was defined by Victorian conventions. She carries the whole world with herself. At the beginning, Moodie (archetypal woman) projects her nostalgic Victorian views into an alien, hostile landscape. In doing this, she remains constantly ignorant of the challenges of the new environment (the challenges represent dangers as well as new possibilities).

Atwood started writing poetry and only later turned to writing fiction. In poetry, her main concern is Canada (as a country and as a nation). She explores the complexity of being a Canadian. Her poems are more Canadian-oriented than her novels, which are much more about the feminine self that is becoming liberating.

- *Two-Headed Poems*:

It is about Canada as a culture with two heads (English-Canadian, French-Canadian). The country is rather dangerously divided between two cultures (using two different languages).

From one of her poems, there is a frequently used quotation: Canadian literature is 'not a debate but a duet with two deaf singers'.

In her later poetry (1980s→), she becomes more interested in the global international context. She sees globalization (themes: world famine, the threat of the nuclear war, political terrorism) as potentially very dangerous.

According to the critics, she remains 'a typical Canadian moralist' in claiming that modern Man (world) ought to change and reinvent him/herself.

- *The Edible Woman*:

It was her first fictional success (1969). The main protagonist is a woman who is not a pioneer but a professional woman. She lives in a contemporary consumer society.

In her novels, the women protagonists are journalists, scientists, writers. They go through a process of self-discovery because their constructed versions of the self are at the beginning of each novel undermined (swept off their feet). They experience the loss of a job, mental breakdown and they have to reexamine themselves.

- *Lady Oracle*

- *Life Before Men*

In these novels, much of Atwood's anger is directed against men. She sees the society as sexist, male-oriented, in which a woman has to rebel to her man in order to survive and retain herself.

- *Bodily Harm*:

The situation of physical suffering is set in a completely new environment - an unnamed Caribbean island. The island is hostile because she is new there - she is an immigrant. The island is politically alien and dangerous for her. She feels that she has to abandon her original culture, views of reality and that she has to accept the new reality in order to liberate herself. She has to 'learn the environment'.

- *Surfacing*:

It is very symbolic and typical of her writing. There is the narrator (she is not identified). She searches the wilderness in the northern Quebec (she is searching for her father - a botanist who was reported missing). The fact that she goes to the wilderness means that she has to go to the past. Thus, this physical voyage to the north represents a retreat into her past and psyche.

She explores not only her own self in relation to her father and the past, but also the relationship that a modern man has with nature. She sees that modern men see the nature simply as a possibility to exploit it economically rather than trying to understand it and find some 'primitive' link, union with it. She claims that this union is something that the native peoples have but the modern man has lost. The heroine is trying to reinvent and recreate herself in relation to her past and in relation to her relationship with nature. She drowns in order to be born again. There are references to the Americans. She is critical of Canadians who always put the blame on Americans. She claims that in many cases, Canadians are the ones to be blamed.

The novel has been described as a kind of mystical initiation of the heroine to finally become a shaman (somebody who has visions and can predict things).

- *The Handmaid's Tale*:

It brought her great international recognition. There is a female protagonist. It is a futuristic American society dictated by men. Women are reduced to sexual slaves who are only there to bear children. The heroine is called Offred. She rebels. She tries to reinvent herself as a different woman.

- *Cat's Eye*:

A painter is depicted and she goes back to her childhood and examines it. In her childhood and early youth, she experienced many betrayals and cruelties of her female friends. She has to cope with the past in order to relive.

- *The Robber Bride*:

It is based on the Grimm's tale. Atwood tries to reinterpret this fairytale from the female point of view. It is about three women whose lives are manipulated and controlled by a fictional character Zenia who all of a sudden surfaces again from the dead. As such, she represents a challenge of peace for each of these three women. She had robbed each of the three women of their men. They are now trying to come to terms with their lives in retrospect. It is about delusion and deception in life. Zenia is the robber bride.

- *Alias Grace*:

It is a strange novel. It is based on an actual 19th century murder case in Upper Canada. A woman Grace allegedly killed her employer and his mistress. This murder case had already been described by Susanna Moodie. It is about a murderess. Atwood wrote a novel about 19th century fears and fantasies about the female murderess. She explores and meditates on the distortion of the male and female relationships (was she guilty; in the end, Grace was not sentenced because of some religious protests).

Atwood also wrote short stories. They are relatively gothic (the exploration of the psyche).

Michael Ondaatje

He is of Sri Lankan origin. He comes from a mixed marriage (father - Dutch). In the early 60s, Michael and his mother first moved to England and then to Canada. He is very international as far as his themes are concerned. But he also speaks about Canada.

Technique of writing:

Atwood is more given to symbolism and lyrical writing and is not very experimental, but she is traditional. Ondaatje, on the other hand, is much more experimental in form. Many American critics labeled him as a post-modernist writer. European critics claim that this label in connection with his work is invented. He uses the collage technique (music, photos). This technique is present in some of his early works. Later on, he becomes a realist.

- *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970):

The theme is totally non-Canadian. It is a mixture of poetry and prose, containing also photographs and actual historical descriptions about the American Wild West in the late 19th century.

- *Running in the Family* (1982):

It is about his Sri Lankan descent. It is more traditional in form.

- *Coming Through Slaughter*:

It is about a black jazz musician Buddy in New Orleans. Ondaatje tries to write his life. He includes parts of his music, photographs and his own fictional writing. Buddy had a difficult life. He becomes too much obsessed with his art and is sucked in and becomes mad. He is a warning against the identification of art and real life.

- *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987):

It is set in Toronto in the period between the two wars. It is about the migrant who lived in Toronto. It is written in a traditional way.

- *The English Patient* (1992):

It is about the violent nature of English colonialism. He received the Booker Prize. It is different from the film. The protagonists (also in other novels) are very unusual and very mixed. There are characters of different nationalities. It symbolically shows the mixture of Canadian background. The world is chaotic - there is no order. The world is showed as surreal that you cannot understand it. The settings are very different. He made the effect of history and ideology on the people's lives. This history is to be seen in terms of the post-colonialism.