

Université de Montréal

**The Little Presses that Did:
A History of First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada, and an
Assessment of their Contribution to the Rise and Development of Modernist
Poetry in Canada during the Middle Part of the Twentieth Century**

by

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Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures

en vue de l'obtention du grade de

Philosophiæ Doctor (Ph.D.)

septembre 2001

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Université de Montréal
Faculté des études supérieures

Ce mémoire intitulé

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Collett Tracey

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Résumé

Cette thèse doctorale est une histoire de trois petites presses importantes qui ont été fondées à Montréal au cours de la partie moyenne du siècle. La compagnie First Statement Press (1945-1951) a été lancée par John Sutherland, Louis Dudek et Irving Layton; la compagnie Contact Press (1952-1967) a été gérée par Raymond Souster, Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, et Peter Miller; et la compagnie Delta Canada a été fondée par Michael Gnarowski, Louis Dudek et Glen Siebrasse. Ces trois presses représentaient une progression naturelle de petites revues dont elles sont nées. La revue *First Statement* a donné naissance à First Statement Press, la revue *Contact* est devenue Contact Press; et Delta Canada a émergé de *Yes*. Tandis que chaque petite presse était en elle-même unique et couronnée de succès, les trois presses partageaient ensemble un corps de principes et idéaux. Ces dernières publiaient les travaux de jeunes écrivains radicaux et expérimentaux lorsque personne d'autre ne le faisait. Elles ont fourni un choix à l'établissement littéraire et, par ricochet, l'a changé en cours de route. De plus, elles ont lancé les carrières de quelques-uns des poètes canadiens les plus reconnus. En poursuivant leurs ambitions, First Statement Press, Contact Press, et Delta Canada ont contribué à l'ascension et au développement de la poésie moderniste au Canada.

Clés français:

petites presses, Montréal, First Statement Press, Contact Press, Delta Canada, John Sutherland, Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Michael Gnarowski, des poètes canadiens, développement de la poésie moderniste

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Louis Dudek
(February 6, 1918 - March 22, 2001).

May it, in some small way, illuminate the enormous contributions he made in the
development of our country's literature.

This work could not have been completed without the participation and
contributions of many individuals to whom I am deeply indebted. I would like to
offer my most heartfelt gratitude to Louis Dudek, who opened his home and his
library to me, offered me ongoing encouragement, and continues to teach me even
now;

to Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, Peter Miller, and especially Glen
Siebrasse, who were extremely generous in providing me with their memories,
manuscripts, and their time;

to Professor Howard Roiter, my advisor at the Université de Montréal,
whose belief in the importance of the project and in my ability to meet the task,
pushed me to carry it on;

to my sister, Debbie, who, with her husband, Steve, rummaged through the
wreckage of our home after it burned down, to find enough pieces of the original
manuscript to encourage me to begin writing it again;

to my parents, who have challenged me to be a better person;

to my husband, Nathaniel, and my children, Adam, Rowan and Anna,
whose patience and support have allowed me to pursue and fulfill this dream;

Most of all, I would like to thank Michael Gnarowski, mentor and friend,
whose enduring commitment to Canadian literature inspires me, and whose
knowledge, wisdom and great humanity have guided me through it all...

Collett

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It is not by chasing after immortality that we will make ourselves eternal. We will not make ourselves absolute by reflecting in our works desiccated principles which are sufficiently empty and negative to pass from one century to another, but by fighting passionately in our time, by loving it passionately, and by consenting to perish entirely with it.¹

¹Jean Paul Sartre. Souster used this quotation on the front cover of the first issue of *Contact* magazine.

Introduction

Poems, themselves, do not occur on their own -- they are teased out of the experiences that are lived by the poets who write them -- they are a reaction to, and reflection of, the human condition, and to the times and events that surround people. While the poetry provides a means by which readers may glimpse various moments in time in the course of developing Canadian literature, the lives and experiences of the poets and writers fill out that story and add layers and textures to its body that enrich its meaning and importance.

While the poetry lives on, and is accessible, the people who served to bring it forward often fade from memory. When reading a truly great poem, like Louis Dudek's *Atlantis*, or Irving Layton's "The Bull Calf," "Red Carpet for the Sun," or "Keine Lazarovitch," or A.M. Klein's "The Portrait of a Poet as Landscape," it is easy to forget that behind the beauty and richness of the words exists an individual whose sensibilities have been shaped by his or her experiences and by the people with whom he or she interacted. And as time continues to march forward, it becomes increasingly difficult to know who these individuals were, and how their presence and contributions shaped our national literature.

Poets who *are* recognized tend to be more prominent individuals who by force of personality or by chance are highlighted while others, whose contributions are often equally important, are left in the shadow. While most Canadians are aware of Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen and Michael Ondaatje, how many know of the work of Archibald Lampman, John Sutherland, Louis Dudek or Raymond Souster?

In addition to the significance of the individuals, themselves, what is also forgotten is that it is the various interactions between these individuals and the others who surround them, that make up the atmosphere and environment out of which the poetry is born. And that it was the same poets and friends who, upon experiencing the obstacles that faced them in getting their work published, were self-conscious enough, and courageous enough, to take matters into their own hands, and set up their own little magazines and presses.

It is essential, then, to reassess and remember the importance of the people who created the literature -- to recognize the significance of their lives and experiences in the poetry they produced. It is necessary to acknowledge and celebrate their humanity. In so doing, the poetry and the literature we call "Canadian" takes on greater personal meaning and becomes, even more, our own.

This dissertation, then, attempts to illuminate some of the dark corners of Canadian literary history. Its purpose is to give some context to the development of modernist poetry in Canada, by focusing on the poets involved in three important little presses -- First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada. Based in Montreal, and spanning the rise and wane of Canadian modernist poetry that occurred in the middle part of the century, the poets involved in these little presses make up the fabric of our literary history. Without them, there would be no poetry; there would be no literature; and there would be no story to tell.

Chapter One

The Rise of the Little Press in Montreal: First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada

But how shall I hear old music? This is an hour
Of new beginnings, concepts warring for power,
Decay of systems -- the tissue of art is torn
With overtures of an era being born.

And this perfection which is less yourself
Than Mozart, seems a trinket on a shelf,
A pretty octave played before a window
Beyond whose curtain grows a world crescendo.¹

Questioning boundaries and breaking away from the past are fundamental to the spirit of modernism. In order to do this, not only do the barriers to change have to be overcome, but vehicles of expression have to be found in order to draw like-minded people together who can build the momentum required to make a new vision reality. As John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster and Michael Gnarowski and others have shown, during the modernist movement in Canada, the little magazine provided that impetus and published often unknown poets who were experimenting with new techniques and forms or were new voices. Still,

¹Scott, F.R. "Overture" *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*. (1936). 61.

while providing an important outlet for modern poetry in Canada, the little magazine of the 20's and 30's² remained limited in its ability to promote comprehensively the work of individual poets who continued to be neglected by the more established publishing houses. Poets, again, took matters into their own hands, and they began little presses. In Montreal, three important little presses were founded that span and reflect the changing spirit of modernism from the 1940's, in First Statement Press (1945-1951), the fifties, in Contact Press (1952-1967), and the sixties, in Delta Canada (1965-1971).

These little presses and the movement they inspired played a significant role in the development of Canadian poetry. The advantage of the little press was that it brought like-minded poets together who were equally committed to a greater cause which was moving poetry forward. The little magazine and, by extension, the little press, was a form of resistance against the conservative, commercially-driven publishing practices demonstrated by large, depersonalized organizations that have controlled the publishing industry in Canada since the 1920's. Being self-financed and non-profit entities, the little presses were able to

²Some little and literary magazines that were developed in the early part of the century include: *The Canadian Bookman* (begun in 1919; became the organ of the Canadian Author's Association in 1921; was renamed *The Canadian Author and Bookman* in 1943); *The Canadian Poetry Magazine* (established in 1936; was the first magazine in Canada devoted exclusively to poetry; merged with *The Canadian Author and Bookman* (1969); *The Canadian Forum* (1920-; published many of the first generation of Canadian modernist poets) *The McGill Fortnightly Review* (1925-1927; begun by F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith); *The Canadian Mercury* (1928-1929; established by F.R. Scott and Leo Kennedy).

stand on the front lines of Canadian poetry and publish the vanguard, the experimental, the young. Made up of poets who had a personal commitment to the presses and to the poets and books they published, the presses were rebellious, ambitious and intellectually intense. With these qualities, they were able to serve as a barometer of the social and literary climate in their closeness to the pulse of the times.

Two fundamental problems faced the modernist poet who tried to have his/her work published during the early part of the twentieth century. The first involved the overwhelming influence of the Canadian Author's Association (C.A.A.) with its nationalist agenda and promotion of more conservative poets who were often steeped in the British Romantic and Victorian traditions. The second barrier involved more complicated issues that point to systemic flaws inherent in the fabric of the publishing industry. These difficulties are most clearly articulated by Louis Dudek in a letter to Raymond Souster (February 11th, 1952) just prior to establishing Contact Press. He writes

Yes, goddamit, let's get ourselves out a book of our own, the three of us, and piss on the presses. The poet has to publish his own work henceforth, if he wants to print what he wrote, and if he wants to print more than

12 pages in SIX YEARS³... The whole system stinks
 when 100000000 advertisements get mass distribution
 and a few poems get 250 copies on toilet paper.⁴

Dudek's outburst voices some of the issues facing the modernist poet including the fact that, historically, publishing houses have proven to be, first and foremost, commercial enterprises driven by a profit motive, or were foreign owned, which consequently influences the type of material they publish.⁵

It should be remembered, first of all, that the majority of early twentieth century publishing houses were branch plants of foreign publishers whose headquarters were, primarily, in Great Britain and the United States or,

³The six years represents the period between the time *East of the City* (1946) was published by Ryerson Press and *The Searching Image* (1952) appeared, of which 350 copies (not 250) were printed in the Ryerson Chapbook Series.

⁴Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster, dated 11 February 1952, in Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967: A Note on its Origins; A Check List of Titles*. 13.

⁵The Macmillan Company of Canada, for example, was begun as a Canadian branch of a British publishing company under its owner, Alexander Macmillan. According to the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (1983), Macmillan established the company originally in New York, but expanded into Canada in 1905 (70 Bond Street, Toronto, where the company was to remain headquartered until 1980) in order to be able to obtain imperial copyright. In 1921 Hugh Eayrs became Macmillan's Manager and eventually, its president. John Gray succeeded Eayrs in 1946; he guided the company through the enormous publishing expansion that took place in Canada after the war. Macmillan of Canada was sold to the publishing conglomerate, Maclean-Hunter, in 1973. In 1980, it was taken over by Gage Publishing Limited, which kept the right to use the Macmillan imprint in its educational publications. During the whole modernist period, then, the Macmillan Company of Canada was owned and controlled by British publishing interests.

like Ryerson Press, were institutionally connected. Their primary objective was to sell books, and to do so, reflecting their colonial tradition, they imported employees from their home country. In this way they avoided integrating Canadians into their hierarchies who might otherwise have promoted their own culture and literature (although, it must be said in all fairness, that Canadians were not particularly well-versed in their own literary history at this time).

At the end of the nineteenth century, print was the sole means by which mass audiences might be reached and entertained. Until the early part of the twentieth century, only large-scale publishers, such as John Lovell,⁶ were able to finance the purchase of paper and printing. By the beginning of the twentieth century, paper and ink were more affordable and available for smaller publishing ventures. Financing for such activities was primarily derived from advertising which eventually came to dominate journals and magazines.

In *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature*,⁷ in which he traces the development of printing and publishing, and analyses its impact on literature from the nineteenth century onwards, Louis Dudek writes

⁶John Lovell was located on St. Nicholas Street in Montreal. His firm published city directories.

⁷*Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature* was Louis Dudek's Ph.D. dissertation (1955, Columbia University, New York.) It was published by Ryerson/Contact Press in 1960.

The relations of production and distribution of goods have been different within the past century and a half from those of any other period of history: quantity compounds to a difference of quality. An immense opportunity was suddenly opened to acquire wealth where formerly there had been economic scarcity and a divorce of power between property and poverty; competition was intensified, and in the money scramble, a changed ethic infiltrated to every field of life. The profit incentive, though it had always been present in manufacture and commerce...received a maximum stimulus as the new industrial system offered fantastic opportunities for expansion and wealth. It was in this competitive economic atmosphere that the printing press in the nineteenth century began to pour forth its increasing quantities of printed literature (10).

As Dudek points out, "quantity compounds to a difference of quality."

Smaller presses were usually run by one or two individuals who had a personal investment in their business. It was they who input the painstaking work of setting print, sorting paper, oiling and caring for the press and manually cranking out the copies. The end result was a reflection of the quality of their labor and therefore, their source of reputation. To invest such time and effort into a publication

motivated people to ensure that the material to be printed was, by itself, important and worthwhile. Mass production and distribution of printed materials, in comparison, lowered the standards by which materials to be published were judged. This meant, in addition, that attention to more literary work -- criticism and poetry in particular -- waned, because it did not command a large readership, and was, therefore, not as financially viable.

In considering the market for poetry in Canada in the early part of this century, Bruce Whiteman remarks

poetry then as now sold poorly in Canada, and publishers took on very little of it. Macmillan of Canada, for example, published only eight books of poetry between 1950 and 1960, of which three were by E.J. Pratt⁸ and one was the anthology *The Blasted Pine*.⁹ McClelland and Stewart limited its poetry list pretty much to the Indian File Series which Roy Daniells' *Deeper into the Forest* inaugurated in 1958 and which ended ten years -- and nine books -- later with John Glassco's *The Deficit Made Flesh*.

Ryerson Press was the most active of the three largest publishers with respect to poetry, but Lorne Pierce was ever conscious of the balance

⁸Poetry by E.J.Pratt published by Macmillan Company of Canada during the period 1950 to 1960 include: *Towards the Last Spike* (1952) (which won the Governor General's Award); *Magic in Everything*, (Christmas Card), 1956; and *The Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt*, ed. with introd. by Northrop Frye (1958).

⁹*The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective, and Disrespectful Verse* contains poems selected and arranged by F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith. It was published by Macmillan of Canada in 1957. Two other significant books of poetry published by Macmillan Company of Canada between 1950 and 1960 includes Anne Wilkinson's *The Hangman Ties the Holly* (1955) and James Reaney's *A Suit of Nettles* (1958).

sheet, the Ryerson Chapbook Series was beginning to slow down, and larger manuscripts were limited to one or two per year. ("Contact in Context" 13)

In order to balance the books, larger publishing houses were more interested in proven writers and more popular genres. Poetry and criticism did not fall into these categories and were therefore sidelined by larger publishing houses. Dudek argues that already in the early 1900's, in publishing

the profit motive as a drive in periodical and newspaper publishing had...out-balanced and displaced the literary and scholarly values that had normally entered into the act of publication in the past; money had taken the rudder of editorial taste into its own hands. ("The Role of Little Magazines in Canada" 206)

According to A.J.M. Smith, even the C.A.A., with all its pronouncements of advancing a Canadian culture and national consciousness, was subject to the lure of a profit. In "Wanted: Canadian Criticism" he writes

To the serious Canadian writer...the confusion between commerce and art presents itself in the light of a temptation to effect a compromise. If he chooses to work out his own salvation along lines which cannot be in keeping with the prevailing spirit of pep and optimism he finds himself without an audience, or at least without an audience that will support him. The one Canadian magazine, it must be noted, for which such an artist would care to write is at present unable to pay contributors, while poor imitations of the Saturday Evening Post are ready to pay him handsomely if he will cease to be an artist and become a merchant. This is the temptation

with which the devil has assailed the Canadian Authors' Association, and the whole communion has succumbed in a body. There would be little harm in this if everyone knew the nature of the compromise that has been made, if, for instance, the Canadian Authors had the honesty to change the name of their society to the Journalists' Branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and to quit kidding the public every Christmas that it (the public) has a moral obligation to buy poor Canadian, rather than good foreign books. (Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski 31-2)

These problems were compounded by the fact that young modernist writers were also working against traditional forms of poetry (which were only just being thought of as established enough to be interesting by larger publishing firms), and were experimenting, instead, with new techniques and forms deemed radical by the generation of poets before them.

When, in the pages of *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, Smith and Scott began battling the literary establishment and calling for more meaningful Canadian criticism and poetry, Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts were still undertaking book tours and promoting their work with the support of the C.A.A. That organ was continuing to "booster" any poet that paid his/her dues who offered poetry that fulfilled their nationalist agenda. In "The Future of Canadian Literature," published in *The Canadian Mercury* in December, 1928, Leo Kennedy writes that "The Canadian Author's Association, that pillar of flim-flam, is a stumbling block over which the aspiring younger Canadian writer must first climb before approaching his local Parnassus." (Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski 35).

According to Louis Dudek, *The Canadian Poetry Magazine* (the official organ

of the C.A.A.) continued to publish what Dudek refers to as "the poetry of appeasement, of gullible sentimentality" ("The Role of the Little Magazine" 207).

The numerous complaints by the modernists against the C.A.A. and its influence during the 1920's, 30's and 40's suggest that the small space allotted poetry collections by the established publishing firms was taken up by lavishing attention on writers whose time had seemingly come and gone -- a claim supported by fact: Lampman's *At the Long Sault and Other New Poems*, and his *Selected Poems* were published by Ryerson Press as late as 1943 and 1947 respectively, even though the poet had died in 1899. The work of Charles G.D. Roberts continued to be published by both Ryerson Press and Macmillan through to 1948, while his most important poetry collection, *Selected Poems* was published by Ryerson in 1936. Similarly, although Bliss Carman died in 1929, and, significantly, was able only to be published in the United States during his lifetime, McClelland & Stewart published him after his death; *Ballads and Lyrics* in 1928, and *Sanctuary: Sunshine House Sonnets* appeared in 1929, while *Bliss Carman's Poems* appeared in 1931 and his most popular, *Pipes of Pan*, was published by Ryerson, in 1943.

These poets, along with the numerous second- and third-rate poets promoted by the C.A.A., continued to occupy the space available to poets of the new period. Furthermore, it should be remembered that it was around this time that the effects of the depression began to be felt, which made Canadian publishing companies even more inclined to be cautious of who they chose to publish; new and emerging writers, and those who were more experimental in their approach, constituted too much of a risk.

Consequently, although A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Leo Kennedy and others were the pioneers responsible for ushering modernism into Canada, with the exception of Kennedy, not one of them saw a collection of their work in print until the 1940's, when they were into middle-age and passing the peak of their best writing.

Another problem associated with large publishing firms was that due to their nature and size they were removed from the poets and literary issues that were active at the grassroots level. No publishers of the larger firms felt the same degree of commitment to their press demonstrated by John Sutherland, for example, whose press and little magazine were a vocation. Despite declining health he continued to pour his energies and money into the press and "for a time the office was his home and he slept beside the press" (Fisher 5). Furthermore, the editors of the little presses had a very different vision of the role of poetry and art than did their larger counterparts. While Sutherland, Layton, Dudek and others were, in general, content to leave control of the work they published with the poets who created it, the more established publishing enterprises assumed absolute control over the work they put out, often with the result that more abrasive or antagonistic pieces of work were either diluted or rejected altogether.

When F.R. Scott, for example, was searching for a publisher for *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*, Smith's preface, which attacked latent Victorianism and the C.A.A., (which he felt was responsible for barring the way to the newer, more experimental poets of his age), was rejected by Hugh Eayrs, the editor for Macmillan. E.J. Pratt remarks that "Eayrs...objects to the Preface. He

says it is unwise, and would stir up unnecessary antagonisms."¹⁰ Furthermore, instead of assuming full financial responsibility for the volume, Macmillan agreed to publish the book only if it proceeded as "an associated venture in which the authors [F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, A.M. Klein, Leo Kennedy, Robert Finch, E.J. Pratt] would find subscribers for the volume to the tune of two hundred to two hundred and fifty dollars" (Gnarowski. "Introduction." *New Provinces*. xvii).

Another problem associated with producing the book was the necessity of paying Macmillan a permission fee to include E.J. Pratt's poems -- an additional cost the authors found difficult to meet. The book was almost abandoned as a result of these problems; eventually, however, Smith's preface, which has since proved its literary importance, was replaced by a considerably shorter, more subdued introduction by Scott¹¹ and *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* finally appeared in print in May, 1936, more than two years after it was begun.¹²

¹⁰Letter to A.J.M. Smith from E.J. Pratt dated November, 7th 1934. In Gnarowski, Michael. "Introduction" to *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*. xvii.

¹¹In a footnote to Scott's new "Preface" Smith criticizes the text as "vague, aimless jargon" ("Introduction" *New Provinces*, xx).

¹²In the contemporary edition (1976) of *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* (edited by Michael Gnarowski), Gnarowski reports,

When *New Provinces* finally appeared in May 1936, it represented four years of planning, argument, and compromise and two and a half years of actual correspondence and editorial preparation. This prolonged effort was brought to a successful end with the publication of a slim collection of verse bound in green cloth, the work of one older and five younger writers. It was offered as the new poetry of the time. Now, viewed in retrospect, the appearance of this entirely unpretentious anthology was a singular event in a literary process which stemmed from the origins of Canadian modernism and its beginnings in Montreal. (vii)

Ironically, by that time Smith believed the anthology was outdated.¹³ Furthermore, despite Macmillan's imprint, the volume received little notice, with the result that, in almost eleven months, only 82 copies were sold, of which F.R. Scott, himself, bought ten.¹⁴

Similarly, when Souster and Dudek were searching for a publisher for *Cerberus*, they avoided approaching McClelland and Stewart and Ryerson Press because, according to Elspeth Cameron, "they thought the Indian File Series [McClelland & Stewart] hopelessly out of date and each had published with Ryerson and felt that they had been edited out of existence" (199).

With no other publishing avenues open to them, Souster, Dudek and Layton then did what the little press tradition dictated, and what Sutherland had done before them -- they published the book themselves, and *Cerberus*, with its idiosyncratically significant title, and its provocative introductions, became the first book that rolled off Contact Press (1952).

As these examples illustrate, based primarily in Toronto, controlled by the need to balance financial outlay with income, and distanced by their size and

¹³In a postcard to F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith writes: "I don't care for my poems in the collection much now (with about 3 exceptions)...The Preface wd. have to be carefully rewritten -- and the whole book is quite out of date" (Gnarowski, Michael. "Introduction" *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* xviii).

¹⁴In a letter from F.R. Scott to E.J. Pratt, dated November 2nd, 1937, Scott reports that:

From May 9th, 1936 to March 31st, 1937 the magnificent number of 82 copies [of *New Provinces*] was sold, of which I purchased 10. This despite the fact that we have had excellent reviews from the only people in this country who may be considered serious critics. So I take it that we do not retire to a life of poetry and ease (In Gnarowski, Michael. "Introduction." *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*. xxi).

hierarchy from the poets on the street, firms like Ryerson, Macmillan and McClelland & Stewart preferred to publish proven writers and more popular genres. The consequence was that the modern poets viewed them as outdated and out of touch with what was important in literature. Rather than be stopped or absorbed by the institutions they abhorred and the barriers they faced, the modernists reacted proactively, gathering themselves together to establish the little presses. By providing a forum for the poets of the 1940's, First Statement Press set the tone for the rise of the little press in Canada as well as providing an example, and a structure on which later little presses could build. As momentum developed Contact Press took off, providing the impetus behind the poets of the 1950's and '60's and continuing on to launch the careers of many of Canada's most important poets. Then Delta Canada emerged, to carry on the cause into the 1960's and early '70's.

In many cases, the little presses either grew out of, or coexisted, with little magazines, many of which began as nothing more than a few mimeographed sheets, stapled together and handed out on a street corner. The little presses served to legitimize these early magazines, such as *First Statement*, *Preview* and *Contact*, by rendering their contents more permanent and making them into more "official" literary journals. In these ways the little presses in Montreal contributed enormously to the developing face of modernism in Canada.

First Statement Press

In his overview of First Statement Press Bruce Whiteman reports that, "as its short list did include Irving Layton, Miriam Waddington, and Raymond Souster, poets who later established serious reputations, the press is of some note" (Whiteman. *Lasting Impressions*. 69). This comment underestimates the impact that First Statement Press has had on the history of publishing poetry in Canada, and does neither Sutherland, nor his colleagues, full justice for their accomplishments.

In 1942, a group of young poets, including Irving Layton, Audrey Aikman and Louis Dudek were led by John Sutherland to establish First Statement Press -- a little press that ultimately charted a new course in Canadian writing. Not only was it the first little press in Montreal to challenge the publishing establishment and champion the avant-garde, it also provided a mandate and a precedent on which future little presses could build.

Established in 1942, First Statement Press proposed six goals:

- a) To maintain the highest possible literary standards without regard to any consideration of any other kind.
- b) To provide expression for writers of merit denied publication elsewhere.
- c) To give special encouragement to the young writer and to the experimental writer.
- d) To help sharpen the awareness of Canadian writing both past and present.

e) To employ only strict standards of criticism, but to emphasize the importance of the developing native sensibility in Canada.

f) To establish...a liaison with the French-Canadian writer.¹⁵

In an analysis of the important role played by First Statement Press in developing an acceptance of modernism in Canada, John Sutherland writes that

It [First Statement Press] has been the pioneer and has frequently done the spade work for the commercial publisher. The poetry of Louis Dudek was first introduced in the pages of the First Statement magazine, while the work of Patrick Anderson and Raymond Souster was first published in book form in the New Writers Series. It is notable that all three of these writers found their way by the mid-forties into the publishing list of one of the best-known Canadian publishers.¹⁶ ("Memorandum" Dudek & Gnarowski 74-5)

In his *Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, Sutherland argues, since "The basis of the little press was one of voluntary cooperation among writers and other interested persons, no strict organization was either possible or desirable. Those who were able to contribute their time and labour did so freely. Others helped defray the cost of publication" (Dudek & Gnarowski 70).

Consequently, many poets participated at a hands-on level in every facet of the press's operation. They attended the editorial meetings, selected the material to be published, set the type, and helped in the sales and distribution of its books.

¹⁵Sutherland, "Origin of First Statement Press" Rpt. in Dudek & Gnarowski 69-70.

¹⁶That publisher was McClelland and Stewart.

The printing press, itself, like the type used, was purchased through financial donations.

What came out of the press included an expanded version of the little magazine, *First Statement*, which eventually became *Northern Review* and a collection of modest books under its New Writers Series, which were designed to promote individual poets, particularly young writers and those who were concerned with experimental work. Eight important Canadian books were published by the little press, including Patrick Anderson's *A Tent For April* (1945), Irving Layton's collections, *Here and Now* (1945) and *Now is the Place* (1948); Raymond Souster's *When We Are Young* (1946); *Green World* (1946) by Miriam Waddington; John Sutherland's anthology, *Other Canadians: Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada 1940-1946*, published in 1947; as well as Kay Smith's *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer and Other Poems* (1941); and *Counterpoint to Sleep* (1951) by Anne Wilkinson.

Beyond these important achievements, First Statement Press not only challenged the orthodox and traditional forms of poetry, it participated in creating the new poetry. Absolutely committed to the need to publish and distribute the new poetry, Sutherland and his colleagues broke new and somewhat different ground, providing an invaluable support system and outlet for poets who might otherwise have gone unknown. In so doing they informed the next generation of modern poets how it could, and should, be done.

Contact Press

Contact Press was established in 1952 by Louis Dudek, Irving Layton and Raymond Souster. The name was suggested independently by both Dudek and Souster who both felt that its purpose was to "establish contact¹⁷ with one another in Canada and the U.S."¹⁸

Dudek and Layton resided in Montreal and Souster in Toronto. And, although Souster's address at 28 Mayfield appears on all the books, it is correct to say that there was a good deal of independent activity by the three founding members, which is to say that each editor was active producing books of their poetry or books by authors they were particularly interested in. In fact, the majority of the press's activities were centered in Montreal¹⁹ since Layton and Dudek were both there -- that is until Layton stepped down in the late 1950's leaving a vacuum that was eventually filled by Peter Miller who, like Souster, was based in Toronto. At that time, while Dudek continued to edit and produce all the books from Montreal, the press's center of gravity shifted to Toronto -- to Miller's

¹⁷*Contact* was also the name of a literary little magazine that was published by William Carlos Williams and John McAlmon in the United States (December 1920-June 1923 and then irregularly published until 1932). Souster was familiar with the publication because of his interest in and sympathy for William Carlos Williams (Letter from Raymond Souster to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

¹⁸Letter from Raymond Souster to Irving Layton, March 22nd, 1952. Irving Layton Papers. Concordia University Library. Montreal.

¹⁹According to Souster, although the majority of the press's activities took place in Montreal, out of Louis Dudek's home in Verdun, it bore Souster's address in Toronto, at 28 Mayfield Avenue, for reasons having to do with the Quebec government (Letter from Raymond Souster to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

home on Lamport Avenue, then later to 9 Ivor Road. It continued its existence until 1967, when Miller married and decided that he could no longer work with the little press.

The contributions made by Contact Press toward advancing Canadian modernism are impressive. The three original editors seemed particularly gifted in sensing the potential in young writers. Eventually they were responsible for launching the writing careers of all the important poets of the mid-century. Irving Layton, for example, had been ignored by the larger publishing firms until Contact Press published his books and made him known. At an early stage of his career, in his preface to *Cerberus*, Layton writes "The Canadian poet...is an exile condemned to live in his own country. He has no public, commands no following, stirs up less interest than last year's license plate"(45).

Yet, according to Leonard Cohen, within fifteen years, "Irving Layton converted a whole generation to poetry" (Interview with Elspeth Cameron, 16 May, 1983). In addition to *Cerberus*, Contact Press published Layton's *Here and Now* and *Love the Conquering Worm*, as well as serving as a distributor for *The Improved Binoculars* when Ryerson refused. While Layton might not have been quite as powerful as Cohen suggests, his main vehicle of expression was Contact Press.

In its first flyer, Raymond Souster describes Contact Press as

a non-profit organization formed...to take the place now largely abandoned by the larger commercial book houses -- the publication and encouragement of poetry in Canada.²⁰

According to Louis Dudek, Contact Press was organized under a set of three principles. First, it was a self-conscious response to the popularization of commercial media; second, it strove to remain faithful to literary and artistic traditions; and third it was inspired by the new and creative which is both universal and implicit in the spirit of modernism (Interview with Collett Tracey August 29, 1998). With these standards in mind, Contact Press not only published its three founding members, it eventually served as a distributor for numerous other publishers, poets and magazines. In a letter to Raymond Souster, dated April 16th, 1952, Dudek argues

Contact Press...should be considered...as entirely separate from *Contact* mag. The editors of Contact Press are Souster, Layton, Dudek. The business will vary, and accounts must be carefully kept for different publications. Some will be financed by all three (e.g., *Cerberus*); some by two partners (Canadian anthology we're working on); some by one (*Twenty-Four Poems* I have in mind, etc.). The relations must be free, and the Contact Press imprint is mainly a convenience for publicity purposes.²¹

Five years later, in a letter to Layton written in September 1959, Dudek reveals that his original vision of the structure of the little press had worked:

²⁰"A New Book Idea From Contact Press"; one page flyer, undated.

²¹Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster, dated Montreal, January 16, 1952. (Lakehead University Library). Whiteman, Bruce "Contact in Context." *West Coast Line* 25:2 (Fall 1992) 14.

Originally, the purpose was to publish Ray's, your, and my books, and then others gradually; by now the others have taken over, the press really exists to publish younger poets, some good some bad, & the McGill Series.²²

In fact, by mid 1954, the three founding editors of Contact Press were already expanding the number of authors on their list of publications to include names other than their own. *Trio*, by Gael Turnbull, Phyllis Webb and Eli Mandel, was published in 1954, followed by W.W.E. Ross's book, *Experiment*, which came out in 1956. At the same time, Dudek's *Europe*, published in 1954 by Laocoon Press, was also distributed by Contact Press.

In 1956, Dudek began "The McGill Poetry Series" which, while not being truly Contact Press books, were originally listed as being distributed by Contact Press in order to "obtain outside distribution and advertising."²³ In the following ten years, the series published ten interesting Canadian books, of which three went on to become significant.²⁴ *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), by Leonard Cohen, was the first to appear, which ultimately served to launch Cohen's career. Next came Daryl Hine's book, *The Carnal and Crane*, which followed in 1957, along with George Ellenbogen's collection, *Winds of Unreason*. Eventually, the list of authors published in the series included Sylvia Barnard (*The Timeless*

²²Letter from Louis Dudek to Irving Layton, dated September 24th, 1959. Irving Layton Papers, Concordia University Library. Montreal.

²³ Letter to F. Cyril James, January 13th, 1956. Louis Dudek Papers. National Library of Canada. Ottawa.

²⁴The most significant books to be published in the McGill Poetry Series include Leonard Cohen's *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, *The Carnal and Crane*, by Daryl Hine, and George Ellenbogen's *Winds of Unreason*.

Forest, 1959), Steve Smith (*God's Kaleidoscope*, 1965), Seymour Mayne (*Tiptoeing on the Mount*, 1965) and Jagdip Maraj (*The Flaming Circle*, 1966).

While Dudek was directly involved in Contact Press, he was concurrently involved with *Contact* magazine (1952-1954), and an interested participant in *CIV/n* magazine (1953-1954), as well as finally being fully engaged in publishing his own magazine -- *Delta* (1956-1966). Furthermore, as a result of his contacts with Robert Creeley and other American poets, Souster was acting as distributor for Divers Press books in Canada, as well as for *Northern Review* and other related books such as Charles Olson's collection, *The Maximus Poems* (1960). He also helped distribute Gael Turnbull's mimeographed pamphlets of French-Canadian poetry in translation.

In his assessment of Contact Press, Bruce Whiteman suggests that one of the main ambitions and benefits of the little press was reflected in its title, that "like-minded poets were put...in touch with each other's work, whether they lived in Canada, the United States or elsewhere" ("Contact in Context" 12). During its sixteen years of existence, Contact Press published all of Canada's most important modernist poets of the mid-century, including Al Purdy, George Bowering, Louis Dudek, D.G. Jones, Daryl Hine, Henry Moscovitch, W.W.E. Ross, R.G. Everson, Milton Acorn, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Alden Nowlan, Irving Layton and Raymond Souster. Incidentally, the last book published by Contact Press, before it disbanded, was *The Circle Game* by Margaret Atwood, which went on to win the Governor General's award for poetry in 1966.

During the 1960's, Quebec nationalism was on the rise and with it, a desire, in many Quebecers, for separation. With these influences at work, emphasis on

publishing English poetry in Montreal began to recede and Anglophone Canadian culture began to wane noticeably. From the ranks of Contact Press, Layton had already stepped down by this time; Peter Miller and Raymond Souster were firmly based in Toronto, and with them, the balance of power of the little press; Louis Dudek was the only one of the three original editors left in Montreal and he was feeling isolated.

Of the first generation of modernists, Smith and Scott were never actively involved in little press publishing; after all, Scott was, by training, a lawyer and activist, while Smith had long since moved to the United States. Despite their efforts to establish a modern Canadian poetry and their critical attacks on the "boosterism" of the C.A.A., Scott and Smith still turned to the established presses to publish their poetry. All of Smith's collections of poems were published by large publishing enterprises: Macmillan, Ryerson, Oxford, Gage, McClelland & Stewart, or American publishers -- University of Chicago Press, and Abelard Press

(New York).²⁵ Similarly, Scott's poetry was published primarily by Ryerson Press and McClelland & Stewart.²⁶

Although Klein was involved in both *Preview* and *Northern Review*, his role was peripheral and he was never seriously involved in the business of publishing. Much of his energy was taken up by his involvement in a variety of Jewish causes and organizations and by his law practice. Immersed in these

²⁵Ryerson Press published both *News of the Phoenix and Other Poems* (1943) and *A Sort of Ecstasy: Poems New and Selected* (1954). Oxford (Toronto) published *Collected Poems* (1962) and *Poems: New and Collected* (1967) as well as *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1960) and *Modern Canadian Verse in English and French* (1967). University of Chicago Press published the first edition of *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (1943), which Smith edited and for which he wrote an Introduction and Notes. Gage (Toronto) published the second and third editions of *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (1948 and 1957). Gage also published *The Book of Canadian Prose Volume 1* (1965) (Ed. with an Intro by Smith) and *The Canadian Century: English-Canadian Writing Since Confederation* (1973) (Ed. with Intro by Smith) as well as *The Canadian Experience: A Brief Survey of English-Canadian Prose*, which, again, Smith edited. McClelland & Stewart produced *Masks of Fiction: Canadian Critics on Canadian Prose* (1961) and *Masks of Poetry: Canadian Critics on Canadian Verse* (1962), for which Smith both edited and wrote introductions. Macmillan published *The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective, and Disrespectful Verse* (1957), which Smith edited with F.R. Scott and *The Collected Poems of Anne Wilkinson and a Prose Memoir*, (1968) which Smith edited and provided an introduction for. *The Wordly Muse: An Anthology of Serious Light Verse* was published by Abelard Press (New York), in 1951.

²⁶Ryerson published *Overture: Poems* (1945), *Events and Signals* (1954); Macmillan published *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* (1936) which Scott edited with A.J.M. Smith; *Signature* (1964) was published by Klanak Press (Vancouver); Oxford published *Selected Poems* (1966). McClelland published *The Dance is One* (1973).

interests, Klein turned to American and/or Jewish organizations, as well as the larger publishing firm, Ryerson Press, to publish his work.²⁷

While Kennedy was another one of the angry young men of the twenties who set out to change the course of poetry in Canada, he too, still turned to the large publishing firms to advance his writing, preferring to remain within their ranks than start out on his own. In fact, in 1933, when Macmillan Company balked at the financial risk involved in publishing *The Shrouding*, Kennedy raised \$500 in advanced sales by knocking on doors. Still, in 1937, Kennedy moved from Montreal to Toronto, and then, in 1939, he left Canada altogether for the United States, where he exiled himself for 40 years working as an advertising copy writer.

Of the second wave of modernists who had been actively involved in the work of the little press in Montreal, none remained other than Louis Dudek. After establishing *First Statement*, Sutherland's health continued to decline. Perhaps as a result of chronic illness, fatigue and approaching death, his attention was drawn to religion and Catholicism and away from the little press that had been so important in advancing the new Canadian poetry. Preoccupied with a study of E.J. Pratt, he spent his last months at work on a writer who was clearly at odds with the true spirit of modernism. He died September 1, 1956.

²⁷*Hath Not A Jew* was published by Behrman's Jewish Book House in New York (1940). New Directions (New York) produced *The Hitleriad* (1944). *Poems* (1944) was published by the Jewish Publishing Society (Philadelphia). Ryerson published *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems* (1948) and McGraw-Hill Ryerson published *The Collected Poems of A.M. Klein* (1974) (Comp. and with an Intro. by Miriam Waddington). Knopf (New York) produced Klein's novel, *The Second Scroll* (1951).

Irving Layton, while active in promoting the little press in his earlier years, was largely absorbed by family problems and financial difficulties, and by this time had quarreled with Dudek, leading to a rift in their relationship. Furthermore, by the late 1950's, due primarily to the little presses' efforts in proving Layton's worth, the American publisher, Jonathan Williams, discovered him and helped bring him to the attention of Toronto's larger publishing firm, McClelland & Stewart, who took over the publication and distribution of his work.²⁸

Souster was available, but he lived in Toronto; and although First Statement Press and Contact Press had brought together many of Canada's most important poets and helped launch their careers as writers, none were actively interested in the business of publishing, or those that were had moved away.

By the early 1960's, then, Louis Dudek was the only major Canadian poet living in Montreal who had the spirit and the "habit" of the little press. Increasingly isolated from his co-editors, Souster and Miller, and missing the sense of movement that he had experienced in the company of other poet/publishers during Contact's most critical years, Dudek was ripe for something new. In the course of the summer of 1964, as Michael Gnarowski recalls it, the idea of a new literary venture between him and Dudek was floated -- an idea that offered Dudek the opportunity to explore and guide the energies of a new group of committed

²⁸Until 1956 Layton published nearly all his work through First Statement Press and then Contact Press (with the exception of *In the Midst of my Fever* (1954) which was produced through Divers Press (Mallorca)).

poets and editors. It was, of course, the initiation of a new little press -- Delta Canada.

Delta Canada

By 1964, Michael Gnarowski had already established a literary little magazine called *Yes*, with Glen Siebrasse, and had been teaching at Lakehead University (1962-1965), where he was deeply immersed in researching and indexing little magazines. He gave a paper at the Learned Societies Conference at Laval University (Quebec) in 1962 after which he was approached by *Culture* magazine about publishing it. That paper was "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal."²⁹ The experience made Gnarowski want to move ahead. His research already suggested that generally the successful little magazine developed into a little press, and he and Siebrasse had considered the idea of a series of *Yes* books several times in the past. So, believing that there is always a niche that is not being served in publishing, he approached Louis Dudek during the summer of 1964, with the idea of starting a little press. Dudek, who was somewhat alienated from *Contact*, gave the matter serious thought, so much so that in the ensuing correspondence it was agreed that they would have a meeting to explore the idea more fully. When Gnarowski returned to Montreal in December, 1964, that meeting took place at the Troika Restaurant

²⁹The article was published in *Culture* XXIV:3. September, 1963. 274-286.

in Montreal. Dudek, Gnarowski, Glen Siebrasse, Ron Everson and Colin Hawarth attended, and Delta Canada was launched.

Delta Canada came into being at a time of lessening activity in Montreal, after the peak of publishing English poetry in Montreal had passed. Still, since publishing poetry remains a cause only the truly committed are willing to undertake, Delta Canada's purpose and role in continuing the development of modernist poetry in Canada is important.

The first book published under the Delta Canada imprint was Ron Everson's *Wrestle With An Angel*, which appeared in 1965, followed in the same year by Michael Gnarowski's *Postscript for Saint James' Street* and Glen Siebrasse's *Regeneration of an Athlete*. In the next few years the little press published many significant books of poetry, including Dudek's own *Atlantis* (1967); Colombo's *The Great Wall of China* (1966); F.R. Scott's *Trouvailles* (1967); Ron Everson's *The Dark is Not So Dark* (1969) and *Selected Poems 1920-1970* (1970); Eldon Grier's *Selected Poems* (1970), as well as work by Stephen Scobie, Michael Harris, Eugene McNamara, Douglas Barbour, and a newly emerging group of young writers. Reflecting Gnarowski's academic training and interests, the press also swerved from the traditional little press path in that it indulged Gnarowski's interest in early Canadian poetry, and published scholarly editions, including Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village*, edited by Michael Gnarowski, as well as placing its imprint on several bibliographical studies. This initiative of Delta Canada coupled with a parallel undertaking of the Lande Foundation at McGill University made available for the first time the complete

texts of early poetry that had been written in Canada in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century thus laying the groundwork for the later editions of these poems published by D.M.R. Bentley, Gerald Lynch³⁰ and others. Gnarowski was also responsible for editing and publishing two bibliographic studies on Delta Canada's forerunner, one on *Contact* magazine, *Contact: 1952-1954: Notes on the*

³⁰For example, D.M.R. Bentley did his M.A. at Carleton University under the direction of Michael Gnarowski. His Research Paper (1977) was entitled "Lyrics of Earth: A Working Text," which was a scholarly editing of Archibald Lampman's collection, *Lyrics of Earth*. Gnarowski arranged to have the paper published through Tecumseh Press in Ottawa (1978). Gnarowski, of course, had by this time, already done a great deal of research into Lampman and his work (see, for example, Gnarowski, Michael, Ed. *Archibald Lampman*. Toronto: Ryerson. 1970). In fact, it was the lack of research available on the 19th century Canadian poet that had led Gnarowski to study Canadian literature in the first place (refer to second page of "Chapter Five: Delta Canada". Gnarowski had published *Three Early Poems from Lower Canada* (through the Lawrence Lande Foundation of McGill University) in 1969. The collection provided the first modern printings of *Abram's Plains* by Thomas Cary (1789), *Quebec Hill, or Canadian Scenery* by J. Mackay (1797) and *Canada* by Cornwall Bayley (1806). Twenty years later, Bentley edited a new scholarly version of *Quebec Hill, or Canadian Scenery* by J. Mackay, (1988) as well as another version of *Canada: A Descriptive Poem* by Cornwall Bailey (1990). He provided the same treatment to several other early long Canadian poems, including Archibald Lampman's *The Story of an Affinity* (1986), Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains: A Poem* (1986), Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story* (1987), Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief* (1987) and Alexander McLachlan's *The Emigrant* (1991). Bentley eventually anthologized these poems in *Early Long Poems on Canada* (1993) and provided analyses for them in its companion volume, *Mimic Fires: Accounts of Early Long Poems on Canada* (1994). Furthermore, Gnarowski published the first variorum version of Oliver Goldsmith's long poem, *The Rising Village*, in 1968. Gerald Lynch, who did his Ph.D. at Western University under the direction of D.M.R. Bentley, reconsidered the same poem for his Ph.D. dissertation. It was published by Bentley through Canadian Poetry Press in 1989.

History and Background of the Periodical and an Index and the other on the press, *Contact Press: 1952-1967: A Note on its Origins A Check List of Titles*.

Continuing the tradition of publishing poetry by emerging Canadian writers and making it available to everyone, Gnarowski prompted the other editors of Delta Canada to launch a smaller series of books which were to be called "Buckbooks." Buckbooks consisted of 20 to 30 pages of poetry bound in soft cover, which were sold for \$1.00 each. The first titles in this series were Michael Gnarowski's *The Gentleman Are Also Lexicographers* (1969), followed by Richard Sommer's *Homage to Mr. Macmullin* (1969), Peter Stevens' *Nothing But Spoons* (1969) and Alan Pearson's *14 Poems*, all of which appeared in 1969; later, among several other titles, Buckbooks published Douglas Barbour's *Land Fall* (1971) and Stephen Scobie's first press publication, *In the Silence of the Year* (1971).

Quarterbacks, a series of chapbook-like publications suggested by Glen Siebrasse, were even smaller collections of poetry which, in the last Delta Canada catalogue, were advertised as "A series of eight 6-8-page booklets by some of the most promising younger poets writing in Canada" (Poetry 71, Delta Canada). All of the eight poets who make up the series were previously unpublished in book form. As the title suggests, the booklets were sold for a quarter.

Like Contact Press, Delta Canada established contacts with similar foreign publishing ventures including Unicorn Press, which was owned by Ken Maytag of Santa Barbara, California. The trademark of Unicorn books was their high production standards and their successful attempt to present avant-garde writing. The relationship was an active one resulting in a Canadian folio which featured

"twelve illustrated broadside poems by Margaret Atwood, R.G. Everson, Raymond Souster, Miriam Waddington, Eldon Grier, Jacques Brault and others" (*Delta 71 Catalogue*). In addition, Delta Canada served as distributor of the books of R.G. Everson (*Three Dozen Poems, A Lattice for Momos and Blind Man's Holiday*); Peter Miller (*Meditation at Noon and Sonata for Frog and Man*); Louis Dudek (*En Mexico, Literature and the Press and Delta*); *The Flaming Circle*, by Jagdip Maraj; and Michael Gnarowski's *Index to Direction Magazine 1943-1946, Index to CIV/n Magazine 1953-1954 and Canadian Poetry: A Supplementary Bibliography*.

Although Dudek, Gnarowski, and Siebrasse worked cooperatively in the press, they maintained their own separate interests in, and visions of, the role of a little press. These visions were later realized when, at the close of Delta Canada, in 1971, the three main participants immediately launched their own little presses -- Dudek collaborated with Aileen Collins in Montreal to begin DC Books; Siebrasse continued publishing under the Delta title, and Gnarowski began The Golden Dog Press, in Ottawa, which continues to this day, albeit with a different orientation.

* * *

The advent of the little press created a new and important avenue of expression for young Canadian modernist writers at a time in which serious barriers faced poets wishing to be published. Driven by an unsettling quality of changing times, in which what was known was more comfortable than the new, modernist poets advanced boldly on to record and give voice to what they saw and experienced. Pushed aside by larger publishing firms, they found an outlet in the

little magazines and journals which they established. Needing the capacity to provide more comprehensive collections of individual poets and to distribute to a larger audience they, again, took matters into their own hands and began the little presses. Remembering the lessons of the great modern upheaval of the 1920's, the little presses provided poets with a safe and stimulating environment in which they were surrounded and promoted by other poets and artists who understood and believed in the importance of their work to the extent that they were often willing to finance it out of their meager resources to advance this poetry.

Although First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada differed in terms of their structure, the poets involved in them and the direction they took, they share a common set of principles and ideals. For Louis Dudek, who participated in all three presses, the names of the presses were, in effect, nothing more than umbrellas under which he could pursue ongoing literary activity. While they existed, for the most part, independently of each other, they championed the same cause -- they provided an alternative to the literary establishment and changed it in the process. While the little press was initially viewed as a radical and curious entity that existed on the fringe of the larger literary ethos, it eventually became the preferred avenue for poets to see their work into print. Still, the main motive of the little presses was to publish the work of young, radical and experimental writers when no one else would.

At the beginning of the century poets were writing of the primal and unrelenting Canadian landscape that challenged and often defeated the individual who tried to tame it. Within a decade or two, the modernist sensibility offered a different landscape -- an urban one -- and a different way of depicting it. The little

presses filled the barren literary landscape of Canadian poetry and filled it with vibrant, visceral color. In the process, they launched the careers of A.M. Klein, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, Margaret Atwood, Daryl Hine and many others.

The little presses were an intellectual and conscious rebellion against the commercial media of the time and against middle class values. They offered a sense of integrity in their publication because they were beholden to no one except themselves. Most importantly, they remained absolutely true to the creative impulse of the artist/author. By pursuing these ambitions, the little presses participated in a larger vision that considers the meaning of art and the importance of its advancement.

In Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature, Dudek quotes Carlyle in the following manner:

for a votary of literature, the relation of entire dependence on the merchants of literature is, at best, and however liberal the terms, a highly questionable one. It tempts him daily and hourly to sink from an artist into a manufacturer. (206)

What set First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada apart from Macmillan, Ryerson and others, was their editors' absolute selfless commitment to truth in the presentation of the poet's work, without any kind of interference -- presentation and content being controlled completely by the poet or artist him/herself. The books published by the little presses provide the purest form of poetry in the way in which they are the poets' uncensored statement. Indeed, the

editors and poets were artists, not manufacturers, and their books were intended to be treated as works of art.

Chapter Two

The Time and Place for Revolution: Montreal

What makes a literature is the contact between one poet and another, between one generation and another. Poets breed by scission. Even when they disagree, they learn, and stimulate one another. Nothing stimulates a beginning poet more than the irritating activity of another poet in his vicinity. And once this local decoction has been started, it perpetuates itself -- it can hardly be stopped.¹

Writing in 1957, in his article on "The Montreal Poets," Louis Dudek points out, that it is unusual for Montreal to be the centre of such literary activity, since

although it is the largest city in Canada, Montreal is not a central metropolis in relation to this country in the way that Paris or London are cultural capitals of their countries. The thin ribbon of Canadian life stretching along the border of the U.S. from Pacific to Atlantic could hardly have a physical centre of any kind. The bow of the ribbon is really in southern Ontario, and Toronto is the economic knot that keeps it neatly tied. Montreal, moreover, is predominantly French in population, so that poetry in English would hardly be expected to find its natural home here. The English-reading audience for poetry in this city is veritably non-existent, and the newspapers habitually ignore poetry in their review pages. How does it happen, then, that Montreal has sprung forth a whole branch of twentieth-century poetry in English within the last three decades?²

¹Dudek, Louis. "The Montreal Poets" in Stevens, Peter. *The McGill Movement*. 8.

²*Ibid.* 7.

How does it happen, then, that Montreal has sprung forth a whole branch of twentieth-century poetry in English within the last three decades?²

Given these facts, why is it, then, that Canadian modernist poetry chose to be born and raised in Montreal? Or, as Michael Gnarowski has put it, why is it that "the vortex of literary activity has chosen to spin in Montreal"? (Gnarowski "The Role of the 'Little Magazines'" 213).

The question is an intriguing one; attempting to answer it involves untangling a complex web of interrelationships between the place and the poets who have lived there. It involves considering the place where a number of the poets first came together -- McGill University and later Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) and the one or two unique

²*Ibid.* 7.

professors like Harold Files³ and Neil Compton,⁴ who not only provided a stimulating environment in which their students and colleagues might work but who also brought like-minded individuals together in order to achieve greater goals.

It involves remembering that when modernism began in Canada, the war was very fresh in the minds of Canadians, who were still reeling from its impact, politically, economically, and culturally. Huge numbers of poets and artists moved left in their political leanings toward the development of a new political party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.), one of whose leading lights was

³Professor Harold Files was born in Boston, Mass. May 10, 1894; he attended Harvard University where he received his B.A. (1915), M.A. (1916) and Ph.D. (1923). His field of research was English Mysticism, Literature of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Files took up a teaching position at McGill University in 1923. He was an open-minded individual who encouraged creativity and experimental writing. He had a passion for creative writing and was supportive of A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and John Sutherland, among others, in the beginning of their literary careers. He was a long-serving member of the department of English at McGill and although he was made Acting Chairman on a couple of occasions, and had every right to expect to assume the position on a permanent basis, he was passed over in favour of a Chair brought in from the United Kingdom, which was the tradition at McGill under the authoritarian practices of its Principal, Cyril James.

⁴Neil Compton was another extremely open-minded and enthusiastic individual and teacher. He was born in Montreal August 4, 1920, and undertook a B.A. at McGill University in 1943. He served in the Canadian Army from 1943-1946, after which he completed an M.A. at the London School of Economics in 1948. He became a lecturer at Sir George Williams University (1947-8) and taught at McGill in 1951-52 during the same time as Louis Dudek; in fact the two shared an office in Moyse Hall. Compton was severely stricken with polio during the early fifties, but he continued on to become head of the English department at Sir George Williams University from 1952 to 1969. He contributed to making the department an extremely lively and interesting place for writers and poets.

poet/lawyer F.R. Scott,⁵ or further left, toward Marxist Communism. At the same time, there was a shift in the way in which poetry was viewed -- a change that moved from poets reflecting the landscape or contributing to building a national consciousness to poets inciting political change and startling audiences into awareness of the social and political and economic strife that surrounded them.

In Montreal, in particular, that strife was particularly apparent because of the fact that it was the port which, after the war, welcomed huge numbers of immigrants who settled where they arrived. As a result, the city became a kaleidoscope of diverse communities and ghettos -- the French, the English; the Jews; the Catholics, the Protestants; the Irish, the Greeks; the wealthy, the poor...each group had its own part of Montreal with streets serving as boundary markers that separated it from the next.

This, in turn, contributed to the city's unique air of cosmopolitanism, with all the various older European influences being brought to bear on its architecture, streets, markets and courtyards; its magnificent churches that tower above everything, and its people's seemingly innate sense of taste and flair...all these factors and the way in which they shaped the lives of the poets in question contributed, in varying degrees, to Montreal becoming the dominant centre of modern literary activity in Canada, beginning in the thirties and forties and spanning the following three decades.

⁵Scott organized the League for Social Reconstruction, in 1932, with Frank Underhill. He was a regular contributor to *Social Planning for Canada*, the League's publication. Scott was the League's President from 1935-6. He was national chairman of the C.C.F. from 1942 to 1950.

It involves, also, considering the work of A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein and Leo Kennedy, who, in their work on *The McGill Fortnightly Review* and *The Canadian Mercury*, not only established a new literary outlet for poets and writers in the form of the little magazine but who also managed to establish enough momentum to allow for their endeavors be taken up and refined and developed in the hands of the second generation of modernist poets, Patrick Anderson, John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, and later Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse.

* * *

The first generation of Canadian modernist poets came together at Canada's most prestigious, internationally-known university -- McGill University -- during the mid 1920's. They were A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein and Leo Kennedy. Their backgrounds could not be more different, which seems to be a prerequisite for important and big changes to take place.

During the 1920's, Montreal was Canada's largest city. St. James Street was the equivalent of New York's Wall Street; it housed Canada's largest and most powerful financial institutions, including the Bank of Montreal, the Canada Life Insurance Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway.⁶ McGill University, at the time, was Canada's most prestigious academic centre.

⁶Windsor Station was at the foot of Peel Street.

A.J.M. Smith was a young student doing a science degree at McGill University.⁷ He was also a poet and in 1925 was a regular contributor to *The McGill Daily*, the university's newspaper.⁸ He was responsible for beginning and editing a special four-page "Literary Supplement" which was incorporated into the newspaper on Wednesdays between October 8th, 1924 to March 11, 1925 (Dudek & Gnarowski 24). One young student who contributed a story and a poem to its pages was F.R. Scott.⁹

⁷Smith was born in Westmount where he attended high school until 1918, when he moved to England. He returned to Montreal in 1920, graduated from high school and began a B.Sc. at McGill University, which he completed in 1925. He completed an M.A. in English in 1926 and began his Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. His Ph.D. Thesis was entitled "The Metaphysical Poets of the Anglican Church in the 17th Century." He received the degree in 1931.

⁸*The McGill Daily Literary Supplement* was published for eighteen issues from October 8, 1924 to March 11, 1925.

⁹By 1925, Scott had already won a Rhodes Scholarship to attend Oxford University in England. There, he fulfilled the requirements of a B.A. (1922) and a B.Litt degree (1923). After he returned to Canada he began a career as a teacher at Lower Canada College in Montreal (1923-24) which proved unfulfilling. He decided against pursuing teaching and writing poetry as possible careers because he felt the call to do public service. Sandra Djwa recalls him stating that "service to the nation provides me with a philosophy of work." With the intention of pursuing politics to fulfill this aspiration, Scott decided to enroll in the Faculty of Law at McGill (Fall, 1924). He graduated in 1926, with a BCL, was called to the bar (1927) and eventually began teaching at McGill University (1928). From 1961 to 64, Scott was Dean of Law. He also served as technical-aide representative for the United Nations in 1952, and as a member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism from 1963-1971. He was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1947 and, in 1962, was recognized with the Lorne Pierce Medal for service to Canadian literature. In 1967, he was presented with a Molson Prize for achievement in the arts, humanities and social sciences. He also won a Canada Council Translation Prize for his translation work for *Poems of French Canada* (1977) and a Governor General's Award for *The Collected Poems of F.R. Scott* (1981).

Having recently returned to Montreal from Oxford and having been steeped in European history and culture and developments in labour rights in England particularly, Scott was disturbed by what he perceived as the backwardness of the city and the short-sightedness of those who controlled its wealth. In an entry made in his diary for December 23, 1923, he writes

So many things about me in our civic and national life here simply make me angry -- McGill, American influence blindly copied, rotten press...dirty civic official life and very questionable politics in Ottawa, CPR officials being directors of McGill and generally considered to be worthy of authority in education because they have made money in other lines, the whole acceptance of business as an end in itself -- all these things weigh upon me as though they were my own wrongs (as in a sense they are) and I find it hard to be cheerful at heart." (Scott, F.R. Unpublished Diary. In Djwa 68)

Consequently, when the bureaucracy at McGill determined to establish an American hospitality society at the University, Scott wrote a letter of protest which he contributed to *The McGill Daily Literary Supplement*. According to Sandra Djwa, the "next day he was approached by two students, A.J.M. Smith and Allan Latham,¹⁰ the past and present editors of the *Supplement*, asking him to join its editorial board. Revealing the poet's need for a familiar and supportive

¹⁰Allan B. Latham was a senior student at McGill, studying economics. He resigned during the second year of the *Fortnightly's* publication because his father was a professor in the English department at McGill and was thus vulnerable to retribution by the university's administration who were upset at the little magazine's critical treatment of them.

environment, in which people who shared similar views and aspirations moved, Scott declared, in his diary, that it was an "invitation I was only too glad to accept" (Djwa 82). The first step toward literary change had been accomplished -- Scott and Smith had been brought together. Within a few weeks, however, the funds for the journal were withdrawn and the poets were left at loose ends.¹¹

Determined not to give in, Smith, Scott and Latham set about a new literary venture. Scott was convinced that "it [was] high time someone stood definitely on something in the great mass tides at McGill" (Unpublished Diary. 25 October 1925. In Djwa 83). Within a month the three men had banded together with A.P.R. Coulborn¹² and Leon Edel¹³ and had put together the first issue of the

¹¹The spirit of *The McGill Daily Literary Supplement* disturbed the rather conservative values of the University administration. Thus, when A.J.M. Smith published a poem by Aldous Huxley about "spermatozoa", the University withdrew the journal's publication funds. In his review of *The McGill Daily*, Leon Edel writes

the verse was modern, the reviews collegiate-smart, and Smith also used choice quotations. I remember his reprinting Aldous Huxley's poem about a billion spermatozoa, which caused a shudder of delight on the campus, and horror in the offices of the walrus-moustaches...[The supplement] was unique among college dailies with their inanities of the time, the jazz age of the twenties. So unique indeed that the students' council withdrew the grant the following year -- on grounds of economy. That was the excuse. We knew it was the word *spermatozoa* that had frightened them" (Edel, Leon. "When McGill Modernized Canadian Literature" 114-5).

¹²A.P.R. Coulborn was studying history at McGill; he was from England.

¹³At the time, Leon Edel was a third-year English student at McGill; he assumed the role of managing editor. Later he was to become recognized internationally for his biography of Henry James. Because of the *Fortnightly's* critical stance against the university's administration, Edel resigned during its second year in order to continue to receive a teaching fellowship.

McGill Fortnightly Review,¹⁴ which appeared on November 21st, 1925.¹⁵

The editors determined that the magazine was to be independently financed solely by subscriptions which they sold for a dollar, while individual issues were sold for ten cents apiece. There would be no advertising.

The first editorial to be published in the new journal established that it was a magazine of "independent opinion" -- that would reflect the "new and more lively spirit of criticism"¹⁶ that, according to the editors, existed among the students on the McGill campus. That spirit of criticism was revealed in the pages of the *Fortnightly* in poems, articles challenging the university establishment and literary essays.

The little magazine was proven effective when, after only two issues, Sir Arthur Currie, the McGill principal, summoned Smith and Scott to his office to suggest they needed a board of advisers to "help" them. Scott demurred; the *Fortnightly* was an independent publication controlled solely by its editorial board. Scott was further outraged when he discovered that Currie contacted the Intelligence Bureau at Ottawa to request records on speakers who were invited to

¹⁴ Two McGill University faculty members contributed to the first issue -- Stephen Leacock offered a year's subscription -- the fee of one dollar -- and an article on the role of the little magazines. Eugene Forsey contributed an article, entitled "After the Ball Was Over."

¹⁵ There is some discrepancy as to when the first issue of the *Fortnightly* actually appeared. Patricia Morley incorrectly sets the date as December 5th, 1925 (Morley 53), while Sandra Djwa correctly asserts that it is November 21, 1925 (Djwa 83).

¹⁶ *The McGill Fortnightly Review* 1:1 (November 21st, 1925) 1-2.

give lectures at McGill so that he might warn the students of their reputations.¹⁷ Scott reacted violently against such suppression of voice or idea. He was determined, along with Smith and his fellow editors, to challenge the status quo and provide a forum in which freedom of thought and expression was supported.

It was not only the bureaucracy of the university that Smith and Scott challenged in *The McGill Fortnightly Review*; the state of Canadian poetry was always of primary concern. Poets themselves and educated abroad, both men were keenly aware and pleased with the new modern poetry that was being produced by such writers as T.S. Eliot, Wilfred Owen, H.D., D.H. Lawrence, Edith Sitwell, W.B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens. At the same time, while they might have been less familiar with the Confederation poets Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and Archibald Lampman, etc., they rejected their Victorianism and conservatism and the tie these writers represented to a colonial parent and tradition.

Furthermore, during the 1920's, the Canadian Author's Association was firmly entrenched in its program to boost Canadian writers and subjects which resulted in the propagation of a great deal of bad poetry that was sentimental in its nationalism. Reacting to this, in Volume 11 of *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, published on February 18th, 1927, Smith and Scott write.

¹⁷Currie eventually saw Scott as being someone the students should be warned against; a file was created on him which is referred to in a letter from Colonel Bovey, Currie's aide-de-camp, to the Intelligence Bureau in Ottawa (Letter from Wilfrid Bovey to Major General J.H. MacBrien, December 17th, 1932, McGill Archives).

Canadian literature -- if there be such a thing -- is overburdened with dead traditions and outworn forms. We are a pitiful extension of the Victorians. If a living, native literature is to arise we must discover our own souls, and before that can happen a mass of debris has to be removed. No better helps in this task can be found than amongst our contemporaries in England and America.¹⁸

Sensing the need for change in Canadian poetry, Smith came to the conclusion that the modern movement was anti-romantic and anti-nationalist; consequently he moved away from writing poetry that relied on subjects and themes that were specifically Canadian in favour of the more cosmopolitan. In his seminal article on "Contemporary Poetry," which appeared in *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, December 15th, 1926, Smith writes

Poetry today must be the result of the impingement of modern conditions upon the personality and temperament of the poet. Some have been awakened to a burning enthusiasm by the spectacle of a new era; others are deeply disturbed by the civilization of a machine-made age. Some have heard music in the factory whistle; others have turned aside into solitude that they might the better hearken to the still small voice.

But however much contemporary poets may differ in their estimate of the value of our civilization, the peculiar conditions of the time have forced them all to seek a new and more direct expression, to perfect a finer technique.

¹⁸Unsigned editorial. *The McGill Fortnightly Review*. 11:6 (February 18th, 1927) 41.

Later, he continues:

What is the new poetry and wherein does it differ from the old? The difference is not solely one of form. It is not solely one of diction...all these have been ruthlessly removed from the diction of contemporary poetry. The result was that the new work spoke to people in their own language, and the difference between the new poetry and that to which it is a reaction, though most obvious as a change in form, is something at once deeper and more fundamental. As Miss Harriet Monroe has put it, "The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life; it would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness found in all classics not of the first order. It is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent than most poetry of the Victorian period and much work of earlier periods. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity -- an ideal which

implies an individual, unstereotyped rhythm."¹⁹

Scott, too, was convinced of the need for change, although, unlike Smith, he did not feel the need to abandon things "Canadian" in order to accomplish it. His view of the literary scene is recorded in his famous poem, "The Canadian Authors Meet," which he wrote during a meeting of the Canadian Authors' Association in 1927.²⁰ According to Sandra Djwa, in addition to

pinpoint[ing] the technical weaknesses and the sentimental nationalism that vitiated much contemporary Canadian poetry...the poem also demonstrates the critical double bind in which Scott and Smith, by the accident of time

¹⁹Smith's views on poetry culminate in another significant article, "Wanted: Canadian Criticism," which was published two years after *The McGill Fortnightly Review* ended (in *The Canadian Forum*, April 1928). In it, Smith argues that commerce and art cannot, and must not, be confused if the latter is not to be compromised. He states that

without a body of critical opinion to hearten and direct them, Canadian writers are like a leaderless army. They find themselves in an atmosphere of materialism that is only too ready to seduce them from their allegiance to art and with an audience that only wishes to be flattered...

What are the tasks that await such a criticism?

First and foremost, as a sort of preliminary spade-work, the Canadian writer must put up a fight for freedom in the choice and treatment of his subject. Nowhere is puritanism more disastrously prohibitive than among us, and it seems, indeed, that desperate methods and dangerous remedies must be resorted to, that our condition will not improve until we have been thoroughly shocked by the appearance in our midst of a work of art that is at once successful and obscene.

This notion is echoed by Louis Dudek several years later in his doctoral dissertation, entitled *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature* and is the fundamental driving force and principal that lies behind the creation of little magazines and little presses.

²⁰The meeting was held at the Ritz Carlton Hotel on Sherbrooke Street. The poem, "The Canadian Authors Meet," was published in the final issue of the *Fortnightly*, April 27th, 1927.

and place, were inevitably caught. Both condemned the old romanticism, yet both, like most modern poets, were essentially romantic in sensibility.
(Djwa 92)

This, then, was what prevented Smith and Scott from going further. In the spring of 1927, after twenty issues had been produced, they published their last issue of *The McGill Fortnightly Review*.²¹ For both men it had been a bold and stimulating experience -- one that had challenged Canadian's preconceived ideas of the static and/or isolated nature of poetry -- one that for the first time established the importance of poetry as a means by which people might be excited into political action and to radical solutions that were of vital political and social reform. The journal had provided the vehicle by which the call for a new, modern poetry in Canada was sounded -- a poetry that reflected the reality of the time and place. And it had ensured that enough people were adequately disturbed by that call that a momentum toward change was established. While Smith eventually left

²¹The last issue of *The McGill Fortnightly Review* appeared on April 27th, 1927.

Montreal²² and Scott pursued a legal and political career rather than a uniquely literary one through *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, they had managed to shake up the literary and university establishment and in so doing, provided a new beginning for Canadian poetry.

The following year, 1928, Scott joined with Leo Kennedy to begin *The Canadian Mercury*. It was a "monthly journal of literature and opinion, of which seven issues appeared in 1928-9" (*Oxford Companion* 458). But that was yet to come.

Unlike Scott and Smith, who both lived in the better-off areas of west-end Montreal, Leo Kennedy had grown up poor and with little education. His background was Irish Catholic, and his family had moved from Liverpool Street in Griffintown (working-class Anglophone Montreal) to 3020 Rushbrooke Street, Verdun.²³

Rather than discovering poetry at an academic institution, as had Smith and Scott, Morley states that Kennedy had been introduced to the work of Charles Stuart Calverley by a janitor at one of his father's favorite watering holes, The

²²When he was in London, England, Smith spent a great deal of time in Harold Munro's avant-garde bookstore where he had discovered the new modern British poets of the day to whom he gravitated. After he graduated from McGill in 1926 he received a fellowship to do a Ph.D. on seventeenth-century poets under Sir Herbert Grierson in Edinburgh. Then he moved to the United States to take up a professorship at the University of Michigan.

²³Verdun was an area that was known to have a predominantly working-class Irish, Anglophone population.

Moose Club, on St. Denis, which "provided its members with a place to drink, especially on Sundays when public taverns were closed" (Morley 38). By the time he was seventeen, Kennedy had sold his first poem, for a dollar, to the *Montreal Star* and had contributed numerous pieces to "Margaret Currie's Mail" column in the same newspaper.²⁴ For Kennedy, these pieces provided an outlet for his reactions to the city and the world in which he lived. According to Morley,

Leo wrote scores of Oliver sketches in 1925 and was still a frequent contributor in the first eight months of 1926. He was, in effect, an unpaid newspaper columnist read by thousands of Montrealers. "Currie's Mail" provided a useful sounding-board for a youth who loved polemic and parody yet who could be deeply moved by a sunset or the wind in the trees. In "O Canada" he sang the praises of his own dear land; all other countries were alien....In "Our Literature" [he] attacked the popular literature of the day as contemptible. It was inevitable that Leo's iconoclastic columns would bring him to the notice of the young men at McGill who wanted change" (41)

It was Louis Schwartz, who had also contributed to Margaret Currie's Mailbag, who made contact with Kennedy, meeting him for the first time at the Traymore Cafeteria, which was in a basement on St. Catherine near Peel Street. Schwartz

²⁴Kennedy signed his pieces "Oliver" (Morley 39).

eventually became a close friend and mentor to Kennedy.²⁵

Wanting to further his education, Kennedy applied to the department of English at the Montreal branch of Laval University (now the Université de Montréal). The chairman at the time was Dr. W.H. Atherton, who "was so impressed with the young man that he helped to convince the authorities that Leo had completed high school. This was fraud, pure and simple, but fraud in a good cause" (Morley 50). Kennedy studied there for the following year or two, but became increasingly upset by the rampant anti-Semitism that existed on campus. Morley reports that

Racist graffiti decorated the walls of the urinals, and parades down St. Catherine Street where anti-Semitic posters were common. Racist feelings were not limited to posters; students would walk, eight abreast, screaming abuse at Jews. Law enforcement officers did little to interrupt them, since anti-Semitism was also strong among the police. (50)

Kennedy's two closest friends were Jews -- Louis Schwartz and Abraham Klein.²⁶ They were both enrolled in the faculty of law and had grown up in a neighborhood similar to Kennedy's. Kennedy felt a natural sympathy with them. He remarks

²⁵Schwartz founded the Abelard Press in New York during the 1940s. Kennedy introduced Schwartz to a Detroit bookseller and publisher, Schumann, who was a distant relation to Kennedy's second wife. Schwartz took over Schumann's business becoming Abelard Schumann Press (London and New York), which published medical and scientific books.

²⁶Kennedy also married a Jew -- Miriam Carpin -- in the fall of 1929. Their marriage was celebrated by Klein in the poem, "Christian Poet and Hebrew Maid."

You see I was, to a considerable extent, raised by Jews on Roy Street. Jews were very kind to me. We lived in a barn of a place over a stable that was full of rats. I remember a rat jumping over my mother's shoulder as she opened a cupboard. Roy Street was then a Jewish working-class neighbourhood. Now it's Greek...I was a *shabbas goy*.²⁷

Schwartz was also night editor of *The McGill Daily* at the time, so it was he who introduced Kennedy to A.J.M. Smith -- a meeting that occurred at the *Fortnightly* group's favorite watering hole, The Pig and Whistle. And, through Smith, of course, Kennedy came to know F.R. Scott.

Kennedy's final "Oliver" piece appeared in the *Montreal Star* on August 31, 1926, after which he submitted his work to *The McGill Fortnightly Review*.²⁸

Kennedy recalls that Smith was the acknowledged leader of the *Fortnightly*. He has remarked "I liked Frank better, but I esteemed Arthur more, and thought him a better poet and critic."²⁹

Kennedy found *The Fortnightly* group to be a constant source of support and inspiration. In "The Shrouding Revisited"³⁰ he writes

Abe Klein noted his poems on cigarette packages and wrote them at his mother's kitchen table in the Montreal ghetto. I said my poems in my head walking alone on windy nights between the Verdun Tailrace and the

²⁷Leo Kennedy to Patricia Morley, Ottawa, April 26th, 1980 (Morley 50).

²⁸Kennedy first appears in *The McGill Fortnightly Review* on November 3rd, 1926.

²⁹Kennedy, Leo. "The Shrouding Revisited." In *The Shrouding*. Ottawa: Golden Dog Press. Reprinted 1975.

³⁰*Ibid.*

father's house in what Edel has called the other ghetto. The creative process was lonely but the later comparing of metres was beery fun. We who wrote poetry in the bleak 20s and early 30s thrived on friendship as warm as a Quebec heater and the conviction that we would somehow survive to forty years, the age limit for any working poet.

Kennedy was the only poet to have his poetry published in the thirties. His collection, *The Shrouding*, was published by Macmillan in 1933.

Through Schwartz and Kennedy, A.M. Klein was also familiar with the *Fortnightly*. He was studying law at the Université de Montréal when he first submitted a poem to the magazine. Kennedy recalls that

he turned up...one day at the [McGill] Union and timidly offered -- as timidly as was possible for so ebullient a freshman -- a fine sonnet for the *Fortnightly*. Smith read it with feeling and emotion. He liked it. But, they said, what about the word "soul" in one of the lines? -- romantic, old-hat, an intrusion in an otherwise admirable piece of poetic declamation. I saw, watching the emotions on Klein's face: pride of authorship mingled with eagerness to be printed. He was in conflict. He wavered. He almost said yes -- and then suddenly pride of authorship won. It would have been a delight for him, a freshman, to make the *Fortnightly*. But he couldn't square revision with his pride. He took the poem back; and Scott and Smith, with their insistence on tone and modernity, didn't change their minds. Thus the *Fortnightly* did not print him. (Edel 119)

Although Smith and Scott rejected Klein's poem, they welcomed him into their now closely-knit group of poets and friends.

With Smith having departed to Scotland, Frank Scott and Leo Kennedy were left to launch *The Canadian Mercury*³¹ in December, 1928. Like its predecessor, *The McGill Fortnightly*, the editors determined to fund the publication independently, with the financial support of Louis Schwartz, and through subscriptions, which cost two dollars per year, or 25 cents per issue. It was to be a monthly journal of literature and opinion. Its opening editorial was written jointly by Kennedy, Felix Walter and Frank Scott. In his part,³² Scott asserts.

The Canadian Mercury is intended primarily for the younger writers in this country. The editors are all well under thirty and intend to remain so. We seek to ally with ourselves all those whose literary schooling has survived the Confederation, and whose thought and verse is not afraid of being called free.³³

The periodical was published for seven months, from December, 1928 to the summer of 1929 (June, 1929), when Schwartz tired of losing money and withdrew from the project.³⁴ Its editorial board was made up of Frank Scott, Felix Walter,

³¹The periodical's title was inspired by an American journal entitled the *American Mercury*. Its title page depicts a "plump, jovial Mercury thumbing his nose. The new periodical proposed to do just that to the establishment. Mercury was the patron of thieves and vagabonds as well as of science and commerce" (Morley 60).

³²Leo Kennedy marked his own copy, indicating which editor was responsible for writing which paragraphs.

³³*The Canadian Mercury* 1:1 (December 1928) 1.

³⁴At the time of the *Mercury's* demise, the *Canadian Forum* took over its subscribers' list.

Jean Burton³⁵ and Leo Kennedy. In addition to the work of the editors, the *Mercury's* list of contributors include A.J.M. Smith, Dorothy Livesay, Stephen Leacock, B.K. Sandwell³⁶ and Louise Morey Bowman. Leon Edel, who had been active on the *Fortnightly's* board, had relocated to Paris where he was doing research on Henry James at the Sorbonne. From there he sent articles that reported on the local scene which were published in the *Mercury* as "Montparnasse Letter" or "Montmartre Letter." Kennedy wrote back to Edel reporting on the progress of the *Mercury*, and telling him of its board's decision to work in opposition to the Canadian Authors' Association. He writes, "We are out to break the C.A.A. Every month commencing with April will present something-or-other - a poem, a diatribe -- sniping at the C.A.A."³⁷ The first attack was launched by Kennedy himself. In "The Future of Canadian Literature," which appeared in the first issue of *The Canadian Mercury*,³⁸ Kennedy writes

The Canadian Authors' Association, that pillar of flim-flam, is a stumbling block over which the aspiring younger Canadian writer must first climb before approaching his local Parnassus. Occasionally the country does produce an original youngster, but due to the existing reprehensible conditions, the country does not keep him long. Moving self-consciously

³⁵Burton was the only woman to be invited to be editor of the *Canadian Mercury*; she was from Saskatoon.

³⁶Sandwell later became editor of *Saturday Night* (1932-1951).

³⁷Letter from Leo Kennedy to Leon Edel dated Montreal, February 26th, 1929. Morley 62.

³⁸Volume 3, Leo Kennedy Papers, National Archives of Canada. Morley inaccurately states that the article appeared in the April, 1929 issue of the magazine. Dudek and Gnarowski correctly assert that it appeared in the December, 1928 issue.

among fatheads, his nationalism is severely chastened, and he invariably loses it. He is afraid of being called a Canadian Author, and invariably becomes an American novelist. No one can blame him.

With these points in mind it is difficult to consider Canada's literary future unaskance. It is apparent that Canadian literature -- and by that I mean books from Canada which will be definitely recognized by Europe and the United States -- will not readily be written by Canadian Authors. I have already alluded to the younger writers, and now shift my focus to them, since it is to these restless, dissatisfied and on the whole skeptical young people, that we must necessarily look.

Later on in the same article, Kennedy continues,

Concerned...with writing something which is true and enduring, desiring to declare what is fine and not necessarily best-selling, they will commence, and come in time to express themselves with gratifying clarity. They will approach the task of expression fortified by new ideas and original conceptions; they will learn the lesson of all precursors, discovering in a western grain field, a Quebec maison, or in a Montreal nightclub, a spirit and a consciousness distinctly Canadian. Just as the writers of the United States today are inclined to segregate, with Frost expressing New Hampshire and Sandburg exploiting Chicago, so I believe these younger Canadians when properly fledged will embrace this practice, and write each of the soul and scene of his own community. Only Whitman has comprehensively surveyed the whole American scene, and what is better the whole American consciousness. Only a Canadian Whitman, and by that

I mean a man of his genius and spiritual breadth, will correctly interpret the whole Canadian consciousness. Since Whitmans are purely accidents of birth, and may not be specifically begotten, these younger Canadians will continue their work of enlightenment and propagation, each striving at all times to be the national literary obermensch, and in due course will serve as a fitting background for this inevitable man. The emancipation of Canadian letters will have been contrived; Canada, in effect, will assume position among those nations contributing to the universal betterment, but as it is, Gentlemen, very certainly there may be no future for Canadian literature until Canadian literature as such, is recovered from its present affliction of infantile paralysis.

In this way, Kennedy firmly establishes the need for poets to focus, intensely, on the life and city that surrounds them. In doing so, he articulates the new set of criteria that Scott and Klein, in particular, were beginning to emulate, and that Irving Layton, Louis Dudek and John Sutherland, would later pursue. It was, after all, these writers who self-consciously moved away from building a nation for Canada in their writing, to rendering the city of Montreal in all its realism and colour (in a similar manner to Philip Surrey and Marion Dale Scott who painted the city). However, the time was not yet right for the next generation of modernists to begin their work -- other factors were still at play...and these are most clearly personified in the approach and activities of Frank Scott.

While Scott's sense of social injustice had been roused in his studies at Oxford in his study of R.H. Tawney's *The Acquisitive Society* and of the works of H.G. Wells, it was reinforced upon his return to Montreal, according to Sandra Djwa, by three closely linked events. These were: the sale of a municipal utility which had been purchased by Westmount Water Company at a fair market price and sold to Montreal at "an exorbitant price"; by the reaction of city officials that reacted to the deaths of seventy-five children in a fire at a city theater caused by exit doors that opened inwards instead of out, by banning children from theaters rather than enforcing safety regulations; and by the outbreak of a typhoid epidemic in Montreal, that was caused by a contaminated supply of milk caused by the city not enforcing a by-law that set standards for the pasteurization of milk; and "What was worse, the vaccine, patented by a large drug company, was to be sold in the city at the prohibitive cost of fifteen dollars per inoculation -- practically a month's wages for a domestic servant" (Djwa 95). In his diary, on May 2, 1926, Scott records the following:

I was in a palatial mansion this evening. All that wealth could purchase of beauty in pictures, hangings, carpets, furniture, china -- all that was there. Not a chair, but would sell for enough to feed a slum family for a month: not a picture but would provide a home for every beggar in Montreal.

In the house was a little, tired woman, with a magnificent gown and necklace of large pearls.

She had a cross as a pendant. And down in the Railway Shops men toiled half-naked round roaring fires, and beside clanging machinery, for hours a day at...cents an hour. And whenever he wanted to do so, the

husband of the tired woman with the pendant cross would tell these men there was no more work.³⁹

For Scott, the experience was a call to action. The question that remained was how might he most successfully and fully complete that goal -- as a lawyer, a politician, or as a writer?

He was influenced, then, by his father, Frederick George Scott,⁴⁰ who he recognized shared similar views on the injustices that existed in society, and by his father's friend, J.S. Woodsworth, with whom Scott had become familiar when the former had contributed an article on the Labour Party in Canada to *The McGill Fortnightly Review* and whom he heard speak at a meeting of the McGill Labour Club. Through Woodsworth, Scott was made familiar with the ideals of the Labour Party which Woodsworth stood for, and with which Scott resonated. His vision of the necessity of a new social order became clearer and more refined. He finally understood that

The modernist poet, like the socialist, has thought through present forms to a new and more suitable order. He is not concerned with destroying, but with creating, and being a creator he strikes terror into the hearts of the old

³⁹Scott, Frank. Diary. May 2, 1926. Djwa 95.

⁴⁰According to the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (1983), Frank Scott's father, Frederick George Scott, was born in Montreal in 1861; he received a B.A. (1881) and an M.A. (1884) from Bishop's College, Lennoxville, Quebec. He was ordained in 1886, appointed a canon in 1906 and archdeacon in 1925. He served as chaplain to the Canadian First Division during the First World War, after which he wrote his memoir, *The Great War As I Saw It* (1922). He became a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 1900.

and decrepit who cannot adjust themselves to that which is to be (Scott, F.R. "New Poems for Old: II -- The Revival of Poetry" 338)

It is in Frank Scott, then, that it is possible to see most clearly the impulse of poetry being used toward creative social revolution. And it is this impulse that informs the second generation of modernist poets. While Scott seems to have been unable to pursue that revolution through poetry alone, preferring to work professionally through the channels of law and politics, in his poetry he continued to satirize the social ills he saw around him, and he inspired and supported other poets and artists whom he saw as having similar ideals.

Already having the habit of being with like-minded people on a regular basis through his work on *The McGill Fortnightly Review* and the *Canadian Mercury*, Scott also moved in the artistic circle of Montreal because of his wife, Marian (Dale) Scott. Marian had studied under John Lyman at the Musée des Beaux Arts. There and at a regular salon that the Lymans held every Saturday evening, she and her husband Frank had come to know other modern artists such as Alfred Pellan, Jean Palardy and Jeannette and André Bieler. Again and again their discussion returned to the purpose of art and the increasing need for its power in society to be channeled toward social reform.

In a similar manner, the Scotts began to entertain poets and writers on a regular basis. After they moved to Oxenden Avenue in 1932, which was just a short distance from McGill University, their home became a haven to all who challenged the status quo and who wanted to contribute to the new society. According to Sandra Djwa,

At gatherings at Oxenden Avenue, poetry took its place with socialism and legal discussions. No one had much money, but that did not seem to impede having a good time. Parties were frequent and informal; beer was cheap and plentiful. On other occasions, less often, they would mix up a good punch with a gallon of alcohol from the Quebec Liquor Board. The large living room on Oxenden Avenue was lined with low bookshelves, painted blue. There were paintings hanging on the walls. A gramophone would play the new orthophonic records; the large punch bowl or beer was set out and chairs pushed back for an evening of talk and dance...All who came to the Scotts' were young and full of energy, with high aims for Canada's future. (124-5)

It was at these gatherings and the ones that ensued after the Scotts moved to 451 Clarke Avenue, that discussions of poetry, art and politics, intermixed, as writers, politicians, lawyers and artists gathered and challenged each other's ideas. Scott also threw parties to celebrate the publication of new books, or after lectures or readings.

A.J.M. Smith attended, when he returned from Edinburgh before leaving for the United States; as did A.M. Klein, Leon Edel, Dorothy Livesay, Leo Kennedy, and eventually the *Preview* group: Patrick Anderson, P.K. Page, Robert Finch, and the *First Statementers*: John Sutherland, Irving Layton, and Louis Dudek. John Glassco went to Frank Scott's, as did Anne Hébert. Dr. Norman Bethune also attended, and so did Brooke Claxton and the Reverend J. King Gordon; and artists already mentioned, such as John Lyman and his wife, Pegi

Nicol, Edwin Holgate, as well as Philip and Margaret (Day) Surrey, Betty (Sutherland) Layton and Patrick Anderson's wife, Peggy Anderson.

The gatherings were stimulating and no doubt a great deal of fun. But their importance should not be underestimated in the manner in which they provided individuals who were on the fringes of society -- those who might otherwise have remained in isolation -- with a safe place to mingle with like-minded individuals who, in turn, both challenged and supported their ideas, refining and solidifying them in the process.

In addition to the parties at the Scotts', regular literary gatherings and readings took place at McGill University. There Louis Dudek met Irving Layton as well as Professor Harold G. Files, a unique individual who went out of his way to support and encourage his students in their writing. It was Files who suggested that Dudek introduce himself to John Sutherland, who was beginning a new little magazine ...so it was through this conduit that *First Statement* magazine and press was begun.

Nearly thirty years later, Sir George Williams University became enormously important in supporting Montreal's community of poets and writers. Under the direction of its chairman Neil Compton, the English department became a lively and stimulating place, and a haven for writers. Abe Ram taught there, as did Wynne Francis (who had done an M.A. under Louis Dudek), George

Bowering and Michael Gnarowski.⁴¹ Leonard Cohen was a visitor as were Milton Acorn, Alden Nowlan, Eli Mandel and Leon Edel. The department sought out creative individuals and supported their work. When Henry Miller, Robert Creeley, Cid Corman, Charles Olson and others were making their mark in the United States, the English department at Sir George Williams made their influence welcome.

Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, and many others hosted regular gatherings at their homes. Later, Ron Everson, a wealthy businessman who combined business and poetry and who was associated with Delta Canada Press, entertained poets and artists at his penthouse apartment, The Towers, 4855 Côte-Saint-Luc, and at the Montreal Press Club, which was in the Mount Royal Hotel (now gone).

An unusual array of poets and artists have passed through Montreal, including Milton Acorn, George Bowering, Hugh Hood, Al Purdy, Earle Birney, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje...to name but a few. As Louis Dudek has remarked

What makes a literature is the contact between one poet and another, between one generation and another. Poets breed by scission. Even when they disagree, they learn, and stimulate one another. Nothing stimulates a

⁴¹It was at McGill University that Gnarowski came into contact with Glen Siebrasse, with whom he was to begin the important little magazine, *Yes*, and the Delta Canada Press. Later, at Sir George Williams University he came to know poets Peter Van Toorn, (Delta Canada published *Leeway Grass* in 1970), Michael Harris (*Text for Nausikaa* was published by Delta Canada in 1970), and Stephen Scobie (*In the Silence of the Year* was published in 1971). It was when he was there, also, that Gnarowski began corresponding with Peter Stevens, who was to eventually publish *The McGill Movement* (Toronto: Ryerson 1969).

beginning poet more than the irritating activity of another poet in his vicinity. And once this local decoction has been started, it perpetuates itself -- it can hardly be stopped ("The Montreal Poets" 10)

But much of that was still to come.

In May, 1936, an anthology of poetry edited by Scott and Smith was finally published. It was entitled *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*, and it was the first modernist anthology of poetry to be published in Canada. It continued the work of six poets -- that of the editors themselves as well as poems by A.M. Klein, E.J. Pratt, Robert Finch and Leo Kennedy.

Scott's preface⁴² which is, in itself, a bit of a manifesto, reads as follows:

What has been described as the "new poetry" is now a quarter of a century old. Its two main achievements have been a development of new techniques and a widening of poetic interest beyond the narrow range of the late Romantic and early Georgian poets. Equipped with a freer diction and more elastic forms, the modernists sought a content which would more vividly express the world about them.

⁴²Originally, A.J.M. Smith wrote the "Preface" for the anthology, but it was rejected by E.J. Pratt and Robert Finch. Consequently, Scott wrote a mini replacement preface that was published in 1936. A text of Smith's "Rejected Preface" appeared in *Canadian Literature* 24 (Spring 1965) and is reprinted in a varied form in Dudek & Gnarowski's *The Making of Modern Poetry* as well as in *Towards a View of Canadian Letters* (Vancouver 1973) 170-3. It is reprinted in the 1976 edition of the anthology *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*, edited by Michael Gnarowski (xxvii-xxxii). The original preface has still to be published.

This search for new content was less successful than had been the search for new techniques, and by the end of the last decade the modernist movement was frustrated for want of direction. In this, poetry was reflecting the aimlessness of its social environment.

In confronting the world with the need to restore order out of social chaos, the economic depression has released human energies by giving them a positive direction. The poet today shares in this release, and contemporary English and American verse as a consequence shows signs of regaining the vitality it had lost.

The poems in this collection were written for the most part when new techniques were on trial, and when the need for a new direction was more apparent than the knowledge of what that direction would be. *New Provinces* contains work which has had significance for the authors in the evolution of their own understanding.

Here again then, is that push toward a new vision of art and poetry -- one that demands that the writer be sensitive to the turmoil that surrounds him and that he reflect it, simply and realistically, in his work, with the goal of inciting political action and social change. In Montreal, in the late twenties, with the crash of the stock market (1929) and the ensuing deluge of bankruptcies, widespread unemployment and the beginning of the Great Depression, that change was more than necessary. It was begun by the collaboration of F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, A.M. Klein and Leo Kennedy. And it was taken up, later, by first the *Preview* group, of which, again, Scott was a member, along with Bruce Ruddick, Neufville Shaw, Margaret Day, A.M. Klein, P.K. Page, and their leader Patrick Anderson,

and then by the *First Statement* editors, who consisted of John Sutherland, Louis Dudek and Irving Layton.

What brought these writers together? Ultimately, it was a common need to work against social injustice, to record, self-consciously, the place and time in which they lived, and to pursue poetry.

Montreal offered all these things -- through the early and middle parts of the century, it was a cosmopolitan, tumultuous place made up of fragments of various ethnic groups and fired by enormous political and economic upheaval. It was a place of oppositions and diversity, where the very rich lived in the west while the very poor lived in the east; where the Roman Catholic tradition collided with the Protestant and where the Jewish community battled for recognition; where the Anglophone minority dominated the Francophone majority; and where McGill University and later Sir George Williams University provided a common meeting ground on which these groups might coalesce.

It was these very oppositions that fanned the spark of modernism in Canada as the tensions they created etched themselves on the brains of the poets who would later articulate them and drive them forward. As Irving Layton has stated it

Normal human vileness, philistine materialism, racial prejudice, anti-Semitism, hypocrisy and the relentless pursuit of ass in parliaments, universities, Salvation Army hostels, editorial offices, courthouses, hospitals and morgues -- out of this glorious fecund rubbish heap and out of occasional glimpses of beauty, goodness and mercy I have made my poems. I have dipped my broomstick into the life swirling around me and

written it into the hearts and speech of men. Yahoos, sex-drained executives, pimps and poetasters, limping critics, graceless sluts and the few, the rare few, who gave me moments of insight or ecstasy: I am crazy enough to think I have given them immortality. They will, I hope, never die. Not, anyhow, for as long as style and passion are still valued; or the language which these have sometimes tinged with vitality and distinction....A poet has his images and symbols handed to him very early in life; his later poems are largely explorations he makes into the depths of his unconscious to unravel their meanings. Incontrovertibly my earliest impressions have coloured everything I've ever written. ("Foreword")⁴³

⁴³Layton, Irving. "Foreword." *The Collected Poems of Irving Layton*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. 1971.

Chapter Three

The Evolution of First Statement Press

Some way must be found to keep the budding young poet alive and excited in this large untrammelled world of ours, there to learn the heartbreaking meanings of suffering, joy, lust, guilt, and love: anyway, to experience them at first hand even if he never quite makes out what the whole show adds up to.¹

May it not be that the actual environment is even more essential in the case of poetry? Does not the poet work upon everyday things so as to extract their essence and give them back to us in more concentrated meaningful form? Does he not, therefore, have more to tell us about common ideas and feelings than the prose writer possibly can?²

John Sutherland was born in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, on February 21, 1919. His mother (Lois (Parker) Sutherland) died of tuberculosis in 1926. When Sutherland was seven, he went to live with his grandparents; his father (Frederick Sutherland) moved John and his sister Betty to Saint John, New Brunswick in 1930, when he remarried (Dorothy McNicholl) whom Sutherland did not like. He writes, "At no time, when I lived with relations, did I have a settled or really happy life; and there were long periods spent in traveling when I had no home and no family of any kind" ("Myself" n.p.).

In 1936, Sutherland enrolled at Queen's University for the fall semester.

¹Layton, Irving. "The Creative Process." In Glassco, John. Ed. *English Poetry in Quebec. Proceedings of the Foster Poetry Conference*. October 12-4 1963. Montreal: McGill U P 1965. 40.

²Sutherland, John. "Introduction" *Other Canadians* 55-6.

He completed one year of a general B.A. program, but illness prevented him from continuing. Back in New Brunswick, during the summer of 1937, doctors diagnosed him as having tuberculosis of the kidney, a condition that continued to attack his health during most of his life.

He was treated at Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital for five months (July 3 to November 5), and, according to Bruce Whiteman,³ when he was discharged, he was forced to remain in bed for the following three years. During that time, Sutherland developed an interest in literature.

Again, in "Myself," he reports

The fact that I was obliged to stay in bed severed about almost my last bond that I had with people. The self simply had to be important because something had to nourish me; I knew almost no people. I had barely an activity of any kind. The loss of freedom, during the period that I spent in bed, convinced me that I had a special niche all my own.

From the start, Sutherland's literary preference appears to have been for modernist poetry. Alfred Bailey, the poet, recalls reading poems aloud to him, especially T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." Bruce Whiteman reports that P.K. Page visited Sutherland in 1938 or 39 at which time she recalls "they exchanged poems and read aloud Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven' and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" (Whiteman, "Intro" x). Dudek also reports that during his convalescence, Sutherland developed a vociferous appetite for Shakespeare.⁴

³Whiteman reports that this information is recorded in File 4642, Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital Records, which are in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, RS631. Whiteman, *The Letters of John Sutherland 1942-1956*. Toronto: ECW. 1992. x.

⁴Interview with Louis Dudek August 29, 1998.

Sutherland's readings led him to enroll in an English degree program at McGill University in Montreal in 1941. Shortly after he arrived, he took an English composition course taught by Dr. Harold G. Files, an English professor who actively encouraged student writers and who, indirectly, had a positive impact on the careers of a number of Canadian poets.⁵ Through Dr. Files, Sutherland came in touch with several other keen writers and students, many of whom appear in an unpublished anthology of poems collected by the professor, entitled "McGill's Younger Poets: An Anthology of Student Verse 1939-1945". The collection gathers some of the earliest work of eighteen poets, including Louis Dudek, Irving Layton and Bruce Ruddick, Audrey Aikman,⁶ Mary Margaret Miller, Anthony Frisch, Dennis Gibling and John Sutherland.⁷ It also served as the beginnings of a literary network for Sutherland from which he drew as editor of *First Statement* magazine and press. It would appear that it was this network of associations, rather than the academic climate of McGill, that inspired him. Again, for health reasons, he withdrew from the university after only four months.⁸

Sutherland's literary network was enlarged through his friendship with, and later marriage (on November 27th, 1943) to Audrey Aikman. Between 1942-43, Aikman was poetry editor of *Forge*, a literary magazine published by

⁵See Chapter 2, footnote 3, page 37 for more details.

⁶Audrey Aikman married John Sutherland.

⁷Among the less prominent members of the group, several went on to literary ventures: Bruce Ruddick, for example, became an editor of *Preview* magazine. Anthony Frisch settled in Toronto and edited an anthology of poetry. Dennis Gibling contributed to Raymond Souster's magazine, *Direction*.

⁸According to Raymond Souster, "John Sutherland enrolled at McGill and only his contracting consumption cut short his academic career. After that he was strong enough only to work part-time" (Souster, Raymond "Editorial Comments" Letter to the Author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

McGill students. Mary Margaret Miller was also involved with the magazine at that time, as was R.G. Simpson and Keith MacLellan (who later became a Canadian ambassador). Like Sutherland, these poets felt that poetry should be more closely associated with daily life and should express a more colloquial language than that used by previous generations. It was with these writers, then, that Sutherland began his editorial career.

Montreal, in the 1940's, was a place and a time ripe for Sutherland's ambitions. Canada was coming out of the depression and was enjoying renewed prosperity stimulated by the war and war industries. A great sense of national excitement was in the air. Canadian culture was finally being recognized as an important part of nurturing a sense of national identity, with the result of the initiation of the Governor General's Literary Awards (1936) and the establishment, in 1938, of the CBC's lecture series on Canadian literature.⁹ Alan Crawley began *Contemporary Verse*, in 1941; and, in 1949, the Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was established. These factors fostered an atmosphere conducive to poets. Consequently, there was a deluge of creative writing across the country. According to Desmond Pacey, "never before had there been so many interesting poets writing in Canada at one time" (124).

At the same time, the nature and aims of poetry were being challenged, and poetry, as a form, was being reconsidered in light of its responsibility to society (Pacey 185). Montreal, especially, was a crucible of poetic energy, with the majority of well-known Canadian poets passing through the city during the middle part of the century. Such outpouring of work by poets

⁹The CBC lectures on Canadian literature were called *Canadian Literature Today*; they were edited by E.K. Brown.

established the need for, and founding of, several little magazines. One of these was begun in 1942.

Preview was started by F.R. Scott and Patrick Anderson after they met at a tea given by Montreal poet Margaret Day.¹⁰ Anderson showed Scott a mimeographed poetry magazine he had edited when he was at Columbia, called *The Andersons*. Shortly after, when Anderson, Scott and Day were once again gathered, Scott said "I've got an idea, let's start a poetry magazine" (Margaret Day Surrey to Sandra Djwa. Interview, 24 April 1979). That magazine was *Preview*, and Anderson was its primary source of energy. The first issue's editorial board consisted of F.R. Scott, Margaret Day, Neufville Shaw and Bruce Ruddick. In the second issue, P.K. Page's name was added, and A.M. Klein joined with issue 19, several months later (although his poems appear as early as issue 5 (July, 1942)). A total of twenty-three issues of the magazine were published in the format of a mimeographed literary letter.

The magazine has been described by Munro Beattie as being the result of work by a group of writers who

shared certain literary and political convictions: they were socialist and anti-fashist; they believed in, and practised creative and experimental writing; they were bent upon achieving a synthesis between the lyric and didactic elements in modern verse, a combination of vivid, arresting imagery and the capacity to sing within social comment and criticism (751-84)

According to Sandra Djwa, "The mimeographed *Preview* was, as its name implies, not meant to offer a finished poetry but rather to provide an

¹⁰ After she married Phillip Surrey, Margaret Day became Margaret Surrey. Both were modern artists.

opportunity for practicing poets to *Preview* their own verse" (210). Second, most of the issues include poems devoted to the war effort and to controversies surrounding it, which suggests that, in line with new and developing notions of social conscience, *Preview* provided writers with a forum in which to investigate and challenge ideas of social responsibility.

In contrast, Michael Gnarowski contends that the war poetry in the magazine was written and included on the instigation of Patrick Anderson, whose role and task was to use the magazine as a propaganda piece for communist Marxist ideology. Gnarowski argues "this was expressed in a variety of ways, but mainly in celebratory poems by Anderson which sing the praises of the Red Army."¹¹

Several months after *Preview's* inception, *First Statement* appeared. The reasons for its beginning remain unconfirmed. However, in her article, "Montreal Poets of the Forties," Wynne Francis points to Sutherland's autobiographical story, "The Great Circle," as explanation. If "The Great Circle" is accepted as a real account of Sutherland's experiences, then, when the editors of *Preview* rejected a poem that he had submitted, he became determined to publish it himself. In fact, Elspeth Cameron reports that Sutherland was "stung with bitterness when some of his poems had been rejected by *Preview*" (136). Sandra Djwa goes further, reporting that some of the other "members of the executive [*First Statement*] had been rejected as members of the *Preview* group." These facts led her to the conclusion that "*First Statement* began in antithesis" (212). More recently, Brian Trehearne has noted that *First Statement* published its first issue after the sixth issue of

¹¹Interview with Michael Gnarowski, February 28th, 2000.

Preview appeared. He argues that "the *Preview* editors had only agreed to a run of six issues, so it seems likely that one motive for the establishment of *First Statement* was a sense of the imminent loss of the 'rival' journal" (31-2). He carries on to suggest that perhaps the *Preview* editors continued their magazine beyond its pre-established end out of a sense of growing competitiveness with *First Statement*.

Much has been written about the apparent rivalry between the *Preview*-ites and the *First Statement*-ers. All these positions are founded on the basis that, from the start, a strong antagonism existed between the two groups and between the two founding editors, Patrick Anderson and John Sutherland. In fact, many factors suggest otherwise.

Whether or not Sutherland's poems were rejected by *Preview* editors is difficult to establish. That there was clear definition between the two groups, *Preview* and *First Statement*, is irrefutable. However, despite differences in education, in cultural backgrounds, and in national and political leanings, it is clear that interaction between members of the two groups was generally friendly and supportive. Any sense of competition that existed between them was both positive and productive, energizing the "two distinct kinds of poetry being written in Montreal" (Gnarowski "The Role of 'Little Magazines'" 221).

Trehearne states, for example, that

the two editors had a competitive attitude to quantity: when *First Statement* went to a typical twelve from a typical eight pages, *Preview* followed suit in its next issue. Six months after *First Statement* went to print with their purchased press, a *Preview* 'Note' 'reminded' readers of the \$100 target of their own '*Preview* fund,' purpose unclear (31-2).

Furthermore, as Trehearne also points out, numerous articles contained in the

magazines are reactions to, or engagements with, the other.

For example, the first issue of *First Statement* contains an article by Robert G. Simpson, entitled "Time and Mr. Aaronsen", which responds to Bruce Ruddick's article, "Vi", (*Preview*, 1:3). In Volume 1, No. 5, of *First Statement*, an article appears by John Sutherland that assesses P.K. Page's poetry. In its conclusion, Sutherland writes

both in subject matter and style *Preview* provided Page with a necessary cue. She had been developing in the general direction of Auden and Spender and under *Preview's* influence she took a considerable step forward. She gained a new assurance, and she writes now with greater fluency and more power to create an abundance of images.

Such critical evaluations of each other's work appear in both magazines.

Dudek, too, recalls that while the *First Statement* group felt a strong sense of rivalry toward the *Preview*-ites, deriving from their position as the younger generation of poets, they also admired them both as writers and friends. He admits that the determination felt by the *First Statement* poets to prove themselves to their more tried and experienced counterparts of *Preview*, served to stretch the younger poets and make them work harder than they might otherwise have done. Furthermore, Dudek recalls that at times the *First Statement* group considered "creating" a stir between the two magazines in order to spark an outpouring of new energy and writing.¹² All of this was done with a greater purpose in mind than just to criticize or attack members of the *Preview* group. It was, simply, to increase the profile and readership of little magazines of poetry. The *First Statement* group had a large and long-range

¹²Interview with the author, April 23rd, 1999.

vision. It included changing the face of poetry, and doing it on a national scale. *Preview* provided them with fuel for that plan.

With this more positive perspective in mind, Sutherland's charge, in Volume 1, No. 8, that "*Preview* has no influence, no backing. When they appear in a new format the contents are illegible and the cover is hanging on. They fail to organize and they make a serious productive mistake" appears less as a personal attack on *Preview*, and more as a challenge to become stronger and more serious. In fact, put in the context of his comparison between the degree of seriousness given to *Canadian Poetry Magazine* and *Preview*, and his call for magazines to be "taken out of the hands of the editors and established as an individual unit" Sutherland's statement is both reasonable and fair. He was determined that poets and writers have an avenue of expression; he believed that that could only happen if the magazines were taken seriously. For this to occur, the magazines, themselves, had a responsibility to "make consistent efforts to expand their circulation or widen their influence" -- something he felt *Preview* was not doing.

In addition to this sense of inclusion, rather than exclusion, of *Preview*, it is important to remember the sense of isolation that most writers, and especially poets, experienced. This is particularly obvious in a comment made by Irving Layton about his friendship with A.M. Klein, whose poetry appeared in both magazines, but whose name was on the masthead of *Preview*. Layton remarks

to know there was a poet living in Montreal, a living poet, meant a great deal. Not only was he kind, looking over my first efforts, but the fact that I talked to him, saw him breathe, drink a cup of coffee, established a world of reality for me. I very much doubt I would have

become a poet if there had not been somebody like Klein in Montreal at that time (Caplan 99).

This sense of common bond, which was strengthened by the onset of war and their reactions to resulting world events, brought the two groups together. In fact, the poets of *Preview* and *First Statement* often frequented each other's homes and offices, particularly that of F.R. Scott, and later at Layton's and Dudek's houses.

That there were generational differences between the two groups, there is little doubt. The *Preview* writers were twenty years or more older than the *First Statement* group. Consequently they were more conservative in their political views, and they looked to more traditional avenues of publication for their books. The *Preview*-ites were generally more established in professional careers, having the magazine as an extra activity on the side; the *First Statement* group were poets first, often having "jobs," rather than careers, to subsidize their full-time vocation: poetry. In fact, Sutherland's only real career was as editor of *First Statement* magazine, an activity he undertook so seriously that "for a time the office was his home and he slept beside the press" (Fisher 5). As a result, generally, the *Preview*-ites were financially comfortable and lived more in the west parts of Montreal; the *First Statement* group, in comparison, were bohemian, poor, and lived more in the east side of Montreal. But physical differences were not the only source of separation between the two groups.

According to Frank Davey

Preview was associated with the colonial attachment of Canadian literature; their poetry had affinities with the English poetry of the preceding decade -- especially Auden and Thomas, whereas the *First*

Statement people were more related to contemporary American poetry, twentieth century American poetry stemming out of Walt Whitman -- Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams and eventually Ezra Pound. And therefore what you had in these two magazines was a significant confrontation between the colonial pull toward British literature and the new Native strain that would come right out of Canada (Davey 5).

Furthermore, the *Preview* editors, trained in the classics and traditions of previous poets, were more academic in their approach to poetry. The *First Statement*-ers, in comparison, perceived themselves as working class poets. According to Wynne Francis they therefore determined they would not write of the phoenix and the hyacinth but of Berri Street and Debullion. Scorning artifice of metaphor and symbol, they preferred to shout huzzahs and hurl insults, to fight, spit, sweat, urinate and make love in their poems" ("The Little Magazine/Small Press Movement" 91)

Still, these issues were less significant than the fundamental fact that the people involved in *Preview* and *First Statement* were, at heart, *poets*. As such, they shared a keen desire to experience and record the world around them; even more importantly, they shared a belief in the importance of others reading and reacting to their work.

These ideas must be remembered when considering Sutherland's famous "outing" of Patrick Anderson. Even after Sutherland's critical assessment of Anderson's poetry in which he suggests Anderson might have had a homosexual experience in his youth (*First Statement*, Volume 1, No. 19), even after his retraction, which was published on the cover page of the following issue after Anderson threatened a law suit, the two remained in contact. Sutherland continued to acknowledge Anderson's work in *First*

Statement; the second book that rolled off *First Statement's* press was Anderson's *A Tent For April* (1945); both men came together to form *Northern Review* when *Preview* and *First Statement* joined. Sutherland wrote a letter of defense to *The Canadian Forum* to rebut A.J.M. Smith's review of Anderson's "The White Centre" and he refers to Anderson several times in his seminal work -- his introduction to *Other Canadians*.

Anderson, too, continued to consider himself Sutherland's friend. In fact, considering his own work retrospectively, Anderson admits that he, himself, had come closer to Sutherland's earlier assessments of his work. In "A Conversation With Patrick Anderson" Seymour Mayne reports that Anderson made the following statement:

Apart from publishing my first book, he [Sutherland] wrote a very perceptive and extremely long article about my work after myself and the others had left *Northern Review* and when I was teaching at McGill, and I prize this article though it was pretty critical about some of my earlier work, about which I am also critical. It did praise the more recent poems which appeared in what I considered to be my best Canadian book, *The Colour as Naked*, and it also printed several poems to go along with his article. So that particular *Northern Review* is almost exclusively a Patrick Anderson issue. And I can't honestly see how people could imagine that I am the bitter enemy of a man who does that for me. (54)

Thus it can be seen how extremely important the interactions between the poets in *Preview* and *First Statement* were, both independently and collaboratively, in inspiring and then channeling their energies. Thus it can be seen how significant Sutherland was, not only in providing a forum for

Canadian poets to publish their work through *First Statement* magazine and then *Northern Review*, but in implementing his greater vision of a new, national agenda for poetry and publishing in Canada.

First Statement Magazine

First Statement began as a mimeographed magazine published and produced by John Sutherland, Betty Sutherland, Audrey Aikman, R.G. Simpson and Keith MacLellan out of a tiny, dingy office at 1800 Sherbrooke Street West. Its first volume appeared in 1942, and in its editorial, John Sutherland, reports

We want to remove every shred of practicality and make it certain that we have nothing to lose. We are going on a diet of cheap, mimeographed paper, a kind of literary bread and water. We intend asking no charge for the magazine, to prevent the petty hope of making a profit. We are going to rid ourselves of practical encumbrances to have freedom in which to move.

Then, in a comment that reveals his sense of responsibility to a larger, national vision of Canadian literature, he continues

Someone will say that we will be talking in a vacuum, to ourselves alone, and be making gestures that have references to nothing. It does not seem to us an unreasonable criticism. In the present stage of Canadian literature, a gesture would appear to be important. A display of activity may symbolize a future, and plant a suggestion in someone's mind. The religious ceremonies which thrived many centuries ago must

have arisen from a belief in the newness of living and the youth of the race. What had happened seemed rare, and it was not certain that it would happen again. Bread was broken to express the hope that bread would be granted again. We intend to go through the ceremonies, in our Canadian literary youth. (Vol 1:1 1)

A number of factors set *First Statement* apart from *Preview* and other little magazines that had gone before. First, as of Volume 1, Issue 3, Sutherland initiated a pay-per-word "monetary acknowledgment of contributions" as an incentive to Canadian poets to send him their work -- an action that served as a model for future literary ventures while promoting a greater sense of establishment to the *First Statement* magazine. Second, as Sutherland's letters reveal, in order to pursue his goal Sutherland successfully spent a large part of his time tediously corresponding with good Canadian poets, encouraging them to send him their work. Furthermore, Sutherland's eye for talent seems to have been true -- *First Statement* magazine served as an early springboard for numerous, now well-known poets and writers, including, among others, Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, Miriam Waddington, Raymond Souster, P.K. Page, Patrick Anderson, Kay Smith, A.M. Klein, John Glassco, Robert Simpson, William McConnell, Anne Marriott, Dorothy Livesay and F.R. Scott.

In addition, Sutherland consistently remained true to his plan: every movement or change in his editorial board and magazine served to further his goal of promoting the work of young Canadian writers and having Canadian poetry achieve a greater national focus. Already, for example, in issue No. 2, a larger forum for individual poets is established when Sutherland reports,

First Statement will appear every two weeks for at least a year. Each

of the twenty-six issues will consist of eight to ten pages, and will contain as varied a representation of Canadian literature as possible. We shall try to exhibit the art of the various groups of writers in Canada, rather than express any opinions of our own. Every two months *First Statement* will publish a supplement of one work by a single author, which will be approximately the length of the magazine.

It is clear, then, that Sutherland and his colleagues were very much concerned with promoting a strong sense of national consciousness. This is underlined by an editorial that appears in Vol 1, No. 13, in which Sutherland writes

The average person develops his intellectual powers by dealing with life in terms of his own country. If a Canadian focuses his attention on the history, literature and politics of Canada, he achieves a fusion of the theoretical and practical sides of his mind. He not only develops a new consciousness -- a Canadian one -- but he informs abstract concepts with the right measure of reality.

The supplement contributed to satisfying Sutherland's desire to have a greater space in which poets might publish and have exposure. And, in some ways it was a precursor to his press, which was purchased only a few months later. Still, Sutherland continued to promote his national vision.

The editorial in Volume 1, No 5, of *First Statement*, written by Geoffrey Ashe of the *Western Freelance* magazine, reports that the two magazines "are to be united into one nation-wide publication". Shortly after, Lois Darroch's name is added as an agent in Toronto, and Myron Galloway appears as representative for Halifax. Volume 1, No. 10 reveals a name change from *First Statement, A Magazine for Young Canadian Writers*, to *First*

Statement, A Canadian Literary Magazine, which is changed again, in No. 13, to *First Statement, A National Literary Magazine*.

Continuing to set himself and his little magazine apart, Sutherland contributes to a new definition of the role of little magazines and their editors in Volume 1, No. 8. After comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* and *Preview*, he writes

the business of the new magazines must be taken out of the hands of the editors and established as an individual unit. The business manager must be a businessman instead of a writer or professor. He must cease to play the passive role of treasurer and general factotum. No magazine lives until it has an audience which it molds and which in turn molds it. It is necessary that each editorial board begin a grand effort to put their magazine on a sound basis and make it a living part of its environment.

To increase the size of his own audience, in Volume 1, No. 13, Sutherland proposes the formation of "A New Organization" which includes beginning *First Statement* groups across Canada. He concludes the chief concern of these proposed new groups would naturally be Canada and Canadian literature.

It is not suggested that they form a patriotic organization, but that they assist in the development of a national consciousness. At regular meetings, papers will be presented on our modern writers, and a special emphasis will be placed on the writers of our past. Poets and prose-writers, either members of the group or residents of the district, will attend meetings and read samples of their work. Selections from these, and from the critical papers, will later be published in *First Statement*.

While *First Statement* magazine was promoting the need for poets and writers to draw together across the country, Sutherland was also adding to his

editorial board at home in Montreal. Irving Layton's poetry first appears in the little magazine in Volume 1, No. 9. In No. 12, Sutherland, again revealing a keen and perhaps uncanny sense of the potential of certain poets, formally introduces Layton, Louis Dudek and Kay Smith in his editorial, stating that "none of them has received any public recognition, and even less critical attention. Yet each one is producing work that may appear, in the future, as a valuable contribution to Canadian poetry." Layton's name appears on the masthead as of No. 13; Dudek's name appears as of No. 16.

Louis Dudek was born in Montreal, on February 6, 1918. His father, Vincent Dudek, whose father was Polish, had come from Russia, where people were forbidden to use any language other than Russian. Secretly, however, at night, his grandfather had taught him Polish. In 1905, to avoid compulsory service in the Russian army, Vincent left his family behind and escaped to Canada.

Dudek's mother, Stanislaw (Stasia) Rozynska, was born in Liverpool and grew up speaking both English and Polish. Her family had also fled from Russia, for many of the same reasons. They moved to Montreal in 1902 where Dudek's grandparents eventually improved their situation enough to buy a farm at Charlemagne, Quebec, that figures later in the history of the little presses.

Dudek grew up speaking both English and Polish, but his Polish roots were nurtured by language classes that he began at the age of five. Even though Dudek's family was Roman Catholic, and practised their faith rigorously, his father, who determined that the Catholic school spent too much school time on religious education, insisted that Dudek go to a Protestant

school.¹³

After Dudek's mother, with whom he was particularly close, died, Dudek's aunt came from Poland to help raise him and his two siblings. She was well-read in Polish poetry and recited it to Dudek, particularly Mickiewicz and Slowacki. Poetry began to figure more prominently, however, when he took up the pen himself. He reports,

At about the age of eight or nine I wrote some verses about a cat and mouse which were thought to be surprising for my time of life. While housework was going on, I began to extemporize comic-satiric squibs about members of the family. The family was shocked at this discovery of talent. (Dudek "Autobiographical Sketch" 1-2)

Dudek attended the High School of Montreal. There, he won a number of small poetry competitions, which reinforced his sense of confidence about writing poetry. In his final year he recalls showing his Latin teacher, of whom he was very fond, "some bad versified translations of Horace and Catullus" and "communicated my desire to write poetry. I have never since been so entirely devoted to a poetic calling or career as then, nor so innocent in professing it." (Dudek "Autobiographical Sketch" 3)

At the same time, Dudek's attitudes toward religion were shifting. Up until the age of seventeen, he had continued to practice Catholicism. Then, after a short period of extreme religiosity, he made a break with the church. He comments,

I was conscious of the incompatibility between natural sexual demands

¹³ For a Catholic in Quebec to attend a Protestant school was almost unheard of! There can be little doubt that the experience contributed to Dudek's later openness to other religions, cultures, origins, etc. It was, perhaps, one of the reasons he was so popular with his Jewish students at McGill University.

and the religious conception of sin; practical reason and scientific theory (evolution, geology, natural law) became my battering rams against religion. Nietzsche, D.H. Lawrence, Ibsen and Walt Whitman had their apotheosis; I considered myself an atheist and an anarchist." (Dudek "Autobiographical Sketch" 4)

When Dudek finished high school, Canada was in the midst of the great Depression. Despite this fact, his family managed to find the finances to allow him to continue on to university. He began a B.A. degree at McGill University, in September, 1936 (which he completed in 1939).

Dudek became a reporter for the *McGill Daily*, and eventually one of its seventeen associate editors. After graduation, he did "odd paragraphs for the *Montrealer*" (Stromberg-Stein 20). He found it difficult to find regular work in journalism; consequently Dudek became a permanent copywriter with the advertising agencies. He has reported to Susan Stromberg-Stein that, "I was in a position to make a successful career in business. But I didn't take the opportunity. I couldn't shape my mind to it and I hated the slick style and the false front about the whole advertising racket" (21). Still, although his career in advertising did not satisfy Dudek's creative impulses, it did provide a source of income from which he steadily, and generously, drew upon to support First Statement's publishing ventures and other little magazine and press activities later on.

Throughout his years at McGill and after, Dudek nurtured his interest in ideas by attending the McGill Philosophy Club, where he met his future wife Stephanie Zuperko. His passion for literature and poetry led him to attend the McGill Literature Society. It was during one of the society's meetings, that he met Irving Layton.

Layton was born in Romania, in 1912,¹⁴ to an Orthodox Jewish merchant family. His father, Moise Lazarovitch, was a bookkeeper in a small timber company, and his mother (Klara Wolfsohn (Keine)) was the daughter of a Russian cotton manufacturer. Responding to increasing anti-Semitism in that country and in order to avoid having himself and his sons conscripted into the militia in which Jews were treated brutally, in 1913, Layton's father, Moise Lazarovitch, moved his family to Montreal.

Layton grew up firmly convinced, from an early age, that he was special -- a fact that shaped his identity and self-confidence. Even in grade one, for example, he was known as "Nappy" -- a short form for Napoleon. To his family, he was Israel Pincas ("our little Messiah) or "Flamplatz" ("Flam" which is derived from "flame", and "platz" which means "blast" or "explosion").

That his mother favored Layton over his siblings, to the extent that she allowed (in fact, encouraged) only him to sleep with her throughout his childhood, no doubt contributed to Layton's sense of uniqueness. However, two particular events also played an important role in the formation of his ego. First, when Keine was pregnant with Layton she became dangerously ill to the point that doctors expected her to lose the baby, die herself, or both. Keine's mother (Layton's grandmother) laid her hands over her daughter's swollen belly and apparently said, "You are a fruitful tree and I a barren woman. May the disease that is meant for you, befall me!" (Cameron 3). Layton reports that

¹⁴The exact date of Layton's birth remains unknown because his parents did not keep records. Layton has identified at least two different dates as his birthday. In a letter to Desmond Pacey he has noted that the only clue his mother gave him was that he was born soon after Passover in 1912.

within a few days Keine's health improved while her mother became ill and died. And second, Layton was born circumcised -- a fact that was viewed, by his family, as miraculous -- a sign that he was destined for greatness.

The Lazarovitch's first home was 183 St. Elizabeth Street, which was in the French Canadian quarter and the first settlement area for immigrating Eastern European Jews. It was a ghetto in which the poorest Montrealers resented competing with the new immigrants and so anti-Semitism abounded. It was also a semi-red light district, where prostitution was prolific and visible. The streets were unsafe for the Lazarovitch children; they were often viciously bullied. Layton and his brothers experienced brutal attacks and beatings as they ran errands for their mother in the neighbourhood. In order to survive, Layton became a fighter -- both physically and mentally.

Unable to read, write or speak English, Moishe's ability to find work was limited. He cut himself off emotionally from his family, immersed himself in religion, and although often cruel towards his wife and children, depended upon them to support the family. Keine had a very harsh tongue with which she constantly whipped her children. According to Layton's brother, Hyman, she was "too busy to be a mother. She was a barracuda" (Cameron 29).

Abraham did as was required, but contracted tuberculosis and died young. Harry, plagued by eczema, began work at the age of eleven; after being pushed out of home in his early teens, he eventually married, but battled chronic depression for the rest of his life. Hyman and Larry were also forced to leave home in their early teens. Both went to New York City, where they lived on the streets. Larry remained there for five years until an incident occurred in which he was attacked by a man with a knife. After that he returned to Montreal where Keine arranged a marriage for him, but manic

depression set in, and he died in middle age. Gertie, Layton's oldest sister, was forced into an arranged, loveless marriage with a peddler of religious items; in the following years she endured numerous mental breakdowns, was separated three times, and had a son who committed suicide. Esther was also pushed into an arranged marriage with an abusive husband who beat her; Dora, who won a scholarship to attend teacher's college, was not permitted by her father to go; she remained at home until her late twenties when she married and moved far away. Issie (Layton), the youngest, was determined to be different. The key to that difference was education.

Layton attended Alexandra Public School. He loved books and quickly became an avid reader. School was a place of literature, history and creativity for Layton. It was also a place that nurtured a means of escape from the poverty and turbulence of his home -- imagination.

When reality was painful or ugly, he habitually reinvented it competing with Hyman [Layton's brother] as a storyteller in imitation of their mother's homespun fables of biblical miracles and proverbial superstitions, he made up life as it went along. Savouring the physical, making of each sensuous detail an intensity of the moment Issie [Layton] transformed potential pain into intense beauty and, sometimes, unspeakable pleasure. (Cameron 32)

Even though none of Layton's siblings were permitted to pursue an education beyond elementary school because of the cost or because they were girls (and therefore expected only to marry), Keine found the money to allow him to attend Baron Byng High School, which he began in 1925. Within two years, inspired by a British schoolmaster named Amos Saunders, Layton was hooked on poetry. By the age of fourteen he began writing it, signing his

work, "Isadore Lazarre, Student of Literature". At the same time, Layton became involved in the Young People's Socialist League, led by David Lewis. It was Lewis, in addition to A.M. Klein, who helped Layton graduate from high school.

Layton determined to become a teacher -- a position almost impossible to obtain by Jews at that time since most teachers were either British Protestants or Catholic French-Canadians. A few Orthodox Jews taught in private Jewish schools. The Protestant School Board of Montreal, which was responsible for educating the mass of Jewish children, had an unwritten policy of not hiring Jews. He began taking in students (the majority were Jewish immigrants) whom he taught English. Still, the depression was gaining influence, and students and odd jobs became increasingly difficult to find. At the same time, the fees required to attend university were beyond his means. Consequently, he decided to attend Macdonald College, an agricultural school, where the Quebec government, eager to promote farming, provided subsidies for students, and the first two years were free while the last two years only cost \$50.00 each. He enrolled in the fall of 1933.

Having seen, first-hand, extreme poverty, concerned about issues of unemployment and social justice, and worked up by events overseas, including Mussolini's rise to power and Europe's movement towards war, and further under the influence of David Lewis, Layton's socialist leanings solidified. Using his pen as a weapon, Layton wrote political and economic commentaries that were published in Macdonald College's student newspaper, the *Failt-Ye Times*; single-handedly he overhauled the Social Research Club, of which he was president; and he became one of seven elected members of the National Committee for World Peace. Absorbed in world events and politics, Layton

failed at school. He went to New York.

When he returned, a year later, Layton was even more passionate about Marx's teachings and Socialism. He re-registered at McDonald College but, determined to learn from some of the leaders of the C.C.F. in which Layton was heavily involved, he took the majority of his courses at McGill, where Leonard C. Marsh was teaching as well as Brunt and Eugene Forsey. Furthermore, around the same time, the *Failt-Ye Times* was absorbed by the *McGill Daily* which allowed Layton to write for a much broader and academic audience. He contributed a regular column to the newspaper in addition to poetry.

In 1938, after being fired from a job waiting tables, broke, unemployed, and looking for safety he married Faye Lynch, who worked as a bookkeeper and stenographer for a junk-dealer. He finally graduated from Macdonald College, and began to appeal for employment through the C.C.F., which, because of David Lewis' knowledge of Layton's Communist leanings, repeatedly rejected him.

Layton continued to sit in on economics and political science courses at McGill. He admired Harold Laski's form of Marxism on which he wrote, at length, in *The Forge*, McGill's student journal. He didn't officially enroll at McGill, however, until 1945 when he began his M.A. in economics. Around the same time, Layton began attending McGill's English Literary Society. It was there that he met Louis Dudek, and his life's course changed.

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When Dudek and Layton met on campus they recognized each other's names because they had both published poetry in the *McGill Daily*. Almost

immediately, each man sensed in the other, a "unity of mind" (Interview with Louis Dudek, August 29, 1998). Walking together to their homes that evening, they realized that, in addition to having experienced a similar feeling of ethnic dislocation, they shared strong philosophical and political leanings. More importantly, perhaps, they were alike in their conviction of the importance of poetry and its need to reflect the time and place in which they lived. Both poets recall stopping at the centre of the Jacques Cartier Bridge where, alive with excitement, they shouted to the world that they were going to change the face of Canadian poetry -- and they did.

Their first project included Layton's book, *Here and Now*. Layton wrote the poetry, and Dudek, with Faye's help, edited it and prepared it for print. Around the same time, in 1942, Dudek met with Dr. Harold Files -- the same professor who had been supportive of Sutherland only a few years before. Through the *McGill Daily*, Files was familiar with Dudek's poetry, and so, at this particular meeting, knowing that Sutherland had begun *First Statement* magazine, Files encouraged Dudek to meet the editor.

In the meantime, Layton had gone to a local restaurant where, upon paying his bill, he had fallen instantly in love with the cashier -- a woman by the name of Betty Sutherland -- John Sutherland's sister. Despite the fact that he was married, Layton pursued Betty, and through her, he met John. Upon discovering their mutual passion for poetry, the men quickly became friends and Layton began contributing poetry to *First Statement* (he appears for the first time in Volume 1, No. 9). He, too, encouraged Dudek to come with him to Sutherland's house, a visit Dudek finally undertook in December, 1942

(Interview with Louis Dudek, August 29, 1998¹⁵). Dudek recalls that while Sutherland seemed enthusiastic and easy with Layton, he was at once "open and cool" towards Dudek. From the start, then, Dudek suggests "there was a semi-friendship, semi-antagonism" (Interview with Louis Dudek August 29, 1998) between them. Furthermore, he hypothesizes that the reasons behind Sutherland's reticence might be their different cultural backgrounds and that Dudek, with a degree from McGill -- a university Sutherland had dropped out of after only four months -- was already better academically trained than both Layton and Sutherland. While Layton was not self-conscious about such a difference due, according to Dudek, to his already developing strong sense of ego, Dudek wonders whether Sutherland was more defensive about his lack of formal education.

Despite these personal issues, however, Dudek and Layton committed themselves wholeheartedly to *First Statement*. The result was a strong and consistent source of poetry, as well as an expanded critical framework on which to build the magazine. In return for their labour, *First Statement* provided the avenue and the means by which the poets could begin their literary careers. The individual strengths and talents of each man were unique; combined, they presented a formidable force. All passionately devoted to the advancement of Canadian poetry, the poets determined to pool their efforts and take on the literary establishment.

Dudek recalls that one of the first submissions to arrive after the three

¹⁵ This date is confirmed by a letter written by Louis Dudek to Michael Gnarowski, editor of the Golden Dog Press. Dudek claims, "this meeting must have occurred in December, or perhaps late in November 1942...Layton and I entered the picture with Vol 1, No. 9" (Stromberg-Stein 22).

men had begun working together was by a young poet named Raymond Souster. Dudek remembers reading one of Souster's contributions, "The Hedgehog", aloud to Layton and Sutherland, and being struck by how perfectly it reflected their idea of what Modern poetry should be about. The editors took it as a positive sign -- that their vision was true and that their time had come. They enthusiastically responded to Souster, requesting more poetry to include in *First Statement*. Souster, in turn, was delighted to find an outlet for his work. A long and productive relationship ensued.

By the time Dudek and Layton joined *First Statement's* editorial board, in 1943, Sutherland and his little magazine had already established a momentum. During its earliest months, the various small quirks that accompany all new enterprises had been worked out; a loyal readership had been established; and a regular number of writers were contributing their work. Furthermore, Dudek and Layton arrived just as Sutherland purchased his press -- a purchase that was to prove enormously important not only to the future of *First Statement* magazine, nor just to the future of several poets' careers, but to the entire industry of little presses. The last issue of *First Statement* to appear in mimeograph format appeared on June 11, 1943.

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The origins of the idea to purchase a printing press are suggested in Sutherland's *The Great Circle*. He reports that

At a meeting after the fourth issue, George told his fellow editors that he felt there was no future in a mimeographed magazine of seven pages appearing only twice a month. Regardless of how good the work was -
- and he had as high an opinion of it as anyone else in the *Circle* -- it

would not be respected in mimeographed form and would never attract an audience. He argued that the dynamite of a new idea was needed to wake the Canadian public out of its slumbers. Before the meeting was over he had persuaded the editors to buy a printing press, and to publish a thousand copies of the *Circle* once a week until the Canadian reader was reeling under the blows. (Fisher 32)

Purchasing a press seemed like a natural progression from publishing *First Statement*. Sutherland and his colleagues thought that the press would cost in the neighbourhood of fifty dollars, that it would speed up the time required to publish the magazine, and that the editors would quickly see a profit. They very soon discovered otherwise. In actual fact, they were forced to purchase the least expensive second-hand press they could find - a platen press -- which still cost \$600.00 -- an amount well over that contained in the fund they had established, and beyond any of their means. To counter this problem, one of the editors suggested that they pay for the press in monthly installments -- which they did. In *The Great Circle*, Sutherland writes, that every month

as each of these installments came due, they had long arguments as to who should pay it, until one of them, in desperation, paid the whole amount out of his pocket. This happened every month for about a year and a half, when the \$600 was all paid up and the merciless straw was lifted from the camel's back. (Fisher 36)

The old press was moved into the *First Statement* office, at 217 Craig Street West (now St. Antoine Street), in the spring of 1943. Its arrival is, again, recorded by Sutherland in *The Great Circle*. He writes

The press weighed about twelve hundred pounds and was carried in one of the biggest moving vans in the city. It was under the special charge of three French Canadians, each of whom stood a great deal taller than six feet and weighed almost as much as the press. It was their decision to hoist the *Circle's* property in by the window that created the dramatic situation...A great crowd gathered in the street and watched every movement with intense interest. Hoisting operations only occurred once or twice a day on that busy avenue, and no one would miss a chance of seeing such a spectacle. Everyone watched with avid eyes as the giant workers, walking in the walled silence of their own flesh, handled the press with as much delicacy and tact as if it had been a kiddy-car. When it was tied securely with dozens of thick ropes and was being hoisted up to the window-ledge, the people shuffled back off the sidewalk and speculated how soon it would fall. The suspense lasted long after the black shape of the press had disappeared through the open window. (Fisher 37-8)

Once installed, Sutherland, Dudek and Layton had to teach themselves the mechanics of printing -- how to set the type (which was done letter by letter), how to ink the press and how to run the machine. All this was done altruistically. There was no payment nor recognition expected by those who lent their time, money or labour to the project.

The press was used, initially, to do small print jobs such as menus and flyers for local business, which helped offset *First Statement's* expenses. Sutherland announces the press's arrival to Dorothy Livesay in a letter dated Montreal, April 9, 1943. He states,

First Statement has bought a printing press and will be appearing in

printed form within a month or two. The new magazine will be a monthly one, more attractive in appearance, and from two to three times the present size. We can do the printing by ourselves at a small cost and we feel that the way is open for a considerable new development of the magazine. (Whiteman 6)

In the same letter, Sutherland further reveals his larger ambitions for the press:

We have other plans for the printing press. We intend to use it eventually to bring out books by Canadian writers. It might be a simple matter, for example, to bring out selections of poetry similar to the Ryerson chap-books, perhaps improved in form and increased in size (and, I have no doubt, in quality). I have no specific data on costs, but from our experience with the magazine I feel that the type of work could be done for very little. If we can create a permanent audience with the magazine, we will be in a position to publish books and to guarantee them attention. That is our ultimate aim and we are ready to work at it for an indefinite time. (Whiteman *Letters* 6)

Again, it is clear that Sutherland's first goal with the press is to continue to promote the validity of Canadian poetry through a more professional-appearing magazine. In fact, in his *Brief to a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts and Sciences*, submitted in November, 1949, Sutherland reports that the aims of the press, from the start, were as follows:

- 1) To maintain the highest possible literary standards without regard to any consideration of any other kind.
- 2) To provide expression for writers of merit denied publication elsewhere.
- 3) To give special encouragement to the young writer and to the

experimental writer.

- 4) To help sharpen the awareness of Canadian writing both past and present.
- 5) To employ only strict standards of criticism, but to emphasize the importance of the developing native sensibility in Canada.
- 6) To establish wherever possible a liaison with the French Canadian writer. (Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski 69-70)

He also establishes that since the "basis of the press was one of voluntary co-operation among writers and other interested persons, no strict organization was either possible or desirable. Those who were able to contribute their time and labour did so freely. Others helped defray the costs of publication" (Rpt in Dudek & Gnarowski 70).

The purchase of the printing press is officially announced in *First Statement* magazine in Volume 1, Issue 20, in an editorial entitled "We Go To Press". In it, Sutherland announces that "The first printed issue of *First Statement* will appear within a few weeks" and that "We have purchased our printing press and printing equipment, and all the work of printing the magazine will be done with this equipment." He continues on to explain that

We, ourselves, are doing the work of printing, with the advice and cooperation of two experienced printers. Printed issues will be from two to three times the length of the present ones. New features will be added, including a review of Canadian books and literary magazines.

Setting the type and operating the press took a great deal longer and required far more effort than Sutherland, Layton and Dudek had expected. They had agreed that the books they produced had to be attractive in appearance in order to receive "greater acknowledgment from the book

publisher in Canada" (*Brief to a Royal Commission* Rpt in Dudek & Gnarowski 74). Neil Fisher reports,

In order to meet their monthly deadline, the three men spent every spare moment after work, during the evenings and on weekends printing the magazine. Then they still had to package and distribute it -- another new and different approach to the publishing process followed by established publishing firms. Furthermore, they quickly realized that printing the magazine, themselves, was costing them far more than they had anticipated and so they had to give up their aspirations of making a profit. In fact, they had to supplement the cost of their own work by having each editor contribute "a weekly fee"....[Sutherland] started things moving by contributing his last ten cents. (Fisher 36-7)

In his editorial in Vol 2, No. 10, Sutherland writes

There are many new writers in Canada today, producing work, who have no opportunity to publish their poetry. It is in order to supply an outlet for them that *First Statement* has decided to publish poetry in book form during the coming year.¹⁶

Perhaps responding to Sutherland's editorial, John Glassco wrote to Sutherland in 1944, inquiring about the possibility of *First Statement* publishing his book, *Frogmore's Follies*. Sutherland wrote back that they were too involved with the magazine to undertake the project, but that they were willing to initially publish selections of the novel in *First Statement* magazine after which, at a later date, they might be in a position to publish the book. After receiving the selections, Sutherland and his colleagues were concerned about censorship

¹⁶Sutherland, John. "First Statement Books" *First Statement* 2:10 (December 1944-January 1945) 1.

issues, and turned to A.M. Klein for help. Against his advice, they published various extracts of *Frogmore*, but agreed they could not publish the novel, despite their desire to do so, out of fear of legal consequences. Sutherland returned the manuscript to John Glassco December 2nd, 1944. The novel was finally published in 1974, thirty years later, as *The Fatal Woman: Three Tales*.¹⁷

Ownership of a press also offered Sutherland the means by which to attract a greater number of contributors. To add more incentive, he again increased the size of the magazine, expanded its scope, and established a set financial return for contributions. These changes are announced in a letter to Ralph Gustafson dated December 6th, 1944. It reads:

We will pay a fixed rate of five dollars for fiction or articles of any type; three dollars for poems under seventy lines, and five dollars for poems exceeding seventy lines. Payment will be made upon publication. As a further step to encourage Canadian writers, we have decided to increase the size of the magazine. A considerable number of pages will be added to our next issue, which appears at the beginning of February. It depends entirely upon the response of the writers whether additional increases will be made at a later date. The additional space will be used for topical material as well as for creative writing. We are hoping to publish more literary criticism and, later on, to include articles on painting and music. We are planning to carry "letters" from London and New York in alternate issues. (Whiteman *Letters* 17)

While Sutherland continued to work on building up *First Statement*

¹⁷Glassco, John. *The Fatal Woman: Three Tales*. Toronto; Anansi. 1974.

magazine, Dudek married Stephanie Zuperko¹⁸ after which the new couple resigned their positions at the advertising firms at which they had been working as copywriters, and set off for New York City (during the fall of 1944). Dudek reports that they "went to New York without any special purpose, except to get away from the advertising business...and in order to see the great world" (Stromberg-Stein 27). Shortly after their arrival, they began taking graduate courses at Columbia University -- Stephanie, in psychology, and Dudek, in history. For the following eight years, then, Dudek was physically distant both from Montreal, and from First Statement Press, although his contributions to *Northern Review* suggest a continued commitment to its goals and ideology.

Back in Montreal, however, the business of publishing continued, as Sutherland and Layton prepared to produce their first book. Some time between December, 1944 and February 5th 1945,¹⁹ Layton's first collection, *Here and Now*, rolled off the press. It was the first book to appear under First Statement Press's New Writer's Chapbook Series. Its sale price was \$1.00.

Continuing to set themselves apart from the more established publishing firms, not only did Layton and Sutherland publish *Here and Now* themselves, they also distributed it. In addition to advertising the book's availability in *First Statement* magazine, Layton recalls going door to door in his efforts to sell it; and when he tired of that, he stood on street corners and stopped passersby to enthusiastically tell them about the merits of purchasing his book (Interview with Irving Layton, Fall, 1998) This practice was continued by the various editors in their determination to distribute their work to the largest possible

¹⁸Dudek married Stephanie Zuperko on September 16, 1944.

¹⁹ In a postscript to a letter sent to John Glassco, February 5, 1945, Sutherland writes that he is including a copy of *Here and Now*.

audience.

According to Layton, the book's title was both a statement and a challenge. The previous year, 1944, Ron Hambleton had edited an anthology of poetry entitled *Unit of Five*, which was published by Ryerson Press. It collected the work of the "five most important modern poets" of the time, including Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, James Wreford, Ronald Hambleton and P.K. Page. To Layton, who had been incensed by his exclusion from the book, *Here and Now* announced his presence to the world. Furthermore, containing language and images that were colloquial and sometimes repulsive, it sounded a new voice -- one that would have been silenced by larger publishers -- a voice that was loud and angry and vulgar. *Here and Now* heralds the new modernist poetry of the 1940's, written by poets who "cultivated a kind of brashness, vulgarity and directness of realistic approach...[that] Critical tightness of the Metaphysical moderns" (Dudek. "The Poetry of the Forties." 294).

Even if Layton had been able to subsidize his own poetry through a larger Canadian publisher such as Macmillan of Canada (Hugh Eayrs) or Ryerson (Lorne Pierce), it is unlikely they would have produced it because of its unrestrained diction and tone. It took the courage and vision of Sutherland, Dudek and Layton, through First Statement Press, to take a stand against the establishment. While the established publishing firms only published what they believed would be profitable, First Statement Press published what they believed was good. In so doing, Sutherland proved to be a pioneer. His vision and energy, combined with that of Dudek and Layton, changed the direction of poetry in Canada, and the manner in which it was printed.

In 1945, after First Statement began printing its magazine, *Preview's*

publication could no longer compete. Mimeographed and stapled, it paled in comparison to the new, crisp, professional format of *First Statement*.

Furthermore, the energy behind *Preview* was waning, while, with its new editors, Layton and Dudek, and the arrival of the printing press, *First Statement* editors were invigorated. Consequently, Sutherland approached F.R. Scott with a proposal to amalgamate the two magazines. On March 27, 1945, he followed up his initial contact with a letter in which he suggested a variety of possible terms by which the two editorial boards might join. It reads:

1. That a joint editorial board be set up, either
 - a) under one editor-in-chief,
 - b) under two equal editors-in-chief, or
 - c) without distinctions in office,and that the members of this board have equal voting power with one another on contributions and matters of literary policy;
2. That a group of ten or fifteen contributing editors, chosen by equal vote, be formed, to provide the magazine with a source of material;
3. That each member of the editorial board pay \$2.00 a week in dues, or an equivalent annual sum, as long as he remains on the board and the magazine requires support;
4. That the magazine be printed on the First Statement Press, and that John Sutherland and Irving Layton be responsible for all the labour connected with its production;
5. That if profits arise, John Sutherland and Irving Layton be paid for their labour at regular rates;
6. That the name of this magazine, and the details of its literary policy,

remain open to discussion...

Do you wish to discuss the plan with us? Have you an alternative plan to propose? Or are you against the idea of amalgamation altogether?

We believe that we can work with you to our mutual benefit; but if you feel that an amalgamation would be against the interests of *Preview*, you are, of course, under no obligation to consider our offer.

(Whiteman *Letters* 22-3)

As these terms suggest, Sutherland's approach was both amiable and open. And the *Preview* board agreed to his proposal. In addition to these arrangements, it was determined that Neufville Shaw and Irving Layton were to do the book-keeping for the new magazine; Sutherland had hoped that E.J. Pratt would serve on the editorial board, but, as matters worked themselves out, A.J.M. Smith joined instead.

Sutherland was to act as Managing Editor, but only for business matters; and he was to be compensated with a fifty-percent commission on any subscriptions he garnered, and thirty-three percent commission of any advertisements he sold; he was further to be paid for any typesetting he did. Otherwise, all editors were to contribute two dollars per week, and since all editors were considered equal, manuscripts were to be passed around for review and approval.

In retrospect, Patrick Anderson admits that one of the reasons *Preview* joined *First Statement* was

a very practical one: we were, I think, very impressed by the way John Sutherland had acquired a printing press, and not only that, he had proved that he was a jolly good printer.... We couldn't overlook the fact that in the end a literary letter which had become really a magazine

would need to be printed. We had here an efficient and dedicated man who knew how to work a press and we wanted this wider and maybe more easily legible and more dignified presentation (Mayne "Interview with Patrick Anderson" 60-1)

The last issue of *First Statement* magazine was published in July, 1945, after which a somewhat uneasy alliance between the two groups was formed, with all the editors of both magazines remaining. Furthermore, in order to enlarge the scope of the magazine, and to bring it out on a national scale, the new board determined to recruit well-known poets as regional editors. These included Patrick Anderson and A.M. Klein, in Montreal, as well as Dorothy Livesay and E.J. Pratt, James Wreford and P.K. Page in other parts of Canada. Sutherland also approached A.J.M. Smith to be a regional representative in the States, and Ralph Gustafson to contribute a regular "New York Letter" every four months.²⁰ Furthermore, Sutherland began corresponding with Harry Roskolenko, to whom, on November 23rd, 1945, he wrote the following:

We really appreciate your help in getting contributions, and I feel that, with your contacts, you could do a great deal for us in [the] States if you are interested. We want to expand our American circulation and to make *Northern Review* slightly more cosmopolitan than *First Statement* used to be, so it's important for us to receive work from the States (Whiteman *Letters* 31)

Originally entitled *Portage*, the new magazine was renamed *Northern Review*, and it made its first appearance on December 1st, 1945. It

²⁰ In a letter to Ralph Gustafson, dated October 13th, 1945, Sutherland writes that he intends to have "someone well-known in England" to contribute a regular "London Letter" (Whiteman *Letters* 29).

incorporated an article by A.J.M. Smith, on Canadian poetry, and a poem by E.J. Pratt. Its cover was designed by Sutherland's sister, Layton's wife, Betty Sutherland.

Around the same time that Sutherland proposed to merge *Preview* with *First Statement*, the second in the New Writers Series books was printed on the new press. It was Patrick Anderson's collection of poetry, *A Tent For April*.²¹ That Sutherland published Anderson's collection next is important given the history of their interactions. Despite their past personal differences, Sutherland appears to have remained unbiased in his critical assessment of his colleague's work, and faithful to his desire to publish it; furthermore, their friendship seems to have remained strong enough to allow them to collaborate on *Northern Review*. The third book published by First Statement Press was by another former *Preview*ite, Miriam Waddington, whose collection, *Green World*, appeared the same year. And Souster's collection of poetry, *When We Are Young*, was the final book to be published by First Statement Press in 1945.

As suggested earlier, the amalgamation of *First Statement* and *Preview* was "uneasy" from the start. Sandra Djwa reports that

Trouble began almost at once when the *First Statement* group, at a preliminary get-together at Scott's began to feel they were kept below the salt because their host, wanting to provide them with food and drink, had ushered them into the kitchen while *Preview* members commanded the living room." (Djwa 216)

²¹It was published between March and June, 1945.

Although they had determined to join ranks, differences in training and ideology continued to separate the two groups. While the press and the new magazine were establishing momentum, relationships between the various editors were becoming more strained. That it was *Preview* which had moved over to *First Statement*, that it was the younger and more "eccentric" (by 1940's standards) of the two magazines that had prevailed, undoubtedly contributed to some of the tension felt by former *Preview*-ites. More importantly, however, attitudes towards poetry itself and towards its presentation, differed between the two groups.

In 1926, A.J.M. Smith had published a seminal article entitled "Contemporary Poetry" in the *McGill Fortnightly Review* (December 15, 1926) in which he identifies the development of a "new" poetry in Canada and argues the need to nurture it. He claims that "Poetry today must be the result of the impingement of modern conditions upon the personality and temperament of the poet" (Rpt. in Dudek & Gnarowski 28). Two years later, in "Wanted: Canadian Criticism" (April 1928), Smith continues to defend the need for a change in Canadian poetry. He states that, in order for a vital Canadian poetry to advance, poets need to "put up a fight for freedom in the choice and treatment of his subject" (Dudek & Gnarowski 32). Smith suggests that this can only occur if writers remain true to their ideals rather than succumbing to the temptations of commerce, or the complacency of such institutions as the Canadian Authors' Association. In the same article he further declares that Canadians are afraid of realism, that,

Nowhere is Puritanism more disastrously prohibitive than among us, and it seems, indeed, that desperate methods and dangerous remedies must be resorted to, that our condition will not improve until we have

been thoroughly shocked by the appearance in our midst of a work of art that is at once successful and obscene (Dudek & Gnarowski 32-3)

By the 1940's Smith had established himself as one of the pillars of the Canadian Modernist scene. He had been writing and promoting the "new" poetry for close to a decade. In 1943, in order to provide readers with a sense of the development of Canadian poetry, he published an anthology of poetry entitled *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. As Hilda Vanneste points out, "*The Book of Canadian Poetry* [was] the first Canadian anthology to trace the development of Canadian poetry from a modern, critical perspective. [It] was assured a prominent place in Canadian literary history" (Vanneste 20).

Sutherland was extremely upset, therefore, to discover that, despite the fact that he had been publishing the poetry of writers such as Layton, Dudek, Souster and Waddington, whose work and ambitions advanced, even trumpeted, the notions that Smith had heralded as crucial to the rise of Modernism in Canada, none of the *First Statement* group were included in the book.

That in 1943 Smith was considering only his own generation's work in his assessment of Canadian poetry is significant and should have been telling to Sutherland. Rather than compare the *Preview* and *First Statement* writers and find the former group to be satisfactory and the latter to be wanting, as Sutherland appears to have assumed, Smith actually seems to have been unaware of the force and significance of Sutherland's work. In fact, he was.

When Smith had lived in Montreal, he had associated with F.R. Scott, Leo Kennedy, Patrick Anderson and others from the *Preview* orbit. After completing his studies at McGill, he had left Montreal in 1926 to go to Edinburgh, Scotland, after which he eventually moved to East Lansing,

Michigan. It was natural, therefore, for him to point to his former friends and colleagues in compiling his anthology. Isolated from the increasingly energized poetic scene in Montreal, he was ignorant of the new developments in poetry in Montreal and the resulting tensions that existed between the *Preview* editors and the more recent *First Statement* group. In fact, to represent the new, modern poets, Smith had incorporated the work of those poets collected almost ten years before, by F.R. Scott, in *New Provinces* (1936).

Smith had divided his anthology into two sections; the first was labeled "The Rise of a Native Tradition," in which Raymond Knister, Dorothy Livesay, Charles Bruce and Anne Marriott, among others, were included; and the second was entitled, "Modern Poetry: The Cosmopolitan Tradition" in which F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Leo Kennedy, Robert Finch, Earle Birney, P.K. Page and Patrick Anderson appear. In his introduction, Smith theorizes that Canadian poetry is derived from two different schools, one that "has attempted to describe whatever is essentially and distinctively Canadian...the other, from the very beginning has made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering into the universal civilizing culture of ideas" (Smith "Introduction" *The Book of Canadian Poetry* 2-3).

In retrospect, by claiming that the cosmopolitan and metaphysical stance reflected in the work of Anderson and other writers associated with the *Preview* group was preferential to the "native" type of poetry of the former group, Smith appears not to have been consciously rejecting or undermining the importance of the work of Sutherland and his peers but rather to have been challenging, instead, the standards of such institutions as the Canadian Author's Association -- institutions that dominated the Canadian literary scene in the 1930's when Smith was living in Montreal.

Despite these realities, Sutherland, who had devoted all his energies to establishing and nurturing a national literary movement in Canada, interpreted Smith's discussion of the "Native" tradition as a negative criticism. Sutherland nursed his negative reaction for several months before finally responding to Smith in his introduction to *Other Canadians*. It will be discussed shortly.

What is significant to the history of *Northern Review* and First Statement Press, in all this, is that by identifying Anderson's group as one that reflected cosmopolitan, intellectual and aesthetic values, Smith reinforced the gulf that existed between it and the *First Statement*-ers, who represented a strong nationalist stance. This gulf created a simmering sense of conflict in the beginning that appears to have been masked behind democracy and diplomacy. However, according to Patrick Anderson, the mask quickly began to slip, and the differences in attitudes between the two groups became more apparent.

Editorial sessions were not..."stormy" but *Preview* people did insist that Sutherland give up most of his lower-case gimmickry after the first issue...A spot-check shows them [the *Preview* editors] dominating the third issue." (Anderson "A Poet Past and Future" 14)

Hilda Vanneste further points out the difference in tone that exists in the first three issues of *Northern Review* in comparison to the last few issues of *First Statement* magazine. She reports that they lack the "hard-hitting criticism one had come to associate with Sutherland" (Vanneste 78), which she further suggests might have been the result of Sutherland's preoccupation with publishing books in the New Writers Series.

Another serious occurrence that may have distracted Sutherland was a fire that devastated the First Statement Press office in May, 1946. In that fire, issues of three magazines were destroyed: *Index* (No. 5), *Contemporary Verse*

(No. 17) and *Northern Review* (No. 3). All work on the press had to be suspended for the summer. One of the projects that had to be put off was publication of Sutherland's own anthology, *Other Canadians*, which was supposed to have been printed in May. It was rescheduled for December, 1946, and eventually published in February, 1947. Shortly after business resumed, the press and office were reestablished at 3575 Durocher Street.²²

In addition to the furor sparked by Smith's book, political differences between the former *Preview*-ites and *First Statement*-ers, that became more obvious in closer proximity to each other, created further dissension. The *Preview* group were, predominantly, socialist and anti-fascist in orientation. To them, the magazine *Preview* had been a vehicle through which they actively and self-consciously expressed and spread their ideology. Patrick Anderson, for example, was a communist trained at Oxford University in England. He had edited *En Masse* (1945) which was the newsletter of the Canadian Labour Progressive Party (the Communist party). During the previous decade (the 1930's), Dorothy Livesay had also become a zealous communist, consumed by her political convictions (see, for example, Livesay, D. "Right Hand Left Hand" 48) to the extent that she had devoted more than seven years of her life to the communist revolution (recorded in "Day and Night") (McDonald 219-20).

F.R. Scott was passionately devoted to parliamentary social democracy. He had grown up shaped by the teachings of the Anglican Church (his father became Anglican archdeacon of Quebec, 1925). He was involved in the

²² The move took place sometime between the February-March issue and the August-September issue, 1947.

Student Christian Movement and was influenced by R.H. Tawney, a Christian socialist with whom Scott associated and whom he referred to as "one of the most formative socialist thinkers in England" (Tawney 92).

A.M. Klein came from the strong tradition of European socialism; his writing suggests that he was extremely political, to the extent that in 1949 he ran for Parliament under the banner of the C.C.F. (Commonwealth Cooperative Federation -- later known as the N.D.P.). The fact that voters rejected him totally (he ran third, behind the Liberal and Labour Progressive Candidates) probably contributed to his later breakdown. Witnesses recounted just how crestfallen he was. Likewise, Phyllis Webb ran for the C.C.F., but in British Columbia.

The *First Statement* editors shared viewpoints similar to those of their colleagues. As has been established, Layton was a committed, even revolutionary, socialist.²³ Dudek, too, was socialist in his beliefs, although more moderate in his approach, perhaps more in line with Scott than with Layton. Sutherland might have been described as a humanist when he met Dudek and Layton. As a result of their guidance and passion, Sutherland's beliefs evolved into a strong Marxist, socialist stance.

What set the *First Statement* group apart from the *Preview* editors, however, was that for them, the magazine was motivated by purely literary, not political, ambitions; therefore, it was not politically charged as *Preview* had been. This lends strength to Larry McDonald's argument that fundamental to

²³ Layton even went so far as to join the Labour Progressive Party (L.P.P.) for a week in 1946; his card number was 475n9. Since that time, however, he has distanced himself from being associated with the L.P.P., arguing that he was a Marxist, a "left-wing socialist, not a Communist" (Layton, Irving. *Waiting for the Messiah: A Memoir* 169)

the controversy between the two groups "may have been...a struggle over the future of Canadian socialism in general" (McDonald 223).

From the outset, then, the alliance between *Preview* and *First Statement* had been tenuous at best. Resentments and difficulties were present, but restrained largely due to the balance of power between the two groups, a balance that had been very carefully established from the start. Wynne Francis reports "one would not have guessed how carefully the editorial board was chosen to give equal representation to the same old constituencies of *First Statement* and *Preview*" ("Montreal Poets of the Forties" 31). The balance, however, shifted when Mary Margaret Miller, who had initially contributed to *First Statement* magazine, joined the editorial board for the October-November (1946) issue. In the following issue (December-January, 1946-47), John Harrison, who was also inclined toward *First Statement* ideals, also joined the editorial board. Then Patrick Anderson left Montreal, further weakening *Preview's* representation. Anderson's departure was also significant because, as Michael Gnarowski has pointed out, Anderson served as a mediator between the two groups as a result of his "catalytic Marxism" -- he was both "English and an outspoken Marxist" ("Anti-Intellectualism in Canadian Poetry" 3).

In February, 1947, Sutherland published his book, *Other Canadians*, on the *First Statement* press; its Introduction has since become a seminal text. Responding to A.J.M. Smith's demarcation of two particular streams of poetry in Canada, Sutherland demands a definition of the Smith's words "national" and "cosmopolitan" in Canadian terms. He challenges Smith's concept of what is Canadian and what constitutes nationalism. He undermines Smith's validity as a Canadian critic by asserting that Smith is a "traditionalist and classicist in literature", who "Regarding with trepidation the example of America...flies to

European fields, and to those sheltered haunts where the "classical" tradition still maintains itself." (Sutherland, "Introduction," *Other Canadians*, Rpt Dudek & Gnarowski 51). Sutherland continues to demand that Smith's colonialism be reconsidered "in light of the new developments of the forties."

Sutherland argues that Canadian criticism "cannot have a living function, because it is entirely concerned with Canadian writing of the last century, or with movements of the twenties and thirties which have either proved abortive or been superseded by something...that a fresh start must be made." In order to do this, Sutherland requests that critics stop "emphasizing the distinction between poetry and reality" and recognize that "the poet retains human attributes in spite of being a poet, that his materials are tangible often in spite of appearance, and that he has something to say which frequently has meaning for the ordinary man." -- an idea that, according to Sutherland, is acceptable when applied to prose writing. Turning to his peers as evidence, Sutherland further asserts that

Poets such as James Wreford and Ronald Hambleton; the *Preview* group of P.K. Page, Patrick Anderson, Neufville Shaw and Bruce Ruddick; *First Statement* writers such as Irving Layton, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster -- all are concerned with the individual and the individual's relation to society, and adopt an attitude which might seem well-nigh blasphemous to conventional people.... These poets are interested in events and ideas whose importance is neither ephemeral nor imaginary to the living and thinking individual; they intend at least to speak to the average man of everyday realities and of the principles which operate in them. They are determined on principle not to ignore the coarse bustle of humanity (Sutherland, "Intro," *Other Canadians*,

Rpt. Dudek & Gnarowski 56).

And, engaging with Smith's negative predisposition towards Canadian colonialism, Sutherland argues that Canadian poetry is rooted in a colonial tradition, and that it is an unavoidable aspect of a literature whose foundations are derived from British and American models.²⁴

After considering the impact of socialism on Canadian writing, and charting the development of the American influence on Canadian poetry, Sutherland recognizes three poets as representative of the best poets of the time -- Dudek, Layton and Souster. He states:

In their work one finds a more Canadian point of view, a greater interest in themes and problems of a Canadian kind, and a social realism which distinguishes it from the political make-believe of other poets. The poetry of Louis Dudek belongs in some ways in this category and is significant of the impending change. The work of Irving Layton...is distinguished by a hard-fisted proletarianism, which makes it potential dynamite in the closed chamber of Canadian letters. And of special interest is the writing of Raymond Souster, a young poet who is still in his early twenties. Souster has a freedom of form, and an ability to handle colloquial language, which will not be liked by those

²⁴ Sutherland declares that "our poetry is colonial because it is the product of a cultured English group who are out of touch with a people who long ago began adjusting themselves to life on this continent...[that] the typical Canadian poet of the forties is an Englishman trying hard to stop being one, but so far not succeeding." And, assessing the growing impact of an American influence on Canadian poetry, Sutherland suggests that "the American example will become more and more attractive to Canadian writers....And perhaps it is safe to say that such a period is the inevitable half-way house from which Canadian poetry will pass towards an identity of its own." (Sutherland, John. "Introduction" *Other Canadians*)

perfectionists who can do so much damage to a young and developing poet. He has a way of calling a spade a spade, of saying what he thinks and feels in the most uncompromising terms, which must be positively embarrassing not only to members of the C.A.A., but to those who go around assuming deliberate disguises. Most important of all, Souster's poetry becomes the embodiment of the common man, completing in poetic terms what the average Canadian thinks and feels. It is poetry on a high creative level, which remains perfectly communicative and full of meaning for readers who have not succumbed to spiritual old age (Sutherland, John. "Introduction," *Other Canadians* 60).

Sutherland's assertion that all Canadian poetry was colonial -- including that of the *Preview* group -- and that it was the work of the *First Statementers*, Dudek, Layton and Souster, that offered a direction and a model that other poets should follow, inflamed the ire of the *Preview* editors. Already incensed at the shifts in balance occurring on the *Northern Review* board, tempers began to flare, and they demanded that the new alliance be reviewed. Subsequently, John Harrison, Irving Layton, Audrey Sutherland, John Sutherland and Robert Simpson prepared a paper that read as follows:

All editors of *Northern Review* who could be reached were advised of a general meeting which was held at 3575 Durocher Street at 3:30 on Sunday, June 15th. Those present were John Harrison, Irving Layton, Audrey Sutherland, John Sutherland and Bob Simpson. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and vote upon certain proposals made by four members of the board (F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Patrick Anderson and Neufville Shaw) for the good and welfare of *Northern Review*. These proposals were conveyed by Scott to Harrison and Sutherland

verbally; the proposals were as follows:

- 1) Two editors, (Simpson and Mary Miller) were to be asked to resign.
- 2) The address of the magazine should be changed to Klein's office.
- 3) Klein should be delegated to deal with all literary correspondence.
- 4) Margaret Surrey should be asked to act as secretary in cooperation with Klein.
- 5) Two editors (Scott and Klein) are to have the power of vetoing any contribution accepted by the rest of the board. Anderson to take Scott's place on his return.

When Scott made these proposals he stated:

- 1) That they would not be submitted to a majority vote of the editorial board.
- 2) That an answer must be given by the remaining members of the board in the shortest possible time.

The meeting expressed its disapproval of the methods adopted in making these proposals, as being contrary to the customary procedure of the meetings of *Northern Review*.

A vote was taken on each proposal separately and each and every proposal was unanimously rejected.

The meeting decided to publish the next issue of *Northern Review* not later than July 1st. Copies of this letter are being sent to all

editors. (Letter *Northern Review* File)²⁵

Foreseeing difficulties, Sutherland protected his interests in *Northern Review* by quickly and quietly filing a claim with the Superior Court claiming sole publishing power over *Northern Review*, beginning June 16, 1947 (*Northern Review* File).

The final straw for the *Preview* editors occurred after Robert Finch won the Governor-General's Medal for his collection entitled *Poems*. Finch had been a long-time member of the *Preview* group and his colleagues and friends were delighted with the recognition he had received. Conversely, Sutherland and the *First Statement* group were appalled. Without sanction or prior knowledge of the editorial board, Sutherland published an extremely negative critique of Finch's book in the August-September (1947) *Northern Review*. Consequently, the *Preview* editors, including P.K. Page and Ralph Gustafson, resigned en masse. On their behalf, A.M. Klein sent the following registered letter to Sutherland on his law firm's letterhead:

June 27, 1947 -- Registered

My dear John:

I am writing you this letter on my behalf and on behalf of F.R. Scott, Neufville Shaw, Patrick Anderson and A.J.M. Smith, to inform you that if you and the group which signed the recent letter addressed to us, intend to put out another issue of the magazine, you are to omit our names from the editorial mast-head.

I wish further to draw to you attention that the *Northern Review*

²⁵ Hilda Vanneste asserts that "Internal evidence establishes the date as June 15th, 1947."

is a common possession of the composite groups of *First Statement* and *Preview*, and that therefore, you are not to use this name in any further publications.

There are also other assets which are owned in common and we ought to get together shortly for the purpose of disposing these.

And do you govern yourself accordingly.

Yours truly,

A.M. Klein

If Sutherland had not legally claimed sole editorship of *Northern Review*, he would have been obliged, according to Klein's letter, to cease using its name for his magazine.

At the same time as the editors listed in Klein's letter resigned, Dorothy Livesay's name was also withdrawn from the *Northern Review's* masthead. Collaboration between *Preview* and *First Statement* had ceased; once again, Sutherland took the helm.

After experiencing such conflict as had existed in the preceding months in the *Northern Review* office, returning to the earlier *First Statement* organization of the press must have seemed an enormous relief to Sutherland, Layton, Souster and their colleagues. However, any peace they reclaimed was short lived, as different tensions between the original editors began to erupt, and as the Canadian literary scene once again began to change.

Dudek reports that "As in most collaborations, at first the poets involved in *First Statement* loved each other -- they were compatible, but after a time, they come to know each other -- more differences appear and jar." (Interview with Louis Dudek August 29, 1998) Early in 1948, First Statement Press published Layton's book, *Now is the Place*, which collected some

previously published poetry by Layton as well as some short stories. Vanneste wonders whether "the fact that two books by Layton were published in the New Writers Series could be construed as an attempt by Sutherland to forge a stronger recognition for an ignored Layton" (Vanneste 90). Dudek and Layton himself had long felt that the pugnacious and dramatic poet had been neglected -- a fact that Sutherland had tried to right in his "Introduction" to *Other Canadians*. Yet Sutherland's critical review of Layton's second book (which appeared in *Northern Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, July-August, 1948. 34-5) suggests a shift in his opinion of Layton. Rather than again asserting Layton's power and place among the new Canadian moderns, Sutherland barely acknowledges Layton's poems, suggesting instead that his strength lay in the fiction. Furthermore, correspondence also suggests that relations between Layton and Sutherland were becoming increasingly impatient, even hostile. These issues appear to have culminated in an argument between the two editors, resulting in Layton writing Sutherland the following letter, dated August 8, 1948:

Dear John:

I've been turning the matter over in my mind and I think that perhaps after all you may be right. There's no point in continuing an association on *Northern Review* which, since our aims and intentions are so widely different, can lead to only further irritation for both of us.

Although the explosion last night was in a sense inevitable I cannot help regretting that the break between us had to come about because of foolish and angry words spoken in a moment of excitement. But the anger itself was a symptom of something much deeper, a growing want of sympathy for each other's views and opinions; at this

point I think it would be silly for either one of us to ignore its plain meaning.

I ask you therefore to remove my name from the editorial masthead of *Northern Review*, remaining with all good wishes for your success.

Your very good friend,

Irving Layton²⁶

While tensions had been growing between Layton and Sutherland in Montreal, they had also been flaring in the relationship between Layton and Dudek. During the previous year (1947), Layton had become increasingly convinced that, isolated from the Montreal poetry scene in New York City, Dudek's political beliefs were changing, and that he was in the process of selling out on socialism in general, and Layton, in particular. Although Dudek argues that he remained loyal to Layton as a friend (Interview with Louis Dudek April 23 1999), he admits that Layton's intuition of a change in political orientation in Dudek was accurate.

Dudek's experiences at Columbia had profoundly impacted on his work. He had begun working on his doctorate -- on the sociology of literature -- under the direction of Lionel Trilling, Jacques Barzun and Emery Neff.²⁷ Trilling had challenged and undermined Dudek's complete commitment to

²⁶Letter from Irving Layton to John Sutherland dated August 8, 1948. In Mansbridge, Francis. Ed. *Wild Gooseberries: Selected Letters of Irving Layton*. 8.

²⁷The thesis was published by Ryerson/Contact Press in 1960 as *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature*. It argues that "since the invention of the printing press, scientific and historical forces have relentlessly debased orthodox literary judgement to the point where serious literature can be supported only by the fugitive publications of private presses and little magazines" (Dudek 139).

Marx and socialist idealism; he convinced Dudek that "human values are not working-class values," that civilization is paradoxically the creation of tyrannies, despotisms and imperialisms, that good and evil are inevitably intertwined." (Frank Davey Interview with Louis Dudek, July 15, 1974, in Davey, F., *Louis Dudek & Raymond Souster*). This change in orientation began to inform Dudek's poetry; Layton sensed this and regarded Dudek as a traitor, by both political and literary standards. Consequently, Layton and Dudek exchanged a number of hostile letters over a period of several months, before ceasing correspondence altogether in 1947.

Other factors may also have persuaded Layton to distance himself from the press, including a shift, in Sutherland, towards a more conservative stance - - one that continued to develop in ensuing years as his health began to decline, and as he moved towards Catholicism. Layton, too, once recognized by *Contemporary Verse*²⁸ and then by writers in the United States and larger publishing firms, may have begun to feel the need to test his independence and reposition himself in the larger literary circuit.²⁹ As of late 1948, his work no longer appeared in *Northern Review*.

At the same time that Layton left First Statement Press, Mary Margaret Miller also resigned. Those who remained included John and Audrey Sutherland, Robert Simpson and John Harrison. Changes in managerial and editorial policies that occur in the following several issues of *Northern Review*, reflect a growing conservatism in Sutherland. Editorial significance was removed from regional editors by replacing them with "representatives", whose

²⁸Layton first appears in *Contemporary Verse* in No. 24, Spring 1948.

²⁹Significantly, after the appearance of *Now is the Time*, Layton's popularity began to increase, finally exploding in the late fifties.

contributions to the magazine were sporadic and inconsistent. The editorial board's treatment of finances also changed, with a business committee being struck in 1949 whose sole purpose was to raise funds for the magazine.

Following the committee's dissolution, in 1951, subscription rates were raised and regular appeals for funds from readers appeared in the magazine.

The scope and context of *Northern Review* also changed after 1948. In a letter to Louis Dudek, and in Volume III, published in October-November, 1949, Sutherland outlines some of the changes he intended to make. These are most explicitly laid out in his *Brief to a Royal Commission*. It reads:

The editors believe that the logical development of the little magazine movement of the 40's is a national magazine of writing and the arts, sufficiently comprehensive in size and scope to interest intelligent readers everywhere in Canada. Their ultimate goal is such a magazine embodying their editorial aims.

With this goal in mind they are planning the following changes in *Northern Review*, beginning with the issue for October first, 1949:

1. An increase in page-length to approximately sixty pages with improvements in the format to increase the attractiveness and readability of the magazine.
2. A new art section containing review of music and stage, painting, film and radio....in these reviews and elsewhere in the new magazine, the effort will be made to employ more strict standards than are customary in Canadian criticism, while emphasizing the development of the native sensibility in the arts.
3. A more comprehensive review of past and current Canadian books. A number of leading Canadian critics will contribute to

this page.

4. Publication of French-Canadian work and of comment on the arts in Quebec.
5. An award of one hundred dollars for the best poem or group of poems published in *Northern Review* during the six issues beginning October first....By giving the award the editors hope to compensate, however modestly, for the almost total lack of material recognition of the poet in English-speaking Canada (Rpt Dudek & Gnarowski 73)

The significance of this piece is in its revelation of Sutherland's backward movement toward a more traditional and purely "Canadian" work in the magazine. Gone is the fiery, risk-taking stance of the man who believed it was essential to challenge the establishment and explore the possibilities of literature that were not yet familiar. And gone is the champion of pure, radical and raw Canadian poetry. In Sutherland's ambition to make *Northern Review* a more national literary magazine, militant themes and ideas were sacrificed. He was focused, instead, on promoting a different kind of Canadianism, one that was

cosmopolitan in its breadth of outlook, that Lorne Pierce has expressed for us in "A Canadian People." [Pierce writes] No nation can achieve its true destiny that adopts without profound and courageous reasoning and selection the thoughts and styles of another....It is in this spirit that our criticism should approach what is its most important problem: the relationship of the arts in Canada to the English tradition.³⁰

³⁰Sutherland, John. *Northern Review* Editorial Oct/Nov 1949. Rpt Dudek & Gnarowski 113-4.

In addition to a shift in political and national agendas, Sutherland also had changed his attitude toward religion in poetry. Before "taking back" his criticism of Smith for his religious interpretations of the new poets³¹ (which he did in 1951), Sutherland reoriented himself back to the publication of books -- something he had not done since 1946 -- to print Kay Smith's collection of poetry, *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer and Other Poems*, on First Statement's press.³² The title poem had appeared in *Northern Review* in the October-November, 1950 issue. It represented a significant departure from the type of books Sutherland and his press had previously published.

Some critics, notably Desmond Pacey, suggest that its production was an indication of Sutherland's growing conservatism; others offer the contention that, given the time, Kay Smith's reactions to the war, that were apparent in her poetry, had a new significance for Sutherland, especially as he began to dwell more deeply on religious matters. In either case, on the jacket of her book, Sutherland promotes Kay Smith as "one of the important poets now writing in Canada."

Very soon after the appearance of Kay Smith's book (in the same year), Sutherland also published Anne Wilkinson's collection of poetry, entitled *Counterpoint to Sleep*. According to Vanneste, Wilkinson

³¹ In "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry" published in *Northern Review*, IV, No. 2, December-January 1950/1, Sutherland reports that "I criticized Mr. Smith, the editor of *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, for his religious emphasis, and I protested that his effort to force a religious interpretation on the new poets was not abiding by the rules and prophesied that it would prove futile. Well, I take it back. I still think Mr. Smith was forcing matters at that time, but the event has shown that he was substantially right" (Rpt. Dudek & Gnarowski, 120).

³² According to an advertisement that appeared in *Index*, July 1946, Kay Smith's book had originally been scheduled for publication in 1946.

was one of the new poets who had appeared during the second half of the decade, and her name was sometimes linked with that of Jay MacPherson and James Reaney. Wilkinson had been involved in the Toronto little magazine *Here and Now*, a magazine later identified as an early meeting-place of the poets who were assigned to the mythopoeic school, the school antithetical to *First Statement* poetics. (Vanneste 149)

Again, despite a growing cynicism toward Canadian poetry and revealing, publicly, a willingness to contradict some of his former ideas and positions, Sutherland's publication and enthusiastic support of Wilkinson's collection exposes his ability to perceive the potential of a new, young poet, and his ongoing commitment to promote him/her. Dudek and Layton, who had once again joined forces under the banner of Contact Press, also recognized Wilkinson's talent, proclaiming that she, and poets like her, furthered the poetic movement begun in the 1940's -- a movement that "continues with undiminished strength, in the magazines...and in new books. We delight in our younger poets -- Colleen Thibaudeau, Anne Wilkinson" (*Canadian Poems 1850-1952* 16).

The reasons for Sutherland's shift in opinion are complex and inconclusive. On an immediate level, his health was failing, and he had come to know, in the early fifties, that his illness was terminal. Furthermore, perhaps as a result of his disease, Sutherland was showing increasing interest in religion and a parallel disinterest in modernist issues of poetry.

At the same time, as Sutherland's article, "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry" reveals, the times had also changed. He reports:

The First Statement Press had no sooner published *Other Canadians*,

An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada, 1940-1946...than the whole purpose and driving spirit of the "new movement" were in a state of decay. We had barely rushed to the side of this challenger of tradition, holding up his right -- or rather his left--hand in the stance of victory, when the challenger laid his head upon the block and willingly submitted to having it removed" (Rpt. Dudek & Gnarowski 119)

During the following years, Sutherland's critical position continued to backslide to the extent that, by 1953, he had turned passionately against all he had previously championed, declaring in "The Great Equestrians", his last significant critical article, that "There is not the slightest doubt that modern literary decadence is now on its death-bed" (16).

Moving increasingly away from his earlier promotion of native, experimental and proletarian poetry, Sutherland continued to broaden the scope of his magazine in the late forties and early fifties and, in doing so, diluted its radicalism and weakened its purpose. While Dudek successfully completed his Master's and then his Ph.D. in New York, returning to Canada in 1951, a recognized poet and critic, while Layton was finally beginning to be acknowledged in both the United States and Canada as an important poet, and while Souster continued to write poetry and began a new career as editor of his own little magazine and press, Sutherland's force and presence continued to decline.

In 1953, after months of financial hardship, Sutherland determined to reestablish life and solvency in *Northern Review*. He decided to remainder the books produced under the First Statement New Writers Series. At the same time, he changed the name of First Statement Press to Northern Review Press. Furthermore, the press was reorganized in order to offer a book and magazine

Shortly afterwards, however, in order to minimize printing costs, he again shifted direction, turning the printing of *Northern Review* over to Villiers Publications, Holloway, London, England (Vanneste 176).

This last action seems to most solidly reflect Sutherland's separation from his earlier beliefs. When he began *First Statement* magazine and then his press, it was in order to facilitate an intimate relationship with his and his peers' poetry -- a relationship that allowed for absolute control over every aspect of the poetry's production and appearance. In the press's earliest days, he, Layton and Dudek had relished the work of setting the type, "line by line, word by word, letter by letter"; they had reveled in the handsome appearance of their work; and they had enjoyed the sense of pride that came from knowing they were physically producing work that none of the larger publishing firms would consider -- work that was later recognized as significant and meaningful, and that sometimes even marked the beginning of a young unknown poet's career. According to Miriam Waddington Sutherland had even slept under his press at times ("Introduction" *John Sutherland: Essays, Controversies and Poems* 14). Therefore, his turn away from it, by first contracting out *Northern Review's* publication, and then by either selling it, or trading it in exchange for the printing of two issues (as Vanneste's research has found), suggests that Sutherland's health was seriously suffering. The press was the last physical link that connected Sutherland to his former ideals; it was also the last link between himself and his former friends and colleagues.

In 1954, he converted to Roman Catholicism, and in January, 1955, confirming even more deeply his increasing detachment from the poetry scene and from Montreal, Sutherland severed his final links with the city when he and his wife moved to Toronto, to an apartment close to St. Michael's College,

his wife moved to Toronto, to an apartment close to St. Michael's College, where he began a B.A.

In Toronto, Sutherland immersed himself in research for a book on E.J. Pratt, (a poet he had previously disdained as being "one hundred and fifty years behind the times"³³) which Ryerson Press subsequently published as *The Poetry of E.J. Pratt: A New Interpretation* (1956). He continued to publish *Northern Review*, but as a quarterly, its contents reflecting Sutherland's continuing preoccupation with religion and neglect of Canadian criticism.

As mentioned earlier, Dudek and Sutherland's relationship was a wary one. Convinced from the outset that Sutherland didn't like him, Dudek determined that he would remain distant from his colleague. Equally committed to the task Sutherland and *First Statement* had established during the early forties, after Dudek moved to New York he and Sutherland continued to correspond, but the gulf between them increasingly widened. Separated by physical distance, Dudek was unaware of the detailed work and issues surrounding the production of *Northern Review* and the maintenance and use of the press and therefore felt less ownership in its goals and successes. His political ideologies were changing, which resulted in the severing of his friendship with Layton. As a result, he felt less pull towards *First Statement*, *Northern Review* and the press, and, thus, John Sutherland. Immersing himself deeply in his studies of Carlyle and the sociology of the publishing industry even further separated him from Sutherland's world of writing tedious letters of appeal for financial support and subscriptions to readers, and battling conflicts within *Northern Review's* ranks. When Dudek successfully completed his

³³Sutherland, "A Letter from Canada" *Briarcliffe Quarterly* July 10th, 1946 138.

Ph.D., the gulf between him and Sutherland increased again since he believed that Sutherland was always somewhat threatened by Dudek's intellectual strengths and academic training (Interview with the author, April 23rd 1999).

In addition, while Sutherland increasingly moved away from the aspirations they had initially shared in the early days of *First Statement* magazine, Dudek's faith and belief in them was being renewed by his studies in New York. Dudek's interaction and association with Ezra Pound led him to experience American poetry in a more meaningful way, and further allowed him to develop a wide network of American writer friends. In comparison, in Montreal, Sutherland's vision was narrowing, and was retreating to a more purely colonial position. In retrospect, Dudek remarks

while Layton's influence was on Sutherland, he was impressive, then Sutherland became Roman Catholic. He knew he was ill, death was close, and he turned away from Neitzche, Lawrence -- the writers who gave him his spark. (Interview with the author, August 29th, 1998)

As Dudek began to turn his thoughts towards returning to Canada, he looked to Sutherland and the press. But times had changed, as had Sutherland, and the energy and activism that he sought were gone. Although he initially believed that he might be able to realign Sutherland and re-energize the press, he soon gave up, admitting that "Sutherland was as dead as a doorknob" (Letter from Dudek to Souster, Nov. 26th 1951, (Souster Papers, Lakehead University), Davey 13). Consequently, compelled by Layton and Souster to join them, he broke with Sutherland and began work on Contact Press.

Wynne Francis suggests that during the mid-fifties "John Sutherland was a lonely, embittered man. He had long lost belief in his own creative powers" (Francis "Montreal Poets of the Forties" 34). His health failing,

Sutherland was admitted first to Weston Sanatorium, and then to Toronto General Hospital, where it was discovered that in addition to chronic tuberculosis, Sutherland also had cancer. The cancer was removed in December, 1955, but it reoccurred during the spring 1956.

Despite these troubles, revealing his absolute commitment to his task of editor, Sutherland published the last issue of *Northern Review* while in hospital. It appeared in mimeographed form, and, curiously, it suggested a renewed spurt of vigor in Sutherland. Some of his previous humor and critical astuteness are apparent, as is a renewed sense of placing poetry within a Canadian context.

Sutherland died on September 1st, 1956.

* * *

In his rejected preface to *New Provinces* (1936),³⁴ A.J.M. Smith writes That the poet is not a dreamer, but a man of sense; that poetry is a discipline because it is an art; and that it is further a useful art; these are propositions which it is intended this volume shall suggest. We are not deceiving ourselves that it has proved them. (Rpt. Dudek & Gnarowski 41)

Who, if not Sutherland, Layton and Dudek, worked to meet these very standards? Did not Sutherland prove that publishing poetry was a business -- a real and crucial business -- that required tedious, financially risky, and time-consuming work? And further, was not Sutherland (and his colleagues)

³⁴The preface never appeared; it was rejected by E.J. Pratt, who, according to Dudek and Gnarowski, "objected to its contents". A version of it was finally published in the Spring of 1965, in *Canadian Literature*, after Michael Gnarowski suggested its significance.

critically aware of world affairs, which knowledge informed and directed their work, both politically and poetically?

From his earliest work on *First Statement*, John Sutherland had a vision of what Canadian poetry might be, and he devoted the greater part of his life to making that vision a reality. He, Dudek and Layton single-handedly took a stand against the publishing establishment, promoting what was good rather than what paid. Again and again, they defended the need for a new poetry that reflected the reality in which they lived. In so doing, they pioneered a new spirit of modernism in Canadian poetry, one in which poets printed, published and distributed their own work. They established a model on which all future little presses could build.

In his *Brief to the Royal Commission*, Sutherland reports that in addition to their contribution to "innovation in Canadian taste in book design," First Statement Press's books were so successfully sold that "While their sale was very small, never exceeding five hundred copies, and insufficient to defray the costs of printing and distribution, it was nevertheless larger than the sale of comparative publications by the established publishers." (Rpt. Dudek & Gnarowski 71) Perhaps Sutherland's most profound contribution to Canadian literature during the 1940's, however, is that he lived up to his ambition of providing

a listening post responsive to vibrations of many kinds, to the strong and the less strong, to the familiar and to those that are unexpected.... Through literally thousands of contacts with young writers, and by encouraging talent wherever it was found, [First Statement Press] was able to relay valuable messages to the enthusiast,

to the critic, and eventually to the publisher.³⁵

³⁵Sutherland, John. *A Memorandum on the First Statement Press to the Members of the Royal Commission on the Arts, Sciences, Etc.* Mimeoographed Typescript. 1949 12.

Chapter Four

Contact Press:

Capturing the "Whirling/Spark"¹

Poetry in Canada needs a new start. To the young, the field is wide open. Our younger poets are getting grey about the temples. The work of the forties is by now old and yellow: it was a good beginning but not yet the real thing. There is now a ready audience for any young writer with something fresh and bouncing to say, someone with a new technique, a vision, or a gift for making art out of matters of fact. But where are the young? Where is the "new" generation?²

As John Sutherland's health declined and his thoughts turned increasingly toward religion, the exuberance and often loud, rebellious spirit of First Statement Press started to wane. Antipathy between himself and Layton, which resulted primarily from clashes of personality, changing political orientations and increasing differences of opinion about what to publish, eventually convinced Layton to distance himself from *First Statement*. At the same time, in August 1944,³ Dudek

¹From Dudek, Louis. "Pure Science." *Twenty-Four Poems*. Montreal: Contact Press. 1952.

²Dudek, Louis. "Où Sont les Jeunes?" *Contact* 1:1 1.

³In Dudek's autobiographical essay in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* Vol 14 (Gale Research Inc Detroit, 1991), he states, "I married in 1944 and with my wife Stephanie moved to New York." Susan Stromberg-Stein reports that the date of the wedding was September 16th, 1944; and that they married at the St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church, in Montreal (27).

left Montreal to pursue an M.A. degree in History⁴ followed by doctoral studies in Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York, and so ceased his direct involvement with the little press. Sutherland began to publish *Northern Review*,⁵ but his editorial calls for contributions and publication policies reveal a steadily growing conservatism.

Ironically, Sutherland's sense of nationalism, which gave life and vigor to First Statement Press at its birth, ultimately hastened its decline. Initially wary of the European and American influences on Canadian writing, Sutherland eventually came to identify with American attempts at writing something new and with their emphasis on realism. And, according to Hilda Vanneste, "Sutherland accepted the American influence because it countered the alienation between the poet and the Canadian environment which was the legacy of the English aestheticism" (114). As his health declined, however, and as first Layton, and then Dudek, went in other directions, Sutherland retreated to a position that was more centered in Canadian nationalism. This reinforced the separation between himself and his former colleagues and indicated how wide the ideological gulf between them came to be. In a letter to Raymond Souster, dated June 7, 1951, in which he reacts to the latest issue of *Northern Review*, Dudek writes, "My theory is that looking for 'native quality' just shuts the eyes to what is new and different and

⁴Dudek's Master's research paper was entitled, "William Makepeace Thackeray and the Profession of Letters." His advisor was J.B. Brebner, a noted Canadian historian.

⁵The first issue of *Northern Review* appeared in December 1945/January 1946. Sutherland continued to publish the little magazine until a few months prior to his death, September 1st, 1956.

alive. Who in hell cares whether it's native or not? And do we want to be natives forever?"⁶

This fundamental difference of opinion between Sutherland and Dudek regarding the direction in which Canadian modernist poetry needed to move continued to grow. The earliest moderns, F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, A.M. Klein, and others, had embraced the writings of British poets such as Auden, Spender, MacNiece and Eliot. These men, then, sought to develop the new writing while establishing a Canadian strain of poetry. Sutherland advanced their cause, reacting, in turn, against the *Previewites* for their adherence to the British model, wanting, to focus less on keeping poetry Canadian, and more on establishing a new Canadian "poetic". This new poetic could be found in the American modernists who could be heard to the south, including Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens, among others.⁷ Ironically, however, the ideals that these poets espoused were the same as those Sutherland, Dudek and Layton had promoted at the peak of their activities with First Statement Press -- the belief in writing poetry that was, at the same time, derived from the 'real', and socialist in orientation -- rejecting art of the past in order to record that which is all around in the present, and placing emphasis on writing poetry that reflected the poets' immediate concerns, surroundings and language. These were the ideals Sutherland

⁶Letter to Raymond Souster from Louis Dudek dated New York City, Montreal, June 7th, 1951 (Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) In Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-67*. 7.

⁷It should be remembered that generally "there is always at least a ten-year time lag between poets on one side of the ocean influencing those on the other side" (Souster, "Textual Comments" Letter to the Author, dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

ultimately moved away from as illness, religiosity and conservatism overtook him; these same ideals, however, continued to draw and inspire Dudek, Layton and others, and created in them the need for an outlet because they were an ongoing development of what the poets already believed in and had started through *First Statement* magazine and First Statement Press.

In the meantime, Dudek and Layton had moved on, and were looking for something new. To them, Sutherland's returning wariness of American and British influences was counterproductive and would result in setting "Canadian poetry back for the next thirty or forty years to where it was in 1925."⁸ Like Smith, Dudek believed that it was time for Canadian poetry to move into the twentieth century, which demanded that Canadian poets look outside of their country for inspiration and new models. Dudek was particularly pleased by the work of Ezra Pound. He also continued to feel isolated from more established literary circles, as well as frustrated and angered by limited publishing avenues in Canada. Consequently, he decided to move to New York to pursue doctoral work at Columbia University.

Before Dudek left he went to a dinner party hosted by John Sutherland at a restaurant in Montreal. There, Sutherland introduced him to Raymond Souster, a Canadian poet who had unexpectedly arrived at Sutherland's home that afternoon, on his way to Toronto from the Royal Canadian Air Force base where he was

⁸"Correspondence," *Northern Review* 4:4:45 1951. According to A.J.M. Smith, the problem with Canadian literature in the 1920's was that it was "altogether too self-conscious of its environment, of its position in space, and scarcely conscious at all of its position in time" (Smith, A.J.M. "Wanted: Canadian Criticism" *The Canadian Forum* (April, 1928)).

stationed in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Souster shared Dudek's feelings of isolation from, and frustration with, the Canadian literary establishment, so he was energized both by Sutherland's recent agreement to publish some of his poems in *First Statement* magazine and by a sense of the importance of the new little magazine. The meeting between Dudek and Souster, while seemingly inconsequential at the time, had a profound impact both on the direction of the mens' lives, and on the next phase of the modernist poetry movement in Canada. It is both ironic and appropriate, then, that Sutherland introduced the two; Sutherland had provided both a standard and a structure for little presses in Canada. At his party, the father of the little press movement in Montreal passed on the torch to the next generation of Canadian poet/publishers, in Dudek and Souster.

Souster was born in 1921 to a lower middle-class family in Toronto. He became interested in poetry very young, publishing his first poem, "A Field in Winter" in the *Toronto Daily Star* when he was thirteen years old. He continued to read and write poetry through high school, but he published only one more poem, "A South Country"⁹ before graduating in 1939.¹⁰ Then, Souster followed his father's example and went into the banking business, beginning as a teller at the Imperial Bank of Canada (now known as the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce). Enjoying the receipt of a regular pay cheque, Souster used his free

⁹"A South Country" appeared in the 1936-1937 edition of the U.T.S. Yearbook, *The Twig*.

¹⁰Several other poems by Souster were printed in The HumberSide Collegiate Magazine, *Hermes*.

time to write poetry and pursue its publication both in Canada and the United States. Within a year his poems began to be published, and by the end of 1941 seven of Souster's poems had appeared, in addition to two short stories and a critical article on Canadian poetry.¹¹ He was twenty years old.

In 1941 Souster enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force and was assigned to ground crew owing to astigmatism of the eyes, which necessitated glasses. Consequently he became R-141217, Aircraftsman Class 2). At the completion of his equipment accounting, despite requesting an overseas posting, Souster was stationed in Sydney, Nova Scotia, where he arrived in February, 1942. Once again he devoted his spare time to writing and publishing poetry. He sent numerous manuscripts to *Contemporary Verse*, a little magazine edited by Alan Crawley. Although Crawley rejected most of Souster's poems, he provided Souster with much feedback and detailed criticism, which Souster used constructively to improve his technique. Crawley finally published "Home Front" in March 1942¹² -- the month that *Preview* was begun by Patrick Anderson.

¹¹In 1940, *The Canadian Forum* published "Nocturnal" (August, 1940), "Last Act; Last Scene" (November, 1940), and "It Can Happen Here" (a short story) (December, 1940). In 1941, the same publishers printed two more poems by Souster (March, August) as well as a short story (July, 1941). Other publications in which Souster appeared include: *The New York Herald Tribune*, *Kaleidograph* (a poetry magazine in Texas), the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* (December, 1941) and *The Providence Sunday Journal* (Souster's critical article on Canadian poetry). Note: Souster reports that Winfield Townley Scott, who was the literary editor of the *Providence Sunday Journal*, "and a fine poet himself, was [his] biggest booster at this time. He published 7 or 8 poems [that Souster had written] and paid \$15 for each which enabled [him] to order Kenneth Fearing, Kenneth Patchen and others from the Gotham Book Mart in New York City" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

¹²*Contemporary Verse* Vol 1 No. 6.

Several months later Souster discovered that little magazine, and began sending his poems to it. Anderson rejected all but one of Souster's contributions.¹³ Compared to the elitist and intellectual tone of the work of Anderson and his colleagues on *Preview*, Souster's poetry was blunt and unrefined.¹⁴ Marked by his lack of university training, Souster's poetry reflected the ideas of the everyday man. It was more "earthy" and sexually daring than that of the *Preview*ites, who were influenced by wider cosmopolitan and academic backgrounds.¹⁵ Consequently, he did not meet their standards, nor fit into their milieu. Physically isolated from them on the East Coast, lacking a supportive network of poets and writers, and frustrated by the barriers posed by often indifferent or entrenched publishers, Souster began to experience an increasing sense of alienation from the literary establishment that was growing in Montreal.

It was at this time, however, that John Sutherland began publishing *First Statement* magazine with the goal of promoting poetry based on realism, colloquial language and attention to local landscape and events, with the purpose of breaking down "the dividing wall between the author and the people."¹⁶ Souster became

¹³"Queen St. Serenade" appeared in *Preview* No. 7, September 1942.

¹⁴Souster has since remarked that "The *Preview* gang may have been thought of as too elitist, but of all the Montreal poets at the time the ones whom I admired most were Patrick Anderson and Pat Page" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

¹⁵Souster also reports that while the *Preview* poets were influenced by British models such as Spender, Auden, MacNiece, etc., Souster preferred American poetry and had read it widely (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

¹⁶Sutherland, John. "Introduction" *Other Canadians*. Montreal: First Statement Press. Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski. *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*. 59.

more aware of the little magazine when he met Bill (Goldberg) Goodwin in the early summer of 1943 when they were both in Sydney. Souster reports

We met on a road of the camp. He apparently recognized me from what Irving Layton, his Uncle had told him. He was carrying what turned out to be a copy (printed) of *First Statement* and he showed me my poem "The Mother" inside. That was the first time I'd seen the magazine though I'd known about it for a few months.¹⁷

First Statement offered Souster a source of poetry much like his own.

Consequently, Souster felt a renewed enthusiasm for his writing, and the hope for a sense of belonging. He was no longer alone.

From the perspective of Sutherland, Layton and Dudek, Souster's first submissions to *First Statement* were exactly the sort of poetry that they wanted to promote in their magazine. According to Louis Dudek, Sutherland received Souster's first submission in December, 1943. During the next regular meeting organized to review new contributions to the magazine, Audrey Aikman, Betty Sutherland, Louis Dudek and John Sutherland read Souster's poetry for the first time, and were immediately excited by it. Sutherland wrote to Souster declaring that he found the poet's work to be "tremendous" (Interview with Louis Dudek, August 29, 1998). Thereafter, Souster sent all of his manuscripts to *First Statement*, and Sutherland eagerly and regularly published them. It was a few months after this initial contact that Souster appeared unexpectedly at Sutherland's door.

¹⁷Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

Sutherland and Souster had a great deal in common. Neither had had pure, academic training; both worked in the "real" world -- Souster in a bank and then in the R.C.A.F.,¹⁸ and Sutherland doing odd jobs to finance his work on *First Statement* magazine; both shared similar reactions to Canadian poetry and similar ideals about its potential and the ways in which that potential might be realized. Furthermore, according to Sutherland's wife, Audrey Aikman, both men were "socially conscious primarily from a humanitarian, not a political point of view" (Campbell 27). The result was a strong and enduring friendship.

After the positive influence of his visit with Sutherland, Souster's home in Nova Scotia¹⁹ seemed even more isolated upon his return. There he had made friends with two leading aircraftsmen, Bill (William) Goldberg (who had sought out Souster on the suggestion of his cousin, Irving Layton) and Dave Mullen. All were convinced that Canadian culture had stagnated. Furthermore, confronted by the bleak existence of the coal miners who lived all around them in Nova Scotia, they were convinced of the necessity for political change. During a discussion about the state of Canadian poetry, which took place between Souster and Mullen on their way back from one of their gatherings, the idea suddenly occurred to Souster that the men should begin their own little magazine. Mullen was immediately enthusiastic, as was Goldberg, who reports, "[they] seized me by the

¹⁸The Royal Canadian Air Force eventually became part of the Canadian Forces.

¹⁹Souster reports, "As I had been granted a living-out allowance in May, 1942, owing to the station doubling in size with not enough barracks to go around, I lived at 617 Prince Street, Sydney, until December, 1943, when I was posted to Scoudouc, N.B. (#4 Repair Depot, R.C.A.F.) (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

arms and legs and like two boisterous and fun-loving kids carried me into the shower-room. Bolting the door,²⁰ they fired a salvo, 'Let's get a magazine out.' "Let us make a declaration of our fighting faith." "Let us denounce the Canadian Author's Association, including the Sir Charles G.D. Tradition."²¹ Souster responded, "We must attack, attack and attack. Let us call the mag. the *Attack* or *Sperm*, anything that will shock the dull witted Canadian imagination out of its lethargy."²² That same evening, November 18th, 1943, the work began.

Mullen and Goldberg solicited contributions from Wesley Scott and Saul Broff, friends and colleagues, and helped plan, write and edit the magazine. Souster wrote the lead editorial and "found" and typed the stencils.²³ Following Sutherland's example, lacking money and access to a printing press, Souster determined to mimeograph the magazine. To this end, the young men "borrowed" paper from the base and persuaded the clerk in charge of the mimeographing machine to let them have access to it one evening. In this way, the little magazine *Direction* was born. Seventy-five copies were mailed out to potential readers free of charge, along with a hand-written covering letter that read

²⁰Souster insists "there was no door to that shower room; toilet stalls were open as well -- there was no privacy in the service" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

²¹Goldberg, William. "The Beginning" a letter in *Direction* 1, December 1943. 1.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Souster reports that the stencils were available thanks to a friendly orderly room clerk (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

Dec 12, 1943

A Note from the Editors of *Direction*

Please accept this complimentary copy of the first issue of *Direction*. We would appreciate any review or publicity which you would care to give it. As this is our first venture in the field of Canadian literature and being in the Service and pretty much isolated from literary circles we are depending upon you to give us a helping hand.

Yours Sincerely,

The Editors

Ten issues of *Direction* were irregularly published between 1943 and 1946 (the last issue appeared in February, 1946).²⁴ Within its pages Souster incorporated work by the original editors, by colleagues stationed on the base, as well as by Irving Layton, Miriam Waddington, Ralph Gustafson, John Sutherland, Kay Smith and Henry Miller.

In the second issue of *Direction*, Souster published an article entitled "A

²⁴*Direction* continued to be edited by Raymond Souster, William Goldberg and David Mullen. As far as can be determined, its issue dates were:

- No. 1. 12 December, 1943
- No. 2 February-March, 1944
- No. 3 May, 1944
- No. 4 July, 1944
- No. 5 October, 1944
- No. 6 December, 1944
- No. 7 March, 1945
- No. 8 July, 1945
- No. 9 November, 1945
- No. 10 February, 1946

Debt". In it he reveals a sense of identification with Henry Miller and Kenneth Patchen, two American writers:

Both men have been systematically attacked by those who always attack new literature that is not the hack work they perpetuate in their commercial book-selling reviews, nor the fake works of art that win the majority of Pulitzer prizes and other so called impartial awards. But these attacks have rebounded from their work like practice shells off the thick armor-plating of a battleship. Their writing has remained and has grown while their critics have been forgotten.

From Henry Miller I learned first a personal courage....I learned to write about everything in the world as we know it today, without worrying about censorship, slander or publication. For most of the subjects worth writing about now are under a taboo more ruthless than any yet known in our civilization....Of Kenneth Patchen I can only say that he alone of all the poets writing at this hour has not compromised his art and sold out his personal beliefs for a much greater and surer place that would have been his had he taken the easy path as so many have elected to take. And so another great book, *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*, has had to be privately printed....This is surely what Celine had in mind when he said in his speech to Zola at Medan, "Here we have come to the end of twenty centuries of civilization and nevertheless no regime today could stand two months of the truth."

Four issues later, in an open letter to Bill Goldberg (December 1944), Souster reports

The other day the mss. of a volume of my poems was returned from a well-known Canadian publishing house²⁵ together with a letter (well-intentioned of course) which revealed in its contents what seems to be pretty well the accepted slot into which Canadian poetry must fall if it is to be tolerated at all.

First, "my poetry has vitality but lacks discipline," which I am told is a characteristic of young poetry, and from the inference in this letter, a decided fault. Or discipline is wonderful, but vitality is to be shunned. My metaphor while "colourful, apt and arresting," is "sometimes so mixed as to lose its power." Further lack of discipline, again too much vitality, too much freedom. Then, "to express himself frankly becomes (for the young poet) a sort of false, artistic heroism." Down with frankness, down with ideals, let's curl up in our dark rooms and sleep off the timid and the afraid, the leeches of life.

And here's the pay-off. Get this little phrase. I'm told that a lot of my poems could have gained almost unbelievable power by a use of "a little fine chiselling restraint." O I love that. O I love the smallness, the perfect pettiness, the womanish touch of that phrase. Doesn't it describe Canadian poetry of the last fifty years better than E.K. Brown's Medal winner²⁶ or the whole of A.J.M. Smith's tired cumbersome anthology?²⁷

No, poetry cannot be healthy or even possible as long as such ideals

²⁵The publisher was Ryerson Press.

²⁶Brown, E.K. *On Canadian Poetry*. Toronto: Ryerson. 1943.

²⁷Smith, A.J.M. *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1943.

are cherished and held up for future generations to follow. They must be stamped out, if need be, ruthlessly.

It will be the pleasure of a few of us to fight this challenge and defeat it.

In the following volume (Number 4), revealing their determination to challenge the establishment, *Direction's* editors published excerpts from Henry Miller's book, *Tropic of Cancer*, which had been banned in North America. They included a note that stated they

regretted that the conventions and the false standards of our age have made it necessary to exclude perhaps the most famous and most living chapters altogether....We...have not used dashes for words or whole lines altogether, believing as we do that this is an insult to the words of any man. Where the whole text cannot be printed in its entirety, it has been put aside altogether, for a happier time which we hope will not be too long in coming.

In December 1943, Bill Goldberg, David Mullen and Raymond Souster were all posted away from Sydney. Goldberg continued publication of *Direction* from Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland, but Souster's involvement in the little magazine ceased. At the same time, Sutherland's *Northern Review* and First Statement Press were faltering in Montreal. Furthermore, Alan Crawley, editor of *Contemporary Verse*, the only other little magazine that provided a serious publishing outlet for poetry, was experiencing financial difficulties that made him

express uncertainty about continuing publication.²⁸ In Issue No. 36, the tenth anniversary number, Crawley writes:

During this summer and up to a few weeks ago I have been wavering and distrustful of my decision [to continue the magazine]; even though the many letters...convince me that *CV* has given help and encouragement to many young writers, that there is still need for this work to go on, and that much of what we hoped would and could be done has been accomplished. I am disappointed that I have been unable to find the money with which to extend *CV*'s circulation, and I had hoped to mark this anniversary by announcing some improvement in the magazine's makeup and some payment to future contributors for their work. But neither of these things seem likely to happen.²⁹

Within a year, Crawley closed *Contemporary Verse* down.³⁰ In addition to financial losses, he cited fewer contributions to the magazine as a fundamental reason for the little magazine's demise. Some critics suggest that Crawley's experience signifies a greater problem that existed in poetry communities across Canada. Campbell, for example, argues that

The new direction found in the early Forties had been explored and exhausted. In fact, by the time *Other Canadians* (1947) was published,

²⁸Souster notes that "Alan Crawley, being blind, had this added handicap to running *CV*" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

²⁹Crawley, Alan. "Foreword: *CV* 1941-1951" in *Contemporary Verse* 36 (Fall, 1951) 3.

³⁰Crawley's closing announcement, entitled "A Special Notice," appears in *Contemporary Verse* 39 (Fall-Winter 1952) 1.

eleven of Sutherland's new war-time poets had stopped writing and few new poets had taken their place. The poetic enthusiasm fostered by the war had abated in the rapidly changing post-war situation. (79-80)

This viewpoint is supported by an anonymous article that appeared in the *Canadian Author and Bookman* in which the author writes that in Canada, the end of the forties was a period in which "little poetry was being written, and that little had scant hope of publication in book form."³¹

In contrast, Souster argues:

Irving Layton, Louis Dudek and myself had moved in to the Fifties writing more strongly and certainly more productively than ever. But not only were the regular book publishers indifferent to our work, but the one or two little magazines still functioning, foremost of which was John Sutherland's *Northern Review*, were now closed to us.³²

Michael Gnarowski also argues against the idea that the beginning of the 1950's was a "period of marked or unusual sterility in Canadian publishing" (*Contact Press 1952-1967* 7). As evidence he cites that in 1951 First Statement Press published Kay Smith's book, *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer and Other Poems*, as well as Anne Wilkinson's *Counterpoint to Sleep*; that Ryerson Press published Souster's *City Hall Street* and Elizabeth Brewster's *East Coast*. And, he points out, in 1952, Ryerson published *Trial of a City* by Earle Birney, as well as their reprint of A.M. Klein's *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*.

³¹*Canadian Author & Bookman* 38:4:2 Summer, 1963.

³²Souster, Raymond. "Some Afterthoughts on *Contact Magazine*" (Gnarowski, M. "*Contact Magazine 1952-1954*." 1).

From their perspective, however, Souster and Dudek became increasingly frustrated by publishers' rejection letters. And each man had his own unique reasons for being upset: Souster seems to have continued to feel alienated from the literary community, at the same time relying on it, including publishers, to give him a sense of legitimacy and place. Dudek, on the other hand, felt slighted by Sutherland. Unlike his co-editors, Dudek had not had an individual book of poetry published by First Statement Press, and might have been indirectly reacting to this fact.

What should also be remembered is that the early 1950's was a time of great change. The war was over and the united sense of purpose that it provided was gone, leaving a vacuum waiting to be filled. Everything was changing, including poetry. Gone was the unflinching nationalism to which Sutherland and others had clung. Gone was the energy that came from poets taking a revolutionary stand against the larger publishing houses and consciously changing the face of Canadian poetry. It is less likely that the problem Campbell and others identify was a need for poets and poetry; rather it was a need for a new direction. And it was Souster who provided it.

On November 19th, 1950, Souster wrote to Dudek with the comment, "I don't find [*Northern Review*] the same exciting thing that the old *First Statement* was, but the times have changed and John [Sutherland] is trying for a wider audience, and the stuff is different too, smoother written" (Gnarowski, Michael. "Notes on the Background and History of *Contact Magazine*" 3) Two months later Souster had formulated a plan. On June 23rd, 1951, in another letter to Dudek, Souster suggests the following:

I think you are probably as fed up with *Contemporary Verse* and *Northern Review* as I am, and I know there are plenty of others who feel the same way. I give them credit for publishing competent publications in the face of every obstacle and I support them but if we are going to move on, something will have to take their place. We need an outlet for experiment and a franker discussion of the directions poetry is to take, not articles on Lampman and the movies. What we need is in short a poetry mag with daring and a little less precious an attitude. Have you anything to add to this? (Gnarowski, M. "Notes on the Background & History of *Contact Magazine*" 3)

Dudek, perhaps more out of touch with the Canadian poetry scene having been in New York for more than four years and concerned about taking a contentious position against his friend and former colleague John Sutherland, was initially reticent to join Souster. On July 17th, 1951, he responded:

the time is not yet right to start a new magazine. John [Sutherland] has done a helluva lot, and is still doing it. It would be a crime for us to go off on our own and try to sink his ship after he has pulled alone for so long. His policy is bad, but his standards are fundamentally right. I am going to be in Canada after September, probably seeing John a lot, and so maybe he will swing a little more into the old line. What he is afraid of now is losing his financial backing; he must see that this is a sell-out, and that either his backers will take a good deal more daring than he imagines (I think they can), or to hell with them. Reduce the magazine back to mimeograph and keep printing the right thing -- for the two hundred people that have brains

and are still alive. If John rears his back on all reform...well...I wouldn't mind his printing some bad poems, when no good ones are available anyhow; but I think we'd come to a real fight if he were rejecting poetry I thought was first class.³³

In 1951 Dudek's attempts to get a manuscript by Souster published by an American publication firm, Farrar Straus,³⁴ failed. Further efforts in 1952, with another American publisher, New Directions, also failed, which, given its nature, was more discouraging. At the same time, Souster and Dudek were writing to each other about the state of Canadian poetry and, in particular, Sutherland's narrowing perspective.

Souster, in the meantime, had returned to Toronto. In 1948, sensing the need for a revitalization in Canadian poetry, and again disturbed by his isolation from literary contacts, he began a new little magazine, which he entitled *Enterprise*. It survived for one year.

Enterprise was a one-man operation from the outset: Souster wrote the editorials and included his own poetry and fiction in its pages. Attracting minimal contributions, he published reprints of Henry Miller's work as well as texts by the U.S. socialists Michael Frankel and Walter Loewenfels. Lacking a mimeograph machine, Souster typed each issue on his typewriter using carbon paper. He produced twenty copies for each of the magazine's six issues, which he mailed to various editors and writers.

³³Letter from Louis Dudek (New York City) to Raymond Souster. In Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 3.

³⁴Farrar, Straus has since been revived and is still in business as Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Although *Enterprise* failed as an avenue of expression for poets and writers, it provided Souster with a springboard into the wholesale marketing of British books and magazines. Furthermore, it began Souster's relationship with book publishing. Souster announced the *Enterprise* "typescript chapbook" series in Issue 2 (February 1948) of the little magazine. Of this series, only *New Poems*, by Souster, appeared. The last page of the chapbook contains an advertisement for two future chapbooks by Souster: *The Girl in the Iron Lung* and *The Diary of a Young Man*. Although Souster did not manage to publish either of these books, their presence as ideas reveals an ambitious aspect to Souster's literary vision which was similar to that shown by John Sutherland.

While Souster had been working on *Enterprise*, Dudek had remained in New York working on his dissertation, which he titled, *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media, and Their Relation to Literature*.³⁵ Under the influence of Lionel Trilling, Dudek moved away from his former Marxist leanings.³⁶ According to Frank Davey, he came to believe that "civilization is paradoxically the creation of tyrannies, despotisms and imperialisms, that good and evil are inevitably intertwined" (Davey 8). In his research, Dudek became intrigued by Thomas Carlyle, whom he viewed as a hero who had fought against society's impulse toward commodifying literature and art. Dudek obviously identified with Carlyle in his own battles against the larger publishing houses in Canada, which he viewed as being run purely for profit, by publishing little

³⁵Dudek's doctoral thesis was originally published, in 1955, by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁶This fact served to undermine seriously his friendship with Layton.

magazines and working on little presses. In his dissertation, he writes

The little magazines are...the most energetic sign of the reaction of literary minorities against the levelling standards of the new urban culture, a culture thrown out of balance by new machines and new wealth. (139)

In 1949, Dudek sent a letter to Ezra Pound in which he wrote of his admiration for the poet's work. Pound (who was at that time confined in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington after his trial for treason) responded and thus began a lively correspondence and eventually much close personal interaction between the two men. Pound served as a conduit for Dudek to numerous other American writers and artists, including Paul Blackburn, Michael Lekakis, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore and Cid Corman, among others. It is clear that Dudek both looked up to, and identified with, Pound, viewing him in a similar light as he did Carlyle -- a "fighting artist trying to survive in a materialistic pragmatic society" (Davey 9). As a result of their friendship Dudek felt renewed in his desire to do something interesting within the literary community. Consequently he began the "Poetry Mailbag,"³⁷ which he describes in the following manner:

I had started a poetry newsletter to be circulated among a dozen or so poets. Each fellow added his own work and criticism to the file and mailed the folio to the next man on the list. Among the dozen or so participants were William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Rudd Fleming, Paul Blackburn, Raymond Souster. It came to an end when Blackburn's cats mistook the

³⁷The "Poetry Mailbag" is the term familiar to Souster. It has also been referred to as the "Poetry Grapevine."

heap of papers for a litter and 'passed judgment' on our labours.³⁸

Dudek invited Souster to participate in 1950 during the "Grapevine's" second round.³⁹ It was the first contact the two men had had in several years. Souster was pleased. On November 19th, 1950, he responded

You have probably always enjoyed -- first in Montreal and now in New York -- the opportunity to meet other writers and the stimulus of exchange of ideas and opinions. I have never had this, and to some extent it is a disadvantage. There are too many writers in Canada who feel all too strongly this loneliness, this feeling of writing for an unknown audience in an alien atmosphere.⁴⁰

Over the next decade, Dudek and Souster corresponded frequently.

Souster was glad to have a literary ally and friend in Dudek; and Dudek, who continued to work on his doctorate, and was preparing to leave New York, was pleased to have a contact to return to who was familiar with American writing.

Dudek returned to Montreal in August, 1951, to a teaching position at McGill University. Dr. Harold Files, who had steered Layton and Dudek to Sutherland, was Acting Chairman of the English Department at McGill University in 1950. He had written to Dudek inviting him to apply as a "visiting poet". By

³⁸Souster elaborates that "Paul had the poetry chain letter sheets scattered around his apartment -- his cats used them as a litter box" (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author, dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

³⁹The Poetry Grapevine made three rounds in total.

⁴⁰Letter in Louis Dudek's Private Possession (Davey 10). Souster reports that "after a while you accept it [the sense of isolation and loneliness] as the norm" (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

the time Dudek arrived, a year later, the position was no longer available.

However, Files hired him anyway, to teach courses in composition and modern poetry.

Dudek reminisces.

The return to Montreal began a new productive stage in my career. I was now in my thirty-third year of life and ready to work on poetry and teaching in earnest. I came to McGill with a mission...I came with the confidence that I had something very important to teach....The first was modern poetry and literature, which had evolved fully abroad but which had barely started in Canada with small groups of poets having a limited audience. The message of modernism was to be spread abroad, through students, lectures, and magazines. It was also to be directed at poetry in Canada, at new promising writers; and outlets had to be created for these voices. (*Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* 131)

As soon as she heard of Dudek's arrival in Montreal, Betty Sutherland (John Sutherland's sister and Layton's wife) phoned Dudek to urge him to reconcile with Layton. The two poets made temporary peace with each other and arranged to meet the following weekend. Coincidentally, Souster and his wife were in Montreal at the same time and were invited along. And so, in late August, 1951, Dudek, Sutherland and Souster⁴¹ gathered at Dudek's grandmother's farm,

⁴¹There is some confusion as to who was at the meeting at the farm; according to Souster, Layton did not appear while John Sutherland did. Dudek's account of the time suggests that Layton was actually there and Sutherland wasn't. A photo taken at the farm does not show Layton, but it is possible that he was the one who actually took the photograph.

near Charlemagne, Quebec, on the Little Jesus River. Souster later reports.

I'll always remember the day on the farm on the Little Jesus River with Louis Dudek throwing the first two issues of Cid Corman's *Origin* down on the picnic table and saying "This is typical of what the nuts in New York are doing these days." I remember casually flipping through both copies and then giving them back to him -- I was not yet ready for Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. But the next year something led me back to those two issues and then Louis came to Toronto in May and left me as a gift *The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams*. From that time on my world of poetry assumed largely its present shape. ("Some Afterthoughts on *Contact Magazine*" 1)

During the gathering at the farm, Souster again raised the idea of a new little magazine with Dudek, and again Dudek rejected it. However, Souster was not to be deterred. A little over a month later (Letter dated October 6th, 1951) he wrote to Dudek asking

Remember we talked a little in one of our letters about the wisdom of new little magazines in Canada at this time? You thought the time wasn't ripe, as you said that John [Sutherland] should be given every chance without any other opposition. At the time I agreed with you, but events of the past couple of months have changed my mind. Biggest factor is the

forthcoming publication of the L.P.P.⁴² called *New Frontiers*. This will leave no other literary mag in Toronto and I think that just isn't good enough. There must be some other publication, even if it's only a token gesture. Therefore we plan to bring out the first issue of a mimeographed magazine of verse to be called *Contact* in February. We want to feature translations, experimental writing from Canada and the USA, the odd poetry review, the emphasis on vigour and excitement. MAKE IT NEW is our unofficial slogan. (Gnarowski, Michael *Contact Press 1952-1967* 4)

On October 11th, Dudek replied with the following:

You astound me with the 'unofficial slogan.' For some time I've been talking...about sometime starting a mag with the NAME: MAKE IT NEW. You took the words out of my mouth. Why not? It would be better than CONTACT. At [sic] would also be a name on a new principle; a blasted Verb in it; a whole policy.

AS THE SUN MAKES IT NEW

DAY BY DAY MAKE IT NEW

YET AGAIN MAKE IT NEW.

...Goddam it, it's really what Canada needs.⁴³

⁴²"L.P.P." was a name under which the communist party of Canada operated. It refers to the Labour-Progressive Party; *New Frontiers* was its organ and had, as its subtitle, "For a Canadian People's Culture in a World at Peace." The magazine was a political forum which included some poetry, short stories and art reproductions. The L.P.P. was eventually renamed the Communist Party of Canada. Its magazine, therefore, would reflect the Communist line on poetry, which is why Souster was alarmed. It only ran for 2 or 3 issues.

⁴³(Ms. in collection of Lakehead University Library) Davey 183.

Having second thoughts about the title, however, Souster determined that the magazine should be *Contact Magazine*. He explains the origins of the title in the magazine's second issue. He writes

Contact is a name first introduced to the literary world by William Carlos Williams and Robert McAlmon during 1920-23, when they co-edited a magazine whose policy was "faith in the existence of native artists who are capable of having, comprehending and recording extraordinary experience."

Dudek further explains⁴⁴ that Souster liked the name because it implied the immediate connection that exists between those who come into contact with each other. Dudek asserts that he did not like the title because he felt that the "contact" to which Souster was referring was too crude; he would have preferred something that suggested a more refined interaction between individuals.

Despite his reaction to the little magazine's name, five days after receiving Souster's letter Dudek responded

I never meant that new mags shouldn't be started. I'm glad to hear that you will start a little rumpus of your own and that your policy is what it is. I don't think it'll affect Sutherland's in any way, unless for the better, by stirring up interest. What I meant was that any attempt to organize the writers who exist and start a second big printed effort would be to try to oust John [Sutherland] from the game, i.e., the last thing we'd want to do now. The little mimeo mag. that may get printed eventually is a good idea,

⁴⁴Interview with the author, April 23rd, 1999.

and you can never tell what will happen.⁴⁵

In the meantime, Dudek resumed contact with Sutherland, offering him advice and contributing manuscripts by himself and others, with the goal of stirring things up and redirecting Sutherland to publish more avant-garde poets as he once used to. Sutherland, however, was not receptive to Dudek's influence. Finally, in exasperation, on November 27th, Dudek reported to Souster that "J. Sutherland is dead as a doorknob. He's waiting for something to drop into his lap."⁴⁶ Having done his best for Sutherland, Dudek felt more comfortable moving away from his former co-editor and committing himself to a new project -- and that project was, of course, *Contact*.

In the following months Dudek and Souster corresponded frequently as they worked out a vision for the little magazine and planned its first issue. Determined to inject new energy into poetry, Souster felt that American poets should be published in *Contact*. Concerned with the idea of supporting a little magazine that contributed to the advancement of Canadian poetry, Dudek initially disagreed although he eventually changed his position. He, after all, had made contact with many poets during his time in New York, whom Souster was eager to print. Dudek also provided reviews and editorials for early issues of *Contact*.

After receiving a hand-crank mimeograph machine as a Christmas gift (1951) from his wife Lia, Souster immediately set about typing, mimeographing,

⁴⁵Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated Montreal, October 11th, 1951. In Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact 1952-54: A Note on its Origins, A Check List of Titles*. 4.

⁴⁶Letter from Dudek to Souster, October 27th, 1951 (in collection of Lakehead University Library) Davey 13.

collating and mailing one hundred copies of the first issue of *Contact*. Dudek, who received his copy only two weeks later, on the 16th of January, declared it to be "a smash the windows and let's breathe" accomplishment. In a letter written to Souster after he finished reading the little magazine, Dudek exults

Hooray!...The contact has arrived. Those good old days -- *Direction & First Statement* days are almost back again. Old Sutherland may get a whiff of how it felt then. By god, what a baggy-pants beer-drinking bohemian bastard he was then, and what a sluggard he is now.⁴⁷

Contact magazine was published for the two years between 1952 and 1954. Its subtitle was: "*An International Magazine of Poetry*," and it remained true to its name; international contributions -- especially American contributions -- made up more than half of its content. In fact, it was Louis Dudek who provided the names and addresses of many of the poets who appear in the little magazine; they are people with whom he made contact during his stay in New York. It was, like *First Statement*, *Direction* and *Enterprise* before it, an expression of literary revolt. Furthermore, it was a means by which new and experimental poets could find their voice.

In the opening editorial, entitled "Où Sont les Jeunes?" Dudek writes Poetry in Canada needs a new start. To the young, the field is wide open. Our younger poets are getting grey about the temples. The work of the forties is by now old and yellow: it was a good beginning but not yet the real thing. There is now a ready audience for any young writer with

⁴⁷Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated Montreal, January 16th, 1952 (in collection at the Lakehead University) Davey 13.

something fresh and bouncing to say, someone with a new technique, a vision, or a gift for making art out of matters of fact. But where are the young? Where is the "new" generation?⁴⁸

While Dudek, Layton and Souster were very much part of the "new" generation, the problem they continued to face was getting published. Although *Contact* was underway, which allowed for a small amount of work by a large number of contributors to be read, there still remained the problem of finding a publishing house willing to produce a larger collection of individual poets' work. Although the three poets had each had a collection of their poetry published in 1951, they were small and inconspicuous texts. Layton had published *The Black Huntsman* privately, in Mallorca, Spain; both Dudek and Souster (who already had biggish books out with Ryerson -- *Go to Sleep World*, by Souster, and *East of the City*, by Dudek) sent manuscripts to Ryerson Press (to Ronald Hambelton) only to have excerpts extracted from them which were included in the anthology *Unit of Five* (1944).⁴⁹

Furthermore, while Ryerson did publish *The Searching Image* by Dudek and *City Hall Street*, by Souster, the small chapbooks had originally been full-size collections that had been drastically edited down in size. Neither Dudek nor Souster felt validated by these publications. Souster reports, "the Chapbooks, little 12-page things, could hardly be considered as books. You can't make any kind of a dint on anybody with a book like that, nobody would pay any attention to it"

⁴⁸"Editorial" Volume 1, No. 1. Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski, *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, 142.

⁴⁹*Unit of Five* was published while Souster was still in the R.C.A.F.

(Davey 20). According to Frank Davey.

The Ryerson Chapbook series, essentially inadequate except for the publication of first books or single long poems, appeared much more significant in Canada than it would have in a healthy publishing scene. Ryerson's eclectic policies, which gathered in dilettantes, traditionalists and committed experimentalists, did little to enhance the reputations of its poets. Writers like Dudek and Souster, and their friend Irving Layton, who wished to bring new modes and aesthetics to the poetry-reading public, were virtually shut out of a publishing world whose smallness was exceeded only by its conventionality. (20)

Furthermore, Souster believed that the larger publishing firms were producing books that were of a certain type that excluded any possibility of having his own work, or that of Layton or Dudek, published. He knew, then, that the only option they had if they wanted to see their work in print was to take matters into their own hands.

Dudek, then, in a letter addressed to Souster dated February 9th 1952,⁵⁰ suggested that, together with Layton, they select approximately seventy-five poems to publish in book form. And that the project might be symbolized by a mythological three-headed beast. On February 11th, he continued:

Yes, goddammit, let's get ourselves out a book of our own, the three of us, and piss on the presses. The poet has to publish his own work henceforth,

⁵⁰(Letter in Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) In Gnarowski, M. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 12.

if he wants to print more than 12 pages⁵¹ in SIX YEARS....The whole system stinks, when 1000000000 advertisements get mass distribution and a few poems get 250 copies on toilet paper.⁵²

Souster responded enthusiastically, but was concerned about the cost of establishing a press and publishing a book, especially since he was already supporting the cost of *Contact* magazine. His first reaction was to attempt to get their book published by a commercial publishing house. None, however, were interested. Finally, on March 13th, 1952, Souster agreed that "a private printed job is best after all."⁵³

Within five days, Dudek replied

As for *CERBERUS* (the 3-man book) your poems of course are right in line with it. We've read them all and our own, and the book is now ready for press...Irving says his books have always paid for themselves, we'll have the format in our hands, and the contents and all the proceeds. Say \$300 to print it.⁵⁴ We'll sell 300 copies certainly. The fact is poets must publish their own poetry from here on....

⁵¹Twelve pages constitutes the size of the poetry chapbooks published by Ryerson Press.

⁵²Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated February 11th, 1952. (In Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 11.

⁵³Letter to Louis Dudek from Raymond Souster dated at Toronto, March 13th, 1952 (A letter in Louis Dudek's private papers) Gnarowski, M. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 12.

⁵⁴Souster reports "I couldn't see my way clear to contributing anything toward it. Irving and Louis put up the \$300. I don't know if 300 copies were sold or not" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

The little mag is a development where the writers undertake their own publication in periodicals. The book follows. This is a measure of the commercial corruption of the estab press.

We'll have to call our press something or other...there will be other books in this series. How about CONTACT BOOKS or CONTACT PRESS or CONTACT PUBLISHING COMPANY. The last sounds best, most business-like. The first most up-to-date.⁵⁵

The following day, Souster responded:

Suggested to Irving last week that *CERBERUS* could come out as published from CONTACT PRESS. Like this better than the other two names you suggest but am easy about the whole thing. Agree with you that it's no use bothering with the Canadian "publishers."⁵⁶

To this, Dudek replied, "Contact Press it is, but the idea is to have a list of books under this imprint starting with *CERBERUS*."⁵⁷

The tone of the quotations above suggests what Dudek has confirmed as a very "democratic and loosely-organized"⁵⁸ arrangement between the three poets

⁵⁵Letter to Raymond Souster from Louis Dudek, dated at Montreal, March 18th, 1952 (In Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 11.

⁵⁶Letter to Louis Dudek from Raymond Souster dated at Toronto, March 19th, 1952 (In Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 12.

⁵⁷Letter to Raymond Souster from Louis Dudek dated at Montreal, March 22nd, 1952 (In Souster Papers, Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact Press 1952-1967*. 12.

⁵⁸Letter from Louis Dudek to Beverley Daurio dated at Montreal, July 9th, 1994. In Personal Papers of Louis Dudek.

regarding control of the press and what it published. Dudek states that the idea of the press was originally to print their own work, and they did so spontaneously.⁵⁹ Toward this end, they established no set rule. During the latter part of 1955, they began to feel self-conscious about publishing only their own work, especially since there were still too few avenues by which Canadian poets could get published, and so they made a conscious decision to produce work by others. Each poet had equal say in suggesting what might be published, and, if they felt strongly enough, it generally was printed. Usually, however, they passed proposed manuscripts among themselves and "voted and agreed on everything by correspondence."⁶⁰

The finances of the press were organized so that each book was backed separately. In this way, poets could contribute toward their own books as well as others they deemed important. And no book was dependent upon all three having enough money to see it through. Therefore, the cost of some books was shared by all three poets, others were financed by two, and some, by only one poet. Furthermore, this arrangement allowed for one poet, despite disagreement by the other two, to publish a book.⁶¹ This was the case regarding the first manuscript

⁵⁹Interview with the author, April 23rd, 1999.

⁶⁰Letter from Louis Dudek to Beverley Daurio dated at Montreal, July 9th, 1994. In Personal Papers of Louis Dudek.

⁶¹Raymond Souster argues that "this is not the way it turned out. I had no money to contribute to the cost of *Cerberus*, as with all other printed books. However, when I believed strongly enough about a title and there was no interest shown by Louis or Peter, I turned to the mimeo and brought out the books in that form -- five of my own titles, W.W.E. Ross' *Experiment* and a big undertaking, *New Wave Canada*. This last [book was] especially disliked by my partners" (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

Margaret Atwood submitted to Contact Press. Souster recalls that Atwood's manuscript

though very promising, was turned down by all three of us, with a strong recommendation she re-submit when she had another manuscript. To our considerable surprise she was back with *Circle Game* in less than a year and although Louis voted "no" the second time, Peter and I gave it an emphatic "yes" and over Louis' protests went ahead with it. You know the rest...it won the Governor General's Award, the first small press book to do so. By the time the award was announced the small printing was exhausted and not one cloth copy remained to hand out to bigwigs. That's why House of Anansi reprinted it the next year.⁶²

The Circle Game was published after the press moved its operation to Toronto.

In general, however, Souster agrees with Dudek. He reports

In the early days, if any of us had a manuscript then we would all read it -- although I don't remember seeing some of those Louis and Irving had until they were printed -- and if we liked it we would print it. Louis was putting up most of the money and I was more or less the silent partner then. They used my address and I plugged the books in the magazine, but the magazine was my chief concern. (Campbell 180-1)

To advertise *Cerberus*, Souster wrote and mimeographed a publicity leaflet that he mailed out to *Contact* magazine subscribers, libraries and periodicals, explaining the beginnings of Contact Press. It states:

⁶²Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

probably much the same motivation as that behind the founding of CONTACT, an international magazine of poetry, is responsible for *CERBERUS* and other forthcoming books to be published by CONTACT PRESS: namely to provide a forthright outlet for poetry in Canada.

Readers of this leaflet both Canadians and Americans are no doubt acutely aware of the wholesale commercialization of the press today with its consequent cheapening of the values of the mind. Canadian poetry...has in our time reflected this situation clearly; moreover, indications are that conditions in poetry will grow worse rather than better. Ill informed reviewers, publishers, readers with little or no idea of what makes a good poem, and a lack of interest on the part of the publisher himself (though exceptions exist), all combined to make the small trickle of published poetry in Canada a mockery of what has been a flourishing art of the past. Conditions in the United States are probably not much better.

It is then left to the poets themselves to take matters into their own hands and fight against this increasingly dangerous situation. It is this that CONTACT PRESS has decided to do. We believe there is a small but receptive audience in this country and elsewhere who will welcome and support such an undertaking. Your response as an interested reader can combine with their efforts to oppose the tide of commercialism and apathy. Apart from this promotion, as well as others he printed in *Contact* magazine, Souster was not heavily involved in the press. The majority of the work was done by Dudek in Montreal, although he used Souster's Toronto address for the press. This was because both Dudek and Layton were uneasy about the books' reception

in Quebec, where Duplessis was still in power.⁶³ As was the case with Sutherland's First Statement Press, Layton remained uninterested in the mechanics and process of publishing.⁶⁴

Recalling the printer John Sutherland used to produce *Northern Review*, Dudek employed Real Lucas of Vaudreuil Village to print *Cerberus*. After being delayed five weeks because Lucas was printing the *Northern Review* special issue on Pratt, the book finally appeared early in the summer of 1952.

"Like *Trio*, which would follow after, *Cerberus* was a cheap way to introduce three poets."⁶⁵ It was made up of three parts, each containing poems by one of the three founding editors as well as an introductory essay. The essays are particularly interesting because they reveal the poets' feelings about the importance of poetry at the time and their individual motivations for publishing a book. In addition, the essays provide glimpses of the poets' passions and personal characteristics which shaped the interactions between them. Dudek, for example, the first to appear in the book, discloses a strong and pure sense of the purpose of poetry. His essay suggests a highly intellectual and philosophical approach. He writes

The way to freedom and order in the future will lie through art and poetry.

Only imagination, discovering man's self and his relation to the world and

⁶³Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

⁶⁴Both Dudek and Souster have both reported that Layton was primarily interested only in getting his own books published.

⁶⁵Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

to other men, can save him from complete enslavement to the state, to machinery, the base dehumanized life which is already spreading around us." (Dudek *Cerberus* 13)

He continues

We three in this book share the same affirmations and therefore the same negations in the face of the present. For all three of us the external horrors of the world today, as well as its scattered beauty, are much the same. If our affirmations are not filled with more halleluyas, it is only because all affirmations are pushed aside by the threatening destructiveness that faces us all. Our theme is love....Poetry cannot change the world in a day, the world of wars, oppressions and mob-suicide which men have prepared for themselves. But in the end, only poetry, imagination, can do so. Actuality itself is a metaphor made of iron, the diseased poem which man has erected out of mass frustration, out of centuries of evil. Poetry, therefore, opposed to this, has power, immense power for good, because it is the true poem, the epic all men would live if they were free. (13-4)

Layton's essay, in comparison, seethes with anger at the lack of appreciation that Canadian poets receive, and the profound lack of understanding that Canadians show regarding the importance of poetry and art. He argues

The Canadian poet...is an exile condemned to live in his own country. He has no public, commands no following, stirs up less interest than last year's license plate. It is worthwhile to speculate on the reasons that make this the most philistine country in the world, not excepting the United States. Is it professionalized sports? The ape intelligence of a vicious, profit-

seeking press? An educational system beveled to the needs of business and technology? These, of course, are partly to blame. More important, I think, is the drag of middle-class morality, suspicious of all enjoyment and neurotically hostile to the release of art and sex; and gentility, the gilded and gelded pseudo-culture of flourishing bankers and brewers.... We have one other reason for publishing *Cerberus* at the present time. Some editorial jackass--the name is superfluous--started a rumour flying that the poetry ferment which had begun with so much promise in the middle forties had petered out scandalously before the end of the decade. After that, several other Missouri canaries lumbered forward to announce the same heart-breaking discovery. How touching it was to see them shaking their well-proportioned asinine heads and hear their woebegone cries. Since a good deal of the poetry was a protest against war and social inequality the genteel at once took heart at the news and began to crawl out of their kennels. By the clever whachamacallit of returning manuscript after manuscript our editorial burro was able to pretend that the bright rebellious talents which had appeared during and after the war years had stopped writing and -- final touch of the macabre -- even to drop tears at the mysterious disease which had carried them off unfulfilled to an early literary grave.

It is in part to help revise this mendacious account of an exciting period in the literary history of the country that we are publishing the present collection of poems. We intend, moreover, to drive the point home by publishing shortly the volumes of other 'dead' but now happily

resurrected poets. (Layton *Cerberus* 45-6)

Layton's essay reveals a deep sense of disillusionment with the Canadian poetry scene. While *Cerberus* is an attempt by Layton to do something about it, the essay shows that he had already turned his hopes elsewhere, particularly to the United States, to look for appreciation and status.

Souster's essay, again, contains a different tone and preoccupation. Its beginning, in fact, suggests a great deal about him: "Souster (hereafter S.) never went past high school, and has learned everything about poetry the hard way..." (Souster *Cerberus* 75). The fact that Souster opens with such a statement suggests how powerful an influence his lack of academic training had had on him; it further suggests that his relationship with poetry was one that contained a great deal of insecurity and battle. It is perhaps these things that drove Souster to prove his worth in the literary establishment -- even to his colleagues; after all, Dudek had a Ph.D. in literature and was a professor at McGill University. And Layton had a Master's degree and was also teaching at the university level.

Souster's essay continues

S. has always believed...that the primary function of poetry is to communicate something to somebody else. Not too important what that something is, the big thing is to get it across, "make contact." If you fail here all that follows, everything else you throw in, is wasted, and you might as well start all over again. Ninety percent of modern poetry fails here. And will go on failing until it learns this and puts the remedy into practice.

S. has been dissatisfied for a long time with existing forms, feeling bound within them, mummified. But up until a year ago didn't have a clue.

Now he's been shown the signs of an opening, a possible right road for the future. It starts somewhere in the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound and goes on to Charles Olson....(Souster *Cerberus* 75-6)

It seems that although Souster was originally happy to have Dudek's friendship and interaction when the latter returned to Montreal, the relationship had not continued to be enough for him, leading him to turn south, to American poets, and particularly Cid Corman, for further acceptance and inspiration. Furthermore, it is clear that Souster viewed *Contact* as a vehicle by which Canada might be opened to American writers. The essay confirms that unlike Dudek, and even Layton, Souster's heart was roving.

It was with these differing viewpoints and motivations that the three poets produced *Cerberus*. During the following four years, true to their original plan, the three original editors of Contact Press almost exclusively published their own work. After *Cerberus*, Dudek employed two Polish printers, Niemojowski and Bernarczyk, in London, England to produce their books. And in 1952, Contact Press published two other volumes. The first of these two books was *Canadian Poems 1850-1952*,⁶⁶ edited by Dudek and Layton (which, incidentally, had been rejected by Jack McClelland). In it the poems of Dudek, Layton and Souster appeared next to those of F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Lampman and Roberts. It was the poets' way of establishing their place in the

⁶⁶According to Michael Gnarowski, 500 copies of the book were printed "in or about September of 1952" (*Contact Press 1952-1967* 15) after which an additional print run was necessary which took place in October, 1952.

Canadian poetry landscape.⁶⁷

The second volume produced that year was Dudek's *Twenty-Four Poems*. In 1953, Layton published, at his own expense, *Love the Conqueror Worm*. Four hundred copies were printed, costing two hundred dollars; each copy was to sell for a dollar. In addition, Souster's *Shake Hands With The Hangman* appeared, which he ran off himself. And a second, revised edition of *Canadian Poems 1850-1952* was also published.

⁶⁷According to Michael Gnarowski, "A second printing of the anthology became necessary in October of 1952, and resulted in what has been incorrectly identified as the 'second edition' of this book...it must be noted that no revisions or changes were made...and the second printing was evidently issued from the same type as the first. The only feature which appears to distinguish the second printing...is the appearance of the title of the collection and the names of its editors on the spine. The second edition of this anthology saw substantial changes. Not only were additional selections incorporated from the work of a few poets -- Birney, Klein, Anderson, Souster, but Elizabeth Brewster was added to the anthology and a set of textual notes was appended as well" In addition, typographical errors were corrected in this version and some poems were replaced (*Contact Press 1952-67* 15-6).

In 1954 Dudek published *Europe* through Contact Press and Laocoon⁶⁸ Press. According to Dudek, Laocoon Press was an imprint created by himself and Layton as a symbolic gesture of separateness from Souster and Contact Press. Dudek suggests that by that time they were feeling the need to have a sense of independence from Souster within the press' structure. The reasons for this remain vague, although they might have been reacting to Souster's resistance to allow them more input into *Contact* magazine, as well as to his ongoing interactions with Cid Corman and other American poets. *Europe* was the first Contact Press book to share an imprint with Laocoon Press. Layton's book, *The Long Peashooter*, was the second and last. It appeared containing only the Laocoon Press imprint, and

⁶⁸"Laocoon" has three significant references:

First, in Greek mythology Laocoon was the priest of Apollo (god of the sun) or of Poseidon (god of the sea). During the Trojan War he urged the Trojan leaders to destroy a giant wooden horse built for them by the Greeks and delivered outside their city walls. While the people were trying to decide if they should bring the horse inside the city, Poseidon, who was bitter toward Troy, sent two sea serpents to land. There, they wrapped themselves around Laocoon and his two sons who were standing together. Laocoon struggled to tear the serpents away from himself and his children, but they overpowered him and strangled both him and his sons. The Trojans, who interpreted Laocoon's death as a sign that his advice should be ignored, brought the wooden horse inside their city where they were overpowered by the Greeks hidden within it.

Second, a marble sculpture was made of the priest and his sons being crushed by the serpents which has been dated to the first century B.C., and is now held in the Vatican in Rome.

Third, "Laocoon" is the title of an essay by German dramatist and critic, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in which the author analyses poetry, sculpture and painting and defines their limits.

Dudek recalls that he and Layton were familiar with the above references, and that to them, "Laocoon" symbolized the imminence of danger -- danger to the poet and to poetry offered by the traditional publishing establishments.

not that of Contact Press. It was printed in Spain through Robert Creeley's connections there.

During the same year (1954), Souster independently published his own collection, *A Dream That Is Dying*, in a limited mimeographed edition of 50 copies. Also, Contact Press published *Trio* (one of two books published by other authors in the first four years). It contained work by three poets, Eli Mandel, Gael Turnbull and Phyllis Webb, and Dudek wrote the preface.⁶⁹

In 1955, Layton published two books: *The Blue Propeller* and *The Cold Green Element*, and Souster also independently published two: *For What Time Slays* and *Walking Death*, (both of which were mimeographed). Dudek successfully completed his Doctorate in English and Comparative Literature.

In 1956, the editors expanded the number of authors they printed, signifying a change in the manner in which the press was to be run. Layton published his own manuscripts, *The Bull Calf and Other Poems*, and *Music on a Kazoo*;⁷⁰ Dudek independently produced *The Transparent Sea*; and all three poets collaborated to publish Souster's *The Selected Poems*. In addition, they published two other manuscripts: *The Serpent Ink*, by Henry Moscovitch,⁷¹ to which both Dudek and Souster objected; and *Poets '56: Ten Younger English-Canadians*,⁷²

⁶⁹Incidentally, the same year, Layton's book, *In the Midst of My Fever*, was published by Creeley's Divers Press.

⁷⁰During the same year Layton's *The Improved Binoculars* (1956) was published by Jonathan Williams through Jargon Press in Highlands, North Carolina.

⁷¹Moscovitch was one of Layton's disciples and imitators.

⁷²*Poets '56* was another mimeographed anthology produced by Souster. According to Michael Gnarowski, only 100 copies of the book were run off, of which only 50 were offered for sale.

which, edited and mimeographed by Souster, contained poems by Avi Boxer, Marya Fiamengo, William Fournier, Daryl Hine, D.G. Jones, Jay Macpherson, John Reeves, Mortimer Schiff, Peter Scott and George Whipple. After Layton published Moscovitch's book despite Dudek and Souster's disapproval, the editorial arrangement that existed between the three editors was revised. While it remained flexible, a *veto* provision was established. In a letter to Souster, Dudek formalized the changes in the following manner:

(1) As a rule we publish if two of us are for the book; (2) if one of us thinks very strongly that the book is good, he may publish against two votes negative; (3) also, if one person feels that a book is deplorably bad, he may veto an acceptance by the other two; (4) clearly we are stalemated if a *veto* comes up against a *volò* -- but I doubt whether that will ever happen; if so (5) the positive vote to print goes. Also, the occasional book that one feels is very good and unquestionable need not go the rounds of the three of us; in fact we probably don't need to read mss. that we know beforehand will be OK; eg. a book by F.R. Scott...or one of our own.⁷³

Souster, Layton and Dudek were able to maintain a generally smooth collaboration on Contact Press during these early years due, primarily, to the looseness of their editorial relationships. Dudek suggests that there were very few disagreements about which manuscripts should be published with the exception of two: First, in April, 1953, Souster wrote to Dudek suggesting that Contact Press publish a collection of poems by Bjerknes. In a letter dated April 22nd, 1953, Dudek flatly

⁷³Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster, dated Montreal, February 9th 1958. In Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

rejected the idea, arguing that "giving Canadian work a hearing is our job; let the Amercs work for their civilization." Second, later in 1953, with Layton's encouragement, Cid Corman submitted a book to Contact Press for publication. The book was never produced and Layton was extremely embarrassed.

However stable and calm their working relationship on the little press was, their personal interactions and their involvement in *Contact* magazine were far less easy. Souster maintained tight control over *Contact*, despite numerous appeals by Dudek to loosen the reins and allow him and Layton more say in the little magazine's content.⁷⁴ For example, following Ezra Pound's suggestion, Dudek encouraged Souster to use a printed cover. Souster resisted the idea because he was concerned with its expense. Dudek insisted. He wrote to Souster

About the cover, I am adamant, we want to make the mag look as good as possible, it gets the stuff more careful reading (the writing is ragged and bold enough as it is...) so what the hell let's make it. I'll send you \$15 for the job; Betty is sending a linocut with the word CONTACT, which you must take to a printer who will mount it on wood, and print off on paper of your choice.⁷⁵

Finally, Souster relented, and the little magazine appeared with a cover, which was

⁷⁴Souster reports, "Louis wanted two or three pages each issue for himself and Irving to publish whatever they wished -- I thought he was asking too much and decided that I had to have editorial freedom or the mag. wasn't worth my trouble." He also notes that "I purposely didn't print any of my own poems either in *Contact* or *Combustion* (Souster, Raymond. "Textual Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

⁷⁵Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated Montreal, February 9th, 1952. In Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library.

designed by Betty Sutherland, as of the second issue.

In addition, although all three poets recognized the need for a new publishing outlet for poets, and all shared a similar ideology regarding the need to publish new and experimental poetry, they differed regarding the sources of the work. Dudek and Layton remained convinced of the need to promote Canadian poets; Souster, on the other hand, was determined to create a magazine of international scope, and to do so he looked for guidance from poets in the United States.

Souster had followed up on Dudek's connection with Cid Corman -- the editor of the little magazines that Dudek had flung down on the table at his grandmother's house the year before.⁷⁶ He sent a copy of the first issue of *Contact*, to which Corman responded, in a letter dated at Boston, January 23rd, 1952:

It is difficult for me to set loose everybody for you immediately, but I will -
- steadily and constantly from now on. I will push towards you all those whose work seems to me worth consideration. I will write my regular contributors of yr interest let them take it from there. You are also, if you want to, free to reprint anything you like in *Origin* -- altho I wd like to know in advance...I want you to print my writer (to put it that way), but yr primary task is to fish for new Canadian talent. Of which there seems to be

⁷⁶Dudek had met Corman in 1951, in New York City. The same year, Corman produced the first issue of *Origin*. By January, 1952, three issues had been published. Therefore, Dudek must have shown Souster and Layton the first two issues of *Origin* (Gnarowski, M. *Contact 1952-1954* 6).

a scarcity.⁷⁷

While Corman's suggestion was to search for and publish Canadian poetry, his comments to Souster about the work of Irving Layton, Louis Dudek and Phyllis Webb (whom Dudek had brought to Souster's attention),⁷⁸ who were included in the first issue, were generally critical.⁷⁹ As Gnarowski has noted ("*Contact* 1952-1954" 7), Corman "was never particularly impressed by Canadian material in *Contact*",⁸⁰ seeing it as "amateurish"⁸¹ and unsophisticated. Of the poems written by Canadian poets in Volume 2, for example, he writes, "My reaction to #2 is similar to that for #1. Your effort and hope is clear; your

⁷⁷(Letter in the Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, M. "*Contact*" 1952-1954: *Notes on the History and Background of the Periodical and an Index*. 7.

⁷⁸In a letter dated November 26th, 1951, Dudek wrote to Souster asking, "Ever seen anything of P Webb's? She is one new name that's developing fast and may produce poetry. Highly brainy, and tangled up there, but its got individuality and rhythm. If she sends anything, read it twice." Accordingly, Souster published two poems by Webb in *Contact* Vol. 2.

⁷⁹Corman offers Souster the following advice:

About *Contact*: I don't care especially for anything in the first issue. What I like is the impetus behind it, the effort that it suggests, that it wants to make, an essential effort, I wd say, for Canada. (*Origin* is just breaking into the antipodes and I think yr country is worth some groundbreaking. Any country where there has been time for people to think, to start and establish a culture, these days, ought to be doing the best art). I can't accept swearing as a sign of honesty or even probed emotion. And the satire I read is too easy; it doesn't ride out of a person; it falls like scales from the skin. (Letter from Cid Corman to Raymond Souster, dated at Boston, January 23rd, 1952. In the collection of the Library of Lakehead University) Gnarowski 7.

⁸⁰Gnarowski, Michael. *Contact* 1952-1954. 7.

⁸¹Letter from Cid Corman to Raymond Souster, dated Boston, March 3rd, 1952 (In the collection of the Library of Lakehead University) Gnarowski "*Contact*: 1952-1954" 7.

achievement dubious. Most of the poems seem amateurish to me."⁸²

Corman's negative reaction to the Canadian poetry in the volume seems to have unsettled Souster. Again, perhaps insecure about his own knowledge of poetry, he accepted Corman's assessment, publishing many of the American poets Corman suggested, including Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, Paul Blackburn among others, as well as turning even more toward Europe for material. Souster recalls, "I didn't know most of Cid's new poets, but when I read Bob Creeley, Charles Olson and Paul Blackburn I knew they were the real thing -- and I believe time has proven me right."⁸³

Through Corman, Souster was introduced to the American poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, as well as to the European poets Guillaume Apollinaire, Gottfried Benn, George Forestier, Octavio Paz and René de Obaldia for whom Corman himself supplied translations. Later, Souster published translations of Anna Akhmatova, Jean Cocteau, Jacques Prévert and George Seferis. Souster recalls

I was so stirred by what *Origin* was doing...and I thought well this was what we had to get here if there is going to be any new advance we have to get new ideas. Of course this was what Corman was preaching -- translations -- read world poetry. This is what I have come to believe, that if you want to become a poet you have to read the poetry of many other countries in translation. It's not enough just to read American poetry; you

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

should know what Pablo Neruda does, what Rilke and Lorca have done and any number of other people. Poetry is a world thing like art -- poetry has suffered because its been in compartments where art is an international thing and that's why art has the pre-eminence it has today, not because it's more meaningful to people. I don't think it is, but it's just because art has become an international language.⁸⁴

In fact, Souster moved away from attempting to balance the number of poems by Canadian, American and European writers, toward publishing increasing numbers of American poems and European translations.

While Souster's enthusiasm for an international focus was growing, Dudek remained convinced of the need to publish "good" poetry, and in particular, good Canadian poetry. Early in February 1952, he wrote to Souster encouraging him to not "hunt up big names from U.S. and elsewhere to give the mag prestige, spend time on our own new work and new names from wherever."⁸⁵ Still, Souster was undeterred. According to Reed, Souster believed "that his printing of the Americans would lead them to notice Canadian writers....He promoted American authors in order to further Canadian writing"⁸⁶ (Reed 113). A problem with this perspective is that the Americans with whom Souster interacted were not

⁸⁴Raymond Souster in an interview with Robert Campbell (Campbell 86).

⁸⁵(Letter in collection at the Lakehead University Library) Davey 13.

⁸⁶Souster states that Irving Layton became well-known in the U.S.A. and Corman thought highly of Margaret Avison, whom he published in *Origin* and who subsequently had her second volume, *The Dumb Founding* published by W.W. Norton & Co. New York City, a well-known American publisher. I also obtained two American publishing opportunities as a result of my "American connection" (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments." Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

interested in Canadian poetry.

Later that year Corman suggested to Souster that *Contact* merge with *Origin* and *Window* (a British little magazine). Dudek, who was generally suspicious of Corman and disliked Creeley and Olson, wrote to Souster of his vigorous disapproval of such a venture. Eventually Souster declined Corman's proposal. Consistently, then, it was Dudek who redirected Souster's attention to new and aspiring Canadian poets. He urged him, for example, to consider the work of Phyllis Webb, whom Souster published in the second issue.

Layton had also submitted work to Souster for publication in the third issue of *Contact*. Perhaps because of Souster's shifting focus, he had rejected Layton's poems, creating resentment in the poet. It is clear that Dudek and Layton felt that Souster was moving in a different direction than they were. Dudek had been listed as an "Advisory" editor since the second issue of *Contact*. After the publication of issue three, Dudek and Layton began pressing Souster for editorial control over two or three pages in every issue in which they could publish their own poetry as well as poets they wanted to promote. Souster immediately refused, not wanting to undermine his editorial authority but eventually acquiesced. The fifth issue lists Dudek and Layton as "Associate Editors." Still, for Dudek, it was not enough. In a letter dated Montreal, November 11th, 1952, he writes

How about making your editorial associates editorialize more? Layton feels badly mauled each time you send back some of his work. As for me I'd like occasionally to print a poem for some other reason than that it's a fine aht wuk...[sic]...At least give Layton this privilege, and we'll avoid a

great deal of dangerous bad feeling...he's got a mighty sensitive soul.⁸⁷

Souster responded negatively to the suggestion leading Dudek to urge him to reconsider:

You're an s.o.b. for not seeing it my way. I don't suggest the plan because I want my own poetry published....The main point was Irving. He can write good poetry, and sometimes neither you nor I are able to tell it when he does....If Irving had the responsibility to select from his own what he wanted to publish you could be sure it would be no crap. You would be keeping the group solid and happy, whereas now, by judging one another, we threaten to do what all magazines do, split up into littler magazines. Think it over will ya? After all we're ASSOCIATES, or is that just for the name?

Again Souster refused to relinquish any editorial control. On November 23rd (1952), he wrote back to Dudek:

All this wrangling, all these differences really get me down. For Christ sake, let's get closer together, not farther apart. And when we can't stand being judged by one another let us end everything. For by then the thing has become unwholesome, afraid, Salud.⁸⁸

When Dudek finally understood that neither he nor Layton had any real control in *Contact*, he moved away from it, channeling his energies into *Contact*

⁸⁷Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated at Montreal, November 11th, 1952. (In the collection of Lakehead University Library.) Gnarowski, M. *Contact* 1952-1954 11.

⁸⁸Letter from Raymond Souster to Louis Dudek (In Dudek's possession) Gnarowski, M. *Contact* 1952-1954. 12.

Press and a new little magazine, *CIV/n*, which was founded and run by Aileen Collins (who eventually became Dudek's second wife), and her friends Jackie Gallagher, Wanda Staniszevska and her husband, Stanley Rozynski. The title of the little magazine immediately contained a contrast with what Dudek and Layton viewed as Souster's one-man show. The term "CIV/n" had been suggested by Dudek; it came from a statement by Ezra Pound who, shortening "Civilization" to "CIV/n" stated "CIV/n -- not a one-man job".

From its inception, Dudek had wanted *Contact* to be "a workshop for young, for solitary minds. The more guts knowledge scope we can get into it -- stretch the lines of poetry -- the better."⁸⁹ When Souster refused to allow that ideal to be realized, Dudek sought it elsewhere, and found it in *CIV/n*.

CIV/n was viewed by all involved as a poetry workshop or cooperative. Dudek and Layton served in the background, as associate editors, providing support and direction.⁹⁰ In "The State of Canadian Poetry: 1954" Dudek explains his editorial stance:

⁸⁹Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster dated Montreal, December 2, 1952 (In the collection of Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, "*Contact* 1952-1954" 13.

⁹⁰Describing his function in the little magazine Dudek states:

I offered help and advice, and proposed that manuscripts be read by a larger group including Layton and myself, and that Aileen Collins and the Rozynskis edit the magazine in the light of our group discussions. There was always a tactful solicitude on the part of Layton and myself not to interfere with the editorial freedom of the actual editors. We read the poetry before a group at Layton's house enjoying free comments and debate over the poems, but we made no decisions and left the final choice of what was to go into the magazine up to the Editors ("The Making of *CIV/n*" in Michael Gnarowski, *Index to CIV/n* (privately published, n.d. 3).

Our underlying position in *Contact* (as well as in *CIV/n* the Montreal magazine) is one of sharp social criticism, but not a criticism based on political or economic grounds alone: it is a cultural attack, a criticism of contemporary life in the name of the whole range of liberal values; and the poetry that we make on this basis is as varied as the personalities of poets can be.⁹¹

It is clear, however, that the "variety" of personalities that existed in *Contact* began to cause friction. After *CIV/n* was established, Dudek, like Layton, continued to contribute poems to Souster, but he no longer offered editorial advice. *Contact* continued for an additional year, producing a total of ten issues. However, without the energy Dudek's presence and participation injected into the press, and perhaps overwhelmed by the amount of material that he received unsolicited, Souster's devotion to, and enthusiasm for, the little magazine waned.

Both Dudek and Creeley unsuccessfully tried to dissuade Souster from terminating the little magazine. Dudek, especially, was convinced that Souster was filling a very important vacuum in Canadian poetry. However, in March, 1954, Souster produced the final issue; it contained seven Canadian poets, including Irving Layton, D.G. Jones, Dorothy Roberts, Avi Boxer, Phyllis Webb, John Reeves and Louis Dudek; seven American poets: Chad Walsh, Cid Corman, K.P.A. Taylor, Robert Creeley, Theodore Enslin and Denise Levertov; and ten foreign poets: Hugh MacDiarmid, Stig Carlson, G.E. Hunter, George Forestier, Rene de Obaldia (the latter two being translated by Corman), Anna Akhmatova

⁹¹Reprinted in Dudek & Gnarowski, *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*. 172.

(translated by Lenard Opalov), Jean Cocteau (translated by Gael Turnbull), Henry Michaux (translated by Charles Guenther), as well as P. Lal and Rskshat Puri, two Hindi poets translated by Kenneth L. Beaudoin.

While Souster was moving away from Dudek and Layton, as he became more involved with Cid Corman and other American writers, Dudek and Layton's friendship was also deteriorating. From the start there had been a sense of competition between the two poets; as long as they shared a common purpose, however, in startling Canadians into recognizing the new poetry that was around them, that friction had positive results. As dynamics changed, largely as a result of Layton's strengthening desire to be known and his relationship with Robert Creeley, the competition began to sour. Elspeth Cameron states that

Layton was disarmed by Dudek's academic success and dismayed by his intimacy with American writing. Dudek overshadowed him at present, and Souster, with his Toronto press, sat nicely at the hub of Canadian modern poetry. But it would not last. Layton must find out all he could about these Americans. (207)

The sense of competition that Layton felt toward Dudek was enacted during a game of handball that took place during the winter of 1952. Quickly the game lost its fun as Layton declared "whoever wins the next game is the better poet!" Dudek remembers that they played like madmen, each determined to win and prove his superiority. Layton eventually prevailed.⁹²

Determined not to be outdone by Dudek and Souster, Layton turned

⁹²Interview with the author August 29th, 1998.

increasingly to Robert Creeley for advice and friendship. Layton made connection with Creeley through Souster. Souster had sent Layton's privately printed collection, *The Black Huntsman*, to Creeley near the end of 1952. Creeley responded to Layton in February 1953, praising the work Layton had submitted to Corman's little magazine, *Origin*, and requesting more for him to publish through

his own Divers Press which was based in Mallorca, Spain.⁹³ An intense correspondence ensued. Furthermore, through Creeley, Layton came into contact with Cid Corman and Charles Olson.

Layton did not particularly like Corman, nor did he fully understand Olson's concept of "open verse" as it is explained in *Projective Verse*, a copy of which Corman left for Layton after a visit. Still, Olson, Corman and Creeley seem to have admired Layton's poetry, and this admiration was important to Layton. In fact, Creeley liked Layton's work so much he published *In the Midst of My Fever* through Divers Press in 1954, and eventually arranged for Layton to join him and Olson as a guest lecturer at Black Mountain College, the avant-garde school in North Carolina (which Layton was unable to do). These events were the beginning, in Dudek's mind, of Layton's departure from the *Contact* scene.

As much as Creeley admired Layton's poetry, he disliked Dudek's, which he

⁹³Creeley founded Divers Press in Mallorca in October, 1952. Within a month of its start up, Creeley had written to Souster suggesting that his press be responsible for printing *Contact*. He argues

having this context of simple disinterest & horrid dignity, etc., it must be a hell of a job to break thru the crust with mimeograph...printing is very damn cheap here -- and good, I mean, look at the actual printing...What I suggest is, thinking about doing CONTACT in the same format, i.e., this here, and sending you sheets to be put together and into the covers there. If the insides were printed as well as they can do it here (and you could have an excellent type, etc.) then it would be clearly a damn fine production job as well as a very serious attempt to break down Canadian lethargy. (Letter from Robert Creeley to Raymond Souster dated July 9th, 1952 (in the collection of Lakehead University Library) Gnarowski, M. "Contact 1952-1954" 9).

Souster did not pursue the idea. However, he reports that "I [Souster] was his Canadian sales outlet" (Souster, "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001.

made clear to Layton in several letters. In one he writes

I hope to Christ I don't seem here utterly unreasonable, i.e., I started off I think ok, but I know at this point I'm screaming again -- it has that fucking effect on me. I cannot damn well stand what he is doing. It grates on my nerves like a file.⁹⁴

While Layton defends Dudek during the early stage of their correspondence he eventually seems to have been worn down. At the same time, the American's high esteem of Layton and low esteem of Dudek served to increase Layton's own sense of self. With the further events of being asked by Robert Weaver to read some of his poems on the CBC poetry reading series as well as being well received at a reading in Toronto on November 14th, 1953, Layton began to feel recognized. Furthermore, after *The Long Pea Shooter* was published (1954) Ezra Pound sent Layton a postcard on which the single word "CHEERS" appears. After receiving it, Layton wrote to Creeley

One word, ONE WORD...and it's enough to make a chap feel that he hasn't altogether wasted more than fifteen years of his life learning the niceties of his craft. It fills me with the delight of a bird at dawn because it was the publication and after-effects of [*The Long Pea Shooter*] which led to a serious quarrel between me and Louis the Dudek; me holding forth that writing pea shooters required O so much craft and cunning, cunning running along the blood & into the fingers that held the pen. Ah well, let me not spoil the grandeur and innocence of the birds' dawn-song by

⁹⁴Letter from Robert Creeley to Irving Layton, dated December 23rd, 1953. In Reed 115).

anything so foolish as a human gloat.⁹⁵

Finally, in the following period, Layton was recognized by A.J.M. Smith, who requested poems from Layton for the revised edition of his [*The*] *Book of Canadian Poetry*, as well as for an anthology of satirical works to be entitled *The Blasted Pine*. Furthermore, Smith reviewed both *The Long Pea Shooter* and *In the Midst of my Fever* for CBC Radio, praising both highly. Such recognition meant that Layton had "arrived." From Layton's perspective it must have seemed that Louis Dudek and Contact Press were far beneath him. And while Dudek had felt competition with Layton before, those feelings must have intensified as Layton received increasing notice.

The bulk of praise Layton received was from the United States, particularly from Olson, Creeley and Corman. Together they convinced him that he needed to leave Canada in order to fulfill his potential. Corman wrote to him arguing

The most important reason to get you out of Montreal is to free you of an abiding provincialism, which I think you can sense in yourself. It doesn't mean that you must become slick or urbane or sophisticated or that you must thereby improve, but I think you have it in you to be a much better poet than you even are now -- but I feel that you need such a distance for a year or two.⁹⁶

Furthermore, sending a copy of *The Long Pea-Shooter* to William Carlos Williams resulted in Layton receiving an enthusiastic response. Williams wrote

⁹⁵Letter from Irving Layton to Robert Creeley, dated December 30th, 1954. In Mansbridge, Francis. Ed. *Wild Gooseberries* 46-7.

⁹⁶Letter from Cid Corman to Irving Layton dated August 4th, 1955. Letter in Irving Layton Collection, Concordia University Library, Montreal.

You have opened up the whole northern sky for us!.. You have let in the air among the objects and people of our lives which was very necessary at the present time....I will never be able to look north without thinking of you from this time forth.... Your abandon, without restraint, to printed page amounts to genius!⁹⁷

In Montreal, in comparison, Layton felt attacked. His relationship with Dudek was severely strained by this time; students at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia), protested against him after a reading of poems from *The Long Pea-Shooter*; McGill dropped the anthology he and Dudek had edited from its reading list; various grants he applied for did not materialize and, finally, a package of *In the Midst of my Fever* was returned to him by Customs, stamped "Obscene."

Demoralized and under increasing financial strain, Layton began doing more readings for the CBC. Around the same time he began a friendship with Desmond Pacey who, according to Elspeth Cameron, replaced Dudek as a person with whom Layton could "spar with ideas" (244). He also began working on editing and financing a collection of Corman's poems as well as acting as a distributor for American poetry magazines and books.

After Creeley tired of publishing Layton's books because of the regulations and money involved in customs and duty, Jonathan Williams, also of Black Mountain College, took over. Like Corman, Williams was concerned about the money required to publish Layton. And at that time, he had Layton's *Improved*

⁹⁷Letter from William Carlos Williams to Irving Layton dated January 14th, 1955. In Irving Layton Collection, Concordia University Library, Montreal.

Binoculars manuscript, which the poet was eager to have published.

Consequently, according to Cameron, Layton

sent installments of money to Williams, got editor Lorne Pierce (who regarded him with cautious awe) at Ryerson Press to order and pay for two hundred of the five hundred copies printed, lined up the possibility of an "Indian File" series publication as backup in case Ryerson failed...persuaded Gael Turnbull in England to find a British distributor (Frederick Woods, who took a hundred copies), encouraged Jonathan Williams to request an introduction from William Carlos Williams (which the poet wrote) and entered an advertisement for the book in *Queen's Quarterly* at his own expense. (247)⁹⁸

Lorne Pierce, and thus Ryerson Press, eventually reneged on the deal because of their affiliation to the United Church, which led to members of the committee to object to the obscenities contained in some of Layton's poetry, specifically "De Bullion Street" and "The Poetic Process." Layton's angry reaction to Ryerson's rejection of his book, which appeared in letter form in the *Toronto*

⁹⁸Souster has since stated that "Irving was always a great promoter of his own work -- Louis and I preferred a quieter approach, and neither of us ended up with a major publisher, like M & S. But the greatest poet in English of the nineteenth century, Walt Whitman, made Irving look like an amateur. Leonard Cohen perhaps surpasses Irving as well" (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto May 4th, 2001).

*Telegram*⁹⁹ and in an interview with *The Globe and Mail*¹⁰⁰ drew attention to him. One person, in particular, who heard of Layton's difficulties, had a profound impact on the next part of Layton's career; that was Jack McClelland, of McClelland and Stewart.

As a result of his growing success and recognition, Layton continued to move further away from his former friend and colleague, Dudek, as well as from Souster. Consequently, 1956 was the last year he published a book with Contact Press. Thereafter, he published his work in the United States with Jonathan Williams Press, with Mosaic Press, of Oakville, Ontario, and with a number of other, smaller presses. Predominantly, however, after 1956, Layton was published by the major publishing house McClelland and Stewart. He had made it into the big leagues. Contact Press was no longer necessary for him to have his voice heard, and so he left it behind.

Around 1955-56 Souster, Layton and Dudek had become self-conscious about publishing primarily their own material. Consequently they decided to promote other, younger poets of whom they were becoming aware. Independently, Dudek initiated and financed the very important "McGill Poetry Series", and its books were distributed by Contact Press. The series began in 1956 with Leonard Cohen's first book, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*. It ran for the following ten years, concurrent with Contact Press, during which time the

⁹⁹See Yur'echek, Gerald. "Frustrated Poet Victim of 'Philistines'" *Toronto Telegram* (January 26th 1957) and Layton, Irving. "A Poet Explains" *Toronto Telegram* (February 2nd 1957).

¹⁰⁰Dempsey, Lotta. "Poet Attacks Publisher's Attitude," *Globe and Mail* (January 14th 1957).

following collections of poetry were published: *The Carnal and the Crane* (1957) by Daryl Hine; *Winds of Unreason* (1958), by George Ellenbogen; *The Timeless Forest* (1959), by Sylvia Barnard; *In My Own Image* (1962), by Dave Solway; Michael Malus's collection, *Night Is A Flaming City* (1963); *Bring Forth the Cowards* (1964) by Pierre Coupey; Steve Smith's book, *God's Kaleidoscope*, in 1964; Seymour Mayne's collection, *Tiptoeing on the Mount*, in 1965; and, *The Flaming Circle*, by Jagdip Maraj, in 1966.¹⁰¹

As a result of the decision to expand their publishing circle, Contact Press published three volumes in 1957, all of which were other poets' work: Dudek independently produced *Frost on the Sun*, by D.G. Jones; Souster independently published *Experiment 1923-1929: Poems by W.W.E. Ross*, which was the first collection of poetry by Ross to bear a publisher's imprint (it appeared in mimeograph form); and Dudek alone was responsible for producing F.R. Scott's collection *The Eye of the Needle: Satires, Sorties, Sundries*.

The same year Souster announced his intentions to begin *Combustion* (1957-1960). Frank Davey suggests Souster began the little magazine to fill the void created by Corman's termination of *Origin* (30). This is likely since Souster produced his fifteenth and last issue in August, 1960, after Corman announced his decision to recommence *Origin*. Like *Enterprise* and *Contact*, *Combustion* appeared in mimeograph form; all the work to produce it was done by Souster out of his home. And, as he had done previously, Souster published a consistent

¹⁰¹Souster notes that "I've never even seen the last six titles -- which emphasizes a growing separation from Louis" (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto May 4th, 2001).

selection of Canadian, American and European poets in its pages although, as in *Contact*, his orientation toward the Americans and Europeans eventually increased.

Perhaps in response to Souster's project, perhaps in response to the beginnings of *Yes* magazine by two young students, Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse, and in either case continuing to reveal his constant and devout commitment to providing an avenue for young Canadian poets, Dudek purchased "a Chandler and Price platen press for \$600"¹⁰² and began *Delta* Magazine (1957-1965). Dudek, it seems, did not approve of *Combustion's* "amount of words, crowdedness, messiness...volume of French hand-me-downs (as usual), the feeling of chaotic disorder."¹⁰³ Consequently he felt the need to balance the scales. In his first editorial in *Delta* (October 1957: 2), Dudek writes, "*Delta* is primarily a local affair: it is a poetry magazine for Canada with a job to do here." He continues, "Unlike Souster's *Combustion*...we will not stuff our pages with translation, with Jacques Prevert and Rene Char etc....We want to present examples of fresh experiments with poetry." Dudek published 26 issues of his little magazine between October 1957 and October 1966. It provided him with a new means by which he might continue his work toward the modernization of Canadian poetry. Other aspects of his life, however, were becoming more challenging.

Producing the *McGill Poetry Series*, experiencing a growing disillusionment with the direction of Contact Press, involved in *Contact*, *CIV/n*,

¹⁰²DK/*Some Letters of Ezra Pound* (1974) 40.

¹⁰³Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster, dated Montreal August 22nd, 1958 (Letter in the Lakehead University Library) Davey 32.

then *Delta*, and maintaining a teaching position at McGill University left Dudek, perhaps, over-extended. Furthermore, personal issues began to wear on him; these included many different things: the strain between himself and Souster since his move away from *Contact* magazine; the gulf between himself and Layton, as well as an increasing sense of injustice and resentment regarding Layton's public success; Layton's separation from Betty (Sutherland), which left Dudek's loyalties divided; the break-up of his marriage to Stephanie, shortly after her return from New York....He writes

I travelled to Mexico in 1958 in a state of much dejection. I was now forty years old, my back was giving me some trouble, I was hit with something called "urticaria" in Mexico -- a red swelling of the face -- and my personal life was a shambles. Enough to make anyone's poetry fall apart in fragments -- and mine did. Perhaps fortunately. (*Biographical Series* 138)

When Dudek returned from his travels he independently published his own volumes, *En Mexico* and *Laughing Stalks*, as well as Ron Everson's first collection, *A Lattice for Momos*, for which Dudek wrote the Forward. Also in 1958 Contact Press published *Jupiter C For The Missile Age: 4 Poems*, by Kenneth Alan McRobbie (in broadsheet format), and George Walton's volume, *The Wayward Queen*. In addition, Souster was responsible for independently producing his own *Crepe-Hanger's Carnival: Selected Poems 1955-1958* and Peter Miller's collection *Meditation At Noon* (which contained three translations

of poems by Federico Garcia Lorca, Aime Cesaire and Dino Campana).¹⁰⁴

In addition to being a poet, Miller worked at the same bank as Souster. He became interested in Contact Press and because "he had some money to put in, and was willing to work"¹⁰⁵ he filled the vacuum left by Layton's departure.

From Miller's perspective

In 1959 the idea struck me that maybe I could help Souster and Dudek to market Contact Press books. For example, in April that year I flogged the list in New York, reporting back to the editors that the Big Apple had recognized our indispensability by ordering seven copies each of three titles and five each of two others, accepted in total by four bookstores.

Obviously the name of Contact Press would soon be neoned over Times Square....

On September 13, 1959, Ray wrote to Louis that I had moved into a large apartment¹⁰⁶ and had offered to use it to stock Contact Press books and from it to ship orders sent to Ray's address. If Louis agreed, we would need to open a bank account in Toronto and keep records. 'But as far as

¹⁰⁴In *Canadian Notes & Queries* (51:1), Peter Miller reports, "I asked [Raymond Souster] to look at my first book manuscript. He did so, and sent it on to Louis Dudek in Montreal. The result was their joint acceptance and (paid for by myself, as was then the going deal at this Press) the book appeared in 1958 with a jacket designed by future wife, Anita. This operation was repeated in 1959 with a second book" (4-5).

¹⁰⁵Letter from Louis Dudek to Beverley Daurio, dated Montreal, July 9th, 1994. In Dudek's personal papers.

¹⁰⁶The apartment that served as a base for Contact Press was at 10 Lamport Avenue in Rosedale. According to Miller, the "address was never officially used by the Contact Press, but it was here that the operations were reformed and became intense and continuous" (Miller 5).

editorial policy goes I feel very strongly that you should have principal control.' Ray suggested that Louis find out whether Irving Layton was still interested in the Press. If he was not, then someone with enthusiasm might replace him as a director. 'The logical person for my dough is Peter Miller, but you may have other ideas. But his offer of help stands and is not dependent on any directorship; I wanted to make that clear, otherwise you might get the idea that he was being pushed down your throat.'

Louis replied on September 25th:

Good. I've written Irving a friendly explanatory letter telling him about the re-organization. I think there will be no offence and no trouble about it....Whatever you do, in any case, is all right with me. I am not sticklish, have no property rights in this philanthropic venture, and would even be glad to retire at any time to make room for younger men'. (Miller 5)

In fact, Souster had already informed Miller of some of the problems the press had been experiencing. These were primarily of a financial nature, due to the cost of producing books -- a cost that was never met by sales and by an increasing number of customers being upset due to the press's disorganization.¹⁰⁷ For each book published the press printed 250 copies, which cost approximately \$500-\$600. If all copies were sold, the press received about \$450.00 which meant that each title

¹⁰⁷Souster states that "orders for Contact books came to my Toronto address, 28 Mayfield Avenue, and were then mailed on to be filled by Louis in Montreal. But Louis now had too much on his plate -- so orders went unfilled, cheques weren't deposited and some were stale-dated. This obviously couldn't continue." (Souster, Raymond. "Editorial Comments" Letter to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

lost approximately \$200.00 (Campbell 219). According to Souster, "People were getting upset....They ordered and paid for a book but didn't get it for six months. Letters were lost and books never arrived and we thought we'd have to close it down."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the printers they were using by that time, Niemojowski & Bernarczyk, which were based in London, England, refused to replace books that were lost or damaged during shipping. Miller's offer to help, then, was extremely propitious.

The first and immediate change the new organization made was to change printers. Instead of sending their work to England, Miller employed more local printers based in Montreal and Toronto. Miller also volunteered to finance most of the books the press published and absorb its losses -- an expense previously assumed by Dudek. Furthermore, Miller helped select manuscripts, and assumed control of the financial records of the little press. He also took over the production of its books and their distribution. Furthermore, Miller's girlfriend, (eventually his wife) Anita Koop, designed the new book covers.

Because Miller was based in Toronto, where Souster also resided, and because he assumed such a large role in the operation of Contact Press, his participation served to shift its dynamics even further away from Montreal, and therefore from Dudek. While previously he had been at the core of the little press, Dudek became the outsider -- a position that might have left him feeling pushed aside.

In 1959, only one book was published by Contact Press -- that was Peter

¹⁰⁸Campbell 219.

Miller's *Sonata for Frog and Man*. In 1960, the press published Eli Mandel's collection, *Fuseli Poems*, as well as its only prose publication, Louis Dudek's dissertation, *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and their Relation to Literature*, which had a joint imprint of Ryerson and Contact Press. No books were published in 1961. During that year, Miller had resigned from his position at the bank and moved to Paris. He reports that viewing Fellini's film, *La Dolce Vita*, "made him "think of a sweet life outside of banking: one in which travel and life-experience would play a lead role. Gradually I planned to extend my sabbatical to a trip around the world, with only my typewriter for constant companion." (Miller 5). Consequently Miller travelled through Europe, to France, Italy, and Greece, and then on through Asia, to Delhi, Bangkok, Thailand, and Tokyo, Japan. He returned to Toronto in July 1961, where he searched for a new job and resumed his efforts on behalf of Contact Press. That fall, Dudek wrote a letter of welcome, in which he states "We're not a 'Press", not even a cooperative one, unless we have a good distribution and promotion, and that we had always lacked -- until you came along" (Miller 5).

In 1962, Contact Press published Peter Miller's second collection, *A Shifting Pattern*, Souster's *A Local Pride*, as well as Alden Nowlan's *The Things Which Are*, and Al Purdy's book, *Poems For All The Annettes*.

By this time overt disagreements had arisen between Dudek and Miller. Miller had continued to challenge the organization of the press.¹⁰⁹ Again, the first

¹⁰⁹Upon his return to Toronto, Miller wrote to Dudek (Letter dated Toronto, September 19th, 1961. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto) suggesting that he wanted to "broaden [his] financing of books by new poets" (Miller 5).

three editors had agreed that their own work "did not need to be circulated"¹¹⁰ and that if an editor felt strongly about a manuscript the book would be published even though the other editors disagreed. Miller, on the other hand, wanted the press to publish only those manuscripts approved unanimously by the editors.¹¹¹ While Dudek compromised his position, agreeing to accept a majority vote on any given manuscript, he was uncomfortable with the decision and with the direction it suggested the press was going.

Furthermore, Dudek began to feel that the press was becoming too demanding of poets wishing to have their work published, and was therefore excluding many young, talented writers who were just beginning. In essence, he felt that with Souster and Miller's influence Contact Press was becoming too much of an establishment, which was antithetical to the ideology and purpose of the little press. Responding to Souster's recommendation that a particular manuscript be rejected, Dudek wrote to Miller (21 November, 1960), stating "If we refuse...pretty soon we'll find that we're not bringing any of the new poets out, and that they're starting presses on their own."¹¹²

Another issue that created tension between Dudek and his colleagues arose with the advent of the Canada Council. Dudek felt the need to protect Contact Press -- and little presses in general -- from government control, however subtle it

¹¹⁰Letter from Louis Dudek to Peter Miller, dated Montreal, September 29th, 1961. In the Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹¹¹Letter from Peter Miller to Louis Dudek dated Toronto, February 5th, 1962. In Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹¹²In Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

might be. He did not believe that assessment by such a body could be fair and unbiased. In 1961 he was most concerned about how the Canada Council might influence the freedom by which poets might write poetry. Writing to Miller he argues

as soon as you submit to gov't subsidy you've got civil service mentality to deal with: the MS has to be immaculate, with starched shirt and full-dress suit and before long the poetry too will toe the mark. They are bound to help poetry that has nothing to say and that is perfectly finished as a new-laid corpse.¹¹³

More recently he has stated

The Canada Council has an immense responsibility: it has no doubt "destroyed" many a writer by refusing a grant, or grants; and it has eliminated many a magazine (e.g. *Zymergy* in Montreal, a truly original literary mag) while supporting *Matrix*, a comparatively uninteresting miscellany of current journalistic interests. This is the great problem of the granting agencies: their juries have to be packed with real *Maecenases* and *Medicis*, or the whole thing becomes a waste.¹¹⁴

Again, unlike Souster and Miller, Dudek firmly believed in the importance of the little press being part of the anti-establishment. In his mind the advent of the Canada Council and the conformity of standards it imposed in exchange for

¹¹³Letter from Louis Dudek to Peter Miller, dated Montreal, November 11th, 1961. In Contact Press Collection in Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹¹⁴Letter from Louis Dudek to Beverley Daurio, dated Montreal, July 9th, 1994. In Louis Dudek's Personal Papers.

support threatened the ability of the little press (particularly Contact Press) to flaunt its independence and publish those whom the literary establishment ignored. Despite these concerns, the Contact Press Toronto editors applied for a Canada Council grant for Milton Acorn's volume *Jawbreakers*, a request that was turned down. Perhaps proving Dudek's point that the little press could and should survive without government support, Acorn's book was published in 1963. The same year Contact Press produced Eldon Grier's *A Friction of Lights*, Gwendolyn MacEwen's collection, *The Rising Fire*,¹¹⁵ and *Sun-Stone* by Octavio Paz, which was in Spanish with English translation provided by Peter Miller.

Finances again arose as a problem between Dudek and Miller when the latter challenged Contact Press's policy of allowing poets to contribute toward the cost of publishing their books -- a practice that had existed since the inception of the little press because it offered two important benefits: first, it allowed for a larger number of poets' collections to be published than if the press had to rely on income from subscriptions, donations or government support. And second, it allowed poets more freedom to publish what they wanted and what they believed was good, without having to work through a bureaucratic system of ratings and approvals. By that time, however, Contact Press generated recognition and prestige and Miller felt that without the more traditional approach to financing its authors, its reputation might be undermined. For Dudek, this further proved that Miller lacked a basic understanding and sense of the spirit of a little press. It was

¹¹⁵According to Souster, Dudek voted against *Jawbreakers*, but Souster and Miller liked it. The Canada Council turned it down, so Contact Press printed it. Dudek also voted against Gwen MacEwen's *Rising Fire* and Eldon Grier's *A Friction of Lights*, as well as *Bridge Force* by Frank Davey.

that same spirit, however, that informed Dudek's whole perspective on, and involvement in, the little press movement.

Dudek reinforced his position when he fought hard to have a manuscript, *The Circle Game*, by Margaret Atwood, rejected, despite Miller and Souster's determination to publish it. At the time, Dudek argued "if we allow ourselves to become another prestige-giving institution of dull but excellently written poetry then to hell with it. We might as well fold up."¹¹⁶

As Miller¹¹⁷ and Souster assumed more and more control over the press, the type of manuscripts that were selected to be published began to change. Wynne Francis has suggested, "By the late fifties Contact Press...could afford to wait until a writer had proved himself elsewhere before offering him the advantages of the Contact imprint. In this sense, Contact...lost some of the character of the little press ("The Little Presses" 57). As his involvement in *First Statement*, *First Statement Press*, *Northern Review*, *Contact* and *CIV/n* had revealed, Dudek's primary motivation was to promote young, experimental,

¹¹⁶Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster & Peter Miller, dated Montreal, December 10th, 1963. In *Contact Press Papers*, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹¹⁷Miller reports that

On October 25, 1962, I wrote to Louis, 'I've had a hell of a ten day holiday, driving, Toronto -- New York -- Philadelphia -- Ottawa -- Montreal -- Toronto. Much of the time I have been peddling Contact books.' Total sales in four cities, 205. 'But my shoes are worn out.'

So I did a fair bit of streetwalking. Any sale at all was a thrill. I felt like a 19th-century itinerant purveyor of patent medicines. The disease was a public suspicion of poetry. The elixir was a dose of our books. It was fun -- if one is into masochism. In the six months up to May 1963 I shipped more than 1,000 books from my apartment (Letter in *Contact Press Papers*, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto) (Miller 6).

perhaps inexperienced writers. While Souster appears to have shared Dudek's ambitions in their early collaborations, by 1964 his definition of what constituted a "young" writer had changed. In a letter to Dudek dated October 4th, 1964, he explains that "the young are those who 'have written a fairly large group of poems showing a distinct growth, and who have a manuscript of 50 or 60 poems which proclaim an individual voice which cannot be denied."¹¹⁸

Given Souster's own history of feeling alienated from the literary community and rejected by publishers as well as his sense of having to prove himself because he never quite felt accepted, it is ironic that he, of all the editors, should set such high standards. Dudek, who had a more complete and wide-ranging knowledge of poetry, who had a doctoral degree, and who had, arguably, more experience in publishing, found Souster's position unreasonable. Rather than continue battling against his two colleagues, who were closer in physical proximity as well as literary ideology, he decided to distance himself from Contact Press. In a letter to Peter Miller, dated October 15th, 1964, in which he explains his reasons, he states

Contact Press is obviously going to continue on its present formal course. I believe in a little more elbow room, freedom to publish on the part of authors who show promise, open-house when good things pour in and less when they don't. Obviously this is not any longer the method of Contact Press. We have finished with the frontier.

In 1964, Contact Press published George Bowering's book *Points on the*

¹¹⁸In Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

Grid, and Alain Grandbois' *Selected Poems* (translated by Peter Miller).

Furthermore, Miller married, and the address of the press changed from Souster's home on Mayfield Avenue, to Miller's, on Ivor Road.

In 1965, the press brought out *Bridge Force*, by Frank Davey and John Newlove's book, *Moving In Alone*. In 1966 the press published Richard Clarke's book *Fever and the Cold Eye*, Margaret Atwood's collection, *The Circle Game*, and *New Wave Canada: The New Explosion in Canadian Poetry*, which was edited by Souster. The latter books, especially the one by Clarke, caused problems for Dudek. He felt that in these manuscripts too much of the "new style" of writing promoted by Olson and Creeley was apparent, while what he defined as poetry with "guts, vitality and staying power" was absent.¹¹⁹ Of Souster's *New Wave Canada*, Dudek writes

this new generation is not our generation, is not wanting our kind of poetry. Maybe it's not even a continuation from the direct and straight poetry of conviction of the forties. I see it as a messy sort of doodling, available to anybody and everybody, a sociological movement rather than a poetry movement, with scores of floundering young poets everywhere smearing pages with reams of incoherent personal drivel.¹²⁰

In response to Dudek's charges, Souster responded that "Canadian poetry in five years is going to be Coleman and Clarke and others of this new 'cool' approach; it

¹¹⁹Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster & Peter Miller, dated Montreal, March 30th, 1965. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹²⁰Letter from Louis Dudek to Raymond Souster, dated Montreal, November 5th, 1966. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

isn't going to be Mayne and Coupey."¹²¹

Souster obviously felt that Dudek was out of touch with a new phase that was revealing itself in the poetry of the time. According to Frank Davey, for Souster, the *New Wave Canada* anthology, subtitled "*The New Explosion in Canadian Poetry*," had been an activist and polemical publication that paralleled Contact's first publication, *Cerberus*, and entirely in the "energetic" and "open house" tradition of small press publishing" (30).

Perhaps supporting Dudek's assessment of the books, as well as underlining his prediction of the negative implications of becoming more of an established publishing house, Atwood's book, *The Circle Game*, won the Governor General's award for poetry in 1966.

In the fall of 1966 Peter Miller indicated his desire to withdraw from "financing and physically producing books for Contact Press."¹²² His marriage had left him with less time and money to devote to the press. Furthermore, he had been deeply hurt by his omission from the credits of *New Wave Canada*, which Souster edited. Miller reports that the book

was published under the imprint of Contact Press, with my own home address. Ray showed me a copy of it. The book was prefaced by a statement to the effect that 'Contact Press was founded by Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster.' True words. However, Layton had

¹²¹Letter from Raymond Souster to Louis Dudek, dated Toronto, April 3rd, 1965. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹²²Letter from Peter Miller to Raymond Souster & Louis Dudek, dated Toronto, September 15th, 1966. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

left officially in 1959, and starting informally in 1959, I had continued as a co-editor, working hard, contributing capital, redesigning policy, and expanding output to books by further new poets. To omit my name, in any form, from the opening credits seemed to me unappreciative and inconsiderate....Ray, to whom I expostulated, did not consider my objections significant. Louis never knew of the incident or of my feelings about it....Accordingly on September 15, 1966,¹²³ I wrote to Ray and Louis jointly, reporting my wish to withdraw from Contact Press. (Miller 9)

Dudek then proposed that Victor Coleman, a Toronto poet, take over Miller's position so that the press could continue. On October 31st, 1966, however, Souster indicated that he wanted to "opt out with Peter."¹²⁴ Other small presses had been started up, and he felt that Contact Press had served its purpose:

Now that Delta Press is firmly established and Coach House Press and Island Press in Toronto are active, I don't think young and deserving talent will be badly served in the future. I think Contact Press has done the job it was founded to do -- we have bridged a very difficult time in Canadian letters -- and now it's largely history. What better time to call a halt.¹²⁵

The following year the little press put out its last two books: *The Tomb of the Kings*, by Anne Hébert, translated by Peter Miller, and *Total War*, by Harry

¹²³Letter in the Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹²⁴Letter from Raymond Souster to Louis Dudek, dated October 31st, 1966. In Contact Press Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

¹²⁵Ms. in Contact Press Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

Howith.

While Dudek was saddened by Souster's decision, he acknowledges that he, too, believed the little press had run its course. In a recent letter he states

In a group, each editor selects or votes for poetry or poets according to his own strong taste, and hence somewhat in divergence from each of the other editors. When the group has good coherence -- as Contact Press had in 1952-1953 -- the divergence is slight, because all are in favour of a certain kind of poetry, defined by the historical moment which has brought them together. But later the individual tastes assert themselves and the group is less united, it develops conflicts and finally reorganizes or breaks up.¹²⁶

When considering the accomplishments of Contact Press, Miller reports the following:

From its beginnings in 1952 to its demise in 1967, Contact Press published 61 book titles, one broadsheet, and Ray's 23 magazine issues. Much of this at a time when many poets in Canada were otherwise starved for an audience. By the time that we folded, other presses, both small and commercial, had become available. Meanwhile we had helped to keep the show on the road. (Miller 9)

¹²⁶Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, April 24th, 1999.

Contact Press broke up because the conflicts that existed between its editors grew too numerous and too strong. By 1967 the basic ideology held by the three founding editors had changed. Layton had long since left its orbit; and while Souster, Dudek and Miller all believed in the importance of providing a forum for Canadian poets, the ways in which they went about it were different.¹²⁷ Perhaps it was that Dudek focused more on the poet while Souster and Miller were more concerned about the reader. Perhaps it was that for Dudek the press was an extension of his teaching poetry while for Souster it was a means of learning about poetry. Perhaps the differences grew as a result of their different training and education. Perhaps it was because of differences in personalities. Or, as is most likely, perhaps it was a combination of the above that eventually contributed to the end of Contact Press.

¹²⁷Reminiscing about Contact Press, Souster has recently stated that publishing poetry in Canada is like betting on a horse race or gambling on a certain penny mining stock. No one can be sure which horse or stock will be a winner, but at least we should have the privilege of trying for intelligent choices. I still feel Peter and I made intelligent choices -- there is only one Contact book now I think we should have passed on -- a pretty good average. Could Louis, if he were here today, say who of all his Montreal poets except Leonard Cohen, amounted to anything? To understand both Louis and Irving you have to remember that both came from East-end Montreal and had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. They had a fierce love for Montreal and a desire to show the rest of Canada (and especially Hogtown) that the true birthplace of poetry was in Montreal, and the two of them were leaders in that struggle. Fate took a hand in it; Layton the promoter, became a national icon; Louis, as eager to promote others as himself, never achieved anything like the place he deserved. But both have their place and used their talents to advantage. Louis ended being somewhat bitter -- but he needn't have been -- his closest friends knew he had the right stuff (Letter from Raymond Souster to the author dated Toronto, May 4th, 2001).

From the outset, Layton was extremely ambitious and competitive, and, as he became increasingly known and successful, his devotion to the workings of the little press and its ideology diminished. Dudek, of course, seems to have remained most true to the original intentions of Contact Press. Despite disappointments and pessimism derived from a sense of the neglect of his role in Canadian letters, and despite difficulties -- both personal and professional -- with his colleagues, Dudek has held firmly to the belief that in an age of commercialization, when the printing press is run by the dollar sign rather than by the measure of literary quality, poets need a small, supportive place in which they might cooperate toward the goal of publishing their own work. To that end he was involved in First Statement Press, Contact Press and then Delta Press, in addition to the production of many little magazines.

Souster's commitment to the little magazines and little presses has also been complete and unwavering; after having been involved in numerous publishing activities throughout his life, Contact Press could be regarded as the peak of his literary adventures. While it is possible to argue that his approach to those activities changed over time depending on his experience and, to some extent, on the individuals with whom he was involved, it is clear that his goals and aspirations remained consistent -- to contribute to the development of a strong base and representation of poetry in Canada. And to provide a forum in which the lesser-known poets might nurture and get their work out.

These men, then, with the support of Peter Miller, who gave the press an additional seven years of life and perhaps bridged the transition between the second generation of modernist poets in Canada and the third or "New Wave" of

writers, left the little press with an extremely impressive legacy.

Contact Press initially filled a void in publishing that existed after the war, supporting and encouraging many young Canadian poets by providing them with a sense of place and purpose. It published the first books (or first substantial books) of some of Canada's finest poets, including Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Phyllis Webb, W.W. E. Ross, George Bowering, Frank Davey, Margaret Atwood...in fact, nearly all the poets originally published by Contact Press have gone on to establish significant careers as poets. Most importantly, however, Contact Press challenged and redefined the shape and content of Canadian poetry over the middle part of the century, and in so doing, made an enormous contribution to the development of modernist poetry in Canada.

Chapter Five

Delta Canada

Our magazine is called *Yes*.¹ This is its attitude. It has been created for the writing of the second half of the twentieth century, which we believe, will once again be the expression of positive values. The world is a yes place -- let us then say so.²

Delta Canada formed after the peak of publishing English poetry in Montreal had passed. During the previous decade, numerous little presses had begun to spring up and so the need for another one was less urgent. At the same time, in publishing there is always a niche that is not being fully served, and to fill it, three young students, Michael Gnarowski, Glen Siebrasse and John Lachs, began a new little magazine of poetry, called *Yes*. Wanting to expand its scope and take it to its next natural progression, Gnarowski approached his friend and mentor Louis Dudek with the idea of beginning a new little press. Dudek agreed to meet to discuss the idea. In December 1965, Gnarowski and Siebrasse met with Dudek, poet Ron Everson and Colin Hawarth at the Troika restaurant in Montreal, and Delta Canada was born.

Michael Gnarowski arrived in Vancouver, Canada, from Shanghai, in the fall of 1951; he was seventeen years old. He made his way to Montreal where he

¹The title "Yes" was taken from the epiphanic last line of Molly Bloom's final speech in James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*. It was misquoted on the back cover of the first issue of the little magazine.

²Gnarowski, Michael. *Yes* 1 (April 1956) 1.

had been accepted at McGill University.

In his first year at McGill, Gnarowski was determined to study science, particularly chemistry, and get his B.Sc. Because of this he had very few electives outside the science faculty; the ones he did have he was determined to fill with courses on literature -- he had always enjoyed reading and had received a strong background in British and American literature at school in China. He was, furthermore, interested in studying Canadian literature in particular because the country that he had adopted intrigued him, and so he was determined to know more about it. He took two literary courses that first semester. The first was a Survey of Literature, taught by George Ian Duthie (who was a Shakespearean specialist), whom Gnarowski disliked. However, Duthie gave the last four weeks of the term to Arthur L. Phelps, a scholar committed to Canadian literature. Phelps had just finished a small book entitled *Canadian Writers* (1951) which consisted of a series of short essays on Canadian writers.³ The students were directed to use Phelps' book and write a term paper on one of the authors included in it. When Gnarowski read the chapter on Archibald Lampman, he realized that

³According to the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature and History*, Phelps was "general superintendent of the international service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation from 1945 to 1947 and taught English at McGill University until 1953 when he retired and went to live in Kingston, Ont. One of the first to write poetry in the modern idiom, he is the author of two chapbooks -- *Poems* (1921) and *A Bobcaygeon Chapbook* (1922) -- in which he successfully captured the atmosphere of a small Ontario semi-rural community. 'Bobcaygeon: a sketch of a little town' was published in the *Canadian Magazine* (Vol. LXV, Dec. 1919). His study *Canadian Writers* (1951) is a series of scripts for radio broadcasts on contemporary authors who up to that time were largely unknown to the general reader.

much more research needed to be done on the writer, and that he wanted to be the one to do it.⁴ It was to be a significant beginning.

The second course Gnarowski enrolled in was a composition course (English 100-C) taught by Louis Dudek. Gnarowski recalls that he arrived at McGill on the 21st of October, well into the term. He had to go and report to Dudek. That Gnarowski had a Polish name and roots, like himself, and that he had traveled from China to Canada intrigued Dudek. Conversely, Gnarowski was hugely impressed by Dudek's eclectic teaching methods and by his humanity. He recalls that near the end of spring 1952 Dudek talked to his students about the new press he was involved in (Contact Press), and he showed them a flyer that listed its forthcoming books. It was a seminal moment for Gnarowski. He was moved by the knowledge that he was in the presence of a "real, live poet" -- not one who was dead and distant. Gnarowski responded by enrolling in a course on Canadian Literature, which was taught jointly by Dudek, who focused on the poetry, and Hugh MacLennan, who taught contemporary Canadian writing (MacLennan considered such authors as Gabrielle Roy, Morley Callaghan and Bruce Hutchison). Gnarowski was moved by MacLennan's nationalism, and extremely excited by the idea that he was among real writers. In fact, he and MacLennan often walked home after class together along Sherbrooke Street to Guy, where Gnarowski would take the bus.

In their conversations he learned of MacLennan's general sense of the

⁴Very little scholarly work on Canadian literature was available at the time. Desmond Pacey's seminal text, *Creative Writing in Canada*, for example, was published only in February 1952.

contemporary in Canadian writing. Dudek, on the other hand, had a strong sense of Canadian poetry as being part of a national literature. Through Dudek's European Poetry course, in which Gnarowski enrolled later, the young student came to see how Canadian literature fit into a world perspective. Having come from another part of the world and personally affected by the power of politics, this was particularly important to him. Thus it was that Dudek's passionate and active commitment to forwarding Canadian poetry through his lectures and his work on little magazines and presses inspired Gnarowski and influenced him in terms of making him wonder whether he, too, might be able to do something as well.

Late in 1952 Gnarowski met John Lachs, a B.A. student studying philosophy, who attended some of the same lectures and who lived in the same building.⁵ Lachs introduced Gnarowski to Glen Siebrasse, a friend from high school days in Verdun, who was enrolled in the Arts program at McGill, who was interested in poetry. The men began to send their poems to the student newspaper *McGill Daily* and the literary magazine *Forge*. They also joined LitSoc -- McGill's literary society -- an association that gathered students who were interested in poetry and writing for readings and discussions (Leonard Cohen was a part of the group). Gnarowski enjoyed the meetings, which provided another outlet for writers at McGill. However in Siebrasse's mind, the activities were elitist, which interfered with their purpose.

In a manner similar to the differences that existed between the members of

⁵Gnarowski lived at 3235 Ridgewood, Apt. 403; Lachs lived on the second floor.

Preview and *First Statement*, there was a fundamental disconnection between the classes in Montreal during the 1950's. Anti-Semitism existed in faculty committees; poor and foreign, students like Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs often felt that they didn't fit in. But needing a "circle of like-minded individuals" and wanting an outlet for their more social realist poetry, Gnarowski began thinking about starting his own magazine. He graduated from McGill in 1956 (with a B.A.). Earlier that year, Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs began planning *Yes*.

The first issue of *Yes* magazine appeared in April 1956. Siebrasse recalls that he was a Socialist at the time, and the C.C.F. (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation -- the predecessor of the N.D.P.), Montreal office, at 1405 Bishop, allowed him to use their Gestetner (copier) to run it off.⁶ In his founding editorial Gnarowski provides a statement of the purpose of the little magazine; he writes,

A new magazine has come to Montreal. Perhaps the thought of a city that could clothe its people in the periodicals it sells does not make this seem an impressive accomplishment. Yet a distinction must be made here; for the professional efforts that roll their paper like two-legged beavers are quite apart from the phenomenon known as the "little magazines." These productions, such as Fredericton's "Fiddlehead," are not devoted to making money (heaven forbid), but rather to providing a stimulating and indispensable literature. Especially in such fields as poetry, which is not commercially attractive is this need fulfilled. Their other important contribution lies in the fact that they give encouragement to new talent by

⁶Interview with Glen Siebrasse, June 16, 1999.

allowing them a medium in which to present themselves.

Unfortunately the little magazine movement in Canada has shown a tendency to lapse in recent years. It is to be hoped that this mimeographed effort will initiate a new phase of activity in this field so as to provide a suitable outlet for the commencing Renaissance of Canadian Writing.

Our magazine is called *Yes*. This is its attitude. It has been created for the writing of the second half of the twentieth century, which we believe, will once again be the expression of positive values. The world is a yes place -- let us then say so.⁷

This editorial is interesting for three important reasons. First, the tone and message of the text is reminiscent of John Sutherland's writing in its enthusiasm and commitment to the "greater good" of Canadian poetry, and in the belief of poetry's importance to the development of Canadian culture. For the poets, living through the atomic Cold War made affirmation extremely important. Furthermore, again, like Sutherland, in his vision of the potential importance of *First Statement* magazine, it is clear that Gnarowski sees *Yes* as the vehicle by which a new phase of the literature might begin -- a "renaissance of Canadian Writing." Suggesting a link between *Yes* and *First Statement* is significant in tracing the development of modernist poetry in Canada, specifically in the growth and progression of the little

⁷Gnarowski, Michael. *Yes* 1 (April, 1956) 1.

magazine and press.⁸

Finally, the editorial is significant because it makes no direct statement of editorial policy. This last issue⁹ seems to have caused Louis Dudek some consternation, because in an open letter addressed to the editors, published in Issue #2, he calls for them to "state [their] views -- advance an editorial, a policy."¹⁰ In response, in the third issue, the editors write:

It seems to be an accepted custom with intellectuals since the days of the Marxian incarnation in 1848, to prepare at regular intervals manifestos in which humanity is neatly divided into two camps, the world interpreted in terms of Manichaeian struggle of light and darkness, opinions are stated, policies outlined. A similarly incisive declaration of allegiance is demanded of all others, to aid the enterprise of cut and dried classification in the proper filing cabinets of the mind. People who talk little are not well liked; one does not know what to expect of them....

In our view it is not absolutely essential for a magazine devoted to publishing contemporary writing to be factional and consequently to be unavailable to the majority of poets, who are then considered "outsiders." This is especially the case in Canada, where poetry has only just come to

⁸The first issue of the magazine reports on forthcoming special projects – already the editors were planning a larger examination of Canadian literature. The issue also contains the first review to appear, anywhere, of Leonard Cohen's *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (it is unsigned). The first poem in the first issue is by Raymond Souster; George Ellenbogen and Stephen Hemingway also appear.

⁹Issue number three also includes artwork, and a book review of *The Transparent Sea* by Louis Dudek.

¹⁰Dudek, Louis. *Yes* 2 1956.

life a decade or so ago and where unfortunately so few little magazines serve the young poet.¹¹

The "feisty" tone of this text reflects the sense of possessiveness that Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs felt for their fledgling publication. This is significant when considering the fact that despite the pressure exerted on them by such an influential and experienced poet and editor as Louis Dudek -- a professor for whom Gnarowski had enormous admiration and respect -- the three editors' belief in their work was strong enough to compel them to remain true to *their* vision of the little magazine. This, in turn, suggests Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs possessed the true spirit of modernism and of the little press -- a spirit, as Dudek himself has stated it, that demanded they "break open the windows and doors and let the light in" -- a spirit, furthermore, that required the creation of new avenues of expression for poets, and opportunities for them to "get it out."¹²

This third editorial also suggests that Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs, while recognizing the value of the organized policies of previous magazines such as *First Statement* and *Contact*, were setting a new course -- one that perhaps heralded the last phases of modernist poetry and the very earliest beginnings of post-modernism. Perhaps it was this shift in direction that made Dudek uncomfortable. Perhaps it was because Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs on the one hand, and Dudek on the other, were looking at the poetry scene in Montreal and in Canada through the lenses of two different generations. The earlier generation was conditioned by leftist periodicals which had clear policy orientation

¹¹Gnarowski, Michael. *Yes* 3. December 1956. 2-3.

¹²Interview with Louis Dudek, August 29th, 1998.

(for example *New Masses* and later, Irving Howe's *Dissent*). Even if Dudek's generation didn't share the policy, they expected some structure and orientation. The question that arises from this, however, is, who was closer to the poetry scene; who knew what was going on?

Increasingly uncertain about the direction that Contact Press was beginning to take and having recently seen the winding up of *CIV/n* (1954), which was run by Aileen Collins (who, in 1970, became Dudek's second wife) Dudek was, perhaps, searching for a new venture. At the same time, Gnarowski approached him about joining the *Yes* editorial board; however, Dudek did not see a role for himself in it. Perhaps the main reason for this was that Dudek realized that his methodology was not in line with that of the younger editors of the little magazine. This was underlined by the editorial above and its refusal to articulate a definite editorial statement. Perhaps, because of this, Dudek felt *Yes* would not serve the needs of good poets. Whatever the motivation, Dudek began thinking about launching his own little magazine, and *Delta* appeared just nine months after *Yes* was launched.

Dudek chose the title of the little magazine with three things in mind: first, Henry Miller, whom Dudek admired, had edited a little magazine in Paris called *Delta*. Second, the word "delta" suggests "a fertile place, a place of flowing energy coming from a primal source;" and third, Delta is the Greek letter for "D" which stands both for "Delta" and "Dudek"¹³

Dudek recalls that *Delta* was, for him, a dream realized -- a magazine that was entirely his -- that represented his viewpoint, and that reflected his idea of

¹³Interview with Louis Dudek, August 29th, 1998.

what was good poetry. In short, *Delta* symbolized Dudek's vision of himself. In his first editorial, (October 1957) he writes

this will be something of a personal magazine, with an impersonal program. I take poetry to mean a special form of writing, rhythmic, whole, heated by imagination, but with no restrictions of subject or form placed upon it, and with the same vitality of interests that prose has: we must win back the ground we have lost to prose, and discover new ground. For this, we want scope, and air, and the help of youth. We want to act as a forum and an exhibition for some correctives to an old malady. We want to present examples of fresh experiment with poetry." ¹⁴

Dudek printed *Delta* on a Chandler and Price platen printing press. He reports, "obviously I had bought a printing press because First Statement had owned the same kind of press, heavy and messy; and I liked to do printing. One thing grows out of another."¹⁵ The press was installed in the basement of his wife's (Stephanie) parents' home on 6th Avenue, Verdun.

Dudek's first editorial is also a direct reaction to the position assumed by the editors of *Yes*. In it, as Ken Norris has explained, Dudek claims the need "for sometimes saying no"(Norris 70). Norris supports Dudek's position by arguing, further, that

An open-door policy in little magazines makes them valuable only until another magazine with a pertinent policy emerges and reveals the need for a clear line of progression. It is for this reason that *Yes* exists as a minor

¹⁴"Editorial" *Delta* (October 1957) 3.

¹⁵Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

accomplishment as compared with *Delta* and *Tish*, two of its immediate contemporaries.

In response, it is possible to argue that, when judged by the standards of the earlier modernists, *Yes* was, perhaps, less successful than *Delta*. However, in terms of its sense that a shift in the poetry was taking place, and its acceptance of, and movement towards, that poetry, *Yes* remained true to the tenets of the little magazine as laid out by John Sutherland in his *Brief to a Royal Commission*. In so doing, it provided a publishing outlet for many poets who might not otherwise have been read -- many of whom, incidentally, have become well known, including Al Purdy, Stephen Scobie, Peter Lord, Michael Harris, Michael Ondaatje, Henry Beissel and Alden Nowlan.¹⁶ Furthermore, if for no other reason, *Yes* serves as an important record of the time.

That Dudek established *Delta* so shortly after Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs began *Yes* -- and that the two magazines were aimed at a similar audience is, again, reminiscent of the relationship between the *Preview* and *First Statement* groups. Like *Preview*, *Delta* represented an earlier generation of poets, and a more conservative understanding of modernism. Furthermore, Dudek, like Smith, Scott, Klein and other *Preview* members, had already established himself when he began his little magazine; first, he was experienced in the little magazine/little press world, with his participation in *First Statement* magazine and press, and *Contact*

¹⁶Of this group, Al Purdy won the Governor General's Award in 1965 for *The Cariboo Horses*, Stephen Scobie won in 1980 for *McAlmon's Chinese Opera*, Michael Ondaatje won in 1970 for *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and in 1979 for *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*, and Alden Nowlan won in 1967 for *Bread Wine and Salt*.

magazine and press, and *CIV/n*, etc. Second, he was able to purchase and use a printing press to produce it, and was earning a regular income from an academic appointment at McGill University that allowed him, to some degree, to support it. In comparison, like the First Statement group, Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs were determined to break the mold established and represented by their rival; and, of course, because they were young students, just starting out, they were poor, forced to rely on a borrowed Gestetner and materials, and so they had everything to prove. They also had a fire in their bellies to make their project work, a fire Dudek didn't have, because he had already done it.

Another similarity that can be traced between the *Preview /First Statement* groups and the *Yes/Delta* groups is that the editors of the two magazines published the others' poetry. More importantly, the editorials suggest that one challenged and reacted to the other; Dudek reports, "Mike, Glen and I got together...doing separate but very friendly magazines (*Yes* did a Louis Dudek number, while I published Glen and Mike in *Delta*)....There was no conflict between these. Perhaps a bit of gentle rivalry. But essentially we saw eye to eye."¹⁷ This is significant in that it allowed for the different visions represented by the two magazines to be tested and honed. This, in turn, established the foundation for a working relationship upon which the little press, Delta Canada that would follow, could build. But that was still to come....

During his undergraduate years, Gnarowski had worked at an electronics company which was located at the corner of St. Laurent Blvd and St. Catherine

¹⁷Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

Street, across from a night club called "The Montmartre" in the heart of the *louche* world of Montreal. He was put in charge of the crew who were all working class and extremely poor (many preferred to be arrested in the winter so that they would be able to sleep somewhere warm). Almost every day Gnarowski would walk from the warehouse past De Bullion Street, to the post office. Almost every night he would work on *Yes*.

The little magazine had little or no hierarchical structure. Gnarowski reports "no one needed to be a leader with *Yes*. All those involved were around the same age and were happier with a democracy."¹⁸ That democracy had, as its foundation, a common sense of purpose: Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs met on a weekly basis to pass poetry around and decide what to publish. Of course, as is true with all little magazines, in the beginning the majority of the work published was by the editors themselves. Over the following issues, Dudek submitted poetry, as did Layton, Daryl Hine and Henry Moscovitch. F.R. Scott contributed \$5.00 to the venture and several poems, and was extremely supportive of Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Lachs when he saw them. Milton Acorn's poetry was published in *Yes* and so was the work of Al Purdy.

In terms of its appearance, *Yes* changed as the editor's financial means improved. As mentioned previously, the first few issues of the little magazine were run off on the C.C.F.'s Gestetner. Both Siebrasse and Gnarowski typed the stencils, and Siebrasse ran the copies off during the evenings. Then, the two editors organized their friends -- many of whom were still involved in McGill's

¹⁸Interview with Michael Gnarowski, June 1999.

literary society, to distribute the magazine.

Not long after the magazine started, Siebrasse recalls going down to IBM's headquarters in Montreal and seeing the first proportional spacing typewriter.¹⁹ He was determined to learn how to use it because the machine, unlike the Gestetner, provided a print-like quality text; Siebrasse understood, as did his co-editors, how important the appearance of a magazine was in terms of its credibility. So, after gaining permission to use the typewriter, he made the trip to IBM every day for several weeks (Siebrasse, by his own admission, is a slow typist!), to input *Yes* material and put two issues together (Nos 9 and 10). He rubbed large-size Letraset letters onto the sheets for titles and headers, and cut and pasted the poems and text into place. Then, he brought the whole issue to the printers, where the pages were photographed onto large aluminum sheets which, when dry, were put onto a photo-offset machine. It, in turn, was inked, and then the sheets were run off in much the same way as the Gestetner worked, but resulting in a much higher quality product.²⁰ This system was time-consuming, however, so Siebrasse and Gnarowski eventually turned to a local printer, André Goulet of Éditions d'Orphée, whom Siebrasse had discovered, to produce the little magazine.

Although there was no stated leader, Gnarowski appears to have been the primary mover behind the little magazine. And through all the editorial shifts of location and arrangement, he remained constant. In the fall of 1958, after issue eight had been produced, John Lachs moved to the United States to do his Ph.D.

¹⁹The proportional spacing typewriter offered a unique type of print for the time in that letters took up different amounts of space when printed -- an "m", for example, took up more space (was much wider) than an "i".

²⁰Three issues of *Yes* Volume 2 (1957) were produced by photo offset.

at Yale University. He had done his M.A. at McGill University with Raymond Klibansky.²¹ In 1958/59, he assumed a teaching position at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.²² The break in momentum offered the other editors an opportunity to reassess their directions.

By this time, Gnarowski had left the electronics firm and had gone to work at an insurance company located on St. Nicholas Street, off St. James. In addition, he joined the military reserves, and began to consider doing a Master of Arts degree in English.

The McGill English Department, at the time, was steeped in colonialism, which emanated from its professors, the majority of whom had been directly imported by the department's chair, Professor Duthie, from England. Duthie was succeeded as Chairman by a Scotsman, Professor R.S. Walker.

On the other side of the mountain, an English department existed at the French Université de Montréal. It had been established in 1923 and flourished in benign neglect. The head, Professor Thomas Greenwood, was a brilliant and tolerant European scholar who operated mainly with part-time teachers recruited from other Montreal colleges such as St. Joseph's Teacher's College, etc. He brought young Hugh Hood in as a full-time faculty member. For a young Canadianist this department was like a breath of fresh air.

Greenwood became Gnarowski's academic advisor. And his influence on Gnarowski's future was profound. At that time, Gnarowski was not exactly sure

²¹Raymond Klibansky (D. Phil (Heidelberg)) was a renowned philosophy scholar who held joint teaching positions at McGill University and Oxford University.

²²Interview with Glen Siebrasse, June 18th, 2001.

what he wanted to do. He was at a crossroads in his career. His interest in Canadian literature was strong, but until that time he had viewed it primarily as a hobby; he had always seen himself as making a professional life in science. All he knew, as a result of working on the Phelps article on Lampman, and his exposure to Louis Dudek and Hugh MacLennan, was that he was interested in further researching Canadian literature. In response, Greenwood introduced Gnarowski to Lawrence Lande with the idea that his student might like to work on Charles Heavyside. Lande was an extremely wealthy individual who believed in the importance of culture and was dedicated to supporting it. He had purchased, for example, extensive collections of Canadian literature, particularly of Heavyside, and he made them available to Gnarowski. The young student quickly discovered how difficult it was to find and study early Canadian texts; very few existed in print, and those that were available in anthologies, such as those by Lighthall and Klinck and Watters, were generally extractions of the complete texts. Frustrated by the obstacles that existed, and having a profound belief in the importance of being able to access our literary heritage, Gnarowski committed himself to changing the situation. But before he could proceed, he needed to complete his M.A.

Finding Heavyside "dark, heavy and verbose"²³ Gnarowski decided not to study him at that time. He returned to Greenwood who then suggested Frank Scott as a possible thesis subject. Gnarowski knew Scott distantly from his support of *Yes* magazine and so made contact with him and began researching his

²³Interview with Michael Gnarowski, November, 2000.

work. Around the same time, however, Gnarowski came upon the work of the American poet Wallace Stevens and was captivated. He reported his desire to work on Stevens to Greenwood. His advisor was, again, supportive. Stevens had died in 1957, and so, to date, very little had been written on him. Consequently, Gnarowski's thesis would be timely. Furthermore, Greenwood told Gnarowski about a unique course on Wallace Stevens that was being offered jointly by two men at Indiana University -- Newton P. Stallknecht, a philosopher who ran the school of letters, and Harold Whitehall of the department of linguistics. Greenwood encouraged Gnarowski to register for the course. In 1959, Gnarowski left Canada for the United States.

Gnarowski's recollections of Indiana University are warm and vivid despite -- or perhaps because of -- the race and class divisions that existed there. Gnarowski was assigned to South Hall, the residence where, on an informal arrangement, all those who were not white, Protestant Americans were billeted -- American Jews, Blacks, Europeans, etc. Many were particularly gifted students in the music department,²⁴ and Gnarowski recalls great jam sessions in the residence's laundry and basement. It is interesting to consider the impact of being in such a richly diverse place during a time of enormous change in music, art and literature. In many ways, perhaps, Indiana University served as a welcome reminder of the variety of people that existed in Montreal at the time. It was certainly a place of cultural and academic variety; it was also a place that inspired and promoted a sense of individual identity. There can be little doubt, then, that the experience

²⁴The music department at Indiana University was particularly strong because it received extensive funding from the Lilly family of Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals.

informed the work of those who lived there -- not only in terms of knowing a sense of separate consciousness, but also in terms of understanding the need for belonging to a larger cultural identity. These ideas are suggested by the fact that those who lived in South Hall were already singled out as being "other", and that they came together in their "otherness" to form a strong, cohesive group. Although temporarily displaced in the United States, Gnarowski -- Polish, and transplanted from China -- was intrigued by Canada and its culture from the moment he arrived; in fact, he consciously set about immersing himself in the environment in which he lived, including learning French as quickly as he could. Perhaps, then, it was his difference that allowed him to appreciate the strengths of the country he had adopted -- an appreciation that developed into a deep and enduring passion, and a fierce commitment to promoting its literature.

Separated by distance from his editorial colleague Glen Siebrasse, Gnarowski continued to work on *Yes* by himself, and then with the help of a new friend, whom he met at his residence -- Donald M. Winkelman. Winkelman is significant in that he took over the publication of *Yes* for issues ten (January 1962) and eleven (May 1962). Two years had elapsed since the previous issue had appeared in February 1960.

Gnarowski returned to Montreal and completed his M.A. on Stevens in 1960. It was around that time that a pivotal meeting with Professor Greenwood occurred. Gnarowski was dressed in army fatigues, on his way to a military exercise when he stopped in to see his advisor. Greenwood told him it was time to choose -- did Gnarowski wish to be a warrior or a scholar? It was a turning point for Gnarowski. Realizing that he missed the study of literature, he chose the latter.

And thus began a lifelong study of early Canadian literature, and an enduring commitment to bringing it forward. He enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the Université de Montréal and completed two years before he had to move.

During those years, Gnarowski relocated to Sherbrooke where he taught courses and commuted to undertake his Ph.D. program. He also spent a summer teaching in Poland, for the World University Service. Then, in 1962, Gnarowski moved to Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay) where he had accepted a teaching post at the soon-to-become Lakehead University. No longer able to commute to the Université de Montréal, Gnarowski suspended his studies; however the position at the Lakehead University proved very fruitful because the librarian there offered him a free hand to build up the Canadian collection, which dovetailed with Gnarowski's research. Still, because the material was so difficult to access, Gnarowski decided to apply --successfully -- for a grant from the Atkinson Foundation to research and index little magazines.

Around the same time, the English department at the Lakehead University began to expand its program and courses in Canadian Literature were indicated. It was Gnarowski who taught them. Again, accessibility of texts was a problem. In preparing a course on Canadian Poetry, for example, Gnarowski discovered that very few anthologies of critical material were available, and almost no critical analyses of the poetry existed. Consequently he turned to his own research and began extracting and collecting significant critical articles from the little magazines he was inventorying. In addition to their importance as teaching materials, these articles provided Gnarowski with a unique understanding of the emergence of modernism in poetry in Canada, and the key elements that drove it. Again, driven

by the need to get the literature out, Gnarowski began to consider putting the texts together in book form -- a project that began to grow over the following years, culminating in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada: Essential Articles on Contemporary Canadian Poetry in English*, co-edited with Louis Dudek.

During 1963 and 1964, while Gnarowski was teaching at the Lakehead, he decided to do his Ph.D. in Canadian poetry, and so returned each summer to take courses at the Université de Montréal, and to do research at McGill University on indexes, *Contact Magazine* and *Direction*. He also taught a course at the Université de Montréal (Summer, 1963). During this time he reconnected with Glen Siebrasse and Louis Dudek.²⁵ And, realizing that the content and impulse of *Yes* was moving away from its Canadian impulse under the editorship of Don Winkelman in the States, he reclaimed editorial control.²⁶ It was a time of rejuvenation for the little magazine. Siebrasse also returned, and Hugh Hood's name also appears on the masthead. Issue 12, April 1963, lists Gnarowski as Editor; Siebrasse and Hood as Associate Editors (Bill Conley did the cover). Issue 13 (December, 1964 -- "Going West") notes Gnarowski and Siebrasse as Editors

²⁵It was in the summer of 1964 that Gnarowski first approached Dudek to lend his knowledge of the early Canadian poetry scene to the project which became *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*. Gnarowski and Dudek recall meeting on Saturday afternoons at Gnarowski's home to write the introductions to each chapter and to decide what should be included.

²⁶One issue upon which Gnarowski and Winkelman disagreed, which ultimately resulted in Gnarowski taking back editorial control, was the inclusion of an early Canadian text (a nineteenth century narrative poem entitled "The Great Fire in Quebec") in *Yes* magazine. Winkelman did not want to publish it in the little magazine.

and Hood as Associate Editor.²⁷

Glen Siebrasse had long since left McGill and had taken a position in an advertising company in which he did copywriting. He reports that it was around this time Gnarowski started talking about doing a series of *Yes* books on contemporary poetry. Gnarowski's research on the theory of little magazines had led him to believe that the natural progression for a little magazine was to become a little press. And Gnarowski was ready to expand. Louis Dudek was teaching at McGill and involved in Contact Press, but was becoming increasingly discontented with it since the center of the press's activities had shifted to Toronto, where Peter Miller and Raymond Souster lived. He believed that editorial decisions were being made unilaterally that were not in the best interests of the press.

Furthermore, Dudek was feeling a general sense of disillusionment with the poetry scene since Margaret Atwood's book, *The Circle Game* – a book that Dudek had disapproved of and not wanted to publish through Contact Press – had received the Governor General's Award. Furthermore, *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* was underway and Dudek and Gnarowski tried to sell it, unsuccessfully, to Robin Farr of McGill-Queen's University Press. The editors realized they needed funding to publish it and so a meeting with Peter Dwyer of the Canada Council took place. The poetry scene was changing in Montreal.

One issue that fueled that change was the rupture of the friendship between Irving Layton and Louis Dudek. Many factors appear to have gone into causing

²⁷Hugh Hood had taught Gnarowski a course on British Literature and the two men had immediately hit it off. Although he was supportive of the little magazine and contributed to its contents, he did not actively participate as an editor.

the split between the two men. For example, after Dudek moved to New York to do graduate work at Columbia, he seemed, in Layton's eyes, to move away from the socialist stance he had shared with Layton, and become more conservative; furthermore, Dudek's emphasis on the locale of Montreal seems to have shifted during these years, and become more universal and cosmopolitan. In reaction to these concerns, Layton claimed his former friend had "sold out" on his beliefs and on Canadian poetry in general. Furthermore, whether it was because he was threatened or simply distanced by it, Layton reacted adversely to Dudek's pursuit of further education, suggesting that it made Dudek too "intellectual and academic" and therefore removed from the poetry of the street.²⁸ Layton felt that Dudek's position had become over-academicized. Always the outsider, he regarded academia with suspicion, if not disdain.

Layton had, by this time, already become heavily involved with the American poets, Robert Creeley and Cid Corman,²⁹ and to Dudek, seemed to have moved away from a genuine commitment to Canadian poetry. Furthermore, Layton had been picked up by larger, more established presses such as McClelland and Stewart, and had become extremely popular; consequently Dudek felt that Layton had turned his back on the little press movement that had helped promote him in the first place. One wonders, too, whether Dudek did not feel that there was some injustice in Layton becoming so successful, both in Canada and abroad, when he had seemingly done so little for the greater cause of Canadian poetry -- this in contrast to Dudek himself, who, having remained true to his Canadian roots

²⁸Interview with Irving Layton, Summer, 1996.

²⁹Corman published an edition of his little magazine, *Pan-ic*, that featured Layton.

and having worked so long and diligently at promoting the poetry of others, seemed to be neglected.

Whatever the reasons -- and they are complicated and multi-layered -- the conflict was made worse by the publication of the individual positions that each man took. While Dudek generally criticized Layton's poetry, Layton attacked the man. For example, in 1962, Layton writes,

Well, Louis, I'm no intellectual as you know, but I also know what is dead or dying.... You Louis, have been dying slowly for several years. I have watched the process with heartburn and gas pains; its final stages, with vomity disgust. Editing *Delta*, writing your assorted pooperies for the *Montreal Star* and *Culture*, you may deceive others about the actual state of your health, but these activities are the convulsive twitches of a dying poet... what do you want, an angel to come down and piss in your ear, some Pegasus brine rubbed in between your shoulder blades, a toadeye laid on your testicles?.... Now as you pass, professors pick their noses less thoughtfully.... Bats pluck at your garments, ravens fly out of your armpits....³⁰

The "acquaintance that ended in slander" (Dudek *The Transparent Sea* 98) not only adversely affected the individuals involved, but also caused a rift among the poets in Montreal who were their friends. According to Glen Siebrasse, Dudek and Layton were two larger-than-life men who had egos to match; therefore it was impossible to stay in both camps. The editors of *Cataract*,

³⁰Layton, Irving. "An Open Letter to Louis Dudek" *Cataract* 1:2 (Winter, 1962) n.p.

including Seymour Mayne and Henry Moscovitch, who were both literary acolytes of Layton, appear to have readily formed an alliance behind Layton, publishing his vitriolic attacks on Dudek; while the *Yes* editors (Gnarowski and Siebrasse) remained quietly loyal to Dudek.

Another unfortunate consequence of the breakdown, then, was that the energy and momentum that the two poets had managed to establish and then build when they worked together on *First Statement* and *Contact* magazines and presses -- was divided. After all, it was Layton and Dudek, together (recalled separately), who had first walked across the Jacques Cartier bridge as they shared with each other their common vision of Canadian poetry; and it was half way across that bridge that they stopped and declared to each other and to the world that together they were going to change the face of poetry in Canada. And they had. That power, that conviction, then, was gone. Because, as history has proven, a little magazine, a little press, and a vision require more than one person to flourish. In the following period, as Layton continued to move further away from the little press movement and as Dudek continued to work on *Contact Press*, and *Delta* magazine, and even though other poets like Gnarowski and Siebrasse came forward and established new magazines like *Yes*, the driving impulse and strong direction that Layton and Dudek *as a unit* had commanded, disappeared. The vacuum that remained, combined with the time and political events, served to leave poets in Montreal divided. Rather than there being two schools of poetry -- the old and the modern -- with the modern becoming increasingly stronger, a greater sense of fragmentation occurred, with poets dividing behind either Layton or Dudek, in addition to the split that already existed regarding style and temper.

Furthermore, according to Gnarowski (writing in 1963)

Little magazine activity in Montreal has tended to emphasize the fragmentation rather than the cohesion of poetic attitudes in the city. The existence of very different periodicals [in addition to *Yes*, there was *Delta* and *Forge*] is also indicative of the fact that while Montreal may be responsible for a movement in Canadian literature, it is certainly not the center of a specific school of poetry. (Gnarowski, "The Role of 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal." 222)

According to Dudek

Contact Press had started at a moment when a good deal of poetry, good modern writers had gathered behind the dam -- and Contact Press gave them an opening... during the sixties, however, these were all exhausted in Canada, and you could either go pop with Leonard Cohen, or beatnikoid, or tangled up in jargon and words with Frank Davey, etc. These were not alternatives for us. We wanted some development out of the forthright poetry of *First Statement*, *CIV/n* and the book *Cerberus*. (It's called "social realism," ok, but that's not really accurate. It is really 1) aware of reality, and 2) modern. This can be developed in infinite ways.³¹

Issue number 13 of *Yes*, published in December, 1964, reports on the most recent developments in the conflict between Layton and Dudek. It also includes poems by Layton, with an introduction by Gnarowski, work by Glen Siebrasse, Raymond Souster, Hugh Hood, Fred Cogswell, and Milton Acorn. The following

³¹Letter from Louis Dudek to the author, dated Montreal, December 4th, 2000.

issue, number 14, which appeared in September 1965, incorporates notebook entries by Dudek as well as sections of *Atlantis*, in addition to poems by A.J.M. Smith, Ron Everson, Ralph Gustafson and Douglas Barbour. Issue number 15 of *Yes* appears a year later in September 1966, and contains work by John Glassco as well as Michael Harris, Don Gutteridge, Barry McKinnon, Ray Souster, Louis Dudek and Tom Marshall. And the sixteenth number (October 1967) includes poetry by Al Purdy, Victor Coleman, Tom Marshall, Henry Beissel, Joan Finnegan, Alden Nowlan, John Wieners and, significantly, Michael Ondaatje.

Two years of silence passed before the seventeenth issue of *Yes* was published. It appeared in October 1969 and announced a new editorial policy. It reads:

A question which has been much on our minds and one which needs raising in connection with the revival of this magazine concerns the sum total of what has been happening to poetry in the last few years. When we started *Yes* in 1956 we believed that the directions for poetry in this country were clear. We believed that the poem had to be rooted in real experience; we believed in a style and content which would be of this country but which would also recognize its North American contact. Furthermore, ours was a literary fundamentalism which saw the poem as deriving from an artistic and reassuring faith in the creativity of people, and we believed that literary values and aspirations had been democratized. We believed that popular art could be great; we did not know that great art could not be popular. For us the line of descent was clear. From Whitman and along lines laid down by the man from Idaho. Since we believed in Walter Whitman more

than in Professor Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, it followed that we would believe more in Raymond Souster than in Professor Arthur James Marshall Smith. The spirit of the man...damn it...it was the spirit of the man that was close to us. Had Whitman not -- in a style which would become the hallowed modus operandi of little presses and their people, of First Statement and Contact -- had he not designed and published his own first edition of *Leaves of Grass*? Therefore, Masters and Sandburg and Williams were good and important. Therefore, Sutherland's position (which was ours and we don't give a damn about the Pratt bit) -- Sutherland's position formed on the left with Layton and Dudek and Souster. Therefore, there was no need for manifestos in 1956..just a shift from the social realism of the First Statementers to a sharper urban focus and a greater interest in the possibilities of the image the new context was beginning to provide. But it didn't work out. If we had valued the hard-edged directness of the colloquial poem, we saw it become amorphous and formless. If we believed in the technique of the unaffected, we have seen it transformed into spurious disquisitions on "poesy" and the artful poses of projectivism. If we believed that poetry was somehow "against this sea of imbeciles" we have found that stupidities, imbecilities and vulgarities have become the stuff of poetry. Someone had made the wrong move back in 1952-1954. Souster and *Contact* magazine may have helped to make that first move. Souster and *Combustion* may have helped to make that move again in 1957-1960. *Tish* ended the game. And after that the little Millwins, and the turbulent and undisciplined host of poets. And the

audience. No, not the few, not readers and lovers of perfection, not with knowledge or a fine sense, but the tolerant, confused, parasitic consumers of mass-cult. Poetry has married a truly ugly wife....Now, where do we begin?³²

As of Issue 17, which was an attack on the "Tish" poets, *Yes* began to lose its momentum. Gnarowski reports he was trying to make sense of what was happening on the West Coast. What the poets there were doing, was incomprehensible to him. In retrospect, he concludes that at the time he realized a shift had taken place in the poetry -- a shift that he did not recognize -- that was, from modernism to postmodernism; it was a development with which he was not comfortable.

Gnarowski and Siebrasse continued to edit the little magazine for two more issues, through to its nineteenth issue, which appeared in April, 1970.³³ Through the years the little magazine provided an outlet of publication for an eclectic mix of poets and work in its attempt to continue "making it new." It incorporated the works of the original editors, themselves, as well as translations of Turkish, Spanish and French poets. It included poetry by some of the earlier Moderns such as F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Earl Birney, Al Purdy, John Glassco; as well as the middle generation of modernist poets: Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, Raymond

³²*Yes* 17 (October 1969) Inside Front Cover.

³³By this time, Gnarowski had begun his Critical View Series of books, with Ryerson Press/McGraw-Hill Ryerson Press. These were a series of books that were written by a variety of Canadian scholars on Canadian writers and poets, including, E.J. Pratt, Smith, Scott and the McGill Movement, Archibald Lampman, A.M. Klein, Frederick Philip Grove, Mordecai Richler, Ernest Buckler, Morley Callaghan, Earle Birney, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen and Margaret Laurence.

Souster, among others. Furthermore, it differed from other little magazines in that it contained early Canadian texts on which Gnarowski was working. In addition, *Yes* provided a forum and a springboard for a new group of poets -- those who bridged the gap between modernism and Post-modernism -- poets such as Michael Harris, Douglas Barbour, Don Gutteridge, Joan Finnegan, and Michael Ondaatje.

Even more importantly, *Yes* served to test and hone Gnarowski and Siebrasse's understanding of the Canadian poetry scene, as well as their abilities as poets and editors. It allowed them to establish important contacts; and it helped them develop confidence in the knowledge that they could do what they set out to do, and could contribute to the development of poetry in Canada in a meaningful and important way. Like *First Statement* magazine for John Sutherland, and *Direction* for Raymond Souster, *Yes* was a foundation for Gnarowski and Siebrasse that demanded to be built on. And the natural progression from a little magazine, is a little press.

There were other reasons, too, why the editors thought there was a need and a place for the creation of a little press. The Canada Council, as a prime example, had been established (28 March, 1957). Its funding practices, initially, were erratic, and over the years, have had both positive and negative consequences. While there is little doubt that the financial support that the Canada Council has provided to Canadian writers has been extremely helpful, the fact that it is a state-supported arts program means that it is both politically vulnerable, and reliant on the critical abilities of those of whom it is made up -- many of whom are not artists or writers themselves.

It was in the 1960's, then, that the influence of the Canada Council on the

type of poetry being promoted could be felt. A revolution in printing took place in the sixties. Whereas, in the fifties, the mimeograph machine had made a form of print reproduction faster and easier than before, the development of photo-offset replaced the Gestetner and allowed for more flexible and less expensive print capabilities. Furthermore, while the Canada Council had initially provided funding to groups and organizations, it began to sharpen its focus in the nature of its support to artists. As a result, the sixties saw a surge of new young poets and writers in Montreal, and across the country, and a new crop of little magazines and publications, prepared by individuals who had previously been unable to afford to pay printers or purchase printing equipment. Consequently little magazines and little presses began to spring up across Canada.

Although many would argue that the Canada Council provided the means by which more poetry could get out, the quality of that poetry was diminished. Having been exposed to Louis Dudek and his undertakings through First Statement Press and then Contact Press, and having personally organized and published a little magazine, Gnarowski was aware of the potential that existed for good Canadian poetry to be published -- apart from political and financial constraints. He, Siebrasse and Dudek are convinced that they would have done what they did regardless of whether or not they received support from the Canada Council. In fact, the little press offered poets the ability to put money into their own work because they believed in it. In a sense, then, the advent of the Canada Council was positive in that it reinforced, in Gnarowski, the need for the freedom that was part of a little press.

That, however, was not its only positive achievement. One particular

event, that was funded by the organization with an extremely positive result occurred in the Spring of 1964. It was a gathering of poets at Stanley House in the Baie des Chaleurs.³⁴ In prominent attendance were: Arthur Smith, Frank Scott, John Glassco, and Earl Birney. Michael Gnarowski, Glen Siebrasse, Al Purdy and Louis Dudek traveled there together. Fred Cogswell, George Whalley, Doug Jones, Ralph Gustafson and Ron Everson also attended. According to Gnarowski it was an extremely stimulating experience -- being surrounded by poets who were talking about and reading poetry. And it inspired in him the desire to go further in bringing forward their work. It was in the summer of 1964, then, that Gnarowski first began to seriously consider organizing a little press. Dudek reports that Gnarowski had a theory of little magazines -- that they "tend to develop into small press[es]."³⁵ This is true, because the small press (book publishing) offers more permanence, more chance of library space, and perhaps a grant."³⁶

Gnarowski again returned to the Lakehead for the fall, but the seed for a new little press had germinated and begun to grow. Glen Siebrasse, having already worked with Gnarowski for several years on *Yes*, was a natural choice for co-

³⁴In her book on Leo Kennedy, (*As Though Life Mattered: Leo Kennedy's Story* (McGill-Queen's University Press. Montreal 1994)) Patricia Morley incorrectly identifies the poets gathered at Stanley House as "The Poets' Society" (see second photograph after page 69).

³⁵Gnarowski first offered this theory in a paper he presented at Laval University during the summer of 1962. The paper was published as "The Role of the 'Little Magazines' in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal. *Culture* 24:3 (September 1963) 274-286.

³⁶Letter from Louis Dudek to the author, dated Montreal, Dec 4th, 2000.

editor, and he was enthusiastic about the idea. Gnarowski also approached Dudek who initially reacted with hesitance given his commitment to Contact Press. The two men had seen a great deal of each other over the summer and mention of a new little press continued to bubble up. Furthermore, by this time Dudek's isolation from the press had left him increasingly frustrated; and the rupture between himself and Layton weighed on him, prompting in him the need for a new start. Thus, in December, 1964, when Gnarowski returned to Montreal, he suggested a lunch at the Troika Restaurant, on Crescent Street, at which the activation of a new little press was to be actively discussed. Dudek was ready to participate.

Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Dudek attended the meeting. Dudek also brought along Ron Everson, a poet and a successful Public Relations executive in the firm Johnston, Everson and Charlesworth. He, in turn, brought a friend and colleague from work, Colin Hawarth, an artist and graphic designer who, while initially involved in supporting the press, did not play a significant part in its practice.

One of the items to be discussed at that meeting was a name for the press. Everson, who admired Dudek greatly, suggested that the press carry on the *Delta* label. The others, who viewed Dudek's participation as important because of his ability as a poet, his experience, and the credibility he would lend the press, went

along.³⁷

In terms of the organization of the press, all those present agreed that it would be operated "democratically, in general, with freedom on the part of any member, on occasion, to bring out a writer of his own choosing."³⁸ Glen Siebrasse, who, by that time, worked in an advertising agency, agreed to be responsible for marketing the books produced and the administrative aspects of the press, including the production of quarterly reports. Siebrasse and Gnarowski agreed that Louis Dudek be given primacy because of his vast knowledge of the field, his immense experience in publishing and his maturity.³⁹

Most little presses rise up out of the need of editors of little magazines to provide a more significant outlet for their work. Delta Canada was no exception.

³⁷Unfortunately, the origins of the name of the press have been reported differently, which has given rise to some confusion. Many assume Delta Canada is a continuation, or outgrowth, of *Delta* magazine and that, consequently, Louis Dudek was the prime mover behind the press. In actual fact, if anyone provided the impulse for Delta Canada, it was Michael Gnarowski, and if it grew out of anything, it was *Yes* magazine. Glen Siebrasse recollects that in any literary enterprise, the most important person is the creator. Without one person saying "this needs to be done", no literary magazine or press would exist. While all of us, Louis Dudek, Ron Everson, Colin Hawarth and myself, were happy to be part of the new Delta Canada, none of us had the vision to set the process in motion. Only Mike possessed the energy and imagination required.... Whatever the press was called, it owed to Mike a debt of gratitude, for possessing the vision necessary to bring it into existence. Without that creative impulse there would have been no Delta Canada. (Interview with Glen Siebrasse and the author, June 16th, 1999).

³⁸Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

³⁹Dudek was very prominent. In addition to his position at McGill University, and his involvement in various poetry gatherings and literary ventures, he reviewed books on a weekly basis for *The Montreal Star*, and wrote for its weekend magazine. People came to him more readily than to Gnarowski and Siebrasse.

Ron Everson already had a manuscript that he wanted to publish, and, in addition, had the financial resources to promote it. According to Dudek, "publishing" Everson's book meant giving it Delta Canada's imprint, after approving the manuscript. Colin Hawarth designed the cover; and Everson "took care of the printing of his book. We distributed it"⁴⁰ Everson brought his book to a commercial printer, Cambridge Press, with whom he had had occasion to print some of his business printing. He had employed Cambridge Press on a regular basis to produce publicity materials for his firm; furthermore, they had printed his first book of poetry (*Three Dozen Poems* (1957)). Their work and their standards were highly professional. So Everson returned to them to produce *Wrestle With An Angel*. It was published in 1965. On its inside flap it is identified as "Delta Canada number 1, Louis Dudek, Editor."

1965 was an extremely busy year for Delta Canada, and for Gnarowski in particular. He won the C.D. Howe fellowship to research little magazines, which enabled him to go on leave from the Lakehead University and return to Montreal to do research. He had also been approached by Frank Scott to do research on literary topics for the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which had its office in Ottawa. During the spring, he and his family left Port Arthur and returned to Montreal where Neil Compton, the chair of the English department at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) offered him an evening course on Canadian literature (Course No. 244). Gnarowski accepted the offer, which enabled him to travel regularly to Montreal to meet with Dudek and Siebrasse and

⁴⁰Letter from Louis Dudek to the author, dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

engage in the planning of the publication list for Delta Canada.

In the 1960's, Sir George Williams boasted a lively English department. Under Compton's guidance, many excellent writers, scholars and poets came to work there, including George Bowering, Henry Beissel, Abe Ram,⁴¹ Howard Fink, Wynne Francis and, eventually, Michael Gnarowski. The atmosphere in the department was energized by the creativity that swirled around it. Poetry readings were enormously popular and successful.

Gnarowski began to look into completing his Ph.D. Professor Greenwood of the Université de Montréal had died in the Spring of 1963. He was replaced as Chairman by Professor Robert Browne, who had come from the United States. This was problematic for Gnarowski, since Browne was an Americanist who redesigned the Ph.D. program in the department; Gnarowski was faced with the prospect of a different course of study from that upon which he had been embarked for some time. Gnarowski, however, was committed to researching Canadian literature. He had also been offered a faculty position at Sir George Williams University, which he had accepted.

Around the same time, Frank Scott introduced Gnarowski to Michael Oliver.⁴² Both men were working at the Royal Commission in Ottawa, which had been established in 1963. Gnarowski had already done some work for the

⁴¹Abe Ram produced *Outset*, a little magazine of creative writing, out of the English department at Sir George Williams University.

⁴²Michael Oliver eventually became president of Carleton University; he edited the book *Social Purpose for Canada* (1961) which explores the need for improved social legislation and a restructuring of the economy, geographically, to promote an equalization of conditions across Canada.

Commission on contract, while he was at the Lakehead University. It was a natural progression, then, for Oliver (who was the director of research) and Scott, to convince Gnarowski to join the commission staff, and move to Ottawa.⁴³

Gnarowski and his family took an apartment on the corner of Metcalfe and Lisgar streets. With the convenience of living in Ottawa, in 1965, Gnarowski transferred to the University of Ottawa to continue his Ph.D. in an academic environment which he felt was more sympathetic with his goals. There, he drifted into the orbit of Professor Alphonse Campbell.⁴⁴ The result was a certain amount of freedom to develop an idea for a Ph.D. dissertation which became a bibliographic study of Canadian literature, which Gnarowski defended, successfully, in 1967.⁴⁵

At the same time, another professor in the department, Michael O'Neil,⁴⁶ approached Gnarowski about helping him develop and structure a Canadian program. In 1967/68, Carleton University invited Gnarowski to become a Visiting Professor at the Institute of Canadian Studies.

By day, then, Gnarowski worked at the Royal Commission; evenings and weekends, however, he focused on the little magazines (his first index -- *An Index to Direction* -- was published in the Quebec magazine, *Culture*, 1965). He had also taken a teaching assignment at Sir George Williams University, where he

⁴³Louis Dudek, Hugh MacLennan and Frank Scott wrote letters of reference in support of Gnarowski's candidacy for the C.D. Howe Fellowship.

⁴⁴A.J. Campbell was a Medievalist with a sympathetic interest in Canadian literature.

⁴⁵Six years later, in an expanded and enhanced form, the Ph.D. dissertation was published by McClelland and Stewart in hardback and paperback form. It was republished in 1978.

⁴⁶Michael O'Neil was a Professor of Irish Literature -- he was a Yeats specialist.

continued to teach Canadian literature.

As a result of the weekly commute to Montreal, Gnarowski saw something of Glen Siebrasse, and a great deal of Dudek, who was busily engaged in putting together his long poem, *Atlantis*. Earlier on, very casual and occasional meetings for Delta Canada were held at Dudek's home; and later, the poets met for supper once a week at various restaurants in Montreal's Chinatown. Usually present were Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Dudek. Colin Hawarth, by this time, had already faded and would soon cease to be an active member. Ron Everson, too, retreated.

Except when he was involved in the production of one of his own books, Everson's involvement with Delta Canada's editors was confined to literary parties that he liked to organize at his penthouse apartment ("The Towers" 4855 Cote-Saint-Luc), and occasional lunches he arranged at the Montreal Press Club (now gone), which was located in the Mount Royal Hotel.⁴⁷

The editors agree that discussions at the weekly meetings were always concerned with the state of Canadian poetry, and the way in which new, young poets could be supported and promoted. Up through the end of the 1960's, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec continued, with the result of an outward migration. Anglophone culture was on the wane in Montreal and its literary and cultural center began to shift to Toronto. At the same time, more West Coast writers

⁴⁷Both Gnarowski and Siebrasse have felt that Ron Everson was less interested in the operation of the press; in retrospect Siebrasse suggests that Everson had a different sense of the little press -- he was a successful businessman; he drove a Cadillac, he came from a different world than the others and, as a result, Siebrasse wonders whether Everson really understood the "little press" concept and ideology. While he was pleased to finance and distribute his own work through Delta Canada, Everson had very little else to contribute to the press.

began to appear⁴⁸ and *Tish* began there.

When Delta Canada had first started up, the editors did look to the Canada Council as a possible source of funding for some of the projects. While the Council supported several books, the relationship that existed between the two organizations was not a particularly good one. The Delta Canada editors found the Council's hierarchical organization ran counter to the spirit of their work, and the bureaucrats to whom they were forced to appeal for help often had little or no knowledge of the cooperative nature and workings of a little press, nor any idea of the difficulties facing young, inexperienced poets who needed to be published.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the standards set by the council to determine support eligibility often did not reflect the ability or the deservedness of those who applied. Consequently, the Council neglected many potentially excellent poets, while lesser-talented writers received grants. This situation frustrated Dudek, Siebrasse and Gnarowski, leading the latter, at one point, to comment that he "didn't know who the enemy was anymore." (Interview with Gnarowski, November, 2000). Consequently, the editors of Delta Canada chose not to be dependent on the Council, agreeing that funds directed from the institution would be gratefully received, but viewed as propitious.

The next book that was ready to be published was *Postscript for St. James Street*, by Gnarowski. Dudek wrote the "Forward" for the book and suggested

⁴⁸In *Delta* 19 Dudek introduces West Coast writers to the rest of Canada; significantly, they became prominent writers during the 1970's and 80's.

⁴⁹Gnarowski recalls one meeting, for example, set up by Naim Kattan and Peter Dwyer, of the Canada Council, to which both Gnarowski and Dudek went, but only one of the editors was allowed entry.

that Mr. Faher, a Hungarian immigrant who worked in Old Montreal, print it.

Around the same time, Delta Canada began to use a Francophone printer, André Goulet, who had his own literary press, Éditions d'Orphée.⁵⁰ Siebrasse had discovered Goulet and had employed him in the production of several issues of *Yes* magazine. Goulet became an important printer for Delta Canada. In contrast to the more commercial printers such as Cambridge Press, Goulet's was a bohemian operation. He was interested in the avant garde -- in poets and writers -- and he took pride and interest in supporting their work. His Heidelberg press was set up in a small, dingy shop space in East end Montreal, on Marie Anne Street (off St. Denis), and, because he liked to tipple, his hours were not regular. Gnarowski and Siebrasse both recall at various times pounding on Goulet's door, which he always kept locked. Siebrasse reports, "If he was awake and sober, he opened the door. If he was drunk, or asleep, he didn't answer it, so you had to go away and come back another day" (Interview with Siebrasse, Nov 24th, 2000).

Goulet's work, however, was based on traditional European standards. He had been trained in France and considered printing an art form. Gnarowski was particularly taken with Goulet's shop. He remembers spending many hours hanging around Goulet's shop, watching Goulet set type on the linotype, the hissing sounds made by the molten lead, the smell of the ink, of the oily rags and cleaning solutions, and the "clank, clank, clank" of the machine as the pages were run off. It was in this way, that Gnarowski's *Postscript for St. James Street*, the

⁵⁰Goulet was a sovereigntist and was anti-English. However, because Gnarowski and Siebrasse were poets, and not members of the "English Ruling class" in Montreal, he made them welcome.

second Delta Canada book, was published in 1965.

Siebrasse also had a collection of poems ready by this time. He designed the cover for his own books. And *The Regeneration of an Athlete* appeared as the third Delta Canada book in 1965.

In addition to writing poetry, and working at a small advertising agency (Cardon, Rose), Siebrasse spent much of his free time "pounding the pavement" in pursuit of booksellers and stores who would sell Delta Canada's books.

Gnarowski had a young family and Dudek was deeply involved in his academic career at McGill University, and so both had time constraints that Siebrasse didn't. Therefore, he felt that he should be the one to do the traveling around.

Furthermore, his experience in the business world, and in advertising specifically, gave him a different perspective to that of his co-editors. He believed that the purely creative element in the press, which he saw Dudek as representing, and the sales and promotion aspect of the sales which he was more accustomed to, were at odds with each other; therefore he believed that of the editors involved in the little press, he was best suited to undertake the sales of Delta Canada's books. He thought, for example, that someone of a highly academic or strongly sensitive nature, such as Louis, could not "sell". He believed, also, that someone like Ron Everson, who didn't fully understand that there was no shame in producing one's own work, and so preferred to distance his name from the production of his books, would not be able to promote his own work, nor that of others. He, on the other hand, did not shy away from approaching store managers and owners and pressuring them to display Delta Canada's books. It was an aspect of the little press that many poets and editors disliked; but, as the editors all realized, without

someone actually carting the books around from store to store, and making sure the right people were aware of the work Delta Canada was producing, the little press would not have succeeded. And so, Siebrasse began to make his rounds.⁵¹

Mansfield Book Shop owned by Heinz Heineman (who as a refugee from Nazi Germany had fled to Shanghai in 1939 and then moved to Canada) and Classics book store were two places that Siebrasse visited regularly. The Village Bookstore, in Toronto, and Duthie's in Vancouver also carried Delta Canada's books.⁵²

In the Spring of 1966, the English departments at both the Université de Montréal (chaired by Robert Browne) and Sir George Williams University (chaired by Neil Compton) offered Gnarowski a faculty position. Having found the latter to be a thriving, stimulating environment, he readily accepted the post there, and moved his family back to Montreal (Pierrefonds). And since Sir George Williams was not far away from McGill, where Dudek was teaching, and both professors had flexible hours, Gnarowski and Dudek began to meet regularly over lunch. It was at this time that the collection of articles Gnarowski had been working on at the Lakehead University, from little magazines, which he had originally entitled

⁵¹According to Siebrasse, books were sold on consignment with 40% going to the bookstore and 60% going to Delta Canada; stores never took more than a dozen copies of each book; there were no returns.

⁵²An unfortunate aspect of Siebrasse's job was that as a result of his being in charge of sales, he was required, further, to produce quarterly financial reports. These left Siebrasse open for blame if particular books did not sell well. For example, F.R. Scott believed his book, *Trouvailles*, should have sold more copies than it did, and he held Siebrasse responsible even though, as Siebrasse claims, "Scott never really was involved in a little press and didn't know what was involved." (Interview with Glen Siebrasse November 24th, 2000).

“Essential Articles in Canadian Literature,” began to crystalize as a full-scale project which developed, with Dudek’s full involvement, into *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada: Essential Articles on Contemporary Canadian Poetry in English* (published in 1967). It, however, was not the only scholarly work that Gnarowski was undertaking.

The fourth book published by Delta Canada was *Contact 1952-1954: Being An Index to the Contents of Contact, A Little Magazine Edited by Raymond Souster Together With Notes on the History and the Background of the Periodical by Gnarowski and Some Afterthoughts on Contact Magazine by Raymond Souster Contact* (Toronto).

Publishing material of a bibliographic nature and/or scholarly titles, in addition to purely creative work such as poetry, sets Delta Canada apart from other little presses in Montreal, and across Canada in general. It reveals a larger vision of the literature and the process by which it is put forward. John Sutherland had certainly prepared the way for such work, in his commitment to including literary analysis and criticism of poetry in *First Statement Magazine*; but neither Sutherland, nor Souster, of Contact Press, took that criticism to the level of the book. It is true that neither Sutherland nor Souster had the academic training that Gnarowski had -- but Dudek did -- and he had been involved in both earlier presses.

It is interesting to ponder, then, the significance of this. Was it simply a unique situation, in which Gnarowski was pursuing his own, particular, academic

interests, which, through his association with Delta Canada, could be promoted?⁵³ Was it more, perhaps, an indication of the beginnings of a shift in the way in which poetry was being approached at the time? Or, even more importantly, was it a sign that, as Lampman might put it, there finally *was* a Canadian literature, -- one that deserved and needed to be recorded and analyzed, and that Gnarowski, with his sensitivity to early Canadian texts, was able to recognize it?

The latter idea is further supported by the fact that Gnarowski's Ph.D. dissertation, *A Reference and Bibliographical Guide to the Study of English-Canadian Literature*, which he submitted to the University of Ottawa (1967), was revised and published in a regular way by McClelland and Stewart, going into three editions, selling thousands of copies in the process.

Small Change, by Renald Shoofler constitutes the fifth book published by Delta Canada. Shoofler is Louis Dudek's nephew, and both Gnarowski and Siebrasse believe that this was the primary reason behind its publication. Even Dudek has since admitted that Shoofler was "really a poet of the Raymond Souster variety. Nothing new."⁵⁴ Neither of Dudek's co-editors wanted to publish the collection, which appeared in 1966; as was often the case in the little press organization, each individual had a discretion to bring forward and to lobby for the manuscript of his choice and Dudek was determined, at the time, to have Shoofler's book published.

Next followed John Robert Columbo's book, *The Great Wall of China*

⁵³It should be noted that Gnarowski helped D.M.R. Bentley found *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, which, quite uniquely, went on to create The Canadian Poetry Press.

⁵⁴Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, December 4th, 2000.

(also 1966). Dudek considers it "very good. But this is a collage of items about the Great Wall of China. The Colombo sort of thing. He is a great collector."⁵⁵

The negative tone to Dudek's assessments reflect the general concern shared by the Delta Canada editors -- a concern constantly aired at their weekly meetings: Where should poetry in Canada be going? Who are the new poets? The editors needed to know the answers to these questions in order to know who and what to publish; however, Gnarowski, Dudek and Siebrasse have all individually stated that they couldn't reach a consensus.⁵⁶ Still, they kept trying....

Pictures on the Skin, by Eldon Grier, was the seventh book to be published by Delta Canada. Eldon Grier and his wife, Sylvia Tait, were both accomplished painters, although Eldon Grier had made a name for himself, as well, as a poet. They produced this collection themselves, with Sylvia designing the cover (which was cloth), and both artists designing the book. It is an elaborate and expensive cloth-bound text, which contains "22 black-and-white and color graphics using collage, film hard edge and line." (*Poetry 71 Delta Canada*). Siebrasse felt the book was too elaborate for a small press publication; he suggests it was "immodest, unattractive and overdone."⁵⁷ Neither Gnarowski nor Dudek felt comfortable with it, either, but were willing to go along with the production because they knew Grier was an able poet and could finance the book himself.

In general, the three editors preferred simple, unpretentious covers and

⁵⁵Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, December 4th, 2000.

⁵⁶This information was derived from an interview with Michael Gnarowski in June, 2000, a letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, December 4, 2000, and an Interview with Glen Siebrasse on November 24th, 2000.

⁵⁷Interview with the author, November, 2000.

arrangements for their books. Therefore, when a reciprocal distribution arrangement was made with Alan Brilliant, of Unicorn Press, Santa Barbara, California, some difficulty in reconciling the production values of the two presses might have been predicted.

Unicorn Press was owned and funded by Ken Maytag of the very successful and wealthy Maytag family corporation. Therefore, the press had the financial means to publish their books without concern about cost. Consequently, Unicorn Press's books were richly produced. Most were clothbound; many were hand-crafted -- hand-printed and stamped, using different shades of ink color. Some even had gold stamping. Many incorporated illustrations, photographs and drawings.

Some critics appreciated Unicorn's work; Goliard's Anthology (No. 7), for example, pronounced that "The one extreme -- of highest quality of small press publishing -- is presently occupied by Unicorn Press. I don't believe these people can do a bad book!" Library Journal states "As one of the major poetry publishers in the United States, Unicorn Press is rapidly assuming importance for both original work and translations." And West Coast Review assessed Unicorn's work as "Printing as a fine art!" (Unicorn Press 1974 Catalogue)

Unicorn Press was responsible for publishing much interesting work, some of which had an international interest, including *Tree of Song* by Garcia Lorca, *Seven Poems* by Boris Pasternak (translated by George L. Kline), *Pili's Wall*, by Philip Levine, *The Torches*, by James Tate, *Vietnam Poems*, by Nhat Hanh (which went to five editions) as well as a book of Vietnamese Folk Poetry.

Ron Everson knew Alan Brilliant, and it was he who initially made contact.

In a letter addressed to Louis Dudek (with carbon copies to Siebrasse, Colin Hawarth and Alan Brilliant), he writes

(I) Alan Brilliant would like to work out some arrangement with Delta by which, in the case of any book of verse that Delta proposes to publish and that Alan likes and thinks would sell in the U.S., a single printing could be done either by Delta or by the author, or by Unicorn Press. Alan figures that with any such book he was willing to take, about 300 copies could be sold in the U.S. With some other such books, he would hope to sell more. In this proposed arrangement of Alan's, before printing, Delta & Unicorn would decide how many copies each wanted; the press run would be divided between them accordingly. And the costs would be divided in the same proportion.

Books for U.S. distribution would have the Unicorn imprint and would state that Delta was the Canadian distributor. Conversely, books for Canadian distribution would bear the Delta Canada imprint and would state that Unicorn Press was the U.S. distributor.

Unicorn would pay a 10% royalty on books sold with the Unicorn imprint.

Alan hopes that he may be able to include a first-class U.K. distributor in the same arrangement, so that there could be one printing for three, rather than for two countries, with consequent further reduction in unit costs.

An advantage to Delta in the above arrangement is that Delta books & authors would get into the U.S. from a respected base in the U.S., and

from the west coast, to balance our east. Another advantage to Delta would be that, in a case where Unicorn produced the book, we would get the services of Alan, as a designer, free. And the Unicorn Press is set up in such a way that Alan figures he can produce books fairly inexpensively. He thinks a good selling price for a book is \$2 or \$3; over that, too hard to sell except in special cases. He has so far turned out 20 things at Unicorn and only one -- a book by Muriel Rukeyser---cost \$1,000.00.

An advantage to Alan in the above arrangement is that Delta would be doing the time-using job of sorting out what Canadian Mss. were worth publishing. Alan would need to read only what Delta proposed to publish.

Alan's press is soundly financed for the next nearly two years. He is 29, was only 19-20 when he got out *Pan* and *Panic*. I have looked at and read the 20 items so far produced in the few months that Alan has been running Unicorn; I feel Alan is a good judge of verse and good designer. He is also consistent; about ten years ago he told me that he thought highly of Miriam Waddington's poetry -- now he has published one item by her and he's working on a book of poems of hers.

An arrangement between Delta and Unicorn doesn't need to be formal or permanent. Least binding way for both parties would be to run from book to book.

I'm willing to test the arrangement with my *Selected Verses*. Presuming the agreement of the Delta Bd., I am trying my verses on Alan and his editorial committee. If the MS gets accepted and Delta approves, Unicorn would design and print the book, tentatively titled, "Child with

Shell, Selected Poems 1927-1967" by so & so. Unicorn would pay a proportion of the costs in accord with the proportion of copies they took & tried to sell. They would pay me a royalty on sales by Unicorn (not, of course, by Delta).

Instead of waiting around to see how this experiment comes out on the off chance that Unicorn accepts my book, I suggest that the Delta Bd ponder the plan of joint publication with Unicorn. As I'm not likely to get back to Montreal for about a month, you had better communicate directly with Alan, to let him know what you think about it all.

(2) Alan's other proposal to Delta Canada is that he would like to sell Delta books in the U.S. To take this on, Alan would need the permission of Unicorn's owner, a Santa Barbara feller, so unlike the joint-publishing proposal, this is not a firm offer. If he got permission, he would need sole Canadian sales rights from Delta and 50% discount, as he couldn't operate under that. He would also need to be allowed to pick which Delta books he would try to sell.

Again, presuming the Delta Bd's consent, I'm turning over some copies of *Wrestle [With An Angel]* for Unicorn to try to sell at \$2.00 Unicorn to get 50%. This project may be some use as a test of Delta-Unicorn relations. Of course, if Unicorn's owner blows the whistle on this, no sale.

While the owner is considering the matter, the Delta Bd. might also

think about it.⁵⁸

The Delta Canada board of editors agreed to work with Unicorn Press. Because Siebrasse was responsible for the business administration of Delta Canada, he took over most communications with Brilliant, which were by correspondence, and eventually a strong friendship was formed between the two men.

According to Siebrasse, the relationship between Delta Canada and Unicorn Press was positive; he reports that Brilliant was responsible for distributing far more of Delta Canada's books in the States than Delta Canada sold for Unicorn in Canada. Furthermore, he enjoyed the literary association with Brilliant. However, Dudek didn't like Unicorn's books; he was suspicious of anything "overproduced", and he felt they were "gaudy" and too extravagant, and did not want to support the arrangement.⁵⁹ It was cause for tension between the two editors which flared up near the end of the press's life.

All three editors supported Delta Canada's next publication; it was Dudek's *Atlantis*, which, after six years of work, was ready to be printed in 1967. Dudek chose Robert Feher of Three Star Printing to produce it.⁶⁰ It won the Quebec Book Award in 1968.⁶¹ *Atlantis* is a long poem that Dudek wrote during a trip to

⁵⁸Letter from Ron Everson to Louis Dudek, dated Montreal, March 10th, 1967. (Everson's copy is in the author's possession).

⁵⁹It is also possible Dudek was somewhat miffed with Alan Brilliant, who, in 1958, had had Layton edit *Pan-ic: A Selection of Contemporary Canadian Poems (1958)* and, in doing so, had promoted Layton's work over Dudek's.

⁶⁰Robert Feher's address at the time was Three Star Printing, 204 St. Sacrament Street, Montreal.

⁶¹Allan Harrison was responsible for the book cover and design.

Europe in 1961. In an interview with Susan Stromberg-Stein, Dudek defines the significance of the Atlantis idea in the following manner:

Atlantis -- the mythological or symbolic word that contains what I'm talking about -- It isn't visible in any concrete way -- it isn't even in our lives; you don't see glory or heaven anywhere, you don't see God or transcendence...But there is something going on, in the actual (it's in great works of art that I see for a moment what I'm looking for in that poem).
(Stromberg-Stein 74-5)

Atlantis also reveals some of the emotional turbulence and depression against which Dudek was fighting during the late fifties and early sixties. His marriage to Stephanie had been difficult for several years, and in 1967, it finally dissolved. The same year, after a long period of growing separation and discontent, he ended his association with Contact Press. His break with Layton still pained him, and a growing sense of disaffection as a poet pervaded him. He was nearly fifty; and despite the important work he had produced, there was not much acclaim. He continued to be plagued with ill health.

Combined, these factors led him to feel that his life was drawing to a

close.⁶² This is significant in considering what Dudek chose to do with the time he had left -- he continued to devote himself to working on a little press, promoting young, unknown poets, and, in so doing, contributing to the development of Modernist poetry in Canada.

The next (ninth) book Delta Canada published was *Trouvailles*, by F.R. Scott, who brought the manuscript to Louis Dudek, who wrote its introduction. It is identified in the press's catalogue as "An often acidic, always witty tour de force on Canadian history, politics and the establishment." (*Poetry 71* Delta Canada "Current Titles"). While not at the same level as *The Blasted Pine*, *Trouvailles* is important in that it offers "found poems," which were a new form of writing for Scott.⁶³ That Scott chose Delta Canada to publish his book is important. By

⁶²By this time, Dudek had published *East of the City* (1946), *The Searching Image* (1952), *Cerberus*, (1952), *Twenty-Four Poems*, (1952), *Europe* (1956), *The Transparent Sea* (1956), and *En Mexico* (1958). Furthermore, through the McGill Poetry Series, he published *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, (1956) which launched Leonard Cohen's career, as well as the following other books: *The Carnal and the Crane* (1957) by Daryl Hine; *Winds of Unreason* (1958) by George Ellenbogen, *The Timeless Forest* (1959) by Sylvia Barnard, *In my Own Image* (1962) by Dave Solvay, Michael Malus' *Night Is A Flaming City* (1963), *Bring Forth the Coward* (1964) by Pierre Coupey, *God's Kaleidoscope* (1964) by Steve Smith, *Tiptoeing on the Mount* (1965), by Seymour Mayne, and *The Flaming Circle* (1966), by Jagdip Maraj. Furthermore, Dudek (with Irving Layton) had edited *Canadian Poems: 1850-1952* (1952; revised 1953), and *Poetry of Our Time* (MacMillan, 1965). Of course he also helped shape *First Statement* magazine, *Contact* magazine, and the two little presses that arose from those magazines, in addition to the work he contributed to numerous other little magazines and anthologies.

⁶³Dudek originally wanted to call the book, *Great Scott* -- a title Scott rejected.

1967, he was a well-established lawyer and poet, who had many contacts at his disposal. At the same time, Scott wanted to be seen as avant-garde. He supported little magazines and presses even though he preferred to be published by the more established presses such as Ryerson and Oxford. Having Delta Canada publish *Trouvailles*, then, was a sign that he was part of the little press lifestyle.

Gnarowski's interest in earlier Canadian work led to researching and publishing Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village*, which was long-out-of-print. To date, two excerpts had been reproduced in Canadian anthologies (by A.J.M. Smith⁶⁴ and by Klinck and Watters⁶⁵). Gnarowski put a new edition together which established the differences between the 1825 version of the poem, which had been published in London, and the 1834 edition, which had been published in St. John, New Brunswick.

Gnarowski had a long-standing friendship with Bernard Amtmann, who had opened a book store across the street from McGill University. Amtmann was engaged in *recherche* materials and Gnarowski had depended on him as an important source of books when he was building up the Lakehead University's library. Amtmann was also a close friend of Lawrence Lande, a notary by profession, who was passionately committed to the collection and preservation of

⁶⁴A.J.M. Smith was responsible for two significant anthologies of Canadian poetry: *The Book of Canadian Poetry: A Critical and Historical Anthology* (1943, revised in 1948 and 1957), and *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse: in English and French* (1960). He also co-edited *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* (1936) and *The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective and Disrespectful Verse Chiefly By Canadians* (1957) with F.R. Scott.

⁶⁵Carl F. Klinck and R.E. Watters produced *Canadian Anthology* (1955; revised in 1966).

pre-Confederation Canadiana.⁶⁶ And, of course, Lande also knew Gnarowski, the two men having had frequent lunches together, and Lande having opened his library and resources to Gnarowski.

It was Lande, then, who lent Gnarowski his copy of *The Rising Village*, from which Gnarowski worked. After it was done, Lande established the Lawrence Lande Foundation for Canadian Historical Research (1969) (Gnarowski recalls discussing its logo with Lande). The first text to be published through the foundation was *Three Early Poems*, which was distributed by Delta Canada. Its title was drawn from the Early English Text Society, a British society that republished early texts gone out of print. Gnarowski had become aware of the organization through Professor Alphonse Campbell and his Ph.D. work at the University of Ottawa. He appreciated the straight-forward presentation and simplicity of the books. And he determined to use this example to make available the texts of early Canadian poetry.

Again, through the support of Lande's library and foundation, Gnarowski collected and published a small anthology consisting of Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains*, which originally appeared in 1789, J. Mackay's *Quebec Hill, or Canadian Scenery*, which appeared first in 1797, and *Canada*, by Cornwall Bayley, which

⁶⁶Lande had an office on Peel Street; he lived at 4870 Cedar Cres. He was extremely wealthy and was financially able to continue to add to his collections, which he eventually donated to McGill University Library and the National Library of Canada (his brothers, too, were collectors of Canadiana). Originally Lande had begun collecting the works of William Blake, which he gave to McGill University.

had been published in 1806.⁶⁷ Much later, near the end of Delta Canada's life, Gnarowski also edited and published *Joseph Quesnel*, a selection of poems and songs by "an eighteenth century pioneer of the French poem in Canada." (Delta Canada brochure, "Scholarly Titles"). Quesnel was a French military officer who was captured at Louisburg and ended up as a prisoner in Canada. He was a composer and a music teacher, and he wrote an operetta. Lande introduced Gnarowski to Quesnel's work, since he owned some of Quesnel's manuscripts. Gnarowski used these, in addition to other manuscripts that were held in the Grand Seminaire in Quebec City, to produce another anthology of texts, which was also the first research to have been done on Quesnel.

The association of Delta Canada with early Canadian texts through Gnarowski's research sets the little press apart from its peers. Gnarowski combined an interest in modern writing with a desire to bring back the past. In fact, he was the first modern scholar to respond to the value and significance of the literature that had gone before. This is important in that it locates Delta Canada's work in a much larger context. Not only was the modernist poetry that the little press was publishing important in its own right, it was important in its place and participation in a long line of development in Canadian poetry. By incorporating the literary past into Delta Canada's orbit, Gnarowski strengthened the credibility of the little press's assessment of the literary present, and supported its pursuit of the literary future. In short, through his acknowledgment of the importance of early Canadian texts, Gnarowski established a larger playing field on which

⁶⁷This interest in early Canadian poetry would be carried on by Gnarowski through his Golden Dog Press.

Canadian poets -- and researchers -- might play. In so doing, he provided the foundation upon which later scholars might build.

Delta Canada's eleventh title was *man:unman*, by Glen Siebrasse. It appeared in 1968. From the collection, the poem "The human being who wished he were a flag" won the President's Medal (1970) -- a prestigious award that was given by the University of Western Ontario for the best single poem from a Canadian book of poetry. It was followed by Gnarowski's *Three Early Poems From Lower Canada* (Lande Foundation, distributed by Delta Canada).

In 1969, at Gnarowski's initiative, Delta Canada began a new series of books, called "Buckbooks". According to Dudek, it is in these small collections of poems that the little press charted a new direction. The books varied in length between ten and thirty-five pages, and were sold for "a buck". Seven separate authors began their poetic careers in this way.

Generally, Buckbooks represent the first publishing attempts of new writers. As such, they constitute an important means by which Delta Canada helped support the struggles of poets in their attempts to contribute to the literary community. Siebrasse reports that "writers can easily stop writing if they are rejected enough or not encouraged" (Interview, November, 2000). There is often a long period between the time a poet writes his/her first finished poem to when he/she has written enough poems to constitute a book. The editors' idea, then, was that the Buckbook format would provide an interim measure by which a poet might further his/her work sooner. It enabled young writers to take their poems beyond the scribbled pages of a notebook to something harder and more concrete - - to something others might see and read. And, because in the workings of the

little press the author has a great deal to say over the text and how it is produced, what it looks like, etc. the author is able to expand the scope of the artistic process, which allows for an added sense of encouragement and satisfaction.

Buckbook No. 1 was Gnarowski's *The Gentlemen Are Also Lexicographers* (1969). The same year, Gnarowski supported Richard Sommer's first publication, *Homage to Mr. MacMullen* (Buckbook No. 2), and Peter Stevens' first collection *Nothing But Spoons* (Buckbook No. 3).

In addition to the Buckbooks, Delta Canada continued to publish longer manuscripts. In 1969, *Images*, by Gerald Robitaille,⁶⁸ appeared. Its cover and book design were done by Glen Siebrasse, with inside drawings by Gerald Robitaille and a drawing for the cover by George Juhaz. The catalogue's description for the collection reads: "A unique form of expression in Canadian literature: the author experiments by interweaving English and French within the single poem. Illustrated with four line cuts by the author."⁶⁹

Robitaille had translated Henry Miller's manuscript, *The Waters*

⁶⁸Robitaille was also responsible for *The Book of Knowledge* (Le Chichotte, Paris), *Un Huron a la Recherche de l'Art* (Eric Losfeld -- Terrain Vague, Paris) and *Le Pere Miller* (Gallimard).

⁶⁹This information was derived from *Poetry 71* Delta Canada "Current Titles" which was written by Glen Siebrasse. Siebrasse reports that "this was my last exercise as a Delta Canada writer. I wrote the copy and Andre Goulet printed it. My only regret, 30 years later, is that I included my name on the cover. An act of immodesty indeed!" (Interview with the author, June 18th, 2001).

Reglitterized,⁷⁰ which Delta Canada considered publishing near the end of its life (Dudek and Gnarowski rejected it). Robitaille had been Henry Miller's secretary and friend; therefore, although none of the editors of Delta Canada felt strongly about the possibility of publishing this piece of early Miller writing, they saw in Robitaille a connection with an author (Miller) whose brand of visceral modernism was something with which they sympathized. In fact, the Delta editors held a party for Henry Miller at Dudek's house (5 Ingleside), which was organized by Gerald Robitaille. According to Glen Siebrasse, "it was well attended by Quebecois poets -- Robitaille's friends."⁷¹

The next poet to be published was Raymond Fraser, a Maritimer who had settled temporarily in Montreal. He had founded the poetry magazine *Intercourse: Contemporary Canadian Writing*⁷² in 1966, and was therefore aware of the new shifts in the poetry movement in Canada. *Intercourse* contained a humorous, irreverent tone. In its pages, Fraser published poets such as Seymour

⁷⁰The catalogue describes Miller's book in the following manner: "One of the author's lesser known works, translated for the first time. Miller has long had an interest in painting -- especially in water colors. In this bilingual edition, he explains his feelings and elaborates on the function of painting in the life of a major novelist. With a four-color water color by the author." (*Poetry 71* Delta Canada). The book never actually appeared; the editors discovered it had already been published elsewhere and were determined not to reproduce texts.

⁷¹Letter from Siebrasse to the author dated Montreal, July 14th, 2001.

⁷²*Intercourse* was begun by Fraser as a small pamphlet in the spring of 1966. It lasted until its thirteenth issue -- spring/summer, 1971. It was a humorous little magazine, containing editorials that "speak of sexual encounters between women missing limbs, of men with incurable cases of acne, or of the art of collecting unemployment insurance or stocking a pantry. Though the humor tends sometimes to fall on the sickly side, the general atmosphere is one of happy irreverence and irrelevance" (Norris 161).

Mayne, Leonard Cohen, Raymond Souster, George Bowering, Fred Cogswell, Eugene McNamara, Gregory Cook, Barry McKinnon, Louis Cormier, Tim Inkster, Bob Flanagan and Len Gasparini. According to Ken Norris, "*Intercourse* was a center of activity during a dull period. It did not offer any new poetic perspectives. Yet there is something liberating in the tone and spirit in which the magazine was put forward, and in some ways *Intercourse* looks ahead to later magazine activity in Montreal" (Norris 162).

Fraser submitted his manuscript, *I've Laughed and Sung Through The Whole Night Long Seen The Summer Sunrise in the Morning*, to Louis Dudek, and Delta Canada published it in 1969. The same year, Ron Everson's fifth book of poetry, and the second to be published by Delta Canada, appeared. *The Dark Is Not So Dark* is an extremely handsome book, cloth-covered, and illustrated with nine graphics by his colleague and passive Delta Canada member, Colin Hawarth. Again, Dudek favored Everson's work and, as before, the commercial printer, Cambridge Press, printed the manuscript.

The last book to be published by Delta Canada in 1969 was Alan Pearson's *14 Poems*. Dudek encouraged Pearson to bring his work forward, and *14 Poems* won the Quebec Book Award in 1970.

Delta Canada accomplished an enormous amount of work in 1970. The year began with the appearance of Ron Everson's third publication through the

little press, *Selected Poems 1920-1970*.⁷³ It was followed by Eldon Grier's second book, *Selected Poems: 1955-1970*, which drew from his previous collections, *A Morning From Saraps* (1955), *Poems* (1956), *The Ring of Ice* (1957) *Manzanillo and Other Poems* (1958) *A Friction of Lights* (1963) (which were all out of print by this time), and, finally, *Pictures on the Skin* (1967).

Delta Canada published Wally Keeler's *Walking on the Greenhouse Roof* next. Its cover design was by Phyllis Whyte, and the book was printed by André Goulet. Dudek had come across Keeler's poetry through a colleague, Alec Lucas, at McGill. Lucas believed that Keeler was a truly excellent poet, and so he strongly urged Dudek to publish him. Dudek eventually felt it necessary to give in, going against the position taken by his co-editors, who were adamantly opposed to publishing Keeler's book. The experience caused a rift among the editors. Siebrasse, for example, felt that Dudek had gone against the basic tenets of the little press in its commitment to forwarding *good* Canadian poetry, in order to preserve peace in his academic realm.⁷⁴ This led to heated discussions about

⁷³In a letter to the author, dated Montreal, July 14th, 2001, Siebrasse recalls that a special launching of Everson's book was arranged at a party at Corby Distillery, 1201 Sherbrooke West, in the summer of 1970. ("What made the launching important was that we didn't launch books; publishing was the goal and we left it at that.") Siebrasse "had heard that Corby's sponsored such events, went to see them, and arranged the details...Mike [Gnarowski]...recalls it was well attended and that there was plenty of free booze to go around...We tried the same thing with Louis' *Collected Poetry* in 1971, but by that time Corby's had given up on poetry. Perhaps the thought of all that scotch being wasted on dreamers and malcontents was too much for them. In any case, Ron's *Selected Poems* was the only book we ever officially launched.

⁷⁴Dudek has since admitted that *Walking on the Green House Roof* was "a waste of money...one should not ride on other people's enthusiasm" (Letter to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000).

academia and poetry and how one often did not agree with the other. And the press almost broke up.

It should be remembered that at this time Siebrasse had been away from university life for several years working in an advertising agency, while Dudek had been teaching at McGill since 1951. At the same time, Gnarowski was doing scholarly work, and holding a teaching position at Sir George Williams University, but he had also, as a student, had extensive experience on a work crew.

Furthermore, Sir George Williams University was far less rigid and traditional than McGill and was, at that time, a far more exciting place. Siebrasse and Dudek took positions that opposed each other. And Gnarowski, who understood both sides, was left in the middle. Still, the differences and hostilities did not exist for long, and the editors turned their attention to their next book, *Text for Nausikaa*, by Michael Harris.

Harris had been a student of Gnarowski's at Sir George Williams University, and when he had enough poems for a book, he turned to his teacher to have it published, who, in turn, took it to the other editors of Delta Canada and, having won their approval, to André Goulet, to print.

The second wave of Buckbooks was also begun in 1970, with the publication of Eugene McNamara's collection, *Outerings*. Again, it was Gnarowski who brought the book forward. It was followed by *The Ties of Time*, by John Lachs.

Lachs was one of Siebrasse's oldest friends and one of the originators of *Yes* magazine. By this time he was a senior professor and ethicist at Vanderbilt University; he had stopped writing poetry after graduating from McGill in 1957.

Siebrasse approached Lachs because he wanted to put Lachs' best poetry in book form. He felt that Lachs was an important philosopher and, since the poetry predated the philosophy, it was important to have it on record so that Lachs' entire career as a poet-philosopher could be examined.⁷⁵ Siebrasse published *The Ties of Time* without consulting Dudek, which, again, caused conflict.

The differences between Siebrasse and Dudek became more acute and escalated when the former promoted a new idea -- the creation of a series of poetry books that were even smaller than the Buckbooks and less expensive -- the Quarterbacks.⁷⁶ Dudek had become more conservative by the late 1960s; he had reservations about publishing the Buckbooks and Quarterbacks. Siebrasse, on the other hand, believed in the importance of the smaller book forms, seeing them as a new way of promoting young poets who had produced a small collection of poems that was not yet large enough to be published in book form. Siebrasse reports that the Quarterbacks were not really about getting poems to readers. Instead, their purpose was purely "to encourage writers to keep on writing until they have enough for a full manuscript. Because it is very easy for a writer to stop writing if he or she is rejected or not encouraged."⁷⁷

Eight Quarterbacks were published by Delta Canada which were sold as a set for \$2.00. Each was a booklet that consisted of six to eight pages. Siebrasse designed the cover, which was the same for all eight Quarterbacks. To give the writers a separate "identity", a different colour of cover paper was used in each

⁷⁵Interview with Glen Siebrasse, November, 2000.

⁷⁶Siebrasse originally wanted to call the books "Nickelbacks" but determined that they would be harder to sell with that title."

⁷⁷Interview with Glen Siebrasse, November, 2000.

case.⁷⁸ The first was by Robert Currie (Moose Jaw); the second, by Bruce Elder (of Burlington, Ontario); the third, by Richard Hornsey, (from Edmonton), the fourth, by Marilyn Grace Julian (Hamilton); the fifth was by Carl Law (Montreal), the sixth, by Sharon H. Nelson (also of Montreal), the seventh, by Donald Polson (Windsor), and the last, by D.C. Smith (Vancouver). Significantly, three of these poets were editors of little magazines -- Robert Currie was editor of *Salt*; Richard Hornsey was co-editor of *Mainline*; and Donald Polson was co-editor of *Connexion*.

Again, Dudek did not approve of the Quarterback scheme; nor did he approve of the poets Siebrasse chose to publish. He reports, "Of these, only the last two, and perhaps Sharon Nelson, have survived....All the rest are like many of the poets since -- the scores and scores in the League of Canadian Poets -- names you do not recognize and never will see again."⁷⁹

Dudek still nursed some misgivings about Siebrasse's decision to publish John Lachs' book, and he became even more alienated by the way in which Siebrasse was managing the daily business of Delta Canada.

In addition, in 1971, Dudek's desire to terminate Delta Canada's arrangement with their U.S. distributor, Unicorn Press, was finally fulfilled. According to Siebrasse, the letter that Dudek wrote to Alan Brilliant was unnecessarily antagonistic. He states

I should tell you that our group here have had doubts for some time

⁷⁸Interview with Glen Siebrasse, June 18th, 2001.

⁷⁹Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

whether we should continue our arrangement with Unicorn or whether we should be trying out other arrangements for our U.S. distribution.

Actually, the present deal, from our point of view, is not at all profitable: we have to deduct a large discount, pay for heavy mailing charges, and cover a number of other little losses, that chip off any gains to us in the arrangement. On your side, as you say, the discount as it stands is hardly worthwhile, unless you mark up the price -- and you cannot do that.

In short, we've taken a serious vote on this and decided for the time being to cancel our arrangement with Unicorn and try to proceed on our own, or through our own channels. We know you are in a tight fix and are trying to steer clear of hazards just at this time. Our good wishes are with you and we hope you make it to clear water again. Anyhow, let us know your reaction to this, and though there's no immediate hurry, let's try to clear up our accounts in the next few months. We will continue to keep in touch with you, and no doubt exchange some books (also, perhaps Ron Everson will want to distribute his particular books through you as a personal arrangement), but we will not be sending Delta Canada books under the former arrangement.⁸⁰

It was less than a happy time for the Delta Canada editors; the saving grace was that there were ongoing projects in which each had a vested interest.

Dudek was helping Peter Van Toorn publish his book *Leeway Grass*

⁸⁰Letter from Louis Dudek "for Delta Canada" to Alan Brilliant, Unicorn Press, Santa Barbara, California, dated March 20th, 1971. A copy of the letter is in the author's possession.

through Delta Canada. Furthermore, at that time, Dudek was in the process of putting together a major collection of his poetry. *Collected Poetry* was drawn from his books *Unit of Five* (1944), *East of the City* (1946), *Cerberus* (1952), *Twenty-Four Poems* (1952), *The Searching Image* (1952), *Europe* (1955), *The Transparent Sea* (1956), *En Mexico* (1958), *Laughing Stalks* (1958) and *Atlantis* (1967). Siebrasse volunteered to proofread the manuscript⁸¹ and design its cover. He recalls

We [Siebrasse and Dudek] met at Crèmes Boboule, a donut shop at 4640 Wellington St. in Verdun so that Louis could approve my cover design. I had kept the design simple -- I felt that a major poet like Louis didn't need an extravagant cover. Louis, as I recall, was pleased....I chose an all-white cover (no colour) to emphasize the "purity" of both the poetry and the man -- a man who had never caved in to commercial pressure, who always remained true to the Little Press ideal.⁸²

To keep the printing costs down, the editors took advantage of lower printing charges overseas and had the book printed by an established printer, W.G. Baird,

⁸¹Siebrasse reports, "Louis had already proofread it. My proofreading was voluntary (Louis didn't ask that I do it). I wanted the book, possibly the most important Canadian poetry book of the 20th century, to be perfect. As I recall, I uncovered 80 typos in its 300 pages" ("Editorial Notes" Interview with Siebrasse June 18th, 2001).

⁸²Interview with Glen Siebrasse, June 18th, 2001.

in Belfast, Ireland. It appeared in 1971.⁸³ It was the last complete book of poetry to be published by Delta Canada.

In 1971, a number of issues and events conspired to bring about the end of Delta Canada. Relations between Dudek and Siebrasse continued to be strained; the editors remained frustrated by a lack of sense of direction in the poetry of the

⁸³According to Siebrasse, the book should have earned Dudek the Governor General's Award for Poetry. In fact, Gnarowski has since recalled that the reason Siebrasse volunteered to work on the book for Dudek, and put in such extensive time and effort, was because he (Siebrasse) felt that the Governor General's committee had done Dudek a great disservice in not recognizing him. After all, of the modernist circle in which Dudek participated, Anne Marriott had won the G.G. for *Calling Adventures* (1941), A.J.M. Smith, in 1943, for *News of the Phoenix*, Earle Birney, in 1945, for *Now is Time*, Dorothy Livesay, in 1947, for *Poems for People*, A.M. Klein, in 1948, for *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*, E.J. Pratt in 1952, for *Towards the Last Spike*, P.K. Page had won the G.G. in 1954 for *The Metal and the Flower*; Jay MacPherson won it in 1957 for *The Boatman*, James Reaney had won it twice, in 1958 for *A Suit of Nettles* and again in 1962 for *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*.

Of Dudek's immediate contemporaries, Irving Layton won the Governor General's Award in 1959 for *A Red Carpet for the Sun*. Margaret Avison won it in 1960 for *Winter Sun*; Robert Finch won it for the second time in 1961 for *Acis in Oxford* (he had also won it in 1946, for *Poems*, which had been responsible for acrimony between the *Preview* and *First Statement* editors). Raymond Souster won the G.G. in 1964, for *The Colour of the Times*, Margaret Atwood won it for *The Circle Game* (1966), Alden Nowlan won in 1967 for *Bread, Wine and Salt*, Leonard Cohen (in 1968) for *Selected Poems* (which he declined); George Bowering, in 1969, for *Rocky Mountain Foot and the Gangs of Kosmos*.

It is interesting -- and dismaying -- to note that, despite the fact that Dudek's abilities as a poet have been recognized to the extent that his work is constantly anthologized, and despite his enormous contributions to the development of poetry in Canada in the support and promotion of such poets as Margaret Atwood, Alden Nowlan, John Glassco, Michael Ondaatje, Milton Acorn, D.G. Jones, Stephen Scobie, and Phyllis Webb -- all of whom received Governor General's Awards, all of whom had their first book(s) published due, in part, to Louis Dudek, he has received very little public recognition or reward.

time; Gnarowski was approached by Robert McDougall about the possibility of joining the English department at Carleton University, in Ottawa, as well as taking on the general editorship of the Carleton Library Series. Gnarowski was unable to accept the position immediately, since he was supervising four M.A. students at Sir George Williams University.⁸⁴ Therefore, he continued to publish three more Buckbooks in 1971, namely, "Douglas Barbour's *LandFall*, Stephen Scobie's *In the Silence of the Year*⁸⁵ and Phyllis Webb's *Between Two Fires*.⁸⁶ These books are important in that they are the first titles by poets who were to become well-known in the next phase of Canadian poetry.

Continuing his investigation of the little press movement, Gnarowski also brought out *Contact Press 1952-1967* in 1971, which provides a history of the origins of that little press, as well as an index to its titles.

With these last efforts Delta Canada was wound down with the three editors having a final meeting at Dudek's home, where they agreed on the terms under which Delta Canada would be dissolved. Then, Gnarowski moved to Ottawa to take up a full professorship at Carleton University.

Although he was reluctant to leave his friends, Dudek and Siebrasse, behind, the liveliness of the English department at Sir George Williams University

⁸⁴At this point in his career, Gnarowski was not only editor of Delta Canada books, but was also series editor for McGraw/Hill/Ryerson's Critical Series on Canadian Writing, which he continued to edit after moving to Carleton University; thirteen titles appeared between 1969 and 1978. Gnarowski would develop the Carleton Library Series into Carleton University Press.

⁸⁵Stephen Scobie went on to win the Governor General's Award in 1980 for *McAlmon's Chinese Opera*.

⁸⁶Phyllis Webb won the Governor General's Award in 1982 for *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems*.

had diminished with the political and social climate of Quebec and Gnarowski welcomed the opportunity to move away. By 1971, the best days of Delta Canada were over, and it seemed to him that tensions in the province were becoming increasingly intolerant. Fundamental changes in the whole political, economic and social structure of Quebec had been occurring in the previous decade. Duplessis had died in September, 1959. Then the Union Nationale, under Paul Sauvé,⁸⁷ lost the election to the Liberals (Jean Lesage) in 1960. The Liberal government carried out significant social reforms in Quebec society. The most important of these was taking over the educational system and the hospitals from the Roman Catholic Church. It was also responsible for the nationalization of hydro electric companies which were amalgamated to form Hydro Quebec.

During the same time period, unions became increasingly more powerful in Quebec; the birth rate fell drastically from the highest in Canada in 1960 to the lowest in 1970. Divorce rates soared. And, most importantly, nationalistic sentiment in Quebec rose dramatically.

Until the 1960's, Montreal had had a prominent Anglophone community. And the city's wealth had been controlled by a small number of very powerful individuals, most of whom were Anglophone. With the rise of nationalist sentiment which eventually translated itself into the terrorist activities of the Front de liberation du Quebec (FLQ), tensions between the English and French in the city became palpable. The mood and atmosphere became one of hostility towards

⁸⁷Sauvé served for four months before he had a fatal heart attack. He was replaced by Antonio Barette who served until June 1960 when he was defeated by Jean Lesage.

the Anglophone community.

Canadian modernist poetry in the sixties drew much of its energy from the protest movement and the revolt characterized by the Beat poets in the United States. Alan Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956), for example, represents the tone of discontent and anger that can later be felt in Canadian poets who were also reacting to the work of such poets as Cid Corman, Charles Olson and the Black Mountain School of Poetry. In fact, according to Gnarowski and Dudek

Leonard Cohen seems to be the key figure for understanding of this stage of development. A poet of the postwar generation (born in 1934) he belongs to the period of affluence combined with anxiety which has marked the last twenty years. The disaffected teenagers of this time may be either a pampered generation of rebels or a tragic generation of young idealists, depending on the view we take of their dilemma. They have not known either the War of the Forties or the World Depression of the Thirties, and in a time of economic prosperity they are threatened by atomic annihilation or by technological conformity, all of which results in profound discontent and gestures of erratic protest. (Dudek, Gnarowski, *The Making of Modern Poetry* 232)

Other issues were also exacerbating the atmosphere of "profound discontent" that existed in Montreal in the 1960's which was becoming more apparent in the poetry of the day. Writing in 1965, F.R. Scott states

Quebec is in the midst of a period of "accelerated history" if not of actual social revolution. Are we to expect that poets will more directly express this revolutionary feeling? I would think that not only is this kind of poetry

bound to emerge but that in fact it is already emerging. It is too early yet to know what will be distilled out of the turmoil and self-analysis. The very titles of poems appearing in little magazines like *Liberté* and *Parti Pris* show that the furore has reached the younger writers. Paul Chamberland writes an "Ode au guerrier de la joie," introduces it with a quotation from the Russian revolutionary poet, Maiakovsky, and puts in it this verse:

O l'extase de ton sang par la scansion de l'Hymne rouge dressant les troupes pré-létaires aux marches des cités sans maîtres, l'extase hors des caries de l'ordre cadennasse.

...The same poet publishes a poem in *Partis Pris* called "Poème de l'anté-revolution." André Brochu's poem in *Liberté*, Printemps '63, ends with the naive and rather touching cry:

Et les anglais
à la potence

As an "anglais" I feel somehow called upon to help, and I am reminded of how Buddha, in a previous incarnation, is said to have given himself to a starving tiger just to appease his appetite, and thereby to have attained much grace. These youthful outbursts at least show an involvement in the "tranquil revolution" that is taking place.⁸⁸

While Scott could regard events of the sixties as part of a "tranquil revolution", he could not have predicted their eventual outcome. As

⁸⁸Scott, F.R. "The Poet in Quebec Today" *English Poetry in Quebec*, ed. John Glassco (Montreal: McGill University Press 1965) Reprinted in *The Making of Modern Poetry* 265-9).

Francophones began to support French language, French politics and French culture in Montreal, they began to revolt and participate in acts of hostility, which further alienated the Anglophone community.

Several culturally significant events began to trouble Gnarowski. The Quiet Revolution had begun in 1960. It took a certain kind of energy from student and academic circles. There were sit-ins and demonstrations that took place, including major marches on McGill. Both Hugh MacLennan and Louis Dudek, whom Gnarowski saw frequently, were very distressed. General vibrations were bad; the Nationalist tone was unpleasant. Students organized and protested at Laval University and at the Université de Montréal, which echoed protests in universities across the country. At Sir George Williams University, Gnarowski recalls a sit-in, and students burning computers and throwing typewriters and furniture down stairways and out of windows, in protest. All around him, Gnarowski saw French-Quebeckers becoming more nationalistic and more anti-English. In the introduction to "Relations with French Writing in Canada," in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, which was published in 1967, Dudek and Gnarowski prophetically write

There has always been a sense of distance and separation between English and French writing in Canada. This has resulted in the rise and development of two separate literatures having the common denominator of one national and social context....The teaching of Canadian literature both in the schools and universities has treated each literature separately, and thus has further contributed to the division of Canadian literary expression into two separate bodies. We should be forewarned, perhaps,

that a separation of literatures implies separate national identities. Only an interrelation between the two literary traditions, at the level of deep experience and of critical understanding, can prevent Canada from remaining segregated into distinct culture compounds, or prevent the fatal split into separate nationalities. (247)

Of course, by the late sixties, it was clear that the prospect for increasing interrelation between the two cultures was becoming less likely. This deeply disturbed Gnarowski.

In his essay, "The Poet in Quebec Today"⁸⁹ F.R. Scott reports that where the poet moves out from his own internal self-expression to the contemplation of the society about him...the poetry showed an awareness of the end of an era long before the politicians started to try to deal with it. It is quite evident that the poets, as usual, got there first.

There is no doubt that Gnarowski was very much involved in contemplating the society in which he lived. And he was, first, a poet. Furthermore, he had already experienced the trauma of war-time hostilities, and the dislocation from his home in Shanghai, as well as the move to Canada, after. Siebrasse recalls Gnarowski talking about the proliferation of hand grenades, bombs, and bamboo stakes in the countryside around where he had lived.⁹⁰ For these reasons, perhaps, he was more sensitive to, and therefore more alarmed by, the political strife around him, and the potential for a bloody outcome. Ironically,

⁸⁹*English Poetry in Quebec* ed. John Glassco. Rpt Dudek, Louis & Michael Gnarowski. *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* 265-8.

⁹⁰Interview with Michael Gnarowski, November, 2000.

Gnarowski had left one divided city, to adopt another. He had also experienced the unpleasantness of small-town Quebec nationalism when he taught at the University of Sherbrooke (1961-62).

After de Gaulle had made his infamous speech in which he declared "Vive le Québec libre," which made clear France's support for Quebec, support for Quebec nationalism had been galvanized. The Parti Québécois was founded in 1969 from the coalition of two small Separatist parties, and René Levesque resigned from the Liberals to become its leader.

By 1970 support for the FLQ had been building; several murders had been committed, some members of the armed forces had sustained injuries in trying to disarm bombs; mailboxes had been closed off to prevent further bombings. Then, the FLQ kidnapped British diplomat, James Cross, and abducted and murdered leading Quebec Cabinet Minister, Pierre Laporte.

It is hard to imagine the sense of alienation and fear that Gnarowski and other Anglophone individuals must have felt as Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act. It was certainly enough to make Gnarowski want to get out. Therefore, when Robert McDougall showed up in Montreal and invited Gnarowski to come to Carleton University, Gnarowski accepted. His departure was one of the main factors that caused the demise of Delta Canada.

The poet's place has traditionally been on the far edge of society's fermentation, on the ideological frontier. However, in Quebec in the 1960's and beyond, that frontier became a mixture of ethnocentric nationalism which occasionally slipped into extreme positions – which are reflected in the way in which Quebec intellectuals like Lionel Groulx are held. At the same time,

however, it is significant that the people at Delta Canada had a warm working relationship with André Goulet and his press, which had strong radical national sympathies. The irony is that nationalist tracts were not only printed on the same press as Delta Canada books, but on the same day!

Looking back, Gnarowski, Siebrasse and Dudek offer differing views of Delta Canada's legacy. On the one hand, Dudek remarks

All our discussions were about finding new poets and who they should be. From that point of view I do not see Delta Canada as a great success. Not our fault, mind you. It was not the historical moment for a breakthrough. Contact Press had started at a moment when a good deal of poetry, good modern writers had gathered behind the dam -- and Contact Press gave them an opening. But Delta Canada appeared when these were all exhausted in Canada.⁹¹

Conversely, Gnarowski and Siebrasse view Delta Canada as having been more of a success. The reasons for this are varied.

Dudek suggests that Delta Canada's weakness lay in its lack of editorial structure. He states he wanted the press to operate "democratically, in general, with freedom on the part of any member, on occasion, to bring out a writer of his own choosing...however, in the case of Delta Canada, "this brought about the demise of the press."⁹²

Siebrasse suggests that the reason Delta Canada could not go further was that the three editors were not equal -- that Dudek, who was older, and more

⁹¹Letter from Louis Dudek to the author dated Montreal, November 4th, 2000.

⁹²*Ibid.*

experienced, had more control than he and Gnarowski, and Dudek exerted that control in promoting his own perspective on the direction of Canadian poetry which, again, because of the generational gap, was different than that shared by the other two editors.

Gnarowski agrees that Dudek's position differed from his own and Siebrasse, in that Dudek sees little or no value in the later books published by Delta Canada. Gnarowski suggests that this is because Dudek is rooted in an earlier form of modernist poetry; the poetry he disliked, according to Gnarowski, is more representative of the beginnings of post-modernism. Rather than seeing this as negative, then, Gnarowski suggests that its sensitivity to shifts in poetry and the manner in which it provided a bridge between modernist poetry and that which came after, is actually one of Delta Canada's strengths as a little press.

Siebrasse also points to the little press's publication of early Canadian texts, through Gnarowski's initiative, as being a significant contribution made to Canadian literature by the press. Both Dudek and Siebrasse agree that Gnarowski's work on the Buckbooks was important in the way in which it offered a new direction in the publication of young Canadian poets.

All in all, as the shift took place from modernism to post modernism, and as political and cultural tensions and hostilities began to build and then swirl all about them, the editors of Delta Canada managed to publish several significant collections of poetry.

Dudek, Gnarowski and Siebrasse remained true to the tenets of the little press movement, as exemplified and articulated thirty years earlier by John Sutherland. They opened an avenue of publishing for some poets who might not

have found a public voice; they encouraged others who might not have continued to write; and they contributed to the rise of several poets who would become well-known during the next decade of Canadian writing. Furthermore, they recaptured and republished early Canadian texts that might otherwise have disappeared. In these ways Delta Canada made an important contribution to the development of poetry in Canada.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

It is not by chasing after immortality that we will make ourselves eternal. We will not make ourselves absolute by reflecting in our works dessicated principles which are sufficiently empty and negative to pass from one century to another, but by fighting passionately in our time, by loving it passionately, and by consenting to perish entirely with it.¹

Poems do not occur on their own -- they are teased out of the experiences that are lived by the poets who write them -- they are a reaction to, and reflection of, the human condition, and to the times and events that surround people. While the poetry provides a means by which readers may glimpse various moments in time in the course of developing Canadian literature, the lives and experiences of the poets and writers fill out that story and add layers and textures to its body that enrich its meaning and importance.

While the poetry lives on, and is accessible, the people who served to bring it forward often fade from memory. When reading a truly great poem, like Louis Dudek's *Atlantis*, or Irving Layton's "The Bull Calf," "Red Carpet for the Sun," or "Keine Lazarovitch," or A.M. Klein's "The Portrait of a Poet as Landscape," it is easy to forget that behind the beauty and richness of the words exists an individual whose sensibilities have been shaped by his or her experiences and by the people with whom he or she interacted. And, as time continues to march forward, it

¹Jean Paul Sartre. Souster used this quotation on the front cover of the first issue of *Contact* magazine.

becomes increasingly difficult to know who these individuals were, and how their presence and contributions shaped our national literature.

Poets who *are* recognized tend to be more prominent individuals who by force of personality or by chance are highlighted, while others, whose contributions are often equally important, are left in the shadow. While most Canadians are aware of Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen and Michael Ondaatje, how many know of the work of Archibald Lampman, John Sutherland, Louis Dudek or Raymond Souster?

In addition to the significance of the individuals themselves what is also forgotten is that it is the various interactions between these individuals and the others who surround them that make up the atmosphere and environment out of which the poetry is born. And that it was the same poets and friends who, upon experiencing the obstacles that faced them in getting their work published, were self-conscious enough -- and courageous enough -- to take matters into their own hands, and set up their own little magazines and presses.

It is essential, then, to reassess and remember the importance of the people who created the literature and to recognize the significance of their lives and experiences in the poetry they produced. It is necessary to acknowledge and celebrate their humanity. In so doing, the poetry and the literature we call "Canadian" takes on greater personal meaning and becomes, even more, our own.

This dissertation attempts to illuminate a rich, but little-known chapter in Canadian literary history. Its purpose is to give some context to the development of modernist poetry in Canada by focusing on the poets involved in three important little presses -- First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada. Based in

Montreal, and spanning the rise and wane of Canadian modernist poetry that occurred in the middle part of the century, the poets involved in these little presses make up the fabric of our literary history. Without them, there would be no poetry; there would be no literature, and there would be no story to tell.

The most fundamental common denominator that exists in each press' story is its place -- Montreal. Many factors account for its attractiveness as a city: its great sense of history; the island; the beauty of its topography with the rivers that surround it and the mountain that rises up from its core; its architecture and distinct quarters that are reminiscent of old Europe; that it is a major port, and as such, is often the first sight that immigrants have of their new homeland and the first place they settle...all these things contribute to Montreal's uniqueness. But there is something more....

After enduring the crash of the stock market and the ensuing depression during the thirties, Montreal was imbued with an air of growth in the forties that developed into enormous economic, political and sociological change. The dynamics bred from the enormous immigrant population and its resulting cultural diversity certainly played a part. It had a very special reputation and atmosphere that was conducive to intellectuals, artists and writers. People were drawn to and inspired by the city.

In the 1940's, 50's and 60's, during which the story of First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada unfolds, Montreal was as cosmopolitan a city as Canada could have, and cosmopolitanism and modernism are inherently

linked. William Weintraub argues that what set Montreal apart from the rest of the country was that it was a "wide-open town, uniquely sinful in strait-laced Canada" (61). Known for its gambling and prostitution and the corruption of its police force, Montreal had an air of naughtiness that always attracts those on the edges of society. Its plentiful restaurants and diners pleased every palate -- from those who preferred haute cuisine from French-trained chef François Bouyeux, to Ruby Foo's, which could seat 700 customers at a time, and offered a new style of Asian menu, to others who liked to dine late at Ben's Delicatessen, which was open twenty-three hours a day.

Hockey players such as Boom Boom Geoffrion, boxers such as Rocky Marciano, promoters such as Eddie Quinn, and wrestlers such as Yvon Robert flocked to the city. In a time when prohibition was in place in the United States and it was illegal to drink alcohol in public places in Canada, Montreal's plentiful nightclubs offered sanctuary to those who were thirsty, and entertained them with elaborate and flamboyant shows, as well. Lily St. Cyr, who gave new meaning to the striptease, performed regularly in Montreal. The El Morocco, Chez Parée, the Maroon Club, the Copacabana, the Tic Toc, Slitkin's and Slotkin's, the Palais d'Or, Ruby Foo's, Dagwood's and Montreal's many other clubs and restaurants boasted big name entertainers such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman. Oscar Peterson made a name for himself in Montreal. And Milton Berle, Dorothy Lamour and Jerry Lewis were also regulars. From abroad, Edith Piaf and Charles Aznavour came to sing. Even members of the ratpack, including Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr., performed.

In addition, Montreal was composed of many separations. Extremely wealthy Montrealers lived in the west part of town, in Westmount; the poor lived in the East. The Roman Catholic Church, which controlled schools and education, was primarily French while the Protestant and Jewish quarters of the city were predominantly Anglophone. Anglophones were generally better educated and earned higher incomes than Francophones, who still were better off than the city's immigrant population.

Perhaps for these reasons, Montreal held the same type of attraction for Canadian writers and artists that Paris had for the likes of Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, Ernest Hemmingway, T.S. Eliot, E.M. Forster, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Sartre, Camus...etc. Nearly all of Canada's great poets appear to have either settled in the city or at least passed through it at one time or another -- F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Patrick Anderson, Leo Kennedy, Dorothy Livesay, Ralph Gustafson, P.K. Page, Miriam Waddington, Doug Jones, Alden Nowlan, Leonard Cohen, George Bowering, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, John Glassco, Earle Birney, Hugh MacLennan, Morley Callaghan, Hugh Hood, Brian Moore, Mordecai Richler...the list goes on...

Set against this backdrop, responding to its lively and quickening pulse, poets of the 1940's and beyond sought to create a new form of poetry -- one that accurately portrayed the many languages they heard -- the sinfulness and debauchery that they saw every day -- the poverty and the wealth that they experienced -- the virility, the dirt, the richness, the depravity, and the elegance that was all around them. In doing this, of course, these men and women

portrayed their world as they saw it through their own unique lenses, which were coloured by their own particular experiences and personalities.

The *Preview* group differed markedly from the *First Statement* group, for example, in the level of wealth and education that they had, and in the cosmopolitan world from which they did or did not come. Patrick Anderson's experiences at Oxford University in England certainly shaped his preference in poetry, just as John Sutherland's early illness and convalescence on the east coast of Canada formed his. A.M. Klein's personal struggle with the role and responsibility of the poet in society conflicted with his religious and political convictions and position of lawyer.

Within the *First Statement* and *Contact* groups, there is little doubt that Irving Layton's belief in himself, his blatant virility and self-aggrandizing resulted in his voice being heard and his work being promoted. While, in contrast, Louis Dudek was more reserved and refined, preferring to promote others above himself, and choosing an academic career in which he was popular with his students while he might have preferred a more public position which would have allowed him to be more popular with the general population.

Raymond Souster's desire to find acceptance in the literary community led him to explore American poets in addition to those in his home country, while Michael Gnarowski's experiences in Shanghai and his Immigration to Canada led him to want to embrace his new country as completely as he could, immersing himself in its culture and its literature. And while their academic experiences certainly informed the manner in which F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Patrick Anderson, Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski approached poetry, the lack of that formal

academic training equally shaped the work of John Sutherland, Raymond Souster, Glen Siebrasse and others.

While these differences need to be recognized, the poets who were responsible for beginning and running the little presses in Montreal during the middle part of the century share several things in common. First, the editors, John Sutherland (who began First Statement Press), Raymond Souster (who initiated Contact Press), and Michael Gnarowski (who was responsible for forming Delta Canada), were, foremost, poets. They all began their publishing careers as unknown writers who were looking for an outlet for their work. They all discovered that very few such outlets were available since the more established publishing firms were not interested in producing the work of young, unproven poets who could not guarantee them a financial return. Consequently, they determined to create such outlets for themselves.

Second, the three editors shared a strong sense of nationalism and a commitment to contributing to it through its literature. They all believed in the importance of poetry and its ability to cultivate a national sensibility and feeling of unity among its people.

Third, the three editors had "fires" in their bellies -- their belief in the importance of their role as poet and publisher was powerful enough to withstand the enormous hurdles that stood in their way. Furthermore, their sense of purpose and strength of personality and charisma served not only to attract fellow poets and writers around them who helped build the momentum required to make their vision of a little magazine become reality, but to develop those visions into something larger -- into the little press.

In the earliest days of *First Statement* magazine, John Sutherland drew on Irving Layton and Louis Dudek together. Over the years that ensued, as *First Statement* grew and purchased its own press to become First Statement Press, and then merged with *Preview* to become *Northern Review*, Sutherland continued to rely on Layton and Dudek in addition to the contributions of Raymond Souster, F.R. Scott, A.M. Klein, Patrick Anderson, Dorothy Livesay, P.K. Page, Audrey Aikman, Betty (Sutherland) Layton and many others. In addition to printing the very first books of such great Canadian poets as Irving Layton and Louis Dudek, Sutherland's First Statement Press served as a firm foundation on which future little presses could build.

Inspired by Sutherland's example, Raymond Souster, who had already tried his hand at a little magazine called *Direction*, started *Contact*, which, with the support of Irving Layton and Louis Dudek and, upon Layton's departure, Peter Miller, expanded into Contact Press, which eventually published many of Canada's most important books of poetry.

Michael Gnarowski, too, started his publishing career with a little magazine -- that was *Yes*. Like *First Statement* and *Contact*, before it, *Yes* was cultivated by its editors, Gnarowski and Siebrasse, developing over its lifetime into an organization that warranted the publication of books. With Glen Siebrasse and, again, Louis Dudek, Gnarowski began Delta Canada, which produced many significant volumes of poetry, which reflect the latter stages of modernist poetry in Canada.

Not only did these poet/editors share a common vision and a common source of support in their peers, they had the drive and initiative to put their ideas into practice, and the commitment to see them through. These are the people who sorted through the various contributions to their little magazines and presses, and laboriously typed up the poetry they determined to print -- first on stencils, then on typewriters, and eventually on computers -- who formatted the material and determined its layout and appearance.

These are the people who ran the gestetners, who collated the material and stapled it -- before the advent of machines that did such a task automatically -- who stuffed envelopes and mailed out the little magazines.

These are the people who took time away from their families and from their work to meet regularly, to vet the poetry and decide what was worthy of publication and what wasn't. These are the people who took financial and personal risks in order to push their own work and more importantly, the work of others, forward.

These are the people who pounded the pavement to take the little magazines and books they produced to bookstores to sell, and who worked hard to convince book store managers to display and distribute their work.

Above all else, the editors involved in First Statement Press, Contact Press and Delta Canada, particularly John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Peter Miller, Glen Siebrasse and Michael Gnarowski, were willing to promote the work of others above and beyond their own -- to publish those who might not otherwise have found a voice and a place to be heard.

These are the people who contributed to the making of modern poetry in Canada, but who are absent from its credits. Their contributions need to be acknowledged and remembered, not only in gratitude, but in order to remind us that we -- as ordinary, everyday people, who have a particular interest in, and commitment to, our country and our literature -- we, too, can make an enormous difference.

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With Michael Gnarowski

Ongoing

Note: Tapes, transcripts and notes of interviews were destroyed in a house fire that occurred on September 23, 1999.