

The Canadians Are Reclaiming Canada

Tired of being "one huge American branch plant," Canadians are peeling off U.S. influences and discovering their own identity.

by Valerie Miner

Toronto, Ontario

Although few Americans know it, one of the world's most intense and rapidly growing nationalist movements is going on just across the border. The movement concerns, not a radical fringe, but a whole people, the Canadians, who are coming to realize that their country is one huge American branch plant. Anti-American sentiment has escalated on such a broad scale that even the Canadian government—traditionally a docile ally of its U.S. counterpart—is taking heed of it. In recent months the government has severely curtailed American imports of two pervasively influential commodities: financial investment and radio-TV commercials. Further restrictions are almost sure to come, and together they will restructure the relationship between North America's traditional good neighbors.

The vanguard of the nationalist movement consists of university-educated professionals in Ontario and the West, but its ranks range across the political spectrum—from Canadian businessmen, who want profits, to Canadian artists, who want recognition, to Canadian Socialists, who want economic self-determination. And although the issue is widely debated by politicians and intellectuals, it is by no means restricted to them. What nationalism means to an increasing number of Canadians is survival.

Take, for example, Ted Paiement. He is no flag-waving, stomp-the-imperialists radical, but a middle-aged Toronto insurance adjuster. I met him one lunch hour in the city-hall square. Paiement told me that he is uncomfortable with his loss of affection for the Americans. He fought with an American unit during World War II. He has long subscribed to American periodicals. He belongs to a Canadian-American bowling league.

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"I guess I always used to want to be an American," Paiement said. "But now I'm glad of the difference. Americans have too many problems with race and pollution. And I must admit that when I went down east on a holiday last summer, I was aggravated to see so many American trailers. I couldn't even get a space in my own national park. I could say I'm a nationalist to the extent that I think we should take care of things for ourselves up here." His commitment is quiet but resolute. He voted for a nationalist candidate in the last election, and he has been circulating a petition against foreign ownership around his Commerce Court office.

Nationalism here grows from a fertile sense of Canadian identity as well as from an erosion of American popularity. Although most Americans are unaware of the movement, for those like me who have emigrated from the States, nationalism transforms the border from a diplomatic formality into a personal reality. The most startling part of that reality is American omnipresence—from McDonald's to "M*A*S*H" to American magazines, which crowd Canadian ones off the newsstands.

The most telling indicators of U.S. domination, however, are economic and political. Americans own 80 percent of the long-term foreign investment in Canada. They control 96 percent of the auto industry, 90 percent of the electrical-equipment industry, 50 percent of all manufacturing. Consequently, the U.S. Trading With the Enemy Act has forbidden Canadian subsidiaries to trade with Cuba, North Vietnam, North Korea and, until three years ago, China.

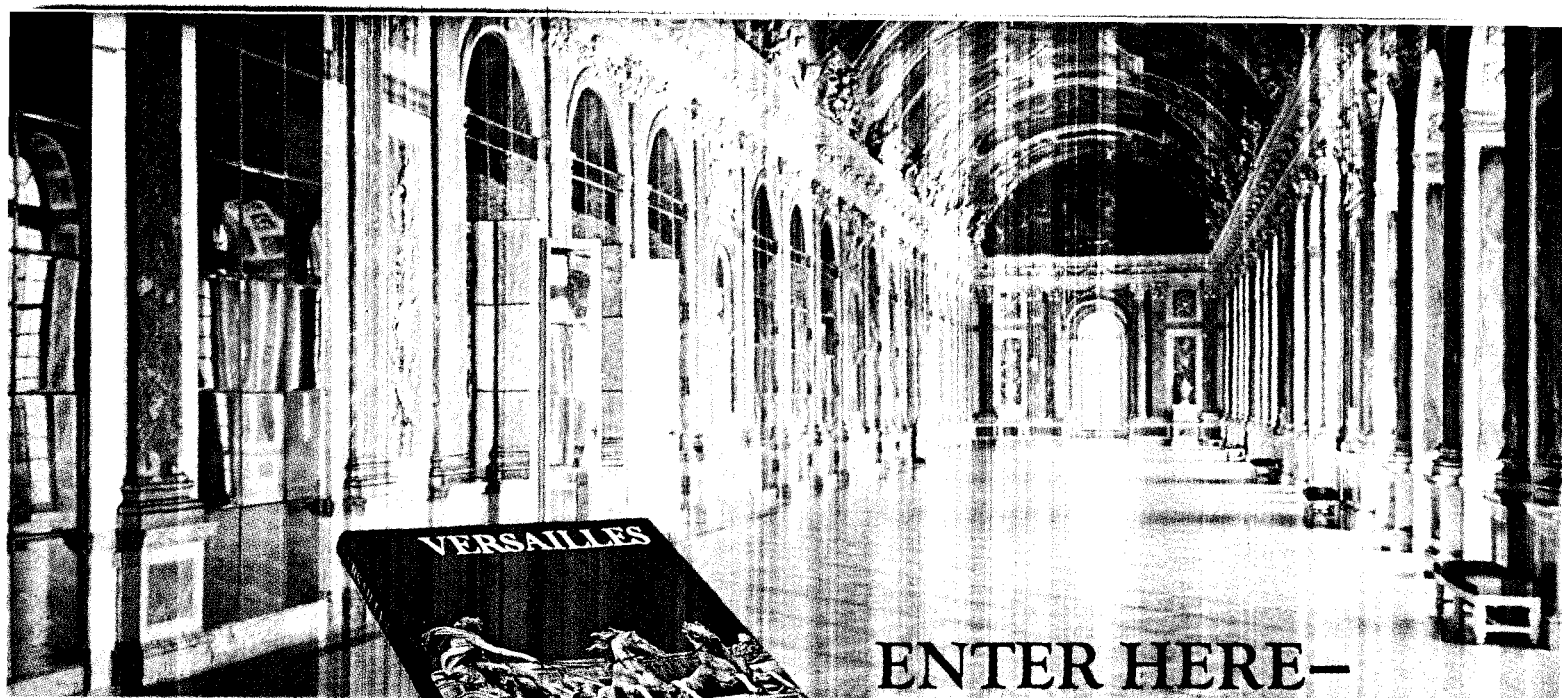
Canadian nationalism is hardly a new movement. As Canadians freed themselves from British economic and cultural domination in the late 1800s, they came under the sphere of the new world empire, the United States. Canada's cultural ties to the United States closely parallel those of the United

States to Britain in the nineteenth century, when Britain was the center of the English-speaking world. At that time, such imitators of British writing as Cooper and Irving were more popular than other native authors, such as Hawthorne and Melville. Canadians are victims of the same sort of insecurity. They have a "low profile" in their own communications media. Since most Canadians huddle along the warmer border regions, they are saturated by programming from the American networks. They view American problems and American trends—with very little of their own experience reflected back to them. Americans tend to identify well-known Canadian writers—like Mordecai Richler and Margaret Atwood—as their own, and Canadians themselves are largely indifferent to the books they write. Canada's overall culture reflects the branch-plant mentality.

Margaret Atwood, prominent poet and author of *Survival*, a nationalist guide to Canadian literature, told me, "It's all very well to say that art transcends time and place. But good writers don't cut themselves off from their roots, from the ground they stand on. They may transcend their nation, their time, their class, by being good, but they don't transcend it in the texture of their work."

The nationalist concern about Canadian media extends beyond its American content. Advertising revenue is another serious issue. Many U.S. border stations—like Bellingham, Washington; and Buffalo, New York—soak up Canadian advertising money. In the magazine industry, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* collect one-half of the total ad revenue, hampering the development of indigenous Canadian periodicals. The problem is so severe that government has intervened. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission now calls for 60 percent Canadian content in television and 30 percent in radio. It is considering prohibiting foreign commercials—almost all of which, of course, are American made. The federal and provincial governments also have allocated money to help periodicals and publishing houses stay afloat.

Ninety-five percent of the books sold in Canada are written by foreigners; most of them are published by American firms. Therefore, few of the texts studied from grade one through university offer any Canadian content. University students experience the most obvious Americanization. The instruction of the history of the War of 1812 illustrates the pro-



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cess. A U.S. professor with U.S. texts will teach his Canadian students that the war was part of a global conflict in which America was caught up in a Napoleonic war. Canadians will emphasize the Loyalist background and the need to preserve the identity of their country against the American threat.

One current campus movement demands that 80 percent of faculties be composed of Canadians. This bewilders American professors, because they were welcomed enthusiastically during the last decade. But such a quota would not be unique to Canada; France, Italy, and the Netherlands all refuse permanent college posts to non-citizens. Although they send advisers to African universities, Canadians depend on Americans when they expand their own programs.

Public reaction to American influence is hard to gauge. To most people, nationalism means patriotism and unity, not independent development. But it can be a reactive issue, erupting around such incidents as the 1971 nuclear test at Amchitka, off the west coast of Canada. The American bombardments of Haiphong and Hanoi drew an unprecedented vote of censure from the Canadian Parliament last year. More and more Canadians are reacting against the nation that has brought forth the Indochina war, Watergate, and the sinking dollar.

According to a 1973 Gallup poll, 48 percent of Canadians want to nationalize their oil and gas industries. Other recent polls have found that 67 percent think that there is enough U.S. investment here now; 35 percent believe that Canada is in effect an American colony, and 50 percent have little or no confidence in America's ability to handle world problems. Those findings were borne out the day I took my own sampling of more random shades of opinion in Toronto's city-hall square.

Anne Boulder, a young lawyer on recess from the county court, said, "I don't think Canadians will have any identity until we free ourselves of American authority. That means the resources first, then the industry. And the land situation aggravates me, too—all these people from the States buying up our prime recreational land." She said that in her student days "we had no image of ourselves as a separate country."

The Canadian government has made slow but determined progress in repatriating the economy during the last fifteen years. It has ordered majority Canadian ownership in the financial and

communications sectors. It also has enacted legislation requiring prior government approval of foreign investments that would establish new businesses in Canada or take over sizable existing ones. But for many nationalists, the repatriation of all resources and industries is the only solution.

The irony of Canada's trade relations with the United States is that the country exports natural resources to the United States but then imports them back in manufactured form, in the style of a modern underdeveloped nation. American investment here has escalated substantially since World War II. One-third of all U.S. foreign investment is in Canada. Canadian labor as well as management is directed from the States; two-thirds of Canadian union members belong to U.S. organizations in which precedence goes to American workers. For instance, in the 1971 Douglas Aircraft strike, Canadians were directed to go back to work by the United Auto Workers in the interest of American operations. But the most crucial debate concerns ownership of natural resources. (Americans control two-thirds of the petroleum and mining here.) One current controversy involves the James Bay Project in northern Quebec, which would provide hydroelectric power to Con Edison in New York. The project infringes on native-land rights, endangers the ecol-

ogy, and provides little long-term employment for Canadians.

Although the American ego may be deflated in the process, the thrust of this nationalism is not a backlash against the United States but an acclamation for Canada. This is well illustrated by the personal metamorphosis of Robert Fulford, editor of *Saturday Night*, Canada's oldest magazine. As a boy, he was absorbed in jazz music and American novels. When he began his career, he emulated A. J. Liebling and Dwight MacDonald. Although he wrote about Canadian art, he believed that the great contemporary artists lived in the States.

But in the mid-Sixties Fulford started to lose faith: "In some respects, like the foreign policy, Americans simply became a bad example. Also, I began to realize that the Canadian diversity I had been proud of was vanishing. I realized that Canadian independence hadn't been free to generations before me and wasn't going to be free for me. Canada is going to go one way or the other in the next thirty years—it's going to get completely swallowed up by the Americans, or it's going to become independent. It's Canada's fault that we're owned by foreigners and that foreigners make the decisions. The Americans, after all, did what they were taught to do—move in and take over. This is a problem for Canadians, a thing we must settle among ourselves." □



"Omar Khayyám would be proud of you."

BOOKS

The First Picture Show

THE ROMANTIC REBELLION:

ROMANTIC VS. CLASSIC ART

by Kenneth Clark

Harper & Row, 366 pp., \$15.00

Reviewed by Anne Hollander

Kenneth Clark is probably the best-known art historian on both sides of the Atlantic, because of the very successful television series called "Civilisation," in which he appeared as the apostle of culture to the multitudes. Among scholars, however, he is not invariably in the first rank, since his books are actually informed essays rather than works of rigorous scholarship. Of all his works, the best is probably *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, which is an admirably organized, sustained original study. *Landscape Into Art*, another valuable and original book, is a group of lectures given by Clark while he held the Slade Professorship at Oxford from 1946 to 1950. "The Slade Professorship," he says, "is a peculiar institution, very different in intention from the professorships of art history which are usual in the universities of America and the Continent. . . . Its founders . . . did not intend that the professor should give his pupils a detailed survey of the history of art, or should make them proficient in such branches of the subject as stylistic criticism and iconography. They intended, in Ruskin's words, that he should 'make our English youth care somewhat for the arts.'" This is still manifestly Lord Clark's purpose in the present volume.

The title *The Romantic Rebellion* belies the nature of the book, by indicating an analysis or even a chronicle of a fairly well-defined historical movement. Instead, it is a series of close looks at ten very distinctively original artists working during the momentous period between 1760 and 1860, and at three more who can be said to continue the romantic and

classic traditions almost down to the very end of the nineteenth century. Like the celebrated *Civilisation*, this book is a collection of essays that were made out of lectures and into television programs before finally being printed under one title. There is no central thesis or unified historical vision in this study, which is, rather, a few notions about art and artists clarified by a look at a great many pictures.

Lord Clark is wonderful at doing this publicly and at showing how looking at works of art may be a lifelong, self-renewing pleasure, forever offering up new material—new connections, new insights, new attitudes—from old, familiar things. Without felicity and an economy of expression (a happy blend of semicolloquial terms and a brisk use of the vocabulary of traditional learning), this kind of criticism becomes pretentious and unpalatable burbling. But when Lord Clark, with august authority and expertise, states flatly that he finds something boring, he seems to invite everyone to express his own most immediate feelings about any work of art, and thus to do a proper kind of honor at least to the directness of the artist's original effort. In the next breath, Clark is confessing to new discoveries about something he once failed to appreciate, and so we are encouraged to follow that example as well. When he lectures, we are inclined to listen the more respectfully, since he allows not only for his own prejudices but also for any of ours.

During the period covered by this book, paintings often had an exciting public existence quite different from the one they experience today. Long before movies, people loved to see fantasies brought to life and popular attitudes dramatically depicted. In Paris and London, eager crowds would stand in line and pay to see a single huge canvas by Benjamin Haydon or Jacques Louis David, and they would often respond to it with strong emotion, participating actively in the event by strewing flowers or shaking their fists or fainting. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, artists, whether careful classicists or agitated romantics, were all committed to the concept of subject matter, and it is this commitment that wedded the two opposing movements. The public might be satisfied, outraged, or uplifted by an artist, but it could always know what the painting was about. Among all the artists Sir Kenneth deals with, only Turner privately indulged in pure color and painted

many canvases for his eyes alone, the way a modern artist might do; yet with his accumulated prestige, he could even successfully exhibit some of his incomprehensibly misty compositions, as long as they were identified and titled. Some of them, in fact, had very long specific titles about the time and place in which they were done, so as to show how intimately the artist had involved himself with the circumstances he was recording—often dangerous and dramatic ones, such as storm and fire.

TURNER IS A CENTRAL FIGURE in this book, which is written in a rather old-fashioned English tradition of art criticism, concentrating on French painting, proudly giving due space to the great English eccentrics—Blake, Fuseli, Turner, Constable—and completely ignoring the vast German romantic movement, with its echoes in America. In England, Turner did make an unprecedented poetic leap out of the whole conventional world of English topographical watercolors and Claude-like classical landscapes, with which he successfully began his long, extraordinary career, and into the most astounding painterly freedom, which antedated the impressionists and Whistler by more than a quarter century. Hazlitt called his glittering, swirling pictures "portraits of nothing, and very like." The English are right to be proud of him; and yet there is such a vivid resemblance between his *Hero and Leander*, for example, and one or two works by his American contemporary Thomas Cole that it seems wrong not to deal with Cole at all. Caspar David Friedrich is mentioned once but is not discussed.

Self-aware romanticism in the art of this period is distinguished, says Clark, by its concentration on releasing the emotion of fear, with the aid of a whole



Fuseli—"Plagued by persistent images."