encore, c’est cette appartenance à la «classe bourgeoise» qui aurait influencé l’évolution des œuvres automatistes: «Les peintres du groupe Borduas et Borduas lui-même eurent du mal à se dégager de l’emprise de leur milieu, ce milieu «bourgeois» qu’ils affectaient de mépriser... Il faudra l’exil pour que Borduas se détache et vole en plein ciel» (p. 35). Comme le caractère «cubiste» que Borduas, à partir de New York, reconnaîtra aux œuvres de l’Auto-
matisme québécois devait quoi que ce soit à cette classe bourgeoise qué-
béciose, qui rejetait certes tout de la révolution de Braque et de Picasso.

Cette confusion entre ideologies de classe et différentes catégories de pouvoir culminera dans l’accca-
usion ultime, à savoir que Borduas aurait utilisé une «morale terro-
riste», qui serait assimilable à celle du pouvoir politique duplissesta: «À la crainte généralisée qui consti-
tuait le centre psychologique de la société canadienne-française de
1948, Borduas oppose une autre terreur, celle des mots qui purifient
par le refus qu’ils expriment. Mais pouvait-il espérer que cette terreur
portueuse de refus entraînerait les foules à se transformer?» (p. 143-
144). Par quelle mauvaise foi s’attache-t-on ici à vouloir confon-
dre la «terreur» toute rhétorique

Dennis Reid Our Own Country Can-
da: Being an Account of the National
Aspirations of the Principal Land-
scape Artists in Montreal and Toronto
1860-1890. Ottawa, National Gal-

laries, que «la classe intellec-
tuelle qui sentait fleurir l’autorité
suprême du régime était disponible.
Dans ces conditions, la pensée de
Borduas n’avait rien de rébarbatif.
Les idées qu’il défendait circulaient
daus tous les milieux éclairés...»
(p. 117). On nous permettra bien
des réserves sur la disponibilité des
«milieux éclairés» des années 40 à
recevoir la pensée automatiste. Et

foules de terreur, société du
tion de la bourgeoisie,
autres de l’automatistes
«répression
révolution
urtisme

de l’esthèse qui se sentait
tre de conscience ou-
verte et nette, clairement articulée,
des mouvements encore diffus.

Plus important encore, on ne
parlera qu’autour et alentour de la
présence de Borduas dans le milieu
québécois si on n’interroge que ses
textes verbaux, au lieu d’analyser la
désconstruction idéologique opérée
par son moyen privilégié d’expres-
sion, la peinture. Les effets dynami-
ques et révolutionnaires de cette
œuvre picturale sont peut-être aussi
vulnérables dans les années 80
qu’ils étaient dans les années 40.

FERNAND SAINT-MARTIN
Université du Québec à Montréal

The exhibition Our Own Country
Canada, circulated by the National
Gallery of Canada in 1977-78,
allowed gallery-goers, for the first
time in over one hundred years, an
opportunity to assess the work of
the first Canadian artists. ‘Can-
dian’ being defined as those who
paid attention to the specifics of
the Canadian landscape. It was an
instructive and useful attempt to
bring into focus the nature of Cana-
dian painting during the last half
of the nineteenth century. Particularly
gratifying was the opportunity to
examine work by O’Brien, Fraser,
Wav, Jacob and others in depth
rather than in isolated examples. A
rich and comprehensive view of
Canadian, or rather English
Canadian art, it forced many to
realize that Canadian art did exist
before Tom Thomson.

What the exhibition missed was a
catalogue. Fortunately this lack has
now been remedied by Dennis
Reid’s book. While appearing con-
siderably after the exhibition the
book was well worth the wait. It is
obviously the result of careful, con-
sidered research and a deep sympa-
thy for and intimacy with the art. If
Reid is perhaps a little impatient
with what he calls the ‘jingoism’ of
the era, he recognizes and makes
his readers appreciate the impor-
tance of the act of our Victorian
predecessors.

As Stephen Vickers so aptly sug-
gests in his Foreword, the area
which Reid has chosen to explo-
are has been hitherto ‘a wilderness.’ It
is a mark of Reid’s considerable
achievement that we come through
the wilderness not only unscathed
but eager to delve further. One
hopes that we will soon see closer
examinations of the artists who fig-
ure so prominently in Reid’s story.

The book has a long subtitle,
Being an Account of the National
Aspirations of the Principal Land-
scape Artists in Montreal and
Toronto 1860-1890, which serves
well as a statement of its scope and
intent. Throughout we are remind-
ed of the need for the Dominion to
establish a sense of natural identity.
That artists should have turned to
the glories of the landscape seems,
in retrospect, only natural. What
Reid points out however, is that this
turn to the landscape is intimately
linked with commercial and territo-
rial expansion. As railways fanned
out from central Canada so too did
the artists and photographers.

Dividing the work into three
major sections, Reid deals in turn
with Montreal, Toronto and the
Dominion. Rather than attempt to
follow the whole scene he has con-
centrated on a number of major
artists and their activities (the
founding of societies amongst other
things). Discussing each in turn, he
gives us a brief resume of their lives
and careers to the end of each
period, picking up some artists
again as the story develops. It is sig-
ificant that while discussing the
work sensitively and clearly, Reid
also gives some attention to person-
ality. We are perhaps too ready to
John A. Fraser, Laurentian Splendour, 1880. Oil on canvas, 48.9 cm × 95.3 cm. Ottawa, Galerie nationale du Canada.

forget that artists are living, breathing creatures and not machines. O'Brien's personality played an important part in the formation of the RCA and accounts of Charles Horetzky's difficult persona shed considerable light on his photographs.

This should not in any way suggest that Reid places undue emphasis on character traits. The art remains the primary evidence and Reid's analyses are incisive. At the same time, he is not afraid to suggest that an image is beautiful or extraordinary. Indeed it is a mark of the book that we are often aware of Reid's personal affinity for the images.

Extensive use has been made of contemporary documents and newspaper accounts throughout the book. These are particularly useful, revealing much about the mindset of these good Victorians and the sense of optimism and promise which pervaded the period.

Perhaps what is most significant about the book however is the consideration of the landscape photographers - Notman, Baltzly, Horetzky and Henderson. Reid rightly suggests that these men were the equals of the more celebrated painters both in their art and in the minds of their contemporaries. The significance of the Notman firm can hardly be underestimated and photographs by Henderson, in particular, are remarkably powerful works of art. Far from being unthinking, mechanical reproductions, they reveal a highly personal sensibility.

On the whole the book is highly enjoyable but the high quality of the text is not matched by the illustrations. Regrettably the only colour is the dustjacket and the reproductions in the book are often too small and occasionally fuzzy. The second lack is in the bibliography, something more extensive would have been much appreciated. This especially when even browsing through the book, one realizes that it is a synthesis of information from a dizzying variety of sources.

These points aside, the book is highly readable and, to this reader at least, exciting. Dennis Reid's contributions to our knowledge of Canadian art have, in the past, been notable and the present book is no exception. It should become essential reading for all students of Canadian art.

IAN M. THOM
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria


This book was originally published to coincide with the widely reviewed and consistently praised retrospective exhibition of Rodchenko's work organized by the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in 1979. It contains an extensive photographic survey of the entire range of his work (including compass and ruler drawings, paintings, prints, sculptures, collages, photomontages, photographs, and designs for advertisements, book and magazine covers and illustrations, posters, logos, furniture, clothing, a teapot and a stage set), as well as critical essays, documentary texts representing Rodchenko's and his colleagues' writing from 1910 to 1941, and the reminiscences of his family and former students. A supplement, listed in the contents to include a catalogue list, chronology and bibliography, was missing from the copy of the book I received to review.

Like other artists of the period, Rodchenko was initially dedicated to a search for the new. In 1915 he wrote to his artist wife, Varvara Stepanova, 'Yes, I have found something to paint and think that it will be new and daring. I shall free painting, even Futurist painting from what it has up until now slavishly clung to... I have found an entirely original path' (as quoted in Alexander Lavrentiev's contribution to the book, 'Alexander Rodchenko: An Introduction to His Work,' p. 28). In 1919, in his manifesto for the X State Exhibition Moscow, he wrote, 'The crushing of all “isms” in paintings was for me the beginning of my resurrection... My work is to create new paintings... I am the inventor of new discoveries in painting' (p. 8).

By 1920 Rodchenko's statements reflect a change in his attitude. No longer was he satisfied simply to investigate new formal possibilities for painting and sculpture: his concern for an art that would serve society and its environment began to develop. His statement for the X19 State Exhibition Moscow read: 'Non-objective painting has left the Museums; non-objective painting is the street itself, the squares, the towns and the whole world. The art of the future will not be the cozy decoration of family homes. It will be just as indispensable as 48-storey skyscrapers, mighty bridges, wireless, aeronautics and submarines which will be transformed into art' (p. 8).

Having explored the formal properties of painting for the preceding six years, in 1921 Rodchenko exhibited three monochromatic canvases in the primary colours, following which he stopped painting for almost two decades. With Stepanova he wrote the Productivist Manifesto that year. It proclaimed the following slogans: '1. Down with art, long live technical