

Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada

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A MARI USQUE AD MARE (from sea to sea), the national motto; see **CANADA**.

ABBAY, Lloyd Robert. Poet, critic, novelist; b London, ON, 4 April 1943; son of Madeleine (Ridell) and Edward Lloyd Abbey. The author of two books on Percy Bysshe Shelley, Abbey taught at U Toronto, where he earned his PhD (1971), and at U British Columbia. His strongly imagistic poetry, best represented in *Selected Poems 1959–1989*, examines the geology and marine life of the Pacific. He also wrote *The Last Whales* (1991), a novel told from the point of view of blue whales who outlive humanity.

R. Gooding

ABLEY, Mark. Journalist, poet, travel writer, editor; b Leamington, England, 13 May 1955; son of Mary (Collins), teacher, and Harry Abley, church musician and piano teacher; emig Nov 1961. A Rhodes scholar, Abley moved frequently between England and Canada, settling in 1983 in Pointe-Claire, QC, as a freelance journalist. *Beyond Forget: Rediscovering the Prairies* (1986) records his personal travels back to the Saskatchewan town 'Forget' (pronounced 'forzhay'). Effectively, this book transcends the TRAVEL-WRITING genre. The double entendre of the title announces a different premise: encoded metaphors have the power to determine our attitudes to place and time. Abley's two books of poetry (*Blue Sand, Blue Moon*, 1988, and *Glasburyon*, 1994) extend this fascination with language, and his literary journalism is enhanced by a lucid style.

G.N. Forst

ABORIGINAL writers, see **FIRST NATIONS**, **INUIT**, **NATIVE**, and names of individual language groups.

ABSURD, a term used variously to describe (1) a logical dismissal, (2) an element in some forms of HUMOUR, or (3) a category of literary expression, derived from Albert Camus's description of the individual's condition in the modern world: that of being a stranger in an inhuman universe. Embraced by such international dramatists as Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, the THEATRE of the Absurd came later to Canada; it is evident in the work of Claude

GAUVREAU, Jacques LANGUIRAND, Len PETERSON, and George WALKER. Some characteristics of the Absurd in poetry, fiction, and drama include repetition, lack of explanation, narrative discontinuity, incongruity between stage set and stage action, reductive logic, and the dissolution of received forms of 'standard' grammar, vocabulary, and word order.

ACADÉMIE CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE, an organization, based on the Académie Française (and, indirectly, on Plato's Academy, or School of Learning, 387 BC–AD 529), established in 1944, and devoted to fostering and defending the standards of the French LANGUAGE in North America. Its founders, led by Victor Barbeau, included Marius BARBEAU, Robert CHARBONNEAU, Robert CHOQUETTE, Marie-Claire DAVELUY, Léo-Paul DESROSIERS, Alain GRANDBOIS, and RINGUET. The academy currently has 36 seats, and it annually organizes conferences and acknowledges a body of literary work (such as that of Anne HÉBERT) that it considers to be of superior quality. It changed its name in 1992 to L'Académie des lettres du Québec. Jean ROYER wrote its history.

ACADIAN WRITING. Modern and contemporary Acadian literature ranges from fiction, poetry, and drama emphasizing regional, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics associated with Acadian identity to writing influenced by contemporary trends such as POSTMODERNISM and revealing a more cosmopolitan allegiance to the global North American and Canadian francophonie.

For a long time Acadian writing could be compared to Irish or Québec literature to the extent that it benefited from the rich ORAL tradition of a small, fairly homogeneous, and largely rural population, and to the extent that this heritage was supplemented by the NATIONALIST, conservative *collège classique* education offered to the elites by the Catholic Church until the 1980s. What is specific to earlier Acadian writing, notably as it emerged in the 19th century, is the impact and memory of the deportation of the Acadians in 1755–60 from what is now Nova Scotia, their subsequent return in the 1760s and 1770s, and their scattered settlement, mostly in what is now New Brunswick. In particular, the

dramatization of these events in the American Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *EVANGELINE* (1847) and its broad circulation in the form of Pamphile LEMAY's French translation (1865) – which every schoolchild learned by heart – contributed to prevailing definitions of Acadian writing. Inevitably, most Acadian writing of this period reveals a strong sense of place as well as of history, not least because in the 150 years between colonization and the identity-consolidating trauma of the Deportation, Acadian culture developed and thrived in relative isolation – 'benign neglect' is the term often used – from its European roots and its sister colony in NEW FRANCE. With France's rediscovery of Acadie through the works of the visiting French historian Edmé Rameau de Saint-Père (*La France aux colonies: acadiens et canadiens*, 1859), Acadian writers and scholars found new sources of inspiration for social and cultural reforms, while the founding of newspapers such as *Le Moniteur acadien* (est 1867) and *L'Évangeline* (est 1887) created venues for debate on the survival and re-emergence (or construction) of Acadian identity.

Three themes emerge from the early stage of Acadian writing, which lasted until the late 19th century and arguably until the Second World War, if not later. Especially prevalent is the PASTORAL theme of a paradise lost, an ELEGY for the mythical *pays de cocagne*, the Arcadian golden age associated with the prelapsarian Nova Scotian LANDSCAPE of the Annapolis Valley and Minas Basin at the head of the Bay of Fundy. Poetry and fiction are its main vehicles, newspapers and local printers its sponsors. Secondly, the struggle for French-language education rights, then defined in denominational terms, particularly in the wake of the Caraquet Riots of 1875, led to DRAMA, published speeches, ESSAYS, and journalism in support of a politically defined sense of Acadian identity. Jules Boudreau and Calixte DUGUAY's musical play *Louis Mailloux* (1975), about the riots and produced in Caraquet, addresses this legacy. The proceedings of the Acadian national conventions (held more or less annually after 1881) provide another focus for nationalist discourse, productively analyzed by Jean-Paid Hauteceur in *L'Acadie du discours* (1975). Finally, during what became known as the Acadian Renaissance of

the 1880s, Acadian writing at once looked forward to a glorious future and indulged in a cheerful nostalgia for the naive art of the folk, as expressed in the LOCAL COLOUR sketch and the transcription of legend, genres that joined ranks with other literary forms. However, late-19th-century Acadian writing blends such romantic, social-political, and REGIONALIST concerns; thematic and generic boundaries are fairly fluid. Typically, for example, the contributions of Marichette (Émilie Leblanc), published in *L'Évangeline* in the 1890s and edited as a book in 1982, prefigure the tongue-in-cheek humour of Antonine MAILLET and Viola Léger's famous *personnage* in *La sagouine*. Bridging the genres of theatre and monologue, the latter melding the POPULAR traditions of the *raconteur* and the impersonator or stand-up COMIC, *La sagouine* (1970) has sometimes single-handedly borne the burden of representing Acadian identity, while also addressing important questions concerning education, politics, culture, language, religion, and social reform.

Partly because of her spectacular international career, culminating in the awarding of France's prestigious Prix Goncourt to her novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979), Maillet also seems single-handedly to bridge the colonial and post-modern eras in Acadian writing. Contiguous with her prodigious output, the 1970s witnessed a broader cultural phenomenon sometimes referred to as the second Acadian Renaissance, which was characterized by the creation and expansion of publicly funded French-language post-secondary institutions such as U Moncton; new federal, provincial, and local community development initiatives; official bilingualism in the province of New Brunswick as of 1969; the emergence of Acadian publishers, most notably Éditions de l'Acadie in 1972; and the creation of the Acadian regional production office of the NATIONAL FILM BOARD in 1974. An Acadian literary renaissance, particularly in poetry, MUSIC, and film, accompanied these various social and cultural developments, and Maillet's work offers one significant point of reference for this period's effervescent literary nationalism. To the extent that such comparisons are valid, her *La sagouine*, published the same year as her PhD dissertation on Rabelais and Acadian popular traditions, could be said to have had the impact