

over its traditional seigneurial rights.

Over the next 30 years the Sulpicians adopted the role of helpmate to the urban bourgeoisie. They sold and/or commuted much of their urban and suburban properties and, due to restrictions exacted by the 1840 Ordinance on the amount the Seminary could invest in land, the Sulpicians began to invest in railroad and municipal bonds. At the same time, they maintained an urban presence as a social and religious benefactor thus helping to diffuse potential resistance to industrialization on the part of the growing number of urban poor. In rural areas the transition occurred at a much slower pace. Probably due to peasant poverty, rather than, as Young seems to say, peasant reluctance, the Sulpicians retained restrictive control of seigneurial rights in rural areas for a much longer period. Nevertheless, by 1890 only one per cent of the Seminary's revenue came from seigneurial income; in 1834 some 90 per cent had come from that sector.

Finally, Young shows how the accommodation to economic change transformed the Seminary's internal organization and, perhaps, its *raison d'être*. Administration became more systematized and bureaucratic. Land and debts were treated as commodities to be sold, rented, and developed. In fact a measure of just how completely the Sulpicians internalized the emerging industrial ethic can be seen in the sale of hundreds of overdue debts to third parties. In this way the Seminary avoided direct adverse publicity in exacting dispossession procedures. So much for the (probably mythical) notion of reciprocal relations under feudal tenure! The conceptual frame within which Young situates his discussion opens up many more avenues for future research. By highlighting the 1837-41 period as the major transitional point in nineteenth-century Quebec's movement from a pre-

industrial to an industrial environment and by emphasizing the repressive, elitist, and non-democratic nature of that transition, Young builds on the work of Robert Sweeney and others in the Montreal Business History Group. As Young recognizes, this context requires a more focused and detailed explication before it can be granted general acceptance. This discussion of the Seminary in transition is one building block. Hopefully the Montreal Business History Group's most recent collaborative effort, a source compendium for legal history in nineteenth-century Quebec, presages the next step: a detailed exposition of the role of law during the transition. PETER A. BASKERVILLE

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EXPORT AGRICULTURE AND THE CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA. Robert G. Williams. Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1986. Pp. xvi + 257. \$29.95.

Over the past decade, what is now referred to as "the crisis in Central America" has generated a flood of print not even the most conscientious of readers could possibly keep up with. As with any glut, much of what is being produced is inferior and perishable in quality. It would indeed be a pity if the preponderance of mediocre "crisis literature" presently available results in the work of Robert G. Williams being overlooked, for he observes recent events in Central America through a very different lens than most.

Williams conducted the research for his book during academic year 1982-83, when civil strife in Guatemala and El Salvador was at its peak and when the contra war in Nicaragua was starting up. Four years previously, Williams had filed

a Ph.D. dissertation at Stanford on the Central American Common Market. What he concluded in his doctoral work was that, shorn of administrative rhetoric, common market economics in Central America mean misery for many and abundance for a few. The Central American Common Market came into existence as an integral part of the Alliance for Progress, a development initiative promoted by the United States throughout Latin America during the 1960s and early 1970s in response to the Cuban Revolution. Contrary to American designs, the Alliance for Progress in Central America actually widened the already enormous gap between the rich and the poor, exacerbated the very conditions our foreign policy sought to ameliorate, and thus created situations in which violent revolution, to use a term first popularized by President Kennedy and later circulated by Walter La Feber, became "inevitable." The role, in this context, that export booms in cotton and beef production played in the "inevitability" of Central American revolutions, revolutions still to run their full course, is Williams's primary focus of attention.

Cotton, argues Williams, has always been a potential export earner for Central American producers because of "cheap labor, rich soil, and a favorable climate." But not until the discovery and deployment of DDT in the 1940s were pest conditions controlled satisfactorily enough "to make the crop commercially viable." Private investment in cotton was augmented by government and World Bank programmes that, by the mid-1970s, transformed the Pacific coast of the isthmus, hitherto commercially untapped, into an important "export zone." Entrepreneurial endeavour was such that "several dozen families who were already wealthy before the cotton boom" became even wealthier. Agricultural labourers, on

the other hand, found that cotton production "left little room for the subsistence plot, the peasant family, or the paternalism of yesteryear." An "entire social fabric" was thus "progressively weakened," making Central America "ill-prepared for the shocks that were to tear through the region in the seventies."

Unlike cotton, which demands that specific environmental conditions be met in order for it to grow, cattle may be raised anywhere there is grass for pasture. Commercial beef production, therefore, was spatially more threatening to peasant agriculture, contends Williams, than was the cultivation of cotton. As with cotton, the principal "beneficiaries of beef" were a "small group of very powerful families" who "tapped profits from almost every phase of the beef business, from extensive grazing of cattle on marginal lands, to fattening operations, to slaughtering cattle in family-owned packing plants." Far more so than cotton, however, "the beef business came to be dominated by joint ventures or holding companies with ownership and directorships shared between wealthy, politically-connected Central Americans and wealthy, politically-connected multinational corporations."

Cotton and beef, then, together with long-established export crops like coffee and sugar, created throughout Central America such extreme geographies of inequality that, following the collapse of agricultural commodity prices on the world market in the 1970s, social unrest and political upheaval were unavoidable. This, in essence, is Williams's thesis, and he ends by summarizing the differences in internal government response to the crisis, which varied from outright war in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, to intensified militarization and repression in Honduras, to the emergence of confrontation between growers and workers in Costa Rica. Williams, who

dedicates his book to "the people of my own Southland, whose history runs parallel to Central America's," does not shy away from his responsibility as an informed American citizen to speak out against his government's Central American policies. He concludes, having drawn parallels between the aspirations of the Alliance for Progress and the recommendations of recent US initiatives like the Kissinger Commission, that "even if the wars in Central America were ended today, the long-run development program would produce the conditions for a resurgence of the conflict within ten or fifteen years. To build a policy for peace in the region, an approach fundamentally different from the policies of the past will have to be taken."

If, from a geographical perspective, Williams is refreshingly aware of certain ecological dimensions of the crisis, at times his analysis is just too neatly and exclusively economic. He could, for instance, be more mindful of the part played by demography in bringing matters to crisis level, and might also be more cognizant of the fact that cycles of boom and bust have characterized the economic history of Central America from early colonial times on. These observations aside, this is an insightful and well-written contribution, considerably more rewarding to read than other works in the "crisis genre" it rises respectably above.

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Fiction

LITTLE WILSON AND BIG GOD: Being the First Part of the Confessions of Anthony Burgess. Anthony Burgess. Toronto: Stoddart, 1987. Pp. ix + 460. \$28.95.

The grand maître of Monaco, busily turning out his one thousand words a day

under the poster of Marilyn Monroe, has produced his best book in years. His later fictions abandoned character in favour of verbal experiments (*MF, Napoleon Symphony*), social/moral Messages (1985, *Earthly Powers*), literary journalism to keep the home fires burning (*Earnest Hemingway, Flame into Being* - on D.H. Lawrence) and televisual epics on Jesus Christ, Michelangelo, Napoleon Buonaparte - to say nothing about the roughspoken, tender epic of prehistoric love and lust called *Quest for Fire*.

Here we have nothing but a long string of unforgettable characters: his pub-loving absent father and a very bad father too as he once told me; the bog-Irish stepmother best described in *Enderby* in a bravura passage Paul Theroux learned by heart; stepsisters with their fine Irish creamy flesh, one of whom was a specialist on hell and its torments; curiously sadistic nuns who also served as teachers; little Joan Price, an early flame who threatened to become a whore when, sadly, she reciprocated his advances; Phyllis Cornthwaite, the maid afraid of thunder on whose body he lost his virginity in a shallow variety of the sin of Sodom; his first wife, Llewela Isherwood Jones who lost her virginity at 14 and, in later life, committed spectacular adulteries in the spirit of Molly Bloom comparing different bowstrings (later she took a bottle of gin a day and developed cirrhosis of the liver); as well as the gorgeous originals of multi-racial characters who, revised and amended, populated his first published fictions and assembled in *The Malayan Trilogy*. The trilogy includes *Time for a Tiger*, *The Enemy in the Blanket*, and *Beds in the East* which somehow intimate a somewhat larger sequel entitled *A Tiger in Bed is the Enemy of Time* - an unlikely work to come from the maestro. Gore Vidal has recently suggested that Burgess enjoys being humiliated by women. It is doubtful if he