

Enfin, tous ces problèmes sont bien retravaillés dans les longues études consacrées à chacun des vingt graveurs dont on expose ou reproduit les œuvres. Chacune de celles-ci est reproduite dans un format convenable.

On feuillète donc cet ouvrage de référence comme un livre de belles images, en sentant bien que la gravure fait passer dans un acquis esthétique tout un monde de sensations que les autres disciplines n'ont jamais rendu. Le *Port au Persil* d'André Biéler rappelle l'esthétique joyeuse et primesautière de certains bois de Raoul Dufy. *L'épouvantail* de Rodolphe Duguay parle mieux d'un certain dialogue entre la terre et les cieux que la majorité de ses tableaux n'ont pu le faire. Puis, quelle découverte que ce *Cantique des cantiques* de Cecil Buller et autres bois si près du symbolisme rigoureux d'André Derain! Il n'est pas déplaisant de revoir les eaux-fortes de Gagnon, et celles de Neilson. *A Canadian village* (p. 112) ne rappelle-t-il pas, fortuitement, le maître de Redon, Rodolphe Bresdin, qui enseigna la gravure à Montréal en 1874? On n'en finirait plus de noter les impressions que ce livre suscite.

Au compte de l'ouvrage de référence, il faut mentionner d'abord la très utile chronologie des événements marquants de l'histoire de la gravure au Québec, puisqu'elle figure au début du volume. Le lexique des termes et des principaux procédés de gravure vient à la fin, précédant la bibliographie. Cette dernière, compilée par Madame Michèle Grandbois, paraît exhaustive et bien faite, même si quelques ouvrages mentionnés à l'intérieur des commentaires biographiques et critiques n'y apparaissent pas.

JEAN-RENÉ OSTIGUY

Conservateur

Banque Nationale du Canada

IN SECLUSION WITH NATURE:

THE LATER WORK OF

L. LEMOINE FITZGERALD, 1942 to 1956

Michael PARKE-TAYLOR

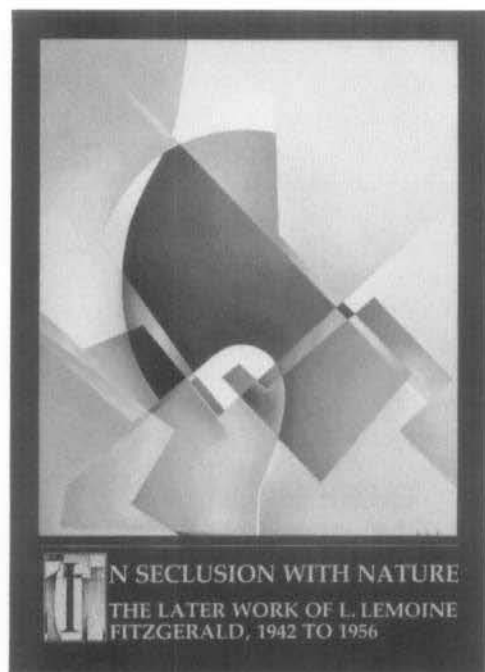
Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1988

237 pp., 16 col.,

129 b/w illus., \$15.00

Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald has been the subject of five previous exhibition catalogues with critical essays devoted entirely or largely to his work,¹ and all but one were produced in the artist's home city of Winnipeg. He and his work have also been covered in two Master of Arts theses: Karen Sens' *A Discussion of the Stylistic Development in the Dated Oil Paintings of Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890-1956)* (University of British Columbia, 1970), and Elizabeth Wylie's *The Development of Spirituality in the Work of Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald 1890-1956* (Concordia University, 1981).

For present purposes, it is significant that both of the M.A. theses go beyond merely documenting and cataloguing FitzGerald's life and work to address (in their distinct ways) the fundamental (and initially very puzzling) problem of how to account for the artist's ability to alternate between naturalist and abstract approaches from 1950 onward. His propensity to switch back and forth between two quite different ways of painting and drawing raises questions concerning the logical continuity of FitzGerald's *œuvre*. Indeed, in a catalogue essay for the artist's large 1978 retrospective at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (the first such exhibition on FitzGerald in twenty years), Ann Davis suggested that the reason for the lack of FitzGerald studies was the fact that the artist's work "does not fall into neat packages of styles and periods." He "moved from medium to medium, seldom content to stick with any



one for very long. And... his styles are cyclical, reappearing... years or even decades after their initiation."² The problem of continuity in FitzGerald's art is complicated by his obvious and much-remarked interest in his subjects *as* subjects. This degree of interest on the artist's part would seem to hinder any argument that he approached his subjects solely (or even primarily) as exercises in formalist problem-solving. If there *is* an underlying unity or a clear development in FitzGerald's work, on what is it based if not on strictly formal or stylistic concerns?

In Seclusion with Nature does much to demonstrate that what may at first appear to be a jumpy or even an incoherent career was in fact grounded on a single centre around which FitzGerald tested an increasingly sophisticated and subtle series of variations. Michael Parke-Taylor's preparation of the catalogue

relied heavily upon Elizabeth Wylie's thesis research notes. These had led her to conclude that the development and coalescing of a variety of spiritualist concerns in FitzGerald's thought offer one possibility for seeing the artist's work as evidence not of an erratic set of unconnected points of interest, but of the evolution of a self-consistent set of basic concerns. In his catalogue essay Parke-Taylor does not reiterate all of Wylie's arguments about links that can be proposed between FitzGerald's thought and assorted religious/metaphysical/spiritualist traditions. Instead he makes particular mention only of Theosophy. FitzGerald's knowledge of many other paths to spiritual growth is only conjectural or, at best, probable but unproven. It is known, however, that he was friendly with Lawren Harris and Bertram Brooker, both of whom were well-aware of and (especially in the case of Harris) in sympathy with theosophical beliefs.

Although FitzGerald did not adhere dogmatically to any religious or spiritual approach, and so cannot be gauged point-by-point against the tenets of Theosophy, he was undeniably aware of its basic ideals and in sympathy with them. Parke-Taylor makes one aspect of theosophical belief central to his essay: the emphasis that Theosophy put on the essential unity of all things. While this no doubt results in an oversimplification of the multitude of influences on FitzGerald's spiritual development (see Wylie's thesis for a more exhaustive treatment of this theme), it perfectly serves Parke-Taylor's argument that FitzGerald was deeply concerned with Nature, and specifically with the underlying reality of an ultimate metaphysical unity of which all natural phenomena are physical manifestations.

Such a belief is certainly not unique to Theosophy, but there is little justification in criticising Parke-Taylor for not exploring the potentially labyrinthine combination of sys-

tems of thought that contributed to FitzGerald's spiritual maturation. He is more specifically concerned with distilling their common essence concerned with distilling their common essence of belief in universal unity, and with using that to further his argument that most of FitzGerald's art is tied together by the artist's consequent approach to Nature. Such an approach could deal with Nature simultaneously as image (in the representational paintings and drawings) and as subject (in most of the works, both representational and abstract, of the 1940's and 1950's). Parke-Taylor's contention is neatly constructed. He begins in 1942, during FitzGerald's first visit to Bowen Island (British Columbia) and the artist's deep impression that he was becoming one with Nature. FitzGerald's goal, outlined by him at least as early as 1942 (the date of the earliest pieces in the exhibition and catalogue), was to grasp through the minute examination of natural phenomena (landscapes, rocks, flowers), the essence of the macrocosmic forces that determined the growth and structure of Nature. "We can only develop an understanding of the great forces behind the organization of nature by endlessly searching the outer manifestations," he wrote to his student and confidante Irene Heywood Hemsworth. "And we can only know ourselves better and still better by this search."³

This is the central clue for the analysis of all of FitzGerald's subsequent work. The depiction of natural phenomena – the meticulous capturing of ephemeral tonal gradations and minute details – was not an end in itself, but rather a gateway leading to the potential discovery of the underlying oneness of all things. It may well be significant that FitzGerald's self-portraits and nudes, though useful as problem-solving exercises or as autobiographical references, rarely seem to be fully-finished works in their own right. That status was usually re-

served for the landscapes and still lifes. Parke-Taylor quotes judiciously from FitzGerald's letters and diary, marshalling a series of persuasive remarks that confirm the artist's determined search for unity not only amongst the inanimate objects of Nature, but also between those objects and human beings. Thus the remarkable resemblance that FitzGerald's painted trees have to human limbs is given intellectual justification. To his credit, Parke-Taylor does not become so entangled with this line of thinking that he abandons other possibilities, notably that FitzGerald was projecting psychosexual anxieties or desires onto the landscape. At the same time, however, he clearly favours the pantheism-based theory.

Given this line of interest, FitzGerald's explorations in abstraction (securely datable to 1950, although there had been a few earlier forays) may be seen not only as logical continuations of personal concerns, but as actually *necessary* in the context of his intellectual and spiritual development. The too-obsessive capturing on paper or canvas of the minutiae of the physical world risked depriving his art of the quasi-mystical analysis that it was intended to promote. FitzGerald's naturalism had already, by 1950, tended toward a variation of realism that sacrificed a degree of objective accuracy to a heightened sense of otherness. (The anthropomorphic trees and rocks are obvious examples.) Abstraction offered the tempting opportunity to seize the almost incommunicable essence of the world – the forces of order that were manifested on a more mundane (visual) level in the petals of a flower or the spirals of a shell. To this end FitzGerald based his abstracts on natural phenomena, sometimes retaining recognizable traces of them in the final pictures and sometimes rarefying the original imagery so extensively that the finished works seem (erroneously) to be completely non-objective. To insist on seeing the

abstractions as having formal concerns as their sole (perhaps even their principal) driving force would thus be missing the main point.

It is in this respect that *In Seclusion with Nature*, along with Ms. Wylie's thesis before it, makes a welcome contribution to FitzGerald scholarship. It offers a valid alternative to the analysis of the paintings and drawings in terms of the exploration of formal and technical problems. That variety of analysis was typified by Patricia Bovey's rationalisation of FitzGerald's 1950's turn to abstraction, in the catalogue to the major 1978 retrospective of his work:

Abstraction was a logical step in FitzGerald's development. Throughout his career he had always been interested in form, the relationship of objects, and the organization of space. He studied and painted objects from a variety of angles, at times reorganizing the background to suit his purposes. ... FitzGerald was also interested in the portrayal of objects in varying light conditions and the change in their forms as a result. ... Another step towards abstraction, already seen in the work he did on the west coast, was his deliberate elimination of all extraneous details in the renditions of fog, water and sky. That he, in the 1950's, concerned himself with the depiction of form, space and light, and their relationships with geometric shapes rather than realistic objects, is understandable. Always an avid reader, FitzGerald was certainly aware of, and knowledgeable about, all the modern art movements, and many of their theories supported these experiments.⁴

Other authors have reached similar conclusions that for FitzGerald form, not content, was the paramount consideration. This was perhaps the inevitable conclusion to draw while the Modernist paradigm held sway in art criticism. It can, of course, be reconciled with

FitzGerald's practice of alternating between abstract and naturalistic pictures at the end of his career, assuming that the naturalistic works are seen in dispassionate formalist terms. This approach can also fit well with the artist's combination of naturalistic and semi-abstract elements in single drawings and paintings during the 1930's and 1940's. Indeed, Parke-Taylor reproduces on p. 27 a c. 1930's photograph by FitzGerald which shows a nude model contemplating an arrangement of geometrical objects. "The abstract qualities of form and modulation of tone," he notes, "are here made manifest in the juxtaposition between the living figure and the objects." However, what both Wylie and Parke-Taylor demonstrate is that there is another way – one that has little to do with formalism and that makes greater sense of FitzGerald's own writings – to account for the artist's work during the last fourteen years of his career. And, as usual in this catalogue, a strategically-selected quotation from FitzGerald is used to underline the point nicely: "Art is not design, structure, volume, tensions and all the modern vocabulary only. Surely there are some human values as well that don't have to be sweet sentimentality. ..." ⁵

The only problems worth noting with the *In Seclusion with Nature* catalogue stem from the shortness of the essay. At twenty-three pages, it is concise and direct, but at the price of leaving the reader hungry for the examination of one or two potentially rich tangents – particularly those that would have provided a more fully-rounded account of the intricate artistic and social contexts within which FitzGerald developed his quasi-mystical approach both to Nature and to his art. The text adheres firmly to the last fourteen years of his career, making almost no reference to events in his life prior to 1942.

On the one hand, there is of course ample justification for such a strategy. As noted

above, it was in 1942, on Bowen Island, that FitzGerald seems to have begun to think seriously about the inter-relationship between spiritual concerns and Nature. Further, in a catalogue like *In Seclusion with Nature*, that attempts to identify the points of continuity in a body of paintings and drawings that alternate between abstract and representational pieces, it makes sense to give most of one's attention to those years in which FitzGerald produced all of his abstract pictures, as well as some of his most ambitious representational works. They are the years that pose the most trenchant questions about the unity of his art, and this exhibition and catalogue explore them in revealing isolation.

However, given the importance that Parke-Taylor attaches to the artist's approach to Nature, there would have been significant advantage in giving further consideration to the important personal and national identity roles played by Nature for FitzGerald in particular, and for Canadian artists in general, before 1942. There is a brief mention early in the essay about how time spent on a Manitoba farm in his youth may have acted as a catalyst for FitzGerald's quasi-mystical approach to Nature, but there is a case to be made for further thought along similar lines. As one example of another avenue of potentially fruitful speculation: FitzGerald accepted an invitation to become the tenth member of the by-then misnamed Group of Seven in 1932, a fact not addressed in the catalogue. Although he is known to have been firmly (if undemonstratively) attached to Canada and its landscape,⁶ neither FitzGerald's personality nor his art meshed neatly with the aggressive nationalism of most of the other Group members. Nor did FitzGerald's work entirely echo Harris' Theosophy-based nationalism, in which Canada and the Canadian landscape were seen as sources of creativity and spiritual resonance

distinct from and superior to those emanating from foreign countries and landscapes. An attempt to compare FitzGerald's art and thought to these two approaches to the land (while bearing in mind the mystical or spiritualist implications in the landscape paintings of such contemporaries as J.W.G. Macdonald) might have established a firmer contextual background for his relationship with Nature. Though somewhat isolated in Winnipeg, FitzGerald can be most profitably understood as embodying one variation of a set of thematic and spiritual concerns common to Canadian landscape painters of the time.

The clarity of argument encouraged by the shortness of the essay thus creates a few other minor problems of emphasis, but they pale when seen against the tight inner logic of the text as a whole. The work is complemented by two very useful appendices – a draft text by Lawren Harris and a transcription of FitzGerald's 1954 CBC Radio interview "Painters of the Prairie." There is also a detailed listing of post-1942 exhibitions and reviews, and a selected bibliography. Each of the eighty-four drawings and paintings in the exhibition is reproduced and accompanied by exhaustive notes on its history. These are all valuable additions to a catalogue that, although certainly not the final word on the last years of FitzGerald's career, is the ground-breaking publication on the subject.⁷

BRIAN FOSS

Department of Art History
Concordia University

Notes

1 These are: (1) Patricia BOVEY, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald and Bertram Brooker: Their Drawings* (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1975); (2) Helen COY, L. LeMoine FitzGerald Exhibition (Gallery I.L.L., University of Manitoba, 1977); (3) Patricia BOVEY and Ann DAVIS, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: The Development of an Artist* (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1978); (4) Maggie CALLAHAN, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: His Drawings and Watercolours* (Edmonton Art Gallery, 1982); and (5) Helen COY, *FitzGerald as Printmaker. A Catalogue Raisonné of the First Complete Exhibition of the Printed Works* (University of Manitoba, 1982).

2 Ann DAVIS, "Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: A North American Artist," in BOVEY and DAVIS, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: The Development*, 27.

3 FitzGerald to Hemsworth, 23 May 1942 (given as 1952 by Parke-Taylor). (Heywood Hemsworth typescript; quoted on p. 17 of the catalogue.)

4 Patricia BOVEY, "Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: Some European influences on His Work," in BOVEY and DAVIS, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: The Development*, 94.

5 FitzGerald to Robert Ayre, 25 July 1949. (Robert Ayre Papers, Queen's University Archive, Kingston; quoted on p. 29 of the catalogue.)

6 See, for example, FitzGerald to H.O. McCurry, 24 August 1938 (National Gallery of Canada Archives). A relevant excerpt from this letter is quoted in Ann DAVIS, "Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: A North American Artist," in BOVEY and DAVIS, *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: The Development*, 44.

7 Elizabeth Wylie's thesis is substantially more extensive, but is not available in published format.

CONTEMPORARY INUIT DRAWINGS

Marion E. JACKSON and Judith M. NASBY
(with introduction by Judith M. Nasby;
essays by Marion E. Jackson
and Nelson H.H. Graburn)
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1987
118 pp., 14 col., 96 b/w illus., \$15.00



Despite their importance as the source of Inuit printmaking, drawings have been a long-neglected medium in the exhibition and collection of Inuit art. Sensitive to this "under-representation" in public institutions,¹ the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre has acquired over 300 contemporary Inuit drawings. Their recent touring exhibition based largely on this collection included eighty-five drawings by forty-three artists from communities across the Canadian Arctic. The accompanying catalogue documents this wide-ranging survey of graphic images created by artists whose reputations (until recently) have rested on stonecut, stencil, and lithograph prints of their drawings.

The exhibition catalogue outlines the historical development of Inuit graphic art with illustrations of pictographs on archaeological and ethnographic artifacts as well as engravings on ivory tusks, a technique adapted from the scrimshaw art of New England whalers. Pencil drawings collected in the early 20th century by filmmaker, Robert Flaherty, and anthropologist, Knud Rasmussen, chronicle early attempts by Inuit draughtsmen to use the drawing materials introduced by the explorers. A lively work by Nungusuituq (Enooesweetuk), Flaherty's guide, describes four hunt-