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Canadian Sketches

1. The Guv Comes Come

TORONTO

"Well well," I said, shaking his hand in the sitting room of his hotel suite. "Dear old friend." His hair has long been white. But he had put on some weight since last I saw him, at least twelve years before when he conducted a concert of his music at the National Arts Center in Ottawa. We embraced and then we sat down in soft armchairs in front of a window that looked out on a curved street of well-behaved homes and trees in their winter undress. The hotel was the Bradgate Arms, on University Avenue just south of St. Clair. "This is a nice hotel," I said. "New?"

"Six months," Robert Farnon said. His accent has been seriously modified by his years in Britain but it is not quite English. His speech is well-enunciated and exceptionally clear and very polite. "You know, Ernest Seitz used to live on this very location. *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise*?

"Lyrics by Gene Lockhart," I said.

"That's *right*," Bob said.

"Early Canadian trivia," I said. "It's the kind of stuff Americans never know about us. Mack Sennett, Jack Warner, Mary Pickford, Norma Shearer, all that bunch. How do you like your home town now?" Bob was born in Toronto, as were Percy Faith and Gil Evans. This makes the city notably influential in American music, which curious fact remains unperceived by Canadians and Americans alike. It is in a way improper for Canada to claim Gil as its own, since he, like Glenn Ford, moved to California when he was in the latter half of his teens. Gil's mother left Toronto for the Canadian west when he was quite young, then moved with her second husband, whose name Gil bears (he was born Ian Green, and his father was Australian), and thence to California. If, however, character is formed as early as the psychologists say — and some say it is before the age of three — then Gil's temperament was to some important extent shaped by the Canadian experience. Gil still remembers the bitter prairie winters. And there is something about the melancholy grandeur of his writing, the way he moves blocks of sound around, that reminds me of the paintings of the Group of Seven, and most particularly A.Y. Jackson. Maybe it's illusion, but I think I hear the west in Gil's music, and I think hear Canada. *Sketches of Spain — A View of Toledo*, as painted by Lauren Harris.

"Well " Bob said, "I went for a walk this afternoon along St. Clair Avenue, and I thought, 'How beautiful it is.'"

"I believe Toronto has become the most beautiful city in North America, and in a lot of ways the most interesting. It's quite a change from the time when Stephen Leacock said he wanted to die in Toronto on a Sunday because the transition was so slight. I remember when the best restaurant in town was Basle's, and the top of their menu was the hot beef sandwich. Leacock also said they didn't bury the dead in Toronto, they walked them up and down Yonge Street. But then he was a Montrealer, so we know his prejudice."

"The change is incredible," Bob said.

"If you walked along that part of St. Clair Avenue," I said, "you passed Glenn Gould's old apartment. It's a yellow brick port-hole modern building, circa 1935. And the fake Gothic apartment building immediately south of here, Fletcher Markle used to live there. I've got a great Fletcher Markle story for you." Fletcher Markle has a considerable track record as a producer and director in both films and television and for that matter radio drama, going back to Orson Welles and the Mercury Players. "Fletcher came back to Canada about 1970 to become head of drama at the CBC." The CBC is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, potentially the finest television and radio network in the world but hopelessly mired in a mediocrity of its making. "Someone introduced me to Fletcher in a restaurant, just after I moved back here for four years. He said, 'Since you returned, how many people have asked you, "Why did you come back?"' The implication of course is that you must have blown it everywhere else, since no one in his right mind would be here of his own free will. I told Fletcher, 'A number of times, as a matter of fact.' And he said, 'I've come up with an answer that stops them cold, and you're welcome to use it. Next time they ask you that, ask them, 'Why did *you* never leave.'"

"Oooooh," Bob said, "that's wonderful. May I use that?"

"Be my guest. It isn't mine, anyway, it's Fletcher's. And now that we're on the subject, why *are* you back?"

"Well," said Bob, who always sounds amazed by the respect in which he is held, "I got a telegram from the mayor. The Toronto Symphony is playing some of my music in a Christmas concert, and they want to give me a plaque or something. Oscar Peterson got one too."

"It's about bloody time," I said. There has long been an international Robert Farnon Appreciation Society, but Canada, and conspicuously the CBC, has almost studiously ignored him. I once wrote and narrated a one-hour documentary about Farnon for the CBC's AM radio network. Ten minutes or so into the show, the network broke into commence a report on one of the American lunar landings. For the remainder of the hour an announcer described the pulse, heartbeat, respiration, and other telemetric readings from the astronauts. There was nothing else to describe: they were asleep. And the displaced Farnon documentary was never re-run.

"Lorne Green told me a story," I said. "I first remember him of course as the CBC's chief news announcer, during the war. After the war, he knew that television was coming in fast, and he started that School of Broadcasting Arts. Andrew Allan taught writing and Fletcher Markle taught directing, among others. They trained a lot of people, including Leslie Nielsen. As a matter of fact, Fred Davis went to that school."

Fred Davis, a prominent television personality in Canada, played trumpet in Farnon's Canadian Band of the Allied Expeditionary Force. Fred remembers with pleasure Farnon's lack of pretense and his indifference to military protocol. Bob was in effect the boss officer, but he was also, as they say, just one of the cats. A number of members of the band were moonlighting in England. Fred booked a gig for a small group at a British officer's dance. At the last minute, the piano player couldn't make it. Fred asked Bob to sub for him, although Bob's original instrument is trumpet. (Percy Faith said Bob played creditable drums as well, and in the film *Gentlemen Marry Brunettes* he dubbed the vocals for Ralph Meeker.) This presented a problem. Officers were not supposed to hob-nob with enlisted men and certainly not to play sideman gigs under the command of a private. And so to pass unnoticed, Bob wore his battle dress, which was the same for both officers and enlisted men — the waist-length windbreaker that become known, curiously, as the Eisenhower jacket when the

Americans entered the war and adopted the style. The band assembled on the stand but there were not yet any dancers to play for, except a very young English lieutenant and his girl. No doubt to impress her with his newfound authority, the lieutenant gave Fred a dressing down for not starting to play. Farnon got up quietly from the piano and shoved his captain's pips under the lieutenant's nose and said, "Who do you think you're talking to?" along with a few more colorful phrases. "Anyway," I continued, "Lorne said that he thought someone like Andrew Allen should head TV when the CBC started up the new network. And then it was announced that someone who was the farm broadcaster would be head of it." ("His name was Fergus Mutrie," Fletcher Markle told me two weeks later in California.) " Lorne was very upset by the appointment and decided to take up the issue with Ernie Bushnell, who was then head of the CBC. So they went down to the King Edward Hotel for a drink, and Lorne asked, 'Why?' And Bushnell said, 'He's very creative, Lorne.' Lorne pointed out that television would be a visual medium and asked if the man had any experience with film. 'No, but he's very creative,' Bushnell said. Lorne asked if the man had had, then, any experience with graphics, visuals of any kind. 'No, but he's very creative,' Bushnell said. And finally, exasperated, Lorne said, 'What makes you keep saying he's so creative?' And Bushnell said, 'He makes all his own furniture.' Lorne said that he decided right then and there that he was going to get out of Canada."

Bob laughed that rich and jolly laugh of his.

"You know," I continued, "Percy was quite bitter about it. He said he'd been the token Jew of the CBC. And then they cut the budget on his orchestra. It was, he said, one of the most successful shows the CBC ever had — picked up in fact by one of the American networks, always the Canadian standard for success: recognition by the Americans. Just at that time, the *Carnation Contented Hour*, which came out of Chicago, asked him to be a summer replacement. And so Percy went to the States and never came back, just as you went to England and never came back."

"That's right," Bob said. "You know, of course, because we've discussed it before, that Percy was a very strong influence on me."

"Percy told me, this must have been about a year before he died, that you'd be sitting there playing trumpet with the left hand and writing vocal charts for your broadcasts with the other during the tacets."

"Only during the rehearsals!" Bob said. "I never did that when we were on the air." He laughed. "You know, Percy came to me and said, 'It's a little soul-destroying to see you doing that. I wish you'd stop.' So I promised not to do it again. I learned such a lot from Percy. Including what to leave out. I was 17 when I first went to the CBC. I worked for Geoffrey Waddington, not Percy, at that time. And he introduced me to Louis Weizman, who was the librarian of the Toronto Symphony. He was Percy's teacher and then he became mine."

"Either you or Percy told me a strange story about that guy."

"I think I told you that story. Well, he would come to me and say, 'I've just finished a new composition called *Parade of the Bumble Bees*, and it was note for note from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumble Bee*. He was so proud of it."

"Was he crazy?"

"Half mad, yes. But a marvelous teacher. He had no gift at all for composition, but he knew how to teach it."

"You told me that Delius was one of your influences."

"But more Debussy. And in heavy orchestral writing, Bartok. I am absolutely besotted by his music. When I was 12 or 15, it was Tchaikovsky. His orchestration. And he wasn't a bad tune-writer, either."

"Constant Lambert said that when you have that kind of flowing gift for full-blown melodies, it is difficult to shape them into larger formal structures, such as the symphony."

"That's quite true. But people can certainly learn from him, particularly his orchestration."

"Do you know who wrote extremely well, and we have been so saturated in his music that we cease to pay attention to it? Johann Strauss the Younger."

"Yes indeed. And it was just the popular music of the day. Dance music. Similar in quality to the dance music of the 1930s and '40s, don't you think?"

"Yes. I happen to think the bands reached their peak in the years right after the war."

"Artie Shaw with strings?"

"That was even a little earlier. The one he had after he returned from the South Pacific. The Woody Herman band of 1945. Dizzy's big band. The harmony had grown richer and the writing was more interesting. Let me ask you something about the writing before the war. A lot of those early arrangers had very good conservatory backgrounds — Don Redman, for example."

"I must tell you a story about Don Redman," Bob said.

"I can't believe these men were unaware of the harmonic extensions and that sort of thing."

"Of course they were aware of them."

"So they must have had to wait for the public to catch up with them, easing into these things slowly. They didn't use much of that sort of thing really until the 1940s."

"Excepting Ellington, of course. He was using a fair dose of that sort of thing in the 1930s. You know, Don Redman was the first man who ever showed me a score. I was playing in my brother Brian's band at the Brant Inn." The Brant Inn was one of the suburban dance halls that once proliferated across North America. It was on the shore of the western end of Lake Ontario, just outside Hamilton. "Don Redman came in with his band on a one-night stand. I was just 15. And I was writing arrangements for the band the hard way — each part spread out on a table, the three trumpets and so on. And Don saw me doing this and introduced me to the art of scoring. He showed me one of his scores, the first time I had ever seen one. I'd write one bar for the first trumpet, then the same bar for the second trumpet — with one hand on the piano, making sure I didn't forget the chord I'd found. What Don showed me, all the parts organized on one page, was a revelation."

"How come your family produced three musicians?" The family, I knew, is of Irish and Scottish descent; Bob played tribute to these two heritages in two of his most exquisite albums, *From the Emerald Isle* and *From the Highlands* and to the country of birth in his *Canadiana Suite*.

"Four, actually," Bob said. "My sister, who lives in Sault Ste. Marie, plays great jazz piano. Well, my father played violin and my mother played piano, and quite well. Brian took up alto saxophone and clarinet. He is six years older than I. He encouraged me, and I encouraged Dennis, who played trumpet. He is six years younger than I."

Brian Farnon has for years been music director of Harrah's at Lake Tahoe. Dennis is best-known to American audiences for his scores to the Mr. Magoo animated cartoons. "Where is Dennis now?" I asked.

"Denny's in Holland, writing."

"They were both in your army band, weren't they?"

"That's right."

"You know, in Switzerland recently, Francy Boland played me some tapes of that wartime Glenn Miller band that I had never heard. And I had never realized how good it was."

"Oh yes. He had the cream of the players."

"Did you?"

"We did at first in *The Army Show*. But when it came to the Canadian band of the A.E.F, *The Army Show* band had been split into small entertainment units that went out among the troops. And they hated it. We lost all the great players. And so we had to audition a new crowd here in Toronto before going to England. Some fiddle players came auditioning holding the instruments on

their chests! And we had to take them. So I had to put together a whole new orchestra for that trilogy of bands, Glenn Miller for the Americans, George Melachrino for the British, and ourselves for the Canadians. Which was Eisenhower's idea, incidentally. He wanted a band for each of the three forces to entertain their own troops."

"How big was that band?"

"Quite big. Eight brass, five saxes, flute, percussion, drums, bass, piano, strings, chorus, and three solo vocalists. The strings were not very good. We had two or three good players and the rest were passengers. It wasn't anything like up to the standard of the Miller string section. He had guys out of the New York Phil."

"And you recorded those charts you wrote for that band, somewhat revised, for English Decca in the early days of the LP, right?"

"A lot of them, yes."

"That's why I say that of all the fine bands there were in uniform, the one that actually had the great post-war influence was of all things the Canadian, because of all the arrangers and composers who bought those LPs you made, which came out over here of course on London. I've never met an arranger who didn't own a number of them, and some of them have all of them. And every one of them acknowledges the influence you had on him. Years ago, Andre Previn told me a story. When John Williams was still known only as a pianist, Andre gave him one of your albums to listen to. Andre told me that John called him back that night and excitedly asked how you had voiced some thing or another at some point. And Andre said, 'I don't know, but if you figure it out, call me back.'"

"Really!" Bob said.

"And there's a footnote to that. Several years later I was writing something about you for somebody or other and I wanted to verify my recollection. So I asked John if the story was true, and he said, 'I honestly don't remember, but say it's true anyway, because I'd be honored to be mentioned in the same breath with that man."

"And I so admire John Williams!" Bob said.

"Another time I dropped in on Johnny Mandel and he said, 'You're just the man I want to see. I just made a list of people I want to meet before we're all too old to care. And one of them is Robert Farnon. I want you to introduce me to him.'"

"Well give me his phone number and I'll call him before I go back to England. You know, I once wrote Johnny Mandel a fan letter. It was after he scored *I Want to Live*. But I never got an answer. I sent it to the movie company, and perhaps he never got it." (Two weeks later in California, Mandel said, "You bet I never got it. If I'd received a fan letter from Robert Farnon, I'd have died on the spot." And he said that Bob had indeed phoned him and so at last they met, if only on a long distance line.)

"You know," Bob said, "I really cannot believe it when I hear these things about these people, because I admire them so much. Do you know who I want so much to meet? Gil."

"You missed him by one week. He was here doing a concert and an open rehearsal. He's another one who wants to meet you."

"I really don't understand it," Bob said.

Farnon is in fact universally known among musicians as the Guv'nor, or just the Guv. Arrangers devoured his 15 postwar albums, elegant settings of standard songs, notable for the lovely harmonic vocabulary, the linear beauty of the voice-leading, perfect orchestral balance, exquisite pointillistic detail, unfaltering taste, and finally — which is particularly Canadian and even more particularly Farnon — an almost diffident quality. It is not show-off writing, like that of Michel Legrand. It requires ears. And if, as more than one gloomy observer of the human condition has observed, the public truly cannot hear harmony, it is little wonder that the Farnon albums sold primarily to musicians while the public went for the treacly maunderings of Mantovani.

Orchestral writing in wartime and postwar popular music, including some beautiful charts by Axel Stordahl for Frank Sinatra and those of Paul Weston for Jo Stafford, advanced greatly. But handsome instrumental exposition of the best in popular songs constituted something new. There was some precedent in an album of 12-inch 78s by Morton Gould called *Manhattan After Dark*, but that album leaned toward the symphonic. What Farnon did was to combine classical with dance band writing in a way that was both felicitous and very fresh.

"That was deliberate," he said. "I wanted to enhance the popular song. I like arranging. When I do an arrangement of a popular song, I like to put some thought into it, not just dish it up in two choruses. Make it into a piece of music, a composition, tell a story."

The Farnon influence was directly communicated to many American composers and arrangers by the teaching of Marion Evans, himself a fine arranger who, like Don Costa, ended up writing charts that one would have sworn were Farnon's. They are heard in any number of albums Evans wrote for Tony Bennett, Steve Lawrence, and other singers. Marion held informal classes — seminars, really — in his crowded New York apartment for J.J. Johnson, Torrie Zito, Jack Cortner, Nick Perito, and Patrick Williams, to name a few of them. Marion required that his "students" (they were all established professionals) go through the Goetschius books on harmony and composition and listen hard to the Farnon albums. Most of them are still listening. "What I like about Farnon as I get older," Pat Williams mused recently, "is that he does things so simply that you kind of wonder about the ease of it. It shouldn't be that easy."

Toward the end of the 1950s, someone threw a party for Farnon during one of his occasional visits to New York. There were so many musicians there, particularly composers and arrangers, who either knew him or wanted to meet him — Urbie Green, Al Cohn, Tony Tamburello, Manny Albam, Marion Evans, Quincy Jones, Eddie Sauter, Red Ginzler among them — that Quincy said later that if a bomb had been fired in that apartment, there wouldn't have been another note of music written in New York for five years.

Singers became fascinated with Farnon and begged him to write albums for them. He would rather write instrumental music, but he did write several albums for Tony Bennett, one for Frank Sinatra called *Great Songs from Great Britain* (never released in America because Sinatra was dissatisfied with his own performance, and now of course a collector's item) and a marvelous album with Lena Horne on RCA which has the added allure of some solid Phil Woods solos. There's an album with George Shearing and another with The Singers Unlimited, both on MPS in Europe, Pausa in the U.S. There's a lovely album on Polydor in England, unobtainable west of the Atlantic, called *The Music of Robert Farnon*, which contains the *Prelude and Dance* that Bob wrote for the astonishing classical harmonica virtuoso Tommy Reilly (he plays it like a violin) and his *Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra*, with Steven Staryk as the soloist. In addition to those albums of standards, including some recorded for Phillips, Farnon wrote an incredible quantity of music-by-the-yard for the Chappell publishing library, wild track that was recorded in the early days of television and still is used as movie and television underscore around the world. This made Farnon a lot of money. At one time, a Farnon march was being used as a sign-off theme by what seemed like half the television stations in the United States. The theme used on the David Susskind TV show is a Farnon piece called *Journey into Melody*. His serene orchestration of the French (and French Canadian) folk song, *A la claire fontaine*, is performed by orchestras everywhere. It was in fact the first thing he wrote after the war.

"I wanted to forget all the horror of it, all the bloodshed," he told me once. "And writing that seemed a good way to do it."

"Why did you stay in England after you got your discharge?"

"All my life I'd wanted to write for films and to record, and there were no opportunities in Canada. There was no movie industry and no recording, except for one or two things RCA was doing. I had had a chance to look around in Europe. I had been doing some writing for Ted Heath and other bands while I was still in uniform, and I saw that the opportunities were am· and so I stayed. I found work immediately."

And of course, he wrote his film scores, 35 of them to date. He also wrote an album for Dizzy Gillespie and Oscar Peterson that was never recorded. "What happened to that album?" I asked.

"We were going to record it in Berlin — a piece I wrote for Oscar called *The Pleasure of his Company* and *Private Suite*, which I wrote for Dizzy. We were going to take several first-chair men because we weren't sure of the musicians in Berlin, first trumpet, lead alto, baritone, and of course Ed Thigpen and Ray Brown. Well the guys got talking in London before we left, saying, 'We're going to Berlin to record with Oscar Peterson and Dizzy Gillespie.' And it got to the union. At that time musicians in Britain were not allowed to record outside the country. And the Americans were not allowed to come over to Europe. Well the British union got in touch with the American union and we all got telegrams in Berlin, through Norman Granz, saying that if we made the album, we would all be suspended from the union. And so we all went home with our tails between our legs, and the whole thing was shelved, although later I performed the first movement of the piano piece on television with Oscar in London."

For the past 25 years, Farnon has lived with his third wife on Guernsey in the Channel Islands, which has the advantage of no income taxes, at a place called La Falaise (French for The Cliff) in St. Martin's. Their five children are grown up now. It is said that Bob is a bit of a laird in Guernsey, by now one of its fixtures. He lives in a great rambling stone house that I know from pictures brought back by musicians who have made the pilgrimage there to see him.

"Who's been over lately?"

"Dizzy was there last summer. He came and stayed with us during, as it happened, the racing season. We took him to the race course. Just for fun he took out his trumpet and played that race course bugle call before the start of each race, with his trumpet up in the air and his African hat on. He broke up the island, because it's a very small place, and that Dizzy Gillespie was there was very important news."

"Now, changing the subject. You are aware, no doubt, that you are admired by a lot of musicians for a non-musical reason — namely the reputation you've always had for being very adept with the ladies."

"Are you running that tape recorder?"

"Yes."

"You're quick, aren't you?"

"Quite."

"Now about this reputation you have with the ladies . . ."

"Quietly," Bob said.

"Now, there's a story I heard about your powers of musical concentration, comparable to the one about writing vocal charts while playing. Total comparmentalization of thought. Somebody said that the wartime band was rehearsing and you were sitting at a table writing something else and somebody came up and said that your wife was arriving from somewhere and your girlfriend from somewhere else, and you said, without even looking up from the paper, 'Put my wife in such-and-such a hotel, put the other in such-and-such, and send them both flowers,' and went on writing."

"Oh," Bob said, "that's not true. Who told you that story?"

"Never mind."

"At least I don't think it's true. Well, wait a minute. It could have happened. I don't remember. You know, I once had three girls all named Pat. And I didn't have any trouble at all. It was easy going from one to the other."

"And what is your wife's name?"

"Pat," Bob said, laughing hugely.

"That's what I thought," I said. "Is she one of the three?"

"No, this is another one."

"Does she know about your colorful past?"

"Oh sure. Of course. And I know about hers too." When the laughter died down, I said, "What are you doing now?"

"I'm writing a lot for school wind bands for a publisher. It's quite interesting, especially when you're trying to do things for beginners' level. You're so restricted that it's challenging. I'm not doing anything orchestrally at the moment, I'm afraid. A friend of mine named Derek Boulton, whom I believe you know, is trying to buy back some of the Decca albums, so that we can re-record them in stereo."

"That would be wonderful. The only thing that has dated is the rhythm section sound, and today you have bass players like Chris Lawrence in England."

"Isn't he marvelous? Someone like that. And a good drumm[redacted] The only album we had a good drummer on was *Sunny Side Up*. We had Phil Seaman. A serious drunk. Finally killed himself with a needle. Did you know him?"

"No, just of him."

"Pissed all the time. He was the one who was in the pit of *West Side Story* in London, and he fell asleep during a ballad, and someone nudged him for a cue coming up, and he grabbed his stick and accidentally hit the big gong. And he stood up grandly and said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, dinner is served.' And he got fired that night."

A few years ago, Rob McConnell, who has a wonderfully acerbic sense of humor, flew out to California for the premiere performance of a composition he wrote for the New American Orchestra. I ran into him at rehearsal. I said, "How're things at home, Rob?"

"How are things at home?" he repeated. "Well, we recently did a record with Oscar Peterson. Full orchestra, all Canadian musicians with charts by Rick Wilkins. I played on the date. It was a big deal, and the Toronto *Star* sent a photographer, who said to Oscar, 'Where do you plan to stand when you play your trump[redacted] Mr. Peterson?' I think that says it for the state of the arts at home."

In the last analysis, though Farnon has spent most of his professional life outside Canada, it is as a Canadian that he has to be understood. The National Lampoon has several Canadian editors, who vent their animus in a nastily accurate and very funny little column called *The Canadian Corner*. That column once carried a questionnaire to help you determine if you were a latent Canadian. One of the questions was, "Is your favorite color gray?"

Canada is a nation without heroes whose unspoken article of faith is that the finest of all human characteristics is modesty. This forces even arrogant Canadians to affect a fake humility, although a few have gone against the wind and achieved prodigies of self-admiration. God forbid that you should want your work to be noticed and should seek attention for it. This atmosphere imposed (and more so in the past than now) a strange loneliness on children who had cause to suspect that they might have something worthwhile to say. In that loneliness, seeking to meet some impossible criterion of worth, they sometimes reached high levels of virtuosity — those at least whose inner force did not die under the burden of a gray seemliness. Consider the writing of Farnon, Faith, Evans, and McConnell, the playing of the late Glenn Gould, Lenny Breau, and Murray MacEachern, the playing of Oscar Peterson, Maynard Ferguson, the elegant young guitarist Lorne Lofsky, Moe Koffman, the astonishing bassist-pianist-vibraharpist Don Thompson, the writing of Robertson Davies, the paintings of

Harold Towne and Alex Colville, the acting of Chris Plummer and Donald Sutherland, the films of Mack Sennett and Norman Jewison.

Phil Cohen, head of the music department of Concordia University, internationally known as a musical diagnostician and advanced pedagogical theorist, says that the American flair is for synthesis, the Canadian for analysis. Analysis leads to clarity. Clarity is one of the outstanding characteristics of Farnon's writing.

We remarked on the beauty of the city once more as I left him that day. "But I could never live here again," he said.

A few days later I called him from California, but the Guv was gone — back to his home on Guernsey.

2. Glenn on Glenn

The Montreal novelist Mordecai Richler is author of the quip "world-famous in Canada". It is an interesting expression, one layer of whose meaning is that in Canada you can get away with a great deal if you have persuaded people that you are indeed "world-famous". For Canadians have a reluctance to recognize Canadian talent until it has been recognized elsewhere, especially in the United States, toward which Canada looks with a quiet but undying unease.

Glenn Gould was an exception to all the rules of Canadian gee-whiz-it-was-nothingism and the occult workings of the CBC. (Oscar Peterson is a different case in that most of his career has been in other countries, although he has always lived in Canada. The CBC's indifference to him, which lasted many years, created a tacky situation in that it could be construed as racist, and in more recent years it has been moving to rectify the oversight. Many other gifted Canadians have not been so fortunate. Oscar, incidentally, has firmly asserted, "I am not a Canadian artist. I am an artist who happens to be Canadian.") Glenn Gould, unlike Oscar, was a creature of the CBC, on which I first heard him play when he was about 16, but it neither suppressed him nor rejected him. He knew how to push all its buttons, because Glenn was one thing few of his enemies and even fewer of his friends realized: a master politician who affected a virginal indifference to fame and its trappings while pursing the condition with invisible cunning. Far from being subservient to the CBC, he turned it into his plaything and spent unknown sums of public money (the CBC is the property of the Canadian people) on odd programs filled with his idiosyncratic conceits. Even the CBC's and Glenn's most ardent detractors owe him a grudging admiration for the way he used those people. He might make mock of the Beatles but Glenn had in fact a good grasp of something the late John Lennon also understood: once you have attained a certain eminence, the most incomprehensible nonsense to fall from your lips will be acclaimed as profound by those who do not understand it.

There have been, it is estimated, five books about Glenn since his death at 50 in 1982, none of which I have read, but I am told by those who have that their collective intent is to canonize him. There is another and newer book which consists of dozens of his essays and radio scripts, edited by Tim Page, who writes on music for the New York *Times* and other publications. This one I have read. Indeed, it was in my briefcase when I left Bob Farnon and walked east along St. Clair Avenue past Glenn's apartment building. The book is published in Canada by Lester & Orpen Dennys, which developed it, and by Alfred A. Knopf in the U.S.A. Lester & Orpen Dennys is a small and excellent house of the old school which has not been absorbed as yet by a conglomerate. The company does beautiful work and *The Glenn Gould Reader* is designed and printed with elegance and class. The book is an important one both to those who admired Glenn Gould and those who had, shall we say, reservations.

Glenn had a considerable following among jazz musicians for, I think, two reasons: their tradition is one of individualism in which not the play but the player is the thing; and Glenn's playing swung, in the jazz sense. It had great rhythmic drive, particularly his Bach, and one jazz historian asked me if Glenn could in fact play jazz. He couldn't, although that didn't stop him from having opinions about it. Nothing ever stopped Glenn from having opinions about anything, and he would write about popular music from his aerie on St. Clair Avenue — actually his very unkempt apartment was on the third or fourth floor, as I recall — with an authority that his factual errors called into question. In an essay entitled *The Future and "Flat Foot Floogie", he says that the song is "by the celebrated triumvirate of Bob Green, Slim Galliard, and Slam Stewart." Let us examine that. They were never a triumvirate. Bud (not Bob) Green, who wrote Once in a While* and *Sentimental Journey* among other things, collaborated only that one time with Slim and Slam. And "celebrated" is hardly the world for Slim *Gaillard* who has, alas, been known throughout his career chiefly to jazz fans and to a minority of them at that. The possibility that the misspelling of Slim Gaillard's name is a typographical error is precluded by the fact that it recurs. And the "celebrated triumvirate" phrase, meant to establish simultaneously both Glenn's position on a higher plane than this kind of musician as well as above the reader, who is assumed to be unfamiliar with these three names, accomplishes the reverse. It shows that Glenn doesn't really know who they are. These errors slipped by the editors of *Piano Quarterly*, wherein the piece (which is all but incomprehensible, by the way) originally appeared, then past Tim Page, and past Malcolm Lester, one of the partners of Lester & Orpen Dennys, who is a well-informed jazz fan. That shows how uncelebrated Slim Gaillard (not to mention the unsung Bud Green) really is. The more important point is that Glenn seems to see *Flat Foot Floogie* as an example of the banality of popular music, and although he fancied himself an engaging satirist, he does not realize that Slim Gaillard is perhaps the funniest farceur that jazz ever produced. (Well, maybe Dizzy is, but Slim Gaillard is certainly in that same exalted class.) *Flat Foot Floogie* is a joke that Glenn apparently didn't get. And if he did get it, his obtuse prose obscures the fact.

One of his essays is titled *The Search for Petula Clark*. It was written when she had a hit on *Who Am I?* I am more than a little familiar with this piece, having been its original editor. The essay is completely self-indulgent, beginning with a long dissertation about the north shore of Lake Superior not because of any relevance to Petula Clark but because Glenn liked to write about the north shore of Lake Superior, and ending with a tenuous thread of connection when he describes hearing the song on a car radio while driving in that strangely beautiful region. He read the piece over the phone to me — he always read his essays over the phone to people — after which I edited it on paper. I was in a spot. I did not know him at the time. And I was curious about him because I so admired his playing, as well as the fact that he was celebrated as an eccentric. But my duties to the English language, under assault from all quarters anyway, required that I try to untangle his prose. There can be no doubt that had the piece come to *High Fidelity* over the transom, and under the byline of a nonentity, it would have found its way swiftly into its return envelope. But as Tim Page points out in his quite perceptive introduction to the book, "having attained an international reputation before the age of 25, (Glenn) was in a position to publish anything he wanted." Exactly. And one demurrer said

Notice

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Glenn "preferred talking nonsense on anything anywhere to playing the piano marvelously in a concert hall." The Petula Clark piece is nonsense, nonsense that I edited thoroughly at the time. And I still haven't the slightest idea what it means — whether Glenn actually liked Petula Clark or was doing a lofty look-down on criticism in popular music.

An essay on Barbra Streisand, entitled *Streisand as Schwarzkopf*, is clearer than the Petula Clark piece but worse. He begins the piece, "I'm a Streisand freak and make no bones about it. With the possible exception of Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, no vocalist has brought me a greater pleasure or more insight into the interpreter's art." Four paragraphs later he attacks what he calls the "'I won't bother to speak up 'cause you're already spellbound, aren't you?' routine of Peggy Lee." Which shows you how little insight Glenn had gained from anyone into the interpreter's art.

There have been other musicians who have thought highly of Streisand. However, I find that the opinions of instrumentalists about singing often have to be held a little suspect because they apply to the art inappropriate criteria. What her admirers among musicians fail to see is that, for all Streisand's musicianship, she is trying to do Piaf with a repertoire that will not support that kind of scenery chewing. Judy Garland at her worst did the same. Streisand performed *Happy Days Are Here Again* as a sad ballad just because that's a different way to do it. And maybe she figured she could get that French effect of conflicting a happy message with a sad reading, smiling-bravely-through-my-tears-folks, but it didn't work, for me anyway, and I find that performance particularly mannered. In French songs of this kind such as some of those wonderful jewels the late Boris Vian wrote with Henri Salvador, the effect is structured cleverly into the material, not superimposed like Greek columns on a Bauhaus building.

But the most off-putting thing about Streisand is the affectation of her ex-a-juh-ray-ted ee-non-see-ay-shon. Peggy Lee (who can indeed be spellbinding) is the opposite. Always shy about performing, she stands there in an almost frightened stillness and *lets you hear the song*. She is the most exquisite actress the American song has known. Streisand is a better singer only if such smoked hams as Gary Merrill, Jason Robards, and Charlton Heston are better actors than Richard Attenborough.

It was inevitable that Glenn would not object to odd tempi like that in *Happy Days Are Here Again* because he indulged in them himself, which is why those who know Mozart better than I were incensed by his readings. Personally I liked it; it swung. And Glenn would like Streisand's peculiar excessive articulation. He did that sort of thing too, as witness his oh-so-slow staccato reading of the Bach C-major prelude, the one on which Gounod wrote his *Ave Maria*. According to the principle of projected self-justification that is inherent in all artistic response — the corollary of which is the Rorschach effect in criticism — Glenn could not but like Streisand. In her work he saw himself, Narcissus peering into the water, seeing Streisand not as Schwarzkopf but as Glenn — *Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould about Glenn Gould*, which is another of the essays in this book. "With Streisand," he writes, more revealingly than he knows, "... one becomes engaged by the process..." That's right, not by the song but by the process, which is exactly what was wrong with so many of Glenn's performances — performances even Tim Page admits were "occasionally disastrous".

Debussy reminded us in one of his Monsieur Croche essays that as children we were not allowed to pull the stuffing out of dolls, meaning of course we are not supposed to be aware of how the dream is made. No wonder Glenn didn't like Debussy. Debussy was not only a master musician, he was a master magician who hid the process completely. The seed of his philosophy was expressed in his student days when he indignantly told his professor, Cesar Franck, "Monsieur Franck, vous etes une machine a moduler' — Mr. Franck, you're a modulating machine. Debussy didn't like to hear the creak of the machinery. And in Streisand, you hear it.

Glenn in these essays often seems indifferent to facts. He writes with aplomb that Ontario is the smallest of the Great Lakes. It isn't. Lake St. Clair is. Tim Page corrects some of Glenn's factual errors in footnotes, and at least one well-known classical music critic plans to correct a lot more of them in his own essay about this book. And I'm not sure how swift Page is about facts either. He says that "in 1964, after nine years of superstardom on the concert stage, Gould abruptly announced that he was withdrawing from live performances and would henceforth only make recordings. No famous musician had ever done anything like it." That's going to come as quite a shock to Artie Shaw, who went much farther than Glenn. He put away his clarinet and never played again, not even on records. Page forgets, too, Liszt, Rossini, Sibelius, and Charles Ives, not to mention Isham Jones.

I obviously do not have a philosophical objection to first-person journalism. I would rather read "I think that" than "usually well-informed sources believe that", which is one of the guises in which journalists clothe their guesses. Objectivity is ultimately impossible, even in science, and first-person writing allows you to assess the source. There should be more of it, not less. But Glenn by a curious dislocation of thought, frequently turns the first person into the third person, referring to himself as "he" — which is one of the signs of madness; Richard Nixon was doing it at the end. There are here whole essays that do this, including one in which Glenn (identified as g.g.) interviews himself (G.G.) about G.G. and another in which g.g. interviews G.G. about Beethoven, whom Glenn dismisses as he did Chopin, Debussy, and any item of cuisine more sophisticated than scrambled eggs. His dietary habits were deplorable, which some of us who cared about him think led to his all-too-early death of a stroke.

Any artist worth his salt, and I think Glenn was a very great one, has a prejudice in favor of his own work. If he didn't like it the way he did it, he would do it in a way he did like. Assuming sufficient basic skills, a musician plays what he wants to hear. Artur Rubinstein played the piano very differently from Glenn, and had an entirely different philosophy about the instrument and music in general. These differences become clear in a piece in which Glenn interviews Rubinstein. Rubinstein puts him gently and rather sweetly in his place. Immediately following this essay in the book is a piece called *Variations on a Theme by Rubinstein* that *Piano Quarterly* (which seems to have had a limitless appetite for Glenn obscurities) published. Glenn read this piece over the phone to me, too. It is a fantasy about a self-admiring pianist who flits from one junkfood-consuming girl to another in the course of an afternoon on Muskox Lake, an obscure (for *auslanders*, anyway) reference to Muskoka Lake and the region around it in Ontario, of which Glenn was quite rightly fond. What this peculiar piece is is Glenn's "review" of Volume Two of Rubinstein's autobiography, in which a sensualist of note from time to time reminisces happily on some of the great wine, women, and dinners in his life. Again, because of the principle of projected self-objection, Glenn, an asexual (so far as anyone knows) abstainer with no interest in food, would inevitably dislike such a book. Glenn's "review" is incomprehensible if you have not been told a little about the Rubinstein book (which I was before he read it to me), and it isn't in the least funny even if you have. Whatever the editors of *Piano Quarterly* thought, this piece is really a matter of Glenn stamping on the toes of a great elder pianist who had the audacity to disagree with him both in conversation and in the way he lived his life, a piece written by a man who had neither understanding nor sympathy for us lesser mortals with a taste for warm beaches, cold wines, bright rooms, clean linens, pretty girls with soft lips, perfumes, haute cuisine, handshakes, and Debussy.

There are more pieces in which Gould writes about Gould. One of these is the liner notes from his recording of Liszt's piano transcription of the Beethoven *Fifth Symphony*, consisting of four

imaginary reviews of the album, supposedly from English, American, German, and Hungarian publications. He has his English reviewer refer to "that extravagantly eccentric Canadian pianist, Glenn Gould" — again Glenn attempting to see himself in the third person. Another is a review of Geoffrey Payzant's book *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, in which Glenn of course continues to refer to himself as "Gould" and "he", along with any number of justifications for his own biases, including his dismissal of Mozart. The tone is arch and distantly mocking as he chides the author for not having consulted or interviewed "Gould". But he doesn't dismiss the book, as well he might not, since Payzant considers him one of the great minds of the century.

Every writer has, and should have, the *I Am a Camera* fixation. And in an ideal situation the writer becomes invisible as I turns into eye. But in Gould the eye always turns into I, and we find that the camera's favorite subject is itself. In the Streisand piece he refers to the Argentine poet Borges, which is appropriate, for clearly life to Glenn was a wonderful walk down a corridor of mirrors. The only thing wrong was his fear of death, which was deeper than that of most men and no doubt was founded in the perceived horror of that moment when the eye ceased to see the I.

In the latter half of his life Glenn was extensively involved in broadcasts for the CBC. One of the works of which he was proudest was a radio show called *The Idea of North*, in which he took reflections of four people and wove them together like, he said, "a trio sonata . . ." and so forth. He writes, "The point about these scenes, I think, is that they test, in a sense . . ," but what is the point of the test? ". . . the extent to which one can listen simultaneously to more than one conversation and vocal impression. It's perfectly true that in that dining-car . . ." four people talk simultaneously over sound effects of a train ". . . not every word is going to be audible, but then by no means every syllable in the final fugue from Verdi's *Falstaff* is, either, when it comes to that." The analogy is silly. It doesn't matter whether you can follow every line of that fugue in *Falstaff* but it does matter whether you can follow the lines of speech. Music is an abstraction, a patterning of sound whose nature we do not fully understand. Speech is our most concrete and specific form of expression, an incredibly complicated structure of symbols elaborated over the millenia of our evolution, which we crave always to understand, and understand clearly. When we find it too hard to understand, as in conversations in a language we do not know very well, or in too many conversations going on at once, we become exhausted and finally bored — which is what *The Idea of North* does to us. Glenn completely confused the quite different functions of music and speech. This is evident in his prose, which most of the time consists of long looping parenthetical insertions and asides and allusions that compare for obscurity not only with the densest word forests of William Faulkner but even with the writing of that most impenetrable of all jazz critics, Andre Hodeir.

In any case, Glenn's own life was a refutation of this "test" of how many lines of conversation one can listen to at the same time. His social life, which was actually rich and extensive, was lived on the telephone, because, he said, he could catch the essence of a person better that way. In other words, he liked the verbal information to come in to him in simple straight lines, not in some form of counterpoint. He totally and absolutely avoided group conversation.

Glenn, with predictable consistency, defends his practice of tape-splicing, even in his radio documentaries, and at one point proudly describes vast amounts of time spent taking the halts and hesitations out of one man's speech. If you can get a good editing studio for $50 an hour, you're doing well. The time Glenn spent editing that one speech amounted to many thousands of the Canadian taxpayers' dollars. And to what end?

In 1970 or '71, my friend Roland Gelatt, the former editor of and my boss at *High Fidelity* and by then the editor of *Saturday Review*, came up to Toronto to see Glenn and me to meet Marshall McLuhan. Either we saw McLuhan early in the day and Glenn in the evening or else we saw McLuhan the evening after Glenn played us two examples of what he called "contrapuntal radio", *The Idea of North* and *The Latecomers*, which was about solitude and Newfoundland. Whatever the sequence, a startling antiphony of ideas occurred in those two meetings. For Glenn's two "documentaries" (they were no such thing; they were fictions made out of spliced tape) were classic examples of the non-linear thinking McLuhan said was occurring and which Glenn in fact championed. (He uses the term several times in the book in assessing his contrapuntal radio.) Roland, my wife, and the engineer with whom Glenn worked at the big old red-brick CBC chateau on Jarvis Street were on hand as he played the programs with such expectation of praise. I do not recall what Roland said. I said nothing. But I do remember what my wife said. She said, "How many of those voices are you?" For Glenn loved to mimmick voices, and when tape has been spliced that much, who can tell who did the talking? And Glenn laughed.

And then she said, "How much did you pay for the shoes?" They were nondescript black Oxfords, but now that I looked at them, they were very good and very expensive. And again he laughed. Then, like an old European tailor, she rubbed the lapel of his equally nondescript gray overcoat between thumb and forefinger. "Vicuna, isn't it?" she said.

In the legend of Thomas a Beckett, the monks, after his murder, remove the glorious robes of their archbishop to find that under them he is wearing a hair shirt. To purge himself of the last traces of pride, he would not display his own humility, and so he hid it in arrogance. Glenn was the opposite. He wore his hair shirt for all the world to see — but it was vicuna.

Glenn Gould understood the CBC like no man before him or likely to follow. He called himself a socialist, though he was, by the evidence of the pontifications he dropped to the masses as from a Goodyear dirigible, the least egalitarian of men. Let us remember that *National Lampoon* questionnaire about latent Canadianism. It made me smile when, twice in the book, Glenn says that his favorite colors are gray and midnight blue. He loved cars and told me he liked to drive in fog (which is gray) because of the sense of isolation it gave him. He says, in his review of the Payzant book, that the professor shows a curiosity about his, Glenn's, sex life. But he doesn't fill in the blank. It was said by some that Glenn was homosexual, but he never so stated and no one else established it. There was for a while a certain tittering in Toronto because Glenn was seen of evenings tip-toeing into the residence of a certainly lady temporarily estranged from her famous composer (of the avant-garde) husband. But somebody who spent one of those evenings with the two of them said that all they talked about was the stock market, in which Glenn had an interest his admirers are apparently unaware of. There was, it seems, nothing romantic about their liaison, which rested on a firm foundation of their mutual interest in money. His sexual leanings, if any, bear on this discussion only in that his air of sexual centrism made him a perfect candidate for indulgence by the CBC: you could imagine him being whatever you wanted him to be, or nothing at all, and in any case he was physically unglamorous, a requisite for the CBC, which unhorses those who, like Lorne Green, have conspicuous flair. (Strange, too; he was almost beautiful when he was young.)

His beard always looked three days old, no more and no less. I used to wonder how he managed it, whether he had a special electric shaver that took it off just so, like those clippers with which the military dispenses assembly-line brushcuts. When we worked on the Petula Clark article, I took him out in a rented car (because of the theme of listening to her in a car) to photograph him. He turned up for our meeting unshaven, demonstration of his indifference to fame and photographs. But he was wearing pancake makeup.

An expensive coat meant to be nondescript and a three-day beard. Glenn had a studied seediness about him, and this was the perfect costume in which to maneuver Lamont Cranston-like through the corridors of power in a big broadcasting organization of which someone once said, "CBC girls all look they wear unwashed brassieres."

Other nations pick flamboyant symbols of their identity; the British lion, unhurried and sedate but ready to do you up if you bother him; the American eagle, screaming and flying high and just waiting to dive in attack. What did Canada pick? The poor old hard-working and plodding and unprotesting beaver. Glenn made a better national symbol than that. Quick and very skilled but hiding it all in a nondescript overcoat. Acclaimed by the world but indifferent to its adoration. Right? as another Canadian, Mort Sahl, would say. More modern than the British, more modest than the Americans. Not getting involved in the mundane complexities of life, as the Americans do, and not at all belligerent. Socialistic but not so much that you'd notice. Capitalistic, but not to a fanatic fault. Humble. Shy. Retiring. "Retiring?" cried Bob Offergeld, Glenn's editor at *Stereo Review*, who was responsible for a number of the essays in this book, and who in fact conceived and commissioned *So You Want to Write a Fugue*. "Glenn was the world's most publicized hermit!" No wonder the CBC loved him. And to top it all off he was Canada's superstar *classical* musician. And what's more, a creator of avant-garde *experimental* radio! What a powerhouse justification when you go to government for next year's budget! Those commercial Americans weren't doing anything like this!

Glenn was an adjusted citizen of that electronic global village whose arrival Marshall McLuhan had heralded with such enthusiasm. Or had he? One of McLuhan's associates at the University of Toronto had told me that this was not so, that McLuhan was in the position of a man warning you that you are about to be hit by a truck. Is this were true, then it could only be said that McLuhan was one of the murkiest writers of our time, even harder to decode than Glenn. Or Andre Hodeir. How unCanadian! The hypester Howard Gossage in San Francisco, McLuhan's collaborator and publicist, had made McLuhan into a cult figure for his quite unoriginal observation that electronic communication was altering our way of assimilating information. McLuhan's books, with their sophomoric preoccupation with puns and images rather than, good heavens, linear clarity (like the voice-leadings of Robert Farnon), did nothing to clear up the mystery.

Whichever noon it was, Roland Gelatt and I met Marshall McLuhan in his office, which was in a sedate old house on the east side of the the large oval of Queens Park, just opposite the great red stone edifice that is the seat of the Ontario government. The various colleges and halls that collectively comprise the University of Toronto co-exist peacefully enough on what seems to be a shared campus with various government buildings. McLuhan, a tall and very handsome man of the same style and bearing as Alec Wilder, and Roland and I left to have lunch in the restaurant atop the modern Sutton Place hotel. As we walked, I got more and more the impression that the McLuhan mystique was a total misrepresentation of the man, deliberately on the part of Howard Gossage, who saw money in it, and accidentally on McLuhan's part, because he was such a clumsy writer. Like Glenn he had an enormous vocabulary that was misused in word plays and the allusive, as if each man counted on communicating through the connotative, when it is the denotative that must have the priority — in prose, at least.

Roland was getting the same impression I was. The putative guru of the global electronic village and supposed champion of non-linear thinking was putting it all down! I cannot remember whether Roland or I asked the question, but I made it a point to remember the answer verbatim. One of us said, Professor, are you saying then that you don't like it?

"Like it?" McLuhan said with some energy. "I'm a professor of *literature*. How could I like it?" With a wave of his hand he seemed to wipe away all the new skyscrapers to the south of us, as if from a blackboard. "If I could throw a switch," he said, and turn it all off, I would!"

It was mind-boggling. If Marshall McLuhan had had the power to do so, he would have turned off Glenn Gould's tape recorder! And the CBC with it.

I can think of no two men less alike than Bob Farnon and Glenn Gould. Or two who are more Canadian. One thing, however, that Glenn had in common with Bob is a taste for Sibelius. Canadians have more affinity for Sibelius than Americans, which — if you accept that the physical environment and the images of childhood invade even a man's art — could be because in evoking the forest and lakes of Finland, Sibelius expressed as well the mood of the Canadian landscapes that so strikingly resemble them. The land puts you in a mood. You try to capture it in music. And you stir the emotions of people in a far country that looks like it. I can listen in California to *The Oceanides* or *Tapiola* or the *Seventh Symphony* and feel that I am alone on a lake in Halliburton or Kaladar or the Gatineau. That music is full of the beauty of solitude, and of course the longing that goes with it.

In his essay introducing *The Idea of North*, Glenn writes t[illegible] "there are very few people who make contact with it and emerge entirely unscathed. Something really does happen to people who go into the north . . . (they) come to measure their own work and life against that rather staggering creative opportunity: they become in effect philosophers." The French have an expression, *Il a perdu le nord*, meaning, he has lost the north, which means that his compass is broken, he doesn't know which way is up. He's rowing with one oar. But what an image that expression evokes. How terrible it would be to lose the north!

Butch Watanabe, the British Columbia-born trombonist who is one of the mainstays of the Toronto studio world, speaks fluent Japanese. With his Japanese face and language and Canadian musicianship, I suggested that he could do very well in Tokyo. "Oh I've been approached about it," Butch said, "but I could never live there."

"Why?"

"The crowding. When people visit from Japan, they always want to see Niagara Falls, so I drive them over there, and it seems like wild open country to them." What Butch meant is that by our standards, the Niagara Peninsula, once one of the great fru[illegible] growing areas of North America, now seems very crowded. It[illegible] slowly being paved, like the Oxnard Plain in California or the cherry country of Michigan. "In Canada," Butch said, "we always feel that the forest is never far away. I do my work and I wait for the winter, when I can really do my thing."

"What's that?"

"Cross-country skiing."

The idea of north.

One writer referred to Glenn Gould's "genuine and profound strangeness". He was, Page writes in a very deft character portrait, "a hermit of sorts who was the most spontaneous and joyous telephone companion imaginable; he was a deeply conservative recluse who fancied himself a socialist: he was a man who attended no church but spent his long nights reading theology and philosophy."

Glenn used to say that he lived his personal relationships on the long distance telephone, and Bell socked it to him every month in bills that ran to four figures. He once called me in New York from Newfoundland to talk about trains.

If I have given an impression that I disliked Glenn, I have erred. I often disagreed with him but I admired and liked him. "Gould," Page writes, "usually called about midnight, as he sipped an omnipresent cup of tea and prepared to begin his nocturnal workday. Even now, whenever I receive a person-to-person call, especially if it is late at night, I automatically anticipate Gould's cheery voice coming over the line."

Me too. When Glenn died we lost a little of the north.