

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Spring 1982

## Review of *Sinclair Ross* By Lorraine McMullen

Geraldine Anthony

*Mount Saint Vincent University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Anthony, Geraldine, "Review of *Sinclair Ross* By Lorraine McMullen" (1982). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1641.  
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1641>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*Sinclair Ross*. By Lorraine McMullen. Twayne World Author Series. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979. Bibliography and index. 159 pp. \$12.95.

Devotees of Canadian and American prairie fiction will welcome this book, the first to treat the entire body of Sinclair Ross's work. Lorraine McMullen has done a creditable job of analysis and criticism. She begins with a biographical introduction and follows with a study of all of Ross's short stories and novels published from 1934 to the present.

The first critic to provide any details about Ross's life, McMullen illuminates the personality of this enigmatic prairie writer and, incidentally, corrects a few errors in Robert Chalmer's little book, *Ernest Buckler and Sinclair Ross*. Ross himself has maintained that creative sources spring from the subconscious and are therefore inexplicable, but this book introduces us to Ross as a person, describing his background and thereby opening new meanings for those who have read his novels (*As for Me and My House*, *The Well*, *Whir of Gold*, and *Sawbones Memorial*) and the eighteen short stories that complete the Ross opus.

A large portion of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the short stories as they demonstrate Ross's literary technique. The reader is made aware of the unique concerns and stylistic devices that Ross consistently developed from his first short story through all his later fiction. Ross's artistic manipulation of landscape, his delineation of the psychological effects of the struggle with the land on the prairie dweller, his exploration of the human conditions of isolated persons, his ironic examination of the tragic failure of communication, and his economy of style combine to produce a controlled art that is reflective of the prairie and its inhabitants.

McMullen includes detailed assessments not only of Ross's most famous novel, but of his less well known works as well. She gives sensible analyses throughout, observing strengths and weaknesses objectively and intelligently. She fails, however, to give any detailed comparisons of Ross's work with that of other

notable Canadian prairie writers, such as Frederick Philip Grove and Gwen Pharis Ringwood, or with such American short-story writers as Eudora Welty, whose small-town characters bear comparison to Ross's. Perhaps the limitations of her study required sole concentration on Ross's works. In any case, she has produced the first in-depth study of Sinclair Ross's works and for this we are grateful.

GERALDINE ANTHONY  
Department of English  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia