

# invitation to a party

Hunching up Sherbrooke Street  
peering from eyes slitted against  
the snow, he calls his dog-team to halt —  
looking surprised to see  
the gates and campus buildings there —  
and checks his invitation.

The city's changed since James McGill,  
that old fur-trader, died, leaving  
ten thousand pounds and his Burnside  
estate to found a university.  
He knew a fine quality  
fur — would feel the texture  
with rough-fissured fingers  
pressing the pile; struck a hard bargain,  
and disappointed wife and children —  
but, after litigation — learning  
profited.

One hundred and fifty  
years later we're celebrating  
his bequest by throwing  
a big party and inviting  
his return as principal of many  
"big name" guests.

Perhaps he'll teach us  
how to cut our coat according  
to quite another stuff — or prove  
we have resources enough  
to withstand the economy.

He is our only "constant," for  
students, faculties, buildings  
and administrations come and go —  
the name "McGill" remains —  
a continuing process  
a pattern of behaviour.

So — roll over Beethoven —  
this is our sesquicentennial.  
Make way! Wake up McGill!  
Sound a fanfare of trumpets.  
All hard-pressed scholars in Montreal  
await a paraclete.