



If I Could Turn and Meet Myself: The Life of Alden Nowlan

Patrick Toner

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At his death in 1985, Alden Nowlan stood in the first rank of Canadian writers. Today, his poetry is beloved by Maritimers and popular across Canada and in the US as well. *If I Could Turn and Meet Myself* tells his life story, from his birth to a 14-year-old mother in 1933 through his impoverished childhood, his disturbed adolescence, his newspaper career, his struggle with cancer, and his tenure as writer-in-residence at the University of New Brunswick.

Nowlan founded his success and peace of mind on his belief that he was a composite of many selves. In 12 books of poetry, two novels, a book of stories, and 15 years of weekly columns for the Saint John *Telegraph Journal*, he fictionalized his own life. At the same time, he hid some of the most significant facts about his background from everyone, including those closest to him. His overall personal honesty ensured that even today people accept his "authorized version" as the full and only story.

In *If I Could Turn and Meet Myself*, Patrick Toner portrays a more complex and more richly humane Nowlan than any previous commentator, including Nowlan himself.

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