the "elite" and the "poor," terms belonging to a rival theoretical tradition. He does not consider whose interests the government of the time and the Amulree Commission represented. His critique of Piven and Cloward's thesis on how relief payments regulate and control workers is convincing, and one can read in his conclusion the need for a dialectical treatment of social policy and programs as an outcome of resistance and struggle. But a combination of class and gender analysis with an application of Conley's social reproduction framework could make for a better explanation of Overton's subject matter.

It is worth emphasizing two inter-related themes in this timely book which can be usefully applied in future researches on class, gender, and region. One is the analysis of contradictory processes and their effects on consciousness-raising and collective action — e.g., Conley's emphasis on the contradiction between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction. The other is the use of power by those ostensibly without it.

University of Victoria RENNIE WARBURTON

Ethel Wilson: Stories, Essays, and Letters, ed. David Stouck. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987. Pp. xx, 260.

The most diverting and memorable session of the 1981 Ethel Wilson Symposium in Ottawa was the screening of a 1955 CBC interview of Wilson by Roy Daniells, head of the University of British Columbia English Department. The film delighted the audience for what we perceived to be Wilson's sly and subversive use of a persona of intellectual modesty and genteel decorum to toy gently with the earnest, hapless Daniells. In the absence thus far of a biography of the Vancouver novelist and short story writer, David Stouck's edition of her stories, essays, and letters affords us an opportunity to test this reading of Wilson. Its evidence (though it includes several appreciative comments by Wilson of Daniells) does nothing to disprove the hypothesis of an acute and sardonic intelligence adroitly coming to its own terms with a potentially unpropitious environment in the middle years of this century. "As for my tongue," she writes to John Gray of Macmillan in 1951, "you have revealed to me (and quite right) that perhaps it is congenitally set sideways in my cheek."

Ethel Wilson: Stories, Essays, and Letters contains a selection of previously uncollected stories (deleted chapters from *The Innocent Traveller*; three Lucy Forrester stories supplementing the three in *Mrs. Golightly*;

and "The Life and Death of Mrs. Grant," assembled by Wilson from a rejected didactic novel, "The Vat and the Brew"), stories which do not radically change our impression of Wilson's writing but which are welcome additions, particularly for the scholar. It also includes a brief sampling of her public lectures and her essays (including two of the four published in *Canadian Literature*), accompanied, like the stories, by editorial introductions providing a helpful context. A number of both the stories and articles are brief, and their effect is, therefore, rather disjointed. It is only with Wilson's letters, dated from 1944 to 1972 and occupying over half the book, that a coherent sense of her thinking and writing begins to coalesce. The letters, which are serviceably annotated (although some words remain indecipherable and some names and references unidentifiable), are limited, understandably but regrettably, according to Wilson's own wish, to those of a literary rather than personal nature. The collection is indexed and contains a few photographs, some poorly reproduced. It ends poignantly, after details of the Wilsons' extended struggle with health problems, with Ethel Wilson's inconsolable state in the years following her husband's death. "My darling died yesterday," she writes tersely, on that occasion. "How glad I would be to join him."

Ethel Wilson's correspondents here include her Macmillan editors and such familiar names as Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Mazo de la Roche, Alan and Jean Crawley, Desmond Pacey, and, in later years, Margaret Laurence. Taken with the essays, the letters raise a number of literary issues still current today: the position of the women writer, regionalism, the limitations of creative writing programs, the problem of self-conscious symbolism, and the meaning of "Canadian" writing. Issues of the day — the atomic bomb, the Red Scare of the fifties, press coverage of crime, bilingualism, the 1963 election — appear more fleetingly, but always with a refreshing scepticism and absence of orthodoxy. The self-education Wilson defends in one letter is evident throughout, in her listing of the half-dozen periodical subscriptions she will reluctantly have to suspend during a move, in references to her current reading — Sir Thomas Browne, Pepys, Samuel Butler, Trevelyan — and in her spirited opinions on Richardson (whom she abandons in favour of Trollope), Arnold Bennett, Stendhal, Proust, Faulkner (whom she does not read), Lawrence, Forster, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and Joyce Cary, not to mention Brian Moore, Malcolm Lowry, and Margaret Laurence (whom she admires fiercely).

Readers and critics of Wilson's fiction will find in the collection, too, much thoughtful discussion of her own writing, of its recurring concerns — deceptions of self and others, the irrationality of cause and effect, uneasy human relations — and its characteristic manner — an alternation, as she sees it, of lyricism and emotion on the one hand and compensatory flatness on the other. Wilson informs us of the genesis of *Lilly's Story* (inspired by a passing reference in *The Innocent Traveller*), discusses an early ending for the story, provides alternate endings for *Love and Salt Water*, and assesses the merits of various pieces (including several now lost) for possible inclusion in *Mrs. Golightly*. One letter seems to describe the storm which provided the inspiration for Mr. Cunningham's ordeal in *Swamp Angel*, permitting us an opportunity to compare originating impressions and final artistic transformation. We also receive Wilson's sometimes conflicting evaluations of her works, often moving from initial reservations to greater confidence but, in the case of *The Innocent Traveller*, expressing an abiding affection. Throughout, in her sensitivity to life's contradictoriness, her insistence on the centrality of voice, her strong feeling for the sentence as the essential bridge in writing (she even refers at one point to "eloquent prepositions" in a Chinese poem and firmly, unapologetically defends her own "sparing eccentricity" in punctuation), we see the sophisticated intelligence which gives her work its exactness of style and tone.

Given Wilson's articulateness about what she is doing, her concomitant, extravagant self-deprecation — the "abject humility," as she herself puts it, with which she downplays her writing or invites delay and rejection or dismisses her comments as mere "vaporizing" — strikes a decidedly odd note, at least from our perspective in time. Like the "slight attack of the shivers" that she acknowledges as an under-educated person writing for a learned journal, it can perhaps best be understood as a psychological reflex in no way interfering with her speaking of her mind. As she points out in that journal article, "one soon resumes the pleasure of ordinary conversation." The pleasure Wilson takes in this informed and thoughtful conversation is one the reader shares.

University of Lethbridge HELEN HOY

Alberta: Studies in the Arts and Sciences, Volume 1, Number 1. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988.

In the face of warnings from the very originators of the concept of "limited identities" as an approach to the study of Canadian history and society, can we continue to welcome new provincial or regional journals? As early as 1980 J. M. S. Careless feared that after a vogue of only a