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FICTIONAL PATTERNS

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Poems

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editorial

NEARING 1984

SINCE 1948, we have been living with the idea of 1984 — living with Newspeak and Big Brother and the promise of Eternal Bureaucracies. We have joked about the possibility of them Happening Here, and always truly identified them with what is Already Happening There, and never entirely agreed on what "here" and "there" mean. And we have secretly equated the onset of the terrible bureaucracies with the actual year: if we survive 1984, we tell ourselves, and still don't feel threatened — if Big Brother *isn't* watching us and we still have access to history books and newspapers — then we're home free, untouched by events, as in a child's game.

But Orwell was writing about 1948, of course, and what could follow on from postwar constructions of order. It was no game he ritualized, but the ruthless machinations of politics, religion, industry, all wearing the disguise of benevolence. Why wear such a disguise? Because people — those ordinary individuals who make up the democratic mass — would like to believe the best of others, and at the same time would like to be left to lead their separate lives as comfortably as possible, would like not to be disturbed by ideas, would like to believe that Authorities are looking after their best interests. But if such "authorities" are looking after their own best interests first — if a ruthless amorality guides the governors and a moral apathy invades the governed — the "benevolence" is false and government guarantees of freedom are subverted. Paradoxically it is not chaos that results, but order, false order. In *Gringo*, his recent South American travel journal, the Canadian journalist Dennis Gruending writes of his own political education in Chile: eager to uncover tales of rebellion and resistance, he instead found people complacent about dictatorship — complacent because it supplied the appearance of order, and because the threat of uncertainty was apparently more frightening to them than the restriction of their freedoms: for them, the form the order took, and the reasons that allowed a restrictive order to take power in the first place, were of less moment than the illusion of security they currently enjoyed. And how is this illusion projected? Through systems of

privilege and punishment, both covert and observable, and through language. As Orwell knew, a rhetoric of benevolence, repeated often enough, will be accepted, because the terms of the rhetoric will become stock phrases in peoples' vocabulary: the words will be *used*, and words in use carry the cachet of authority, as though they had real meaning. (What words have the politics of the last forty years custom-framed? "imperialist," "liberated," "law-and-order," "flexibility," "restraint." "Game plan" has come to mean *military strategy*, as though war were child's play and would leave us untouched.)

What lessons are there to learn from such matters — "Here" — in Canada, where we profess our belief in "peace, order, and good government"? One is cautionary: to remember that this trio is a *unit*, that "order" without "*good* government" may not be admirable, that "*bad* government" can emerge here as well as elsewhere and impose an order that serves itself and its friends more than it protects peace and the people. A different lesson is Machiavellian: to learn that there is power in rhetoric, and that repetitive advertising can sell people and beliefs as well as it can market products. A third is advisory: how to persist in maintaining freedoms — by learning to resist the rhetoric as well as to battle the apathy. Freedoms are not lost because others take us over; freedoms are lost when we passively give them up. And we give them up the moment we lose our facility with language, our desire to know more, our willingness to question, challenge, doubt. We give them up when we lose our language and our history to the news-*makers*, the news-*shapers*, the publicists, and the priests of fad. And we resist *through language*: by valuing literacy and asserting the importance of education. It is because literacy *is* such a force in society that usurpers of power try always to control the young; by limiting people's desire or ability to challenge what they have been told, they diminish the threat to their own hold on power. Their power depends upon others' passivity, and in order to defuse any articulate opposition to their own rhetoric, they make scapegoats of anyone who *can* use words effectively — writers, teachers — by attempting to ridicule the importance of the arts and to imply that artists and intellectuals are merely children at play.

Language, we must remember, is an inheritance and a freedom — it should give life to our society, not restrict it. (Our official bilingualism should open opportunities for us in the world at large, not be received as a Protestant punishment.) In this context it is interesting to read two fine recent works on the range of the English language alone: Robert Claiborne's *Our Marvelous Native Tongue* (Times Books) and Richard Bailey and Manfred Görlach's *English as a World Language* (Univ. of Michigan Press). Bailey and Görlach have brought together fourteen parallel essays on the cultural and formal variations that characterize English in Great Britain, the Commonwealth, and the United States; they analyze sound systems, vocabulary differences, structural and grammatical features of the language in the separate societies that use English, and they com-

ment on the history and social implications of English usage as well. Claiborne writes a more personal book, about his own love affair with the language and American society, and through both of these with the cultural inheritance he derives from England. Bailey and Görlach emphasize multiplicity and variation and the richness that variation creates; Claiborne emphasizes tradition and the richness of a linear descent. The contributions to *English as a World Language* make clear how phonetic and structural variations record peoples' separate histories — the diversity of their experience and attitudes — and show how language is therefore a sensitive medium for communicating the subtleties of cultural values. Claiborne is at his most fascinating in tracing the root meanings of words, the hidden metaphors and attitudinal assumptions that often rest within the current structures of the words we use. But no subject could illustrate more clearly the difference in authorial expectation that marks the two books than the subject of language in Canada. Claiborne, the enthusiast for a single tradition, writes that the

> English spoken by most Canadians differs little from General American, apart from one fairly widespread trait: the diphthong in words like "out" and "about" shifts toward /oo/, yielding something like Scots "oot" and "aboot". . . . Otherwise . . . Canada is too close to the United States . . . to be more than an extension of its large neighbor, linguistically speaking — always, of course, excepting Quebec, most of whose inhabitants continue to speak their own rather archaic dialect of French.

Claiborne, that is, speaks of *dialect*, of variation from a presumed norm that is held in the command of a central authority. Bailey, who writes the excellent chapter on Canada in the other book, speaks of a cultural difference in *language*:

> From the earliest times, the English language in Canada has taken a distinctively Canadian form, a combination of mutually intelligible but differing regional and social dialects. . . . Today, regional differences still exist in the English of Canadians, but they have become more alike in their speech and, at the same time, more and more distinct from the other Englishes of Great Britain and North America. . . .
>
> What is distinctly Canadian about Canadian English is not its unique linguistic features (of which there are a handful) but its combination of tendencies that are uniquely distributed.

No one else, that is, talks like us, *pace* Mr. Claiborne. That may not be a sufficient buttress against national disintegration, but it should remind us that we *can* be comfortable with our speech because our speech still gives us the freedom to be who we are.

Interestingly, it is Claiborne who reminds us directly that the freedoms that speech gives us are repeatedly under pressure; he offers government secrecy, "para-government" rhetoric, and irresponsible censorship as the three current

threats, and he does not idly promise that language and freedom will survive them. A knowledge of history is the defence he seems by implication to champion; one could wish him as informed on his facts as Bailey is, and as appreciative of cultural differences. But there remains a political urgency about the threat he feels, the need he wants satisfied. Imposed systems of order can disenfranchise us, more easily than we like to think, and in 1984, before, or after. But if we value our independence enough, we will continue to value our differences. We will reject systems that rule by fear, and retain control over the words we use. By keeping our language alive, we can retain some controls over opportunity, over the history we have inherited and made, and over the memories that are our own to possess. We can perhaps in the process even give ourselves a little room in which to think, in which to create and, as we used to do as children, also to play.

W.N.

PROLOGUE

Doug Fetherling

When the heart skips a beat
the lights begin to falter in a show
of solidarity

This is not the apocalypse, it is
not even morning
                    but only a reminder
of what's obvious and basic:

We have forgotten nature so
nature, perhaps, has abandoned us

If this is the forest then we
must be the animals

IRISH & BIBLICAL MYTH IN JACK HODGINS' "THE INVENTION OF THE WORLD"

Jan C. Horner

On first reading Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* one is not sure whether Hodgins is saying that myth is a swindle or that myth is a fiction which is nonetheless true. I am convinced that *The Invention of the World* must be read mythically because the development of Becker as character-narrator shows that some revelation has taken place and that, in fact, the pilgrimage to Ireland is a sacred journey.[1] Furthermore, events in the story resound with mythic paradigms, both Irish and Biblical: Keneally's conception, the central pilgrimage of Maggie, Wade, and Becker, Keneally's expulsion, the riotous wedding among others. Finally, Keneally and Horseman are truly mythic characters. Horseman, as revealed by the events of the story, is literally supernatural. Keneally is mythic by virtue of the profound dimension he has assumed in the unconscious of the other characters in the novel. Both characters are upheld in their mythic roles by Hodgins' conflation of Irish and Biblical myth and epic in his creation of them.[2]

In order to answer the initial question — "is myth a swindle?" — it is necessary to come to terms both with "The Eden Swindle," the source of the mythic and heroic materials concerning Keneally, and with its author Strabo Becker. The story read on its own terms is as much an account of Keneally's Lucifer-like fall as it is of the swindle of Carrigdhoun. Taking into consideration the author of "The Eden Swindle," Strabo Becker, this section of the book can be viewed as a history into which unconscious reality has been incorporated.

One could look upon the fantastic story of Keneally's birth as simply a swindle perpetrated by Keneally on Carrigdhoun, and one could view the content of his mother's visions and dreams as his inventions. But this view ignores the testimony of Grania O'Flynn, who witnesses the coupling of Keneally's mother with the bull god, and whose visionary peasant imagination may have intuited his mother's original dream. The reader is asked to accept Julius' vision into the past; why not Grania O'Flynn's? When she denounces Keneally before her death, she does not denounce his fantastic birth, but his intention to take Carrigdhoun to Canada.

Keneally is born with god-like potential, born perhaps to be a saviour of his people. Indeed, Yeats' heroine, Cathleen ni Houlihan, who recruited the Irish youth to insurrection, is the spirit who is chosen to announce his birth. One half of his personality has enough love of a fight, it is later revealed, to want to whip the English out of Ireland. His epic battle in Carrigdhoun is, significantly, with an English bailiff.

But it is as though once Keneally is expelled from Carrigdhoun he ceases to be supernatural and becomes merely manipulative. Like Lucifer, when Keneally makes and destroys the god machine, he reduces himself as well. He convinces no one in Ireland to follow him except a cripple in Kilgorlan. This conscious assault on Kilgorlan's faith is far less devastating than the unconscious effect of the mist on Carrigdhoun. It is not through any demonstration of Keneally's power that the villagers are persuaded to follow him; nor can their conversion be attributed to the villagers being "complacent rubes," as Robert Lecker has stated. Rather, Keneally's conscious capitalization on their unconscious vulnerability causes the villagers to follow him. At this point Grania O'Flynn recognizes the reduction of Keneally's stature: "But she knew, after looking once into the eyes of the returned Keneally, that in the years of his absence the trickster child in him had been nurtured into meanness, the unnatural strength of him had developed into a danger, the immense knowledge of him had twisted itself into a cynicism. The fiery glow in his eyes was more the light of a fanaticism than of the god-qualities in his bull-father she'd seen in her shed all those years before."[3]

At the end of his life Keneally is reduced to the bestial, like Lycaon. His Celtic surname Keneally or "Ó Cinnḟaolaiḋ" means both "wolf head" and "learned man"[4] and it is the wolf rather than the sage into which he chooses to metamorphose.[5] When it is too late Keneally tries to recover the dimension he has lost by corkscrewing himself into the earth; he attempts to redeem his mythic beginning — his birth, as it were, from the earth. When Lily questions him about this, Keneally speaks of Irish " 'giant circular stone forts, high up on a hump of land, where the people long ago used to live, or hide from invaders. Inside the stone walls and down under the ground there were tunnels, to escape, in case they were surrounded by the enemy.' " What Keneally is alluding to is the sidhe or Land Under Hill in the depths of mountains where the Irish gods were supposed to have retired upon the coming to Ireland of men.[6] The sidhe has remained sacred even while Keneally is corrupted.

Another explanation for the fantastic-historic paradox of "The Eden Swindle" is that Strabo Becker, its amanuensis, recognizes the powerful effect Keneally has had on the personal and collective unconscious of the islanders and he attempts to reconcile this psychic phenomena with historical fact. The islanders most notably affected by him are Madmother, Lily, Maggie, Doreen Ryan in her fear and desire for privacy, the paranoid Henry Burke and the alleged son of

Enrico Manani, whose childhood fear evokes such a great ambition to escape the colony that he becomes a "world famous singer." Thus Becker accepts rumour, hyperbole, and mythic stature for Keneally in his "history" because it reflects Keneally's far-reaching influence. Keneally accuses his friend Edward Guthrie of long distance killing, but Keneally's baleful influence extends over time as well as space. In fact, Donal Keneally represents unmeaning, chaos, illusion and obscurity, and he holds such archetypal importance, even among Becker's contemporaries, that his myth must finally be confronted and released to oblivion: " 'Myth . . . like all the past, real or imaginary, must be acknowledged . . . especially when it's not believed. When you begin to disbelieve in Keneally you can begin to believe in yourself.' "

Robert Lecker, however, suggests that Becker is taken in by Keneally: "Hodgins implies that Becker is mistaken in the value he places upon himself and his search for legend. His attempt to reshape Keneally's world by organizing fragmented memories, documents, and details makes him envision himself as a creator. But he becomes a reflection of his deceptive subject: the myth he uncovers in Keneally is not one of truth but one of magic and treachery." Lecker misses the point; for what is crucial is not whether the myth is one of truth or deception, but that Keneally *is* a manifestation of myth.

Lecker also argues that: "Becker's problem . . . is that he takes the warped data he uncovers far too seriously — seriously enough to see Keneally, who is really a brutal, selfish tyrant, as the legendary redeemer of his people." This is never the case. The reader is not allowed into Becker's thoughts, nor even hears much of his dialogue until the "Wolves of Lycaon" and "Pilgrimage." Before that we are introduced to him by the narrator who reveals his pretensions and hints at his limitations — Becker's caretaker rather than creator role. "The Eden Swindle" is, moreover, a collective tale and one which is one step removed from Becker, for the narrator says: "Becker tells you this:." The reader is not allowed to know how or why Becker would tell him "this" and is given no clues as to how his personality has affected the telling. But the Becker who recognizes that Keneally is evil, and that Keneally's myth must be confronted, does not perceive the Irishman as a "legendary redeemer."

BECKER'S PERCEPTION is refined in the course of the book. In the introductory section Becker wants to control, order, and possess Keneally's story, but in "Second Growth" he admits: "His story has returned to the air where I found it, it will never belong to me, for all my gathering and hoarding." The introduction and "Scrapbook" are co-extensive, for in the introduction we are told that Becker already has a hoard of scrapbooks, tapes, and other documents, while the tale of Keneally only has "a certain agreed-upon beginning."

"The Eden Swindle" and "Second Growth" also can be paired together — both having similar opening statements by Becker and both admitting that Becker is not the creator and that the story exists independent of him. As Lecker himself points out, the "agreed-upon beginning" of the introduction is changed in "The Eden Swindle," from "Donal Keneally's mother started it all" to "It was Keneally's mother who started the whole deception." This change reflects Becker's realization that it is not his mission to uncover the exact details of Keneally's extraordinary life, but to perceive what myth he represents and to come to terms with it. Becker acknowledges that Keneally's story is a deception, but one which offers mythic truth.

Becker, whose mythical counterpart is Charon, leads us from the conscious to the unconscious reality of Keneally. This connection is drawn by Becker himself in his notes about the Irish hawker (for the ferry to the garden island of Garnish) who is anxious to go to the next world. Becker, then, acts as a psychopomp for the reader as much as Horseman does for Maggie and Wade.

The marriage that Becker records in "Second Growth" reflects the psychic healing that has taken place in the community after the pilgrimage. The marriage is a communal event and in its disorder akin to primitive rites which invoked chaos in order to regenerate the world. In primitive cultures this creation or invention of the cosmos recurred each year, the new year arriving with the harvest.[7] The new year in Irish pagan culture coincided with the festival of Samhain on the first of November where the dead were able to rise and mix with the living. Ella Young, an Irish folklorist, attests to the visionary significance of Samhain: "Samhain is, I think, the greatest of the Old Celtic Festivals, this Feast of Nuts — the Nuts of Knowledge — and of apples — the Golden Apples of the Tree of Life — since in it, symbolically, the Shaper of the World, the Smith of the Stars, of Hades, and of the Nether Hell grants to those who can drink of his cup, immortal life and power to know the true from the seeming."[8]

The reader is not told the date of Maggie's wedding, but the first Saturday in November is close enough for one to suspect that it is also intended to be Samhain, the first day of November. The presence of the dead (Keneally and his three wives); the combat between two opposing groups (the loggers and the townspeople); and the presence of the erotic element in the food orgy and in the passionate embrace of Wade and Maggie (which dispels the fight and from which they emerge "the new man and the new woman") are all characteristic traits of primitive new year festivals.

Unlike Keneally, Maggie is known to the entire community and her marriage unites the community in a desire for celebration and then in a desire for peace. The list of presents offered the couple ranges from plausible items to odd concrete objects to utter abstractions. These abstractions are unconscious hopes, wishes, and fears which have been allowed to rise like the dead on this heiro-

phanous occasion. This abstract category will not help Maggie and Wade set up housekeeping, but it will present a vision of the future of equal parts good and evil. It is with these gifts of vision that "the fine and important couple" will be able to maintain an ecological balance in the larger world which they have uncovered.

THIS MYTHIC READING OF *The Invention of the World* is supported by the book's allusion to Irish paradigms of myth, epic, and legend in Keneally and Horseman. For if one examines The Mythological Cycle, Keneally appears to be modelled after Balor, a King of the Fomorians, the elder of the two races of gods venerated by the ancient Irish. The Fomori incarnate the forces of death, night, storm, and ignorance (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 79). They were the enemies of the Tuatha de Danann, the good gods of light, knowledge, and dawn. The Fomor were also known as the gods of the men of Domna (or Domnand), the men of Domna being the traditional foes of the Ulster heroes, Cuchulain and Conchobar. Donal is written "Doṁnall" in Irish and is derived from the Celtic dumno-valos "world mighty" or dubno-valos, "mighty in the deep."[9] "Domnan," the word which is the name of the people who worship the Fomor, means "a little world" or "microcosm,"[10] suggesting both the Fir-Domnan's human limitations and their limited vision: the Fir-Domnan have "all manner of vices and defects" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 72). Thus, in his very naming, Keneally has the potential both for dominion and petty dominance.

Balor's lineage confirms Keneally's identification with him. In Celtic legend the moon is a horned creature, a bull-headed god named Buair-ainech and like Keneally, Balor, the god of Night is born from this bull-headed god (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 114). Balor has an evil eye which when opened strikes like a thunderbolt (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 115) and he is sometimes referred to as god of the Thunderbolt. Similarly, Keneally's dogs, both called Thunderbird, are symbolic of his power and instrumental to the fear he arouses. At his greatest performance Keneally appears to call up a thunderstorm which reduces even the most sceptical witnesses to doglike servility.

Balor is destroyed when Lugh his grandson puts out his evil eye. Keneally is broken when Thunderbird is killed by Paddy O'Mahony, who Lily says could be Keneally's son. Furthermore, in popular Irish folklore, the father of Lugh, who begins Balor's downfall, is named MacKineely (son of Kineely) just as in a sense O'Mahoney is Keneally's son.

Keneally's treatment of the Colony people as if they were slaves evokes another Fomor, Bress, of whom Arbois de Jubainville writes: "He exacted oppressive tributes from the people and gave nothing in return." The Fomor were known as a race of tyrants who exacted tributes of corn and milk and the sacrifice of

two thirds of the children born in the year (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 57). Keneally, before the dedication of The House of Revelations, proclaims that there will be no sacrifices of children "because they were civilized men and saw no evidence at all of any god to worship." Ironically, many of the children of the Colony are sacrificial victims to Keneally's omnipotence, most notably Mad-mother Thomas, who is molested by him.

In physical appearance the Fomor were monstrous: either dwarfs, giants, men with goats' heads or deformed beings (Arbois de Jubainville, pp. 52-54). In the Book of Invasions, among the deformed Fomor, are those with only one hand and one foot. Thus one recognizes Jems the Cripple, Jerry Quirke, Grania O'Flynn, and even the grotesque Keneally with his "sack of turnips." Moreover the huge trees which surround the Colony are dark giants.

Keneally is, then, a manifestation of the archetype of death, darkness, and evil. He is associated with mist, which symbolizes a sinister unknowable quality. Becker comments that the islanders "don't have any idea what to do with Keneally. As long as he was out there, unreckoned with, unlabelled, he was a fascination and a threat. You couldn't be sure how much reality to grant him. Evil is always like that."

Keneally upsets the paradise of fearlessness in Carrigdhoun even before the coming of the mist. He plays great deceptions on the people and disturbs their sense of time. Indeed, Keneally's great knowledge is mistlike: "Donal Keneally absorbed knowledge as it came down the mountain in the mist and clung to him like the moisture of his hair." Keneally's sense of "fifty different ways you could come at a word like 'truth' and arrive at a separate meaning every time" speaks of the plurality rather than the unity of his vision. It is shortly after Keneally's departure from Carrigdhoun that the terrible mist does descend,[11] as though with his expulsion paradise ceases to exist.

Fear invades Carrigdhoun and the villagers are no longer able to distinguish the real world from the imagined, truth from unmeaning. Here, the Biblical myth of the fall and *Paradise Lost* echo in the Irish mist. One interpretation of the Biblical fall understands the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge as the same tree. The serpent offers Adam and Eve a hitherto untasted experience "of fragmented unity, of things unreferred to the center and valued for their own sake as if they were self-sufficing entities."[12] When they partake of the fruit, Adam and Eve are allowed to know a partial truth in scientific exactness and detail, the trees are separated, and Adam and Eve lose the ability to know the whole or perceive the unity. While the Samhain wedding restores the two trees (of Apples and of Nuts) to visionary wholeness, the people of Carrigdhoun with the expulsion of Keneally and the descent of the mist are synonymous with the Fir-Domnan who worshipped the Fomor and exchanged macrocosm for microcosm, the Tree of Life for the Tree of Knowledge.

The explicit reason for Keneally's expulsion and the concomitant descent of the mist is his fight with the English bailiff. Here epic allusions to both Irish legend and *Paradise Lost* signal a mythic fall. For "Donal" may also allude to "Donnataurus," the name of the dun-coloured, prize bull in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* of the Heroic, Ulster or Red Branch Cycle (Lecker, pp. 95-96).[13] Near the end of this saga the dun bull fights and wins an epic battle with the white bull of the opposing side. In a direct parallel Keneally's battle with the Englishman marks the countryside with "The Bailiff's Retreat," just as Ireland's place names according to the *Cuailnge* were changed by the bulls' fight.[14] This fight is later re-enacted when Keneally confronts the Island town's mayor. The Island fight begins with the Irishman "springing up surprised from the mayor's bed roaring like a bull. . . ."[15] Their final battle also has a devastating effect on the landscape, and Keneally again whips his opponent yet is forced to leave.

In the *Cuailnge* after winning his fight the dun bull rampages across Ireland. Significantly, when the bull reaches the sea his heart bursts and he dies, just as Keneally suffers the ritual death of expulsion. In Keneally's temporary victory, then, one can see the dun bull's last hurrah and Lucifer's initial brave stand against God. This is not to say that the English bailiff is God, but that he is what Keneally mistook for dominion; he is tyranny rather than divinity. In other words the white bull is the bailiff's more apt alter-ego.

Keneally's character also corresponds to Partholon, the chief of the first race in the Mythological Cycle to settle in Ireland. Distinguished by their folly, Partholon and his people preceded the divine Tuatha de Danann. Partholon delivered his people from their enemy by successfully leading them to victory over the Fomor (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 18). Keneally appears to deliver his people from the enemy: literally from their English oppressors, and figuratively from their mistlike fear. After Partholon's death, his colony is wiped out by a plague which is understood as an act of divine vengeance: "When Partholon left his country to come into Ireland, it was not of his own accord; he had been condemned to exile for having killed his father and his mother — a double parracide for which banishment was not deemed a sufficient punishment" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 20). Similarly, Keneally's mother dies giving birth to him, his foster father Quirke dies of shock when Keneally returns to Carrigdhoun and Keneally outright murders Grania O'Flynn, his foster mother. (Lucifer's attempted parracide is also evoked here.) Both Partholon and Keneally are false saviours for their people; their journey to "promised land" is compromised from the outset.

Keneally also is like Partholon in the modern legends, in having an unfaithful wife. Partholon catches his wife in an adulterous situation with a young man (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 18).[16] When confronted, the wife blames Partholon, suggesting that he is a less than adequate or desirable husband. In great anger

Partholon kills his wife's dog — "the first act of jealousy in Ireland." Keneally's jealousy is much more ferocious, for the implication in the text is that he kills Nell and her lover. Because of his illegitimacy as leader Keneally reacts especially violently to criticism. Since in the end his self-deceiving notions of his god-like origins and his god-given rights are closely tied to his sexual potency and prowess, he is especially vulnerable to attack in this area. Hence his despicable treatment of Hattie Scully for her and her mother's "treachery"; hence the alleged murders of his wife and Christopher Wall. Significantly too, when Paddy O'-Mahony challenges Keneally's *droit de seigneur*, Keneally's power base begins to crumble. The death of Keneally's child by Mary O'Mahony at Easter acts as a reminder of his loss of power.

In contrast to Keneally, Horseman is a truly recognizable supernatural character. His counterparts in Irish myth are the Tuatha de Danann. In pagan belief the Tuatha De descended from heaven and evidence in the Irish annals reveals that these Irish gods travelled in air ships.[17] Hence Horseman's association with a car "paler than sky, a silver-blue sedan," space ships and reflections. The name "Horseman" may allude to a number of Irish myths in which the hero, on returning from the Land of the Dead or the Land Under Wave, "cannot alight from his horse without exposing himself to certain misfortune . . . their chariot and horses, which the mode of warfare of the primitive Celts associated so inseparably with them — have something superhuman about them, and are in many respects exempt from the general laws to which the rest of nature is subject" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 207). "Horseman" is also undoubtedly an allusion to Yeats' epitaph and "Under Ben Bulben," his last poem. Yeats' use of horsemen was based upon the peasant belief, researched by Lady Gregory and himself, that supernatural horsemen rode between the mountains.[18]

Horsemen cannot be understood simply as Wade Powers' double because he is seen by Anna Sterner and Maggie, and Anna also notices his resemblance to Wade. Horseman's teasing statement that he is, in a manner of speaking, a "man of God," and his feat of being able to release himself from the locked fort, attest to his super-nature. One also senses about him that he moves beyond the limits of life. To Maggie he is Yeats' cold horseman, bringing her anxiety about mortality: " 'This damn wind . . . it makes me cold right to the bone — I half expect to see your friend Horseman sneaking around behind the stones, he had the same kind of effect on me.' " Once men drove them out of visible Ireland, the Tuatha de Danann and Fomor became the Sidhe, which means "wind."[19] In Yeats' mind the horsemen were also associated with powers of final destruc-

tion; the horsemen of Revelations are also alluded to in Hodgins' book. In Wade's dream, Horseman in his space ship tries to suck him in just as Keneally seems to suck Lily into his obsessive digging. Wade and Keneally are both moving towards a recovery of the true self: both fear death and apocalyptic emptiness.

Keneally betrays curious similarities to Horseman. Keneally's high boots were polished "till you'd see the sky in them. . . ." After Keneally's failure to convert Kilgorlin and other villages and his encounter with the sexually intimidating Meg Delaney, he *steals* a horse. It is with this horse his luck changes: he miraculously finds Nell MacGuire and returns triumphantly to Carrigdhoun. When he plays "Superman" at the Colony his horse, usually a black stallion, symbolizes his sense of his own god-like sexuality. Keneally in "Wolves of Lycaon" is like a black hole sucking *in* Lily (and removing her soul) and in "Wade" Horseman in a dream warning acts like a vacuum trying to suck in Wade. These parallels suggest Keneally's non-identity or rather his parasitic identity. This relationship between Keneally and Horseman has its paradigm in that of the Tuatha de Danann and the Fomor: "The Fomoiri are normally pictured as unpleasant spirits dwelling overseas to the north of Ireland. There is a vagueness, however, in Irish tradition concerning them which is in marked contrast with the clear characterization and wealth of detail about individuals which has been handed down concerning the Tuatha de Donann. Indeed the vagueness is such that it has permitted so great an expert as T. F. O'Rahilly to suggest that between the Fomoiri and the Tuatha De 'there are at bottom no real distinctions.' "[20]

Unlike Keneally, who affects the lives of others randomly and gratuitously, Horseman causes psychic disturbances at crucial moments. In Maggie's case, she is stewing over the appearance of Danny Holland at their son's wedding. It becomes apparent that she fears Holland's "shadowy presence" because he reflects a side of herself she would like to bury — her bush or Zulu self. While she is fretting over Holland, Anna Sterner appears at the window to tell her about Horseman. Through the same window Wade appears to Lily Hayworth as her former husband Donal Keneally. Lily fears Keneally for much the same reasons that Maggie fears her first "husband" — for the influence he had over her. When juxtaposed with the disturbing trio of Horseman, Wade, and Keneally, the threat of Holland is diminished and Maggie's fear of him dissolves.

Horseman appears to Wade shortly after he denies ever having loved Maggie, his anima figure. Wade is a milder version of Keneally, or at least someone who has caught a residual dose of Keneally's emptiness. Wade's fort is a small counterfeit world like Keneally's Colony. Wade is the black sheep of his family, just as Keneally was of his village. Both men have a weakness for women. Wade reflects, suggesting his resemblance to Keneally: "Without even making a show of it they [women] led you around like a bull with a ring in your nose. . . ."

Horseman disturbs Wade's sense of reality before he is sucked into the void as Keneally is. Wade's anxiety about reality is reflected even in his first feelings about Horseman's sedan: "Wade felt like someone who had just come through a museum where he'd admired everything there was, and then realized that he hadn't the slightest idea what any of it meant." In this state of mind Wade becomes hostile to Virginia Kerr's art because it does not conform to what he can see with his eyes. Wade, like Keneally, has become a materialist and, as Virginia Kerr tells him, has lost the ability to perceive truth. He destroys the vision of her art and sends her away as surely as one suspects Keneally killed his first wife and her lover for the way they challenged his world.

Horseman enlightens Wade in two ways. He tells him that he has buried his true self, perhaps symbolically in his fort. Wade is once more tied to Keneally who in the end is obsessed with the ancient circular forts and what is beneath them. He also tells Wade, by means of the story of the woman grieving over her dead children in the one remaining room of her house, that he too has chosen to accept a small space for the whole world. It is this smallness of vision which has made Wade resist the loggers' life as well as the life of his parents — his mother ends up in a booth selling tickets.

Horseman invades Maggie and Wade's consciousness on two significant occasions on the pilgrimage. At Carrigdhoun in the ruins of a stone house Maggie persuades Wade how little is needed to domesticate and swindle people from a larger vision of the world, suggesting how easily people are fooled: " 'The stones,' she said, 'these walls. Can you imagine these being all that separated inside from outside? All that made *home* separate from world?' " Just after this remark Maggie chooses for the first time to confront Wade with Horseman's revelations.

Horseman is also present at the stones above Kilkeal, the high point of the Maggie-Wade-Becker pilgrimage. He breaks in on Maggie's thoughts following her anxiety about finding her position on the map. Horseman has appeared to counteract the influence of maps before this event. Maggie was studying her maps and planning road blocks for Danny when she first heard of Horseman. Fighting over the road with Holland she realized she has been drawn into a petty battle while Lily might have been dying and also realized the non-reality of any fear of Holland.

Keneally and his small sense of dominion are from the beginning associated with maps. When Keneally makes his own pilgrimage to the stones after his expulsion from Carrigdhoun "in the course of the long night he heard the soft voice of his mother laying out for him the direction of his life like a complicated map of roads." In Maggie's dreams, which arise from the enslaved and befouled world as represented on her maps, Keneally appears. While Maggie in her dream tries to open up the locked-up world of her maps, a Keneally-like figure

harasses and scares her: "And always, always from behind a mileage number on a boundary line an upright man-like shadow would appear and pursue her running down the broken lines and twisting roads, down blue-vein streams and narrow inlets, his laugh a thunderous roar that made the paper ripple beneath her feet." Indeed, Keneally allies himself with surveyors and land-developers in his vision of the Island being settled and developed by what would be prison-like colonies much like his own.

Wade also shows a reluctance to trust his instinct and relinquish signs. He wishes to place Horseman on a map as a test of Horseman's reality. Driving in Ireland Wade is hesitant to trust any roads not on the map. Yet it is Wade, in his instinctive movement to cover her map, who releases Maggie from her obsession. Her recognition of the childlike quality of Wade's foot makes her map a small and invented reality by comparison. Maggie sees Wade as her destiny rather than the complex and duplicitous map that was presented to Keneally by his mother at the stones. Her recognition is also an acknowledgement of her truly feminine role as the mother — a role which for much of her life she has tried to avoid. At crucial moments the mother in her emerges: with the young girl at the commune after the murder; in her concern for Lily in the heat of her battle with Holland; and her sheltering of misfits, including Madmother Thomas.

With Maggie's recognition of her self-evasion, she moves to confront Wade finally with his. Becker tells them that they should not simply feel shame or self-loathing for their evasion, rather, they should rejoice in what they have uncovered: the living roots below the frozen ground. In fact Maggie's response to the car of vandals, a machine with arms, is a kind of rejoicing: " 'Look at them go down, look how high we've come, look at how high we've come.' " The monstrous car alludes to the Fomor, and thus to the forces which Keneally represented. The fact that the pilgrims have confronted Keneally and the duplicitous forces he represented in themselves and ritually cast them down the mountain or rather consigned them to oblivion, is emphasized here.

The movement of the book is then, from night to day, from dark to light as the dark, unknowable Keneally gives way to the known and radiant Maggie. "Second Growth" also alludes to the second growth of Celtic Irish mythology where the dark Fomor fathered by Buarainech, a dark god associated with the moon, gives way to the Tuatha de Danann: the gods of light who are the sons of the Goddess Danu (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 73). Thus, in moving from Keneally to Maggie, from masculine to feminine, the novel echoes the levels of cosmogony in Irish myth. Similarly, there is a general healing movement in the book. Becker's investigations are a means of healing the psychological wound inflicted by Keneally to Becker's father. Maggie is the central healer and Madmother the central victim. It is Madmother whom Maggie instinctively seeks out

on her pilgrimage to the bush and whom Maggie brings back to the Revelations House, Madmother's true home.

Hodgins' characters in *The Invention* — Maggie, Holland, and Madmother to name a few — appear at first to be from the small world of an Al Capp comic strip. In *The Invention of the World* Hodgins attempts to set up and break these cartoon cliches reminiscent of pastoral Dogpatch and to invent or uncover the larger world hidden beneath them.[21] Jack Hodgins' use of Irish myth and of Biblical and classical myth, too, are intended to alter and enlarge the reader's vision and thus to incorporate the primitive, mythic, and unconscious into it. Hodgins in *The Invention of the World* uses myth to metamorphose snails into sparrows.

NOTES

[1] Hence this paper disagrees with Susan Beckmann, "Canadian Burlesque: Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 20 (1980-81), pp. 106-25; and with Robert Lecker, "Haunted by a Glut of Ghosts: Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 20 (1980-81), pp. 86-105.

[2] Although the book makes many classical allusions, space does not allow a discussion of them here.

[3] This and subsequent references are taken from Jack Hodgins, *The Invention of the World* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977).

[4] Patrick Woulfe, *Irish Names and Surnames* (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1923), p. 465.

[5] There is some evidence of a belief in lycanthropy among the pagan Irish. George Brandon Saul, *Traditional Irish Literature and its Backgrounds: A Brief Introduction* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 35.

[6] H. D'Arbois de Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology*, trans. Richard Irvine Best (Dublin/London, 1903; rpt. New York: Lemma Publishing, 1970), p. 150. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[7] Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), p. 51.

[8] Ella Young, *Flowering Dusk: Things Remembered Accurately and Inaccurately* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1945), pp. 78-79.

[9] Patrick Woulfe, *Irish Names and Surnames*, p. 180.

[10] "Doṁnán," *An Irish-English Dictionary* (1927).

[11] The illusion or the truth of fiction created by the eleventh-century Irish annalists, depending on one's point of view, in recording early Irish history is described by the villagers of Carrigdhoun: "But in the early Irish history, what one solid and irrefutable fact appears upon which we can put foot or hand and say, 'This at all events, is certain, this that I hold is not mist; this that I stand on is neither water or mire'? Running down the long list of Milesian kings, chiefs, brehons, and bards, where first shall we pause, arrested by some substantial form in this procession of empty ghosts — how distinguish the man from the shadow, where over all is diffused the same concealing mist, and the eyes of the living and the dead look with the same pale glare?" *The Heroic Period*, vol. I of *History of Ireland* (London, 1878; rpt. New York: Lemma Publishing, 1970), p. 20.

[12] Marco Pallis, "Is There a Problem of Evil?" in *The Sword of Gnosis: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism*, ed. Jacob Needleman (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1974), p. 237.

[13] Lecker is quite wrong when he says: "In the *Cuailnge*, the Donn's rage defeats all, and he triumphs in the end." For the dun bull dies at the end of the saga.

[14] Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland: From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Brian O'Cuin (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), p. 340.

[15] In a short auxiliary saga to the *Táin* it is revealed that the bulls were "really rebirths of two men who hated each other during life, and now fought it out in the form of the bulls." Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 339-40.

[16] The tale of Nell and Christopher Wall's first meeting as related by his brother, bears a resemblance to the *Táin Bó Froích* which is "famous for its description of the beauty of Froech as he swam in the pool" where he is watched and admired by Findabair, the heroine. Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 130. A translation of this passage appears on pp. 130-31.

[17] Ella Young, *Flowering Dusk*, p. 33.

[18] John Unterecker, *A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1959), p. 277.

[19] Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, "Yeats and Ireland," *English Journal*, 54 (1965), 449.

[20] Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 108.

[21] It is obvious from the importance Hodgins places on the "Dog Patch" comic strip as an influence on him that he found deep, even mythic meaning in its stories. Jack Hodgins, "Beginnings," *Today Magazine* (28 Feb. 1981), p. 3.

SPRING WALKS

Robert Gibbs

I

I wake to robins and redwings that
stake their ground   The Nashwaak claims
a kingsize bed over the whole interval
The farmer's dump's afloat and his manure
pile's wider than his farm   I walk

to the river to see in the grey   red
marks laugh out loud   two
mailboxes and a coca-cola sign
Joe's Diner where I count seven
bunched over dim-lit breakfasts

A mother waves and two kids in pajamas
half wave   and keep their hands
half open till their van blunders off

The river's still   and brimming   It moves on
faster than I see except by the red

drum it rolls   snatched from some
raft or jetty upstream   Benches
along the bank ankledeep yesterday are
kneedeep today   and rent-a-cars
behind the hotel half drown   Someone's

been out half the night   sandbagging
the river's back premises   I love
this mist   that mixes daylight into itself
red mist and grey   yellow mist greening
land into water   water into trees   trees

into sky   This undistinguishing mist
holds candlelight in willow tips   It
blurs   mystifies   unfreezes   I love too
these lights   that people set their
borders by   crocuses white and purple

that spurt out of ripe old leaves
I turn and walk back   wary of hungry
schoolbuses   that shoulder out
to set their yellow rules against
this day's unruliness

II

By the cindertrack where runners run I put
my ear to the ground   not as keen as when
I put it to the rail to hear the train
far-off coming   I want now to hear

the earth break or breathe   I look for horses
to come beating out of the mist
and listen too   deep as I can   for your
breathing   and the songs of the long dead

stretching out their sleep   I sniff
what's threaded round the taproots
of dandelions   My seismographic
heart   that falters when you falter

skips a beat   It wants to know the flaws
in your sleep   the whimpers of baby groundhogs
or of lovers   who turn and whisper to dry
sheets   where bodyheat should be

NEEDS

Christopher Wiseman

Beacon Hill Park, early March, after rain,
And I'm straight from the white death-house of the prairies.

I'm not much interested in the lakes and trees,
The peacocks parading like bad motel paintings,

The world's tallest and dullest totem-pole,
Or even the mild green giving of grass under my shoes.

Today it's the crocuses that I am stopped by,
The astounding fields of them, white and blue,

Reaching upward, opening to the weather,
A fury in them as if they would be taller,

As if they would defy whatever it is
Decrees they must not grow too much, turn giants,

As if they were desperate to go all the way,
If they were allowed, up into cloud and beyond.

I go on, down to the beach, smelling secrets
Of my childhood in the salt of a freshening wind,

Down to the sandhoppers and shining driftwood,
Sea-bleached, eaten hollow, heaped at random

Like a bone-house for enormous frozen beasts.
I balance on a huge white spine of log,

Looking past the birds into the horizon,
My mind dizzy, white and blue with distance,

And I raise my frozen hands. I would be taller.
I feel the fury in me. Today I would

Go all the way, no holding back. I reach
And, look, already the clouds are higher, lifting.

JACK HODGINS' "THE INVENTION OF THE WORLD" & ROBERT BROWNING'S "ABT VOGLER"

Laurence Steven

In HIS REVIEW-ARTICLE OF *The Invention of the World* J. R. (Tim) Struthers comments briefly on the relationship between "Abt Vogler" and the novel:

> By allusion, the piano player [in the climactic wedding scene] hammering on middle 'C' until he has everyone's attention returns us to "The C Major of this life" in Robert Browning's poem "Abt Vogler". Hodgins' quotation of a two-line passage from "Abt Vogler" in the conclusion to *The Invention of the World* is very appropriate, since Browning and his musician also knew that revelation is achieved in the moment of artistic invention.[1]

Though Struthers' comment is perceptive, it falls far short of the actual significance that Browning's poem carries for Hodgins. The two line borrowing that Struthers neglects to quote in the body of his paper — "What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more: On the earth the broken arcs; in heaven, a perfect round" — reflects a central element of Hodgins' vision. For Hodgins, as for Browning, our world is not *the* world. In an interview with Geoff Hancock, editor of the *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, Hodgins defined his view of reality as "The Reality that exists beyond this imitation reality that we are too often contented with. The created rather than the invented world."[2]

The duality at the heart of this vision — creation versus invention, broken arcs versus perfect round — is embodied in the novel in Hodgins' use of the dual creation myth from Genesis. Significantly, the introduction of this myth coincides with the novel's single mention of Robert Browning's name. Strabo Becker is pacing around old Lily Hayworth's bedroom, trying to convince her to consign her life memories to tape:

> He'd fingered her books, her Robert Browning, he'd picked up the little black leather Bible. "A Bible, Lily?" he said. "You've been reading this?" No, she'd never read it, not through, she said.... A strange story, he said, if you'd read it. It has two beginnings. The first, a single chapter, would have us all made in the image of God, perfect spiritual creatures. Then someone else came along, started

> it all over again, and had us all made out of clay. The rest of the story shows a lot of people trying to get back to that first beginning, back before the mist and the clay. You get all the way up to nearly the end of the book before you meet the man who knows how to manage it.[3]

Lily wonders if this feat is accomplished by magic, because she knows that magic is what people are looking for to help them overcome, in her words, "the limits that are put on us by this sack of bones we call ourselves." Becker tells her there was no magic involved, and then continues:

> magic is what seems to defy the laws, or suspend them. There's nothing magic about something that was there all along, though hidden, like the underground roots of frozen grass.

The relation of the constant to the transitory — the root to the frozen grass — is elaborated in the two major movements of Browning's poem. The first movement, Abt Vogler's ecstatic moment of musical extemporization, is analogous to Hodgins' first creation. Where Becker says we were all once perfect spiritual creatures, Vogler, in the transcendent moment, when past and future, earth and heaven, life and death are one, says the following: "What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon: / And what is, — shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too" (ll. 39-40). This moment of perfection is, however, fleeting — our earth is only a broken arc. Consequently doubt creeps in:

> Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
> Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
> For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
> That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
> Never to be again! (ll. 57-61)

The second major movement of the poem deals with Vogler's response to this loss of truth. In the lines of central importance he says he "must be saved because I cling with my mind / To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be" (ll. 63-64). William Whitla comments usefully here:

> Perfection is gone. It cannot constantly be experienced ... but must be replaced, argues Vogler, with the definite act of mind, the willing choice which holds on to the memory of perfection once experienced. The choice is also made to hold on to the self that was the medium of the experience.... The artist also chooses to cherish the love that brought it to be ... and the love of God who is himself that love.[4]

Falling away from perfection means assuming, inevitably, a false, or at least imperfect self. For sustenance Vogler must cling to the point at which he was made perfect. But as Whitla says, this takes a "definite act of mind," an act which most of us, for whatever reasons, do not make. Old Lily Hayworth in Hodgins' novel intuitively recognizes this:

Maybe that's what life is, forgetting what's natural, or maybe that's what life *isn't*. Maybe our natural life goes on without us while we slap on layer after layer of what we think is life but is only pretense.

Rather than responding to our true natures as perfect spiritual creatures by striving to manifest that nature, we believe only in our all-too-apparent limitations. Though these are real they belong only to the realm of the broken arcs. The other reality, however, of the perfect round, is always part of us — like the underground root —, dwelling in us as a spiritual sense, or conscience, or, as Strabo Becker terms it in his notebook, an instinct:

Maybe all our lives that instinct is in us, trying to translate the fake material world we seem to experience back into pre-Eden truth, but we learn early not to listen. Instead we accept the swindle, eat it whole.

Hodgins' vision of man's dual existence — the perfect spiritual being hidden within the flawed, materially-tied surface personality — gets a most effective dramatization in the relationship of Wade Powers and his double Horseman. Horseman *is* the true, the real, Wade Powers. He is Wade Powers as Wade would appear in the first creation — a perfect spiritual creature. He inhabits the perfect round of heaven as opposed to the broken arcs of earth. When Wade questions him about his occupation Horseman responds:

"A man of God is a busy man," he said. "I'm on the road a lot, it's not very often I get the time to lie around like this."
"What?"
He sat up, shaking his head. "Oh, I don't mean preacher, not a minister. It was a silly thing to say, I suppose, but you see that's the way I think of myself, of us all."

PRIOR TO HIS MEETING with Horseman, Wade has carefully suppressed the spiritual component in his life. He is one of those who are tied, in Horseman's words, "To earth. To things. To themselves, to their own bodies." He has cultivated a hedonistic lifestyle, finally attaining what he believes is an ideal existence: "the thing he'd waited for all his life had happened. He had the Fort. He had those tourists so eager to part with their money. He had Virginia. Things were perfect." But this perfection, such as it is, comes at the expense of the tourists Wade dupes and then holds in contempt. As he says to Virginia Kerr:

the sight of tourists disgusted him. A bunch of fools was what they were, he told her, to part with their money so easily. They came into the place looking as if there was a real treat in store for them, and went out again looking as if something had just been added to their lives. They thought they were stepping back in

time, living their own ancestors' lives for a moment, and didn't even suspect what idiots they were. . . . It probably wouldn't even bother them to be told what they'd paid for was only a rough counterfeit of the real thing.

Whether the fort is real or not, the tourists find it a meaningful experience. The important point is the motive behind the offering, whether it is offered with love or contempt. This is brought out fully in the exchange following Horseman's discovery that the fort is counterfeit:

"Nevertheless," the man said, his head tilted in thought. "If you've offered it to them with love, if you're giving them this because it's the closest you can come to the real thing, and if the real thing is something you want them to have, then you're not really cheating them at all. They spend their lives being satisfied with reasonable facsimiles. This is no different. The important thing of course is motive. Any gift, offered with love, has some value."

"It's a business," Wade said. "It's my business."

"Then it's offered with contempt."

Even if only a reasonable facsimile of the real thing, the gift offered with love has value because love is the precondition of reality, of the created world as against the invented one, the first creation as against the second, the perfect round as against the broken arcs. Just as Abt Vogler had to cling to his "same self," the perfect being he had been in the ecstatic moment, so he has to cling to the "same love" which was the condition which allowed that moment its existence. As Jacques Maritain says:

To produce in beauty the artist must be in love with beauty. Such undeviating love is a supra-artistic rule — a precondition, not sufficient as to the ways of making, yet necessary as to the vital animation of art — which is presupposed by all rules of art.[5]

For Wade to offer his fort in a spirit of love would mean he was clinging to his "same self" — his perfect spiritual nature — as it is embodied in Horseman. This, however, is not what he does. His contempt constitutes a denial of reality and a perpetration of a fraudulent, invented world. Horseman regrets the lack of contact between them in a passage employing variations on the imagery of circle and arc from Browning's poem:

The man sat down on the little bench where the curved outside wall and the straight inside wall met. "We're further apart than I imagined." He looked as if he truly regretted it. "I thought yesterday for a moment or two when we talked that it wouldn't be hard to find at least one point at which we touched. Tangent line and circle. But evidently I was wrong.

The appearance of Horseman in the story at all, however, indicates that a core of loving reality, hitherto deeply buried, is beginning to emerge from within Wade. Hodgins includes a significant juxtaposition in the following statement:

"And the next day, which was the day the stranger arrived on the beach, [Virginia] wanted to know if Wade had ever been in love with Maggie Kyle." Horseman's arrival corresponds to the reawakening of Wade's dormant love for Maggie, a love whose seeds had been sown in the childhood pact they had made to always count on each other. Maggie is the one person Wade is willing to *really* give of himself for:

> If she'd call him, if she'd telephoned from Hed and told him something terrible was going to happen to her, he would be on the road in minutes, heading back to the mountains. He didn't feel sorry for her, he grew more and more fascinated. . . .

The gift is genuine, offered with love. It is this loving nature Wade has to acknowledge, rather than stifle by, symbolically, locking it up in his bastion cell. As Horseman says in their final confrontation: "Don't you think, Powers, that it's time you took responsibility for what you really are?" Wade has to dare — as Abt Vogler has "dared and done" (l. 95) — has to dare to let his spiritual instinct guide him.

The first direct quoting from Browning's poem occurs in the section entitled "The Wolves of Lycaon," in which old Lily Hayworth, at the prompting of Becker with his tape-recorder, plunges into memories of her time as third and last wife of Donal Keneally — founder and self-styled lord of The Revelations Colony of Truth. She is a witness to his self-destruction, when, as a broken and frightened old man, he obsessively tunnels his way into the earth beneath the floorboards of their home and dies in the ensuing cave-in. The first of two identical quotations from "Abt Vogler" comes as Lily and Keneally sit in the kitchen during one of his occasional respites from tunnelling. She ponders the situation as follows: "Who was there left to do anything for anybody? There was only this dark, and the two of them eyeing each other dully. *On earth the broken arcs, in heaven the perfect rounds.*"

The line of poetry is printed in italic type, possibly indicating that Lily recites it at the subconscious level; certainly indicating that she is, in some sense, in touch with a spiritual dimension that Keneally has consistently denied and gone to great lengths to discredit in the eyes of those whom he would have follow him unquestioningly. Lily is certainly no dogged follower. When Keneally explains the circular structure of the colony buildings by saying, "In some cultures . . . the circle represents enlightenment. And perfection" she responds: "Well what happened to your perfection when you got past the shacks? All the fields are squares, all the fences are straight lines."

Lily's sarcasm reveals the inevitable limitations of any material perfection. Like Wade Powers and his ideal material existence, Keneally has attempted to establish paradise on earth, and set himself up as God. The tools he uses are all, finally, superficial: charisma, magic, humiliation, brute force; the one element

that could begin to effect a change — love — is absent. Lily, however, for all her coarse exterior, does have a loving nature, and it is this that gives the lie to her bleak question, already quoted: "Who was there left to do anything for anybody?" Lily herself is doing something for somebody, she is remaining with Keneally to the end, protecting him from those who would take advantage of his weakness. The love is apparent in the following:

> My first concern was for him. Let those others wallow in their dirt, they were used to it, they'd forgotten anything else, time and Keneally's brain-washing had convinced them of their limitations and I wasn't going to change that overnight. No, my first concern was him. Villain, god, demon, magician, con-man, call him what you want he was my husband and I could see what was happening to him, besides being human after all and getting old he was catching whatever disease he had set loose on the others, it was coming back on him now and he probably didn't even recognize it. I saw it sitting in there in his eyes the same way I had seen it sitting in the eyes of the others, and my only thought at first was to keep them from finding out or even suspecting.

Though this love motivates Lily to genuinely offer herself to Keneally, she also has the intuitive awareness that nothing materially can be done to save him. His sickness is of the soul; the determination not to acknowledge anything beyond himself can only lead to self-immolation:

> Should a doctor, or a psychiatrist, be permitted to put patches and Band-Aids on a life that had been plummeting like this from near the beginning? It was only natural that he should screw himself into the ground, after the fall.

The material, humanly limited element in Lily balks at this conclusion but her spiritual sense finally overcomes the objections as the line from "Abt Vogler" is quoted again:

> But natural was never taken as an excuse and wouldn't be for her. There was nothing natural in the way she only sat at that table listening. Wives did not do that, even when they knew it was the only sensible thing. Yet there were some things that mustn't be tampered with, you only had to shift the angle of your vision. *On earth the broken arcs, in heaven the perfect rounds.*

From the perspective of the perfect round — the reality of the first creation, informed by love — Keneally's life has been a denial of its very foundation; from this view he *has* no reality, in effect he doesn't exist. As Abt Vogler says, "The evil is null, is sought, is silence implying sound" (l. 70). Conseqently, for Lily to attempt to heal Keneally physically is pointless; the most she can do is stand by him as an example of the loving sound his evil silence implies. The constancy of love, its *reality,* finally encompasses evil. This is the significance of the Browning line: "What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more" (l. 71). And this is also the significance of the gesture Lily makes from beyond the grave. Through her will she has Maggie Kyle carry Keneally's ashes back to his birth-

place: the circle of stones on the Irish mountain. Symbolically Lily's love has moved Keneally from hell to heaven, from the broken arcs to the perfect round; it has redeemed him.

For Maggie Becker, and finally for Wade Powers as well, the journey to the Irish mountain is more than just a favour for Lily Hayworth. Each of them is on a spiritual pilgrimage, searching for the created as opposed to the invented world. As they stand among the ancient stones and Maggie gets the view she has been craving throughout the novel we realize, through allusions to both the Bible and "Abt Vogler," that they have momentarily re-entered the first creation; have transcended the broken arcs:

> if there was magic here it wasn't in the stones, it was in the command they had of the earth, which fell away below them and ringed them round as far as she could see. *Dominion* was the word that nagged to be said. Dominion over the sun, even, whose fire had already sunk beneath the hills but whose rays like horizontal bands of light streaked out of cloud to cross the valley and find themselves absorbed in stone. Absorbed and then thrown out again, against themselves.

"Dominion," of course, is what God gave man in chapter one of Genesis — the first creation:

> And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:26)

This is no worldly power that one man can hold over another, as with Keneally and his slaves, or Wade and his tourists; it is the power that comes from recognizing the entire created world as spiritually alive and from seeing yourself as part of it. The creation "rings them round" as far as they can see; briefly the impediments to vision are overcome.

To underline just to what extent this mountaintop episode inhabits "the perfect round" Hodgins deftly includes a scene which embodies within it a dramatization of Abt Vogler's "broken arc":

> Somewhere behind them, on the wind, there was a new sound. Turning, they saw far, far back across the lumpy plateau, the small black speck of a car coming towards them.... it rounded the final curve, came up the final slope, going fifty or sixty miles an hour, came yelling and screaming, waving bottles and papers, spouting steam from the grill, belching blue coiling clouds of smoke behind, slowing suddenly, screeching, at the every edge of the drop. A bottle, arching high in the air and then down, smashed exploding against the tallest stone at the same moment the car went over suddenly, dropped over the edge, and turning, roared shooting down the first steep broken section of the road.
>
> "My God, look," Maggie said. "Look at them go down, look how high we've come, look how high we've come."

The smoke-belching car and its disrespectful occupants, symbols of the worst aspects of our invented world, are on a downward path similar to the invented patterns that society has provided and can't see the reality in front of them. Hodgins has skilfully brought us from the outside to the inside of his vision. As we read this scene we share Maggie's perspective; we stand in reality, look out at invention, and see how phoney it is.

THE FINAL SECTION of the novel, entitled "Second Growth," is a mythic rendering of Maggie and Wade's wedding celebration. In its extended exaggeration this expisode is analogous to Abt Vogler's ecstatic moment as he extemporizes on his orchestrion. For Vogler, extemporization is the only artistic endeavour in which "the finger of God" (l. 49) can be experienced directly because inspiration and expression are simultaneous, there is no subjection to artistic laws. Hodgins' use of exaggeration is a symbolic attempt to approach the state of extemporization by transcending the restricting limits of traditional literary realism. And this use is not purely symbolic, either. As Hodgins says, in an interview with Alan Twigg,

> Sometimes I just fly by the seat of my pants. That is, I want to turn the page to find out what happens next. I don't always know. I'm never happy if my writing seems simply beautiful or practical.[6]

In terms of the Browning imagery predominant in the novel, traditional realism, in its adherence to the limits imposed by material reality, manifests a broken arc, while the extended exaggeration, by breaking the rules, moves toward the perfect round.

The wedding is an appropriate occasion for this move toward transcendence because it is a celebration of love, and love, as I said earlier, is the precondition of reality. The creative, ordering power of love — its ability to show us what we really are — is seen clearly in the way it stops the battle which erupts between loggers and townspeople at the reception:

> it was Maggie and Wade who stopped the battle in the end, before anyone got seriously hurt, by expressing their feelings for each other so vehemently in word and deed under the flower-bedecked arch that a pale warm eerie glow radiated from them all over the crowd and stopped them dead in their tracks, full of awe, to contemplate the nature of their own actions. People fell, where they'd stood, in heaps on the floor. Both horrified and amazed at their own behaviour, they either escaped into sleep or hid their faces in shame.

Just as Lily Hayworth knew there was finally nothing *materially* that she could do for Keneally's disease, so Maggie and Wade don't attempt to physically break up the battle — this would only add fuel to the fire. It is their love, remaining

calm and consistent in the midst of the chaos around it, that encompasses, and so quells, the uproar.

When calm is restored Wade gives his speech and unconsciously points the moral by quoting the two Browning lines I opened with: "What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more: On the earth the broken arcs; in heaven, a perfect round." He then suggests it is time to open the gifts, and as Cora Manson tears the paper from parcel after parcel at an increasingly frenzied pace the episode moves to its transcendent cresendo. Beginning with conventional enough wedding gifts — pillows, sheets and appliances — the list is soon exaggerated beyond any semblance of realism, finally leaving the concrete material realm in order to confer on the couple the entire range of human experience and emotion: "Hope. The bomb. Crime. Ecology. Faith. Charity. Life. Truth. Grief. Despair." The list concludes, in total appropriateness to the vision discussed in this paper, with love.

In the final stanza of the Browning poem, Abt Vogler leaves off meditating on the implications of his ecstatic moment and resumes earthly life: "Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign: / I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce" (ll. 89-90). He feels for "the common chord again" (l. 91), assuming his resting place in "The C Major of this life" (l. 96). In doing so, however, his perspective is not completely that of other men: he stands "on alien ground" (l. 93). As William Whitla comments: "Just so is earth alien to the man who has his citizenship in the heaven which he has glimpsed."[7]

Similarly, as the wedding guests are "Reeling from the shock of such an incredible display of wedding gifts," Hodgins brings them back to earth: "It was the piano player who saw the stranger first, and hammered on middle 'C' until he had everyone's attention." The stranger turns out to be Horseman, the symbolic projection of Wade's perfect spiritual nature. It is he who leads the bride and groom back to their home at the House of Revelations. Symbolically, Horseman's appearance at this time indicates that the reality glimpsed by the couple on the mountaintop will remain with them in their earthly life as a guiding love. Significantly, as they leave the marriage celebration Hodgins calls his couple "the new man and new woman."

For both Browning and Hodgins the work of the truly creative artist is an attempt to present the perfect round within the broken arcs. Browning's "whole poet" is able to behold "with an understanding keenness the universe, nature and man, in their actual state of perfection in imperfection."[8] Similarly, in the Hancock interview, Hodgins says

> What you and I call the ocean is to me only a metaphor. All those trees, for instance, are metaphors; the reality lies beyond them. The act of writing to me is an attempt to shine a light on that ocean and those trees so bright that we can see right through them to the reality that is constant.[9]

For both writers, then, art, as displayed in "Abt Vogler" and *The Invention of the World*, becomes a means of revelation.

NOTES

[1] "Fantasy in a Mythless Age," *Essays in Canadian Writing*, 9, pp. 145-46.

[2] "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, No. 32-33 (1979-80), p. 47. This quotation from Hodgins provides the necessary corrective to Robert Lecker's gloss (in "Haunted by a Glut of Ghosts: Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*," *Essays in Canadian Writing*, 20, pp. 86-105) of the two Browning lines that Wade Powers quotes: "The metaphor is quite apparent: contentment and meaning must be found in 'the broken arcs' of this world, and in 'The C Major of this life,' as Abt Vogler says." Though this gloss may support Lecker's contention that Hodgins is an "uninventor" of narrative worlds, it is not borne out by either the novel or the poem. Neither Browning nor Hodgins is concerned with finding "contentment," and, as for "meaning," both offer numerous indications, implicit and explicit, that our limited existence gains significance only to the degree in which it answers the pull from beyond.

[3] This and all subsequent references are to Jack Hodgins, *The Invention of the World* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977; rpt., Signet, 1978).

[4] William Whitla, *The Central Truth* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 86.

[5] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*; quoted in Whitla, p. 69 n.

[6] "Western Horizon," *For Openers* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1981), p. 191.

[7] Whitla, p. 88.

[8] Robert Browning, "An Essay on Percy Bysshe Shelley," in Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange, eds., *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), p. 339.

[9] "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," p. 47.

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DUSK, DURING HARMATTAN

Richard Stevenson

You want to say it is like
a fog in winter, the road
is a deep, dark river
that has nothing to do
with Jordan, the sluggish
currents of the blood.

Your presence is like an oil
slick, some white, frothy
patch of phosphate-laden
detergent that thickens the
surface, fouls bird wings.

That there is no interface
between earth and sky
where angels might breed,
leave their spawn to hatch
from oxygen-fed reeds.

The trees thrust their roots
in the air, seem cauterized,
teased away from the dead,
grey flesh of the sky,
hang their own seed pods

like so many thieves. Cars
grope through centuries of
bad timing and come upon others
suddenly, as a man comes upon
his reflection in a dark room.

— *Potiskum-Maiduguri highway, Nigeria, 1981*

LONGBEACH

greg simison

for hours
approaching the coast
we sense a creeping metamorphosis
but it's only on the ferry
deep-breathing the salty night
the sea stench
washing cities from our systems
that it becomes tangible;
the skin tingling
as webs reassert themselves
between fingers and toes
the tug of organs
resuming an ancient alignment
our brains elated
as they dust off paleozoic skills

a constant seethe
gradually calming with the dawn
as we slide into welcoming breakers
leaving behind
one abandoned car
and two bewildering ruts
across the startled sand

ROAD BUILDING BY PICK AXE

Joy Kogawa

driving down the
highway from Revelstoke —
the highway built by
forced labour — all my
people having no
choice etcetera etcetera

and I mention this in
passing to my friend
who tells me when he
came to Canada from
England he wanted to
go to Vancouver too but
the quota for professors
was full so he was
forced to go to Toronto

PINK GERANIUM

Joy Kogawa

late october farm auction —
the farmer's widow
stands by the fence
watching the crowd

at her feet
a black tipped brown fur
fat caterpillar moves
hump lunge hump lunge

on the auction block
the hammer throated auctioneer
disembowels the farm

"who'll gimme a five a
five for this box of antique lace
yessir an' a six we'll throw in
this beautiful pink geranium"

the widow
lifts her hand quickly
grasping air
as the pink geranium
slips and falls

and the caterpillar is suddenly
tight and round
a green wound oozing
from its side

TWO POEMS

Elspeth Bradbury

Pothole is not preferable   the word's lacuna
This is solemn   sometimes I am solemn-ish
With one or two   the ones I notice with
My present lapses   lapses of my present
How the surface tilts and pits
Walking to the bridge together

Walking back the footing fails to catch   I miss
Am cold apart and fish-eyed
Settles something hard and ancient of the throat
A stiffness to the thigh   a something of relentless
Not at all our way of walking   when it walks
I elsewhere light and bending   will you warm as always

Notice none of this!   I promise
These are little leavings and a far cry from the last

* * *

WORDS to clasp the sometimes silver?
Clods! I curse the drivel
Curse the creepy-crawly devil I am evidently
How shall music of me?   How shall leaping?
I am beautiful with sorrow
How shall seeing?

Songs I've heard that sucked a woman out of me
More lovely than the riding moon
She lives on air
Poor soul
Too light and large
To come back home to me

If clods may climb me to her   let me Alleluia drivel
And Amen for ever hands and knees

THE POST-MORTEM POINT OF VIEW IN MALCOLM LOWRY'S "UNDER THE VOLCANO"

Thomas York

MACHADO DE ASSIS, the nineteenth-century Brazilian novelist, begins his *Epitaph of a Small Winner* with the words: "The Death of the Author: I hesitated some time, not knowing whether to open these memoirs at the beginning or the end. . . . I am a deceased writer not in the sense of one who has written and is now deceased, but in the sense of one who has died and is now writing. . . . "[1] The mechanics of his ghostly narrative, he goes on to say, would require a book in itself to relate. But, unfortunately, Machado himself has not mastered them: he proceeds to write a straightforward novel-length memoir, only referring from time to time to "the great and useful idea" that was the cause of his death — "a great cure, an anti-melancholy plaster, designed to relieve the despondency of mankind."[2]

In the same year (1879) that Machado was writing his *Epitaph*, Sir Sandford Fleming, engineer in chief of surveys for the Canadian Pacific Railways, conceived the idea of standardized time-zones. It was immediately adopted by North American railroads and then by rail systems around the world. Sir Sandford Fleming had inadvertently posed one solution to the problem of breakdown of auctorial authority, which authors as diverse as Proust and Gide, Broch and Mann, Joyce and Woolf, would employ in their works to achieve an effect of simultaneity — the representation, by contrasting public with private time, of single moments in temporal succession which nevertheless gives the impression of instantaneity. Machado had proposed a different solution. But whereas Sir Sandford Fleming's concept of synchronized time was immediately adopted by public transit systems (the CPR in 1879), and assimilated before the turn of the century by philosophers (e.g., Bergson) and artists (e.g., Proust), Machado's post-mortem narrator remained a disembodied idea. It was not until 1927 that Heidegger elaborated the time-consciousness required by such a concept; not until 1947 was it assimilated into fiction by Malcolm Lowry in *Under the Volcano*, and by Samuel Becket in *Molloy* in 1951.

THE TENDENCY AWAY from an omniscient author, and the introduction of relativity and uncertainty into the twentieth-century novel stimulated a generation of writers to experiment with a host of conventions — auctorial personae, unreliable narrators, central intelligences, reportorial sprechers — all with a view to compensating for the lack of narrative authority which accompanied the loss of auctorial omniscience. The omniscience of the author was, and still is, the primary assumption of the reader. With this compact broken, the sense of reliability was threatened, although reader and author both stood to gain, by dint of hard work on both sides, a greater sense of authenticity. The reader was forced to look to the "varying focus, fractured surface, over-determinations, displacements"[3] of the modern novel for a worthwhile vantage; and, faced with the amorphous material which cried out for order and shape, the author was forced to smuggle his distinctive presence into the narrative somehow. He could either fracture the narrative surface and torture the syntax beyond any hope of coherence, as William Burroughs and eventually Joyce would do, or move one of the characters, or the narrative voice, ahead in time beyond the time scheme of the novel — into what Beckett would call "the mythological present."[4] Those novelists whose craft would develop in the direction of the post-mortem viewpoint elected the latter alternative.

"But it is only since I have ceased to live that I think of these things and the other things. It is in the tranquillity of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion which was my life, and that I judge it, as it is said that God will judge me, and with no less impertinence" (*Tril.*, 25), writes Samuel Beckett in the opening pages of *Molloy*, the first of his trilogy of novels composed between September 1947 and June 1950 in "the siege in the room" at 6 rue des Favorites, Paris.[5] The post-mortem voice employed by Beckett, which becomes by the end of the trilogy no longer a voice but a word, and then not even that ("no voice left, nothing but the core of murmurs, distant cries . . . silence" [*Tril.*, 413-14]), gives the effect of omniscience, yet without standing above or outside the novel: "I speak in the present tense, it is so easy to speak in the present tense, when speaking of the past. It is the mythological present, don't mind it" (*Tril.*, 26). The mythological present of the post-mortem narrator is an existential past tense, but fully capable of being embedded within the unfolding of the dramatic "now" of the novel. As such it represents a point of view at once capable of dramatization (in a character, or narrative voice), phenomenologically reliable even though epistemologically uncertain (it is as much as the author, or anyone, can know), and existentially credible (the narrator has *not* survived the experience related — it is that critical, it was that traumatic, to him[6] — but he has somehow contrived to relate it). The mechanics of his contrivance are no more

in evidence in Beckett's novels than they were in Machado's memoir, but "the great and useful idea" of a post-mortem narrator — one "powerless to act, or perhaps strong enough at last to act no more" (*Tril.*, 161) — is dramatically realized in a credible point of view which gives the effect, though it lacks the pretense, of omniscience.

It would not be fair to say that Lowry stumbled on this device as a fully developed "design-governing posture."[7] Neither could it be said that he approached the writing of *Under the Volcano* with the intention of using a post-mortem narrator. Rather, as a comparison of the 1940 manuscript version with the 1947 published text shows, Lowry progressively fragmented and refined the narrative voice employed in *Under the Volcano* in order to meet the demands of his own evolving creation; he "discovered" for himself and adapted to his own needs the post-mortem point of view. This adaptation was an organic, and not a technical, process. Even after his novel had been accepted and was in process of being published, Lowry was unclear about who, precisely, was telling the story and about how pervasive the post-mortem point of view had become in *Under the Volcano.* Was it integral only to Chapter I? Was it a frame device informing the first and last chapters? Or did it pervade the whole novel? In his letter to Jonathan Cape he defends in detail Laruelle's expository function in Chapter I, then says "if we like, we can look at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes, as if it were his creation."[8] This condition-contrary-to-fact clause is a concession to the publisher's reader. Were *Under the Volcano* to be read thus, it could be interpreted much as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is interpreted: with the narrator Marlow/Laruelle as raisonneur surviving the journey he narrates, while penetrating the darkness of a doomed protagonist Kurtz/Firmin who does not survive. But Laruelle's voice does not frame *Under the Volcano* for the reader, nor interpret the Consul to the reader. Lowry's Laruelle is more akin to Conrad's "the Russian in motley" than to Marlow, and his ghostlike presence in Chapters I, VI, and VII, not to mention his "ghost" in Chapter XII, establish him as one of the Consul's *Doppelgängers,* though not the primary one. Notwithstanding the important expository function performed by Laruelle in Chapter I, his primary function is to establish, with Mexico as its objective correlative, an infernal topos viewed from a post-mortem vantage. In this purpose he fully succeeds, but as a character he emerges curiously wraithlike and crepuscular, as merely one of the "aspects of the same man, or of the human spirit . . . [as] two of them, Hugh and the Consul, more obviously are" (*Letters,* 60). Lowry's concession to the publisher's reader proves untenable for a number of reasons, but chiefly because the post-mortem narrative voice which he employs is incommen-

surable with distinct and discrete characterization. Its characteristics are more like those of *film noir* than the drama of character: with vague and fluctuating outlines, mistaken identities, uncertain encounters, and missed appointments predominating. While Lowry was writing and refining over a decade his own masterpiece, there was a novel with which he was familiar that embodied all of these traits. It is to the obscure British novel *Julian Grant Loses His Way* that the critic must turn for the book that most directly influenced Lowry's first chapter.[9]

"It is the history of a man who commits emotional suicide," Virginia Woolf said in her anonymous review of this 1933 novel by Claude Houghton.[10] The author's eleventh novel, *Julian Grant Loses His Way* exemplifies from its opening sentence the varying focus, fractured surface, over-determinations, and displacements that critic Frank Kermode contends constitute "a perpetual invitation to all inquirers after latent sense."[11] And latent sense there is in abundance in *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, for the novel is a *tour de force* of Machado's great idea, except that Julian Grant does not realize he is dead until late in the novel, where latent sense becomes explicit in the following exchange:

> 'You don't really mean to say that you haven't guessed yet?'
> 'Guessed?'
> 'Yes — guessed!' the artist repeated, with tremendous emphasis. 'How much more evidence do you want? God! It's unbelievable! Surely there's only one explanation of all that's happened to you. Anyone overhearing our conversations would have guessed long ago.'
> 'I don't know what you're — '
> 'You're dead. I'm dead. Now, do you understand?'
> '*Dead*?' (*JG*, 345)

The novel is divided into three sections — "Adventure in Picadilly," "Retrospect in a Café," and "Adventure Beyond Picadilly." The first and final parts are composed in the post-mortem mode, and frame the long middle part which is conventionally written — so conventionally that Graham Greene complained of "a yawning gap between the intelligence of the method and the conventionality of the story . . . the framework might have been an afterthought designed to lend significance to an otherwise conventional story."[12] Only the framing device of Houghton's novel is of enduring interest, and it alone proved useful to Lowry. In an unpublished letter to his editor Albert Erskine, Lowry acknowledges his debt to Claude Houghton in the following terms: "There are many influences here [in Chapter XII of *UTV*] . . . Ouspensky . . . Spengler . . . Claude Houghton plays some part here . . . See *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, yet another novel about hell, where the author's method is just to throw in Swedenborg by the bushelful and leave it at that."[13] But it was in his long and important opening chapter that Lowry borrowed most heavily from Houghton, though the debt has

gone unacknowledged. In order to appreciate how Lowry used Houghton's first chapter as virtually a blueprint for his own, some sense of the general texture of *Julian Grant Loses His Way* may prove helpful, before specific borrowings are cited.

The opening sentence of *Julian Grant Loses His Way* reads: "He stopped and turned sharply, as if someone had called him, then looked round in order to discover his whereabouts." Within two pages all the ideas that inform the book have been established, and until the long and conventional "Retrospect in a Café" section commences eighteen pages later, the "quality of confusion and unreality"[14] is sustained while the reader experiences with the protagonist the pressure of a vague but impending appointment, surprise encounters with figures from the past, and the sense of temporal and spatial dislocation. All these motifs — predominant among them the sense of "the past more actual than the present" (*JG*, 3) — are held suspended in a murk of broken prose. Houghton does not resort to tortured syntax or stream of consciousness techniques; all his effects flow from a faithful and restrained rendering of the post-mortem point of view as applied to a character who does not know he is dead. Things familiar are rendered strange, and familiar things perceived strangely assume a symbolic significance which is grasped as if for the first time. The protagonist's name, for example: "Julian *Valentine* Grant. It was odd that he had used his second name a moment ago, for it did not belong to him now — it belonged to his youth, from which he seemed to be separated by several lives. . . . Valentine! it was the name of a Christian martyr in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. What link had Julian Grant with a fanatic of the third century?" (*JG*, 5-6). With this passage one might compare Laruelle's "obscure desire on his last night to bid farewell to the ruin of Maximilian's Palace," his recollection of overhearing the lovers' blamecasting and passionate weeping, and then his mental superimposition of the ghostly Emperor and Carlotta upon the image of the equally ghostly Consul and Yvonne.[15] It is not only that formally the techniques used here are identical, for a similar mythical method is very differently employed by Yeats in his verse drama *Deirdre*; it is the way in which Lowry and Houghton incorporate this mythical dimension into their already uncertain and dislocated dimension that is noteworthy and deserving of acknowledgement, as is the device by which Lowry positions Laruelle in the cinema for what, in the 1940 manuscript version, would be a massive retrospective similar to the "Retrospect in a Café" witnessed by Julian Grant.

The way Lowry handles this transition to a conventional narrative in the 1940 manuscript version of *Under the Volcano*, and the way Houghton does the same thing in his 1933 *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, is strikingly similar. The urgent sense of a message to be delivered is Laruelle's counterpart to Julian Grant's urgent need to keep an appointment. Laruelle does not know what the message

is, and he never delivers it; Julian Grant does not know where or with whom his appointment is, and he ends up not keeping it. Essential to these leitmotifs is the sense of destination. Both Laruelle and Julian Grant, while not knowing what their destinations are, nevertheless arrive at their predestined stations. They arrive in spite of, or perhaps because of, the circuitous routes they take: "At this rate he [Laruelle] could go on travelling in an eccentric orbit round his house forever" (*UTV*, 29), Lowry says almost apologetically in the published text; while Grant zig-zags by starts and fits in an effort, first to keep his appointment, then to avoid an encounter. Their arrivals at their respective destinations, the cantina and the café, are the result of a journey.[18]

The journey is a standard narrative device in naturalistic fiction: like Zola in *Germinal* and Frank Norris in *The Octopus*, both Lowry and Houghton commence with a section in which their outsider character covers much of the geographical and social range of the novel to follow. More than naturalistic exposition is involved here, however. Lowry in his letter to Jonathan Cape says of Laruelle's walk: "A second reading will show you what thematic problems we are also solving on the way — not to say what hams, that have to be there, are being hung in the window" (*Letters*, 68). It becomes clear to the reader before he is very far into the landscape that both Laruelle and Julian Grant are introducing him to an infernal topos. The sites (Maximilian's Palace, the beach at Cornwall) are Dantesque stations on the way to Dis (the cantina, the café). The sense of time is uncertain and shifting, the scene changes illogical and strangely obsessive. In *Julian Grant Loses His Way* the scene shifts are managed by a character's exertion of will. So long as Julian holds a scene in mind, it manifests itself; but as soon as he forgets it, the scene disappears.[17] This device is used once by Lowry where Laruelle, overcome in his dream-trance by passionate desire for Priscilla,[18] wants to embrace her; but as soon as he moves to embrace her, his desire passes and she disappears. In Houghton's more mechanistic version of hell the characters gradually lose motivation to maintain remembered scenes; their passion and power of mind dissipates until finally they accept their fate — a bleak *Gleichschaltung*. Dilthey (1833-1911), who posited the concept of *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding) so essential to the post-mortem point of view, also held that the real gets experienced in impulse and will, and that reality is resistance, or, more precisely, the act of resisting. This theory of reality provides an adequate basis for Houghton's depiction of hell. Lowry, while he flirted with this metaphysic (which he attributed to Swedenborg), finally rejected it in favour of a more complicated and integrated one.

In his 1940 version, Lowry uses the trance, or dream motif — probably borrowed from Shelley's *Alastor*. By his final version he has dropped this device for managing scene-shifts and relies entirely on mood (the Day of the Dead, Quauhnahuac) and time-structure (the Ferris wheel, the film reel). All these devices,

techniques, motifs have to do with place as a projection of an interior state of mind — in a single word, allegory. Regarding the state of mind itself and the mood being projected, *Julian Grant Loses His Way* is obsessive, *Under the Volcano* oppressive. Both Laruelle and Julian Grant experience ridicule: Laruelle in Maximilian's Palace,[19] Julian Grant in the café. Both are outside, yet seeking to penetrate, the phenomena which pass before them. Both function as flesh and blood characters to introduce the reader to ghosts and phantoms. But, in fact, the reverse is the case: it is the phantoms who are the more real.

"Everything that is actually Real becomes a mere phantom when one considers it as a 'Thing in itself' — when it does not get Experienced," wrote Count Yorck to Dilthey in 1894.[20] The difficulty that Lowry faced in successive honings of his first chapter was that of defining the horizon, or context, of his whole novel. His chosen agent for this task was Laruelle: a minor character, an aspect of his major character, an imperfect ego, and little better than a phantom himself. But Laruelle was present in Quauhnahuac in November 1939; the Consul and Yvonne were dead, and Hugh had vanished and perhaps was dead also. Lowry's dilemma involved infusing Laruelle with enough life so that he, and through him the reader, could evoke and experience the absent characters, who were more vivid. They were not palpable, but they were present, having died or disappeared before mass death overtook the world, when tragedy was still possible. In this post-mortem world Jacques Laruelle lives on "like a wanderer on another planet" (*UTV*, 15), a "six foot three or four" husk of his former self, the Consul (*UTV*, 213). Laruelle also "had acquired a certain identity with Hugh. Like Hugh he was going to Vera Cruz; and like Hugh too, he did not know if his ship would ever reach port" (*UTV*, 15). Andrew Lytle, writing on *Under the Volcano*, says: "The stream of consciousness when used by this imperfect Ego, masquerading as a point of view, makes the action more imperfect by the intensity this use of consciousness gives to the action. There must be some hone, some point of objective reference, some measure for this interior flow; usually this is the secular world. But it need not be just this. Without objectivity the consciousness reveals itself as too private."[21] Lowry, having tried and rejected Dilthey's resistance theory and possibly Shelley's dream device, solved the difficulty inherent in his first chapter by making the objective referent Death. Death, or the deadweight of the past, is oppressively present throughout Laruelle's overhearing of ghosts at Maximilian's Palace, his finding and reading the Consul's lost letter while in the cantina, and finaly in his act of burning the letter as a bell tolls "*dolente . . . dolore*!"[22]

Heidegger has defined Death as "the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing . . . the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence."[23] It is this sense of Death that confronts Laruelle as it does Julian Grant and that serves to define them.

Predominant in both opening chapters is a sense of "the past more actual than the present" (*JG*, 3), or, as Lowry simply puts it, "the weight of the past" (*Letters*, 66). The oppressive landscape with its claustral familiarity, the haunted figure in transit across it (Julian Grant is always walking "swiftly" or "slowly," but the reader perceives him in paranoid flight; Laruelle "climbs" or "orbits," but the reader senses his guilty avoidance of something or someone) are reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's Molloy crawling crutchless across a dead landscape toward his mother. Lowry's Laruelle, who, to some degree, is a ghostly travesty of the Consul (*UTV*, 213-14), is as dead in spirit as Julian Grant is in body. He does not grow in conception or change his function between the 1940 manuscript version and the 1947 published text. The objective referent which sets him off undergoes refinement of technique and increases its dramatic impact, but he remains a light *ficelle*. Perhaps that is why so many potential readers of *Under the Volcano* have not persevered past the first chapter: the prospect of looking at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes has proved too much for them.

CHAPTER I IN THE PUBLISHED TEXT of *Under the Volcano* is a chapter set apart from the rest of the novel — in time structure, in dramatic techniques, and in the ways in which it affects the reader. The foregoing comparison between opening chapters of the 1940 version of Lowry's novel and the 1933 novel it was modelled on indicates that the post-mortem point of view, while implicit in *Under the Volcano*, is explicit in *Julian Grant Loses His Way*; indeed, the latter novel's "interest," as Graham Greene says, is "that of a technical trick."[24] Such blatant exploitation of the post-mortem narrative voice is not evident in *Under the Volcano*: even in the early version it is mitigated through Lowry's use of the dream motif, and by the final version it has been further refined and disguised in the pervasively oppressive tone and allegorical topos. Lowry has used the weight of the past and "the slow melancholy tragic rhythm of Mexico itself — its sadness" (*Letters*, 58) to define the wraith Laruelle, through whom the reader gets his first view of the Consul (curiously like Julian Valentine Grant) as a doomed lover and one "who suffers dreadfully from the mania of persecution" (*Letters*, 70). This depiction of the Consul as paranoid was intentional and part of Lowry's post-mortem apparatus. Remarking on the reader's sense throughout the book that the Consul (suspected by Sr. Bustamente and others of being a spy) is being followed, and the Consul's apparent obliviousness, Lowry says: "For lack of an object therefore it was the writer's reasonable hope that this first sense of the Consul's being followed might settle on the reader and haunt him instead" (*Letters*, 70).

Here, then, is the second way of looking at the entire novel as a post-mortem narrative. The first was Lowry's concession to the publisher's reader, to "look at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes, as if it were his creation" (*Letters*, 71). In that case, Chapters II-XII, which depict the last day of an individual's life, constitute a lengthy remembrance: "it seemed one was still permitted to remember the days when an individual life held some value and was not a mere misprint in a communiqué" (*UTV*, 11), Laruelle muses as he contrasts the tragedy of the Consul's death a year earlier with a world at war in 1939. In this way of viewing the novel, the remembrancer would be Laruelle; the life remembered would be the Consul's. In the second way, however, it is the Consul who acts out his own life in a mythological present. Integral to this second way of regarding the entire novel as a post-mortem narrative is the reader's conviction that Geoffrey Firmin is already dead and, possibly, in hell when Chapter II commences — to be precise at 7 a.m. on November 2, 1938. The remainder of the book — comprising the events of the next twelve hours, to 7 p.m. on November 2, 1938 — can only be read in the post-mortem mode if we locate time present in a past event, such as the Consul's "sin" of incinerating the German officers in the *Samaritan*'s furnace during World War One,[25] or the traumatic event of Yvonne's separation from the Consul in December of 1937. If the Consul can be said to have "died" at either of these critical points, then the narrative of his life since is post-mortem. To the extent that he is, or feels himself to be, in hell, his own existence is spurious and his relations with the other characters more apparent than real. In this reading, the Consul is never authentically present throughout the novel: he is enslaved to alcohol, entrapped in the past, and emotionally and morally dead. These are the logical consequences of the view Andrew Lytle takes when he says: "Lowry renders hell in the mind of one man, the Consul . . . whose aloneness is the result of and the punishment for a mortal crime; it is Satan's condition when he was cast forth from the mind of God, that is from love, to the isolation of his own thoughts, which is hell."[26] And, again, "he is already dead when the representative of law and order, now a murderer and outlaw, shoots him down with malice. His death repeats in parody his own act with the German prisoners."[27] But such a reading is forced, if not patently false. Whether or not the Consul committed a "sin" years ago, he is on November 2, 1938, only imperfectly and self-indulgently in a hell of his own making. He still has, and can exercise, freedom of choice — as evidenced by his choice of paths at the close of Chapter X. The allurements of Yvonne (her dream of Canada, and the Consul's response to it), and the actions of Hugh (his bringing the Consul and Yvonne together when he leaps in the arena with the bull), point up the hastiness of Lytle's interpretation — an interpretation the Consul himself would like to hold, but cannot. He has not yet suffered enough, he is still subject to temptation, and he still possesses free will. He may

be said, metaphorically, to be "already dead" when he is killed in Chapter XII, and he may experience horrific glimpses of hell (both in Laruelle's house, and in the toilet of the Salón Ofélia), but he is not there yet. Not until he and Yvonne are actually dead is all hope gone.

Under the Volcano, then, due to its trochal design, may be said to comprise a post-mortem narrative throughout only on second reading, or if it is read, as Lowry conceded it might be, through Laruelle's eyes. Such a reading, however, does not correspond to the literal sense of the text; the novel to follow after the Ferris wheel turns, though a retrospective of sorts, does not read like one. Lowry was able with justification to say in 1946 of the post-mortem device, which he lifted from *Julian Grant Loses His Way* and planted in the first version of his own novel then subsequently refined, that "these influences are assimilated here so far as this author is concerned,"[28] but it is with reference only to Chapter I that this claim can be made. The first chapter influences the rest of the book by establishing a lugubrious, reflexive mood in the so-called present (actually mythological present) tense, which plunges the reader into the past, whose present becomes the book. Aside from the flashbacks, especially Hugh's in Chapter VI, and Yvonne's in IX, the events depicted in Chapters II-XII occur in present time. The Consul's plunge into the barranca in XII, and Yvonne's apotheoses in XI, are the simultaneous climaxes of what presents itself to the reader as a strangely convoluted, but nevertheless linear, novel. The post-mortem point of view, which Lowry borrowed from Houghton and used in his melancholy first chapter as a prop for his character Laruelle, was not a subtle enough device to sustain his main character, the Consul, through a narrative nearly ten times as long. For that *tour de force* he would resort to other, less terminal, devices, including a complicated scheme of temporal manipulations more related to Sir Sandford Fleming's time-zones than to Machado's "great cure."[29]

NOTES

[1] Joaquim Maria Machado De Assis, *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, trans. William L. Grossman (New York: Noonday, 1952), p. 19.

[2] *Epitaph*, p. 21.

[3] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 15.

[4] *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, trans. Patrick Bowles and Samuel Beckett (New York: Grove, 1955), p. 26. Further references will be cited *Tril.*

[5] Samuel Beckett, as quoted in Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett* (New York & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 346.

[6] Beckett, before he embraced the post-mortem point of view in his post-World War Two fiction, employed the Jungian idea of a narrator who was not yet, or not properly, born. See *Murphy* (1938; rpt. New York: Grove, 1977), p. 78. In

Molloy he uses the two ideas interchangeably, only the post-mortem view in *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, and neither in *Watt*.

[7] The phrase is Van Gogh's. Lowry's application of it to his own technique is discussed by Malcolm Bradbury, "Malcolm Lowry as Modernist," in *Possibilities* (London: Oxford, 1973), p. 182.

[8] This remarkable thirty-one page letter, begun by Lowry on January 2, 1946, and mailed on January 15 to Cape, was in response to the reader's report which he had received from Cape the previous November. Lowry's letter in its entirety and an abridgement of the letter from Cape may be found in *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, ed. Harvey Breit and Margerie Bonner Lowry (Philadelphia & New York: Lippincott, 1965), pp. 57-88, 424. Hereinafter cited as *Letters*.

[9] Claude Houghton [Oldfield], *Julian Grant Loses His Way* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1933). Hereinafter cited as *JG*. This obscure British novel has received passing reference in the literature on Lowry at least three times: in Tony Kilgallin's *Lowry* (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcépic, 1973), p. 173, where the statement is made that "Geoffrey echoes the belief of the hero in Claude Houghton's novel"; in Andrew Pottinger's 1978 dissertation, "The Revising of *Under the Volcano*," as a marginal note in the appendix; and in Sherrill E. Grace's 1974 dissertation, "The Voyage that Never Ends," p. 45, where the novel is characterized as "an extremely heavy-handed portrayal of a dead man in Hell who relives his past," and is cited as one of "several minor works which influenced his [Lowry's] masterpiece."

[10] *Times Literary Supplement* (20 April 1933), p. 274. *Cf.* Houghton, p. 326.

[11] *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 15.

[12] *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[13] *Lowry* (22 June 1946), as cited in Sherrill E. Grace, *The Voyage That Never Ends: Malcolm Lowry's Fiction* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 129, n. 5.

[14] Graham Greene, *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[15] Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947; rpt. Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 1963), pp. 18-21. Further references will be cited *UTV*.

[16] The cantina abutting on the cinema, where Laruelle reads the Consul's letter and dreams, or thinks, his retrospective, is as far as his journey carries him in either the 1940 manuscript or the published version of the novel. In the published version, although Laruelle has a good view of the interior of the cinema, he decides he doesn't want to see the film; whereas in the manuscript version he actually watches the film *Las Manos de Orlac*, falls asleep and dreams his retrospective, and wakes up in the theatre. How he got into the theatre is not accounted for.

[17] See, for example, Houghton, pp. 303-04, where Julian in conversation with the artist says: " 'I can't stand the knowledge that you can see my thoughts — that you can read my memories like a book. It's damnable! I can't see your thoughts, or penetrate to your memories.' " The artist, a veteran of hell, replies: " 'That's only because you're such a damned egotist. You will — when you get sick of yourself. And one does get very sick of oneself in this dream-world, where everything is only a projection of oneself. . . . My God! that confounded river's gone! Quick! Concentrate! or the damned lot will go! That's better. I say, you really have a first-class imagination.' "

[18] In the 1940 version Priscilla is the Consul's wife, Yvonne is his daughter.

[19] Following Laruelle's attempt to take Priscilla in his arms in the 1940 manuscript version, the ruined palace collapses around him "and he had the notion that the walls were shaking with laughter at him."

[20] *Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck von Wartenburg 1877-1897* (Halle-an-der-Saale, 1923), p. 61.

[21] *The Hero with the Private Parts: Essays* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 58-59.

[22] The burning of the letter at the close of Chapter I is "poetically balanced by the flight of vultures 'like burnt papers floating from a fire') at the end of III, (*Letters*, 70). In the 1940 version Chapter I ends with an evocation of vultures.

[23] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 307.

[24] *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[25] The internal evidence against this episode having actually occurred is massive. Both Hugh (*UTV*, 188) and Laruelle (*UTV*, 38) discount the Consul's version of his "sin." Further doubt is cast by the chronological fact that, if the Consul was fifteen years old in 1911 (*UTV*, 22), the likelihood of his having commanded a submarine-chaser in World War One would be remote, though not, apparently, impossible. In the last months of the war public school boys were getting "battlefield" promotions and being forced to take over units whose commanders had been killed.

[26] *The Hero with the Private Parts*, p. 54.

[27] Lytle, p. 58.

[28] Lowry (22 June 1946), as cited in Grace, "The Voyage that Never Ends: Time and Space in the Fiction of Malcolm Lowry," Diss. McGill, 1974, p. 22.

[29] See "Manipulated Time" and "Ecstatic Time" in my "*Under the Volcano*: The Novel as Psychodrama," Diss. Tulane University of New Orleans, 1982.

BLIND MAN

Eva Tihanyi

Since the eclipse, the earth
speaks to him in braille
and his hands listen,
his life syncopated
by the beat of a cane
tapping out anger, jazz, lust,
the rhythm of his breathing

Light,
both particle and wave
falling and flowing
of his eyelids
is for him a sound,
a white melody
scored on the dark sheets

He has a penchant for roses,
is the only man I know
who hears them sing

EARLIEST HISTORY

Raymond Souster

I was born on Oakmount Road
in the west end of sleepy Toronto
January 15, 1921.
The doctor who attended my birth
(my mother's first) was Joe Gilchrist,
already slowly dying of diabetes,
who in the next year or so would become the first
human guinea-pig for Banting and Best.

It was early morning with a grey dawn coming up
when Dr. Gilchrist lifted me up by the legs
and slapped me smartly on the ass.
That hurt my feelings and I cried out
(and have been crying out ever since),
then was wiped of my slime and given to my mother.
The room was cold, there were too many pairs of eyes
looking down at me, and when I was raised to a nipple
it was nice while it lasted but that wasn't long enough.

There seemed at that moment
only one sensible thing to do.
I closed my eyes, imagined the snug comfortable place
I'd been rudely ejected from, then climbed back in
to lie curled up in warmth and peace.

I don't think I've even really come out again.

MONIQUE BOSCO "EN ABYME"

Michael Greenstein

POST-STRUCTURALIST CRITICISM has eagerly seized upon Gide's concept of "mise en abyme," a phrase he borrowed from heraldry where the inner design of a shield repeats the overall pattern. Modern critics have extended this synecdochic relationship to include the image of two mirrors facing one another thus creating infinite reflection, repetition, or vertigo such as might be experienced on the edge of an abyss. This sense of vertigo appears as an important characteristic of Quebec fiction in general,[1] and more specifically, the "mise en abyme" effect seems central to the novels of Monique Bosco.[2] The present study seeks to explore some varieties of "abyme" that inform Monique Bosco's writing, as her characters lose themselves in bewildering labyrinths of obsessive repetition from which they emerge only to find themselves reeling on the brink of an abyss. Repetitive thoughts, actions, and language that preoccupy her protagonists and narrators reveal dilemmas paradigmatic of modern fiction.

Un Amour maladroit (1961), winner of the American first-novel award, begins with

> Je suis devant le mur
> Le long mur
> Le mur des lamentations
> Le mur des ancêtres qui,
> La face couverte de cendres,
> Venaient pour s'y lamenter
> Se lamenter
> La seule chose gratuite
> Suprême consolation permise.

In these lines Bosco announces her obsession with lamentation: repetitive tears in front of repetitive walls that connect her to her ancestors. In her claustral universe "walls" play a central role, occasionally pierced by windows or mirrors that, instead of offering relief or escape, merely intensify the sense of endless repetition and incarceration.[3] Immediately following the poem about Jerusalem's Wailing Wall or psychological ghetto walls, the narrator "reflects" upon her existence: "Image fuyante, miroir infidèle. Miroir, dis-moi qui je suis: ni la plus belle ni la plus laide."[4] Through her looking-glass the narrator perceives a doubling confirmation of her internalized identity, a vision confounded by domestic labyrinths: "Longs corridors sans fin où j'erre, interminablement, qui ne

donnent que sur des chambres désertes, désespérément vides. A l'intérieur, tout n'est que noirceur. Dans chaque pièce, un miroir dont je n'aperçois que l'envers." By the end of the novel she has resolved the question posed at the outset of how to grasp her life as she returns to her mirror: "Dans la glace, j'accepte que mon reflet me paraisse enfin familier et inévitable. Je n'espère plus de transformations miraculeuses pour mon visage." Where earlier she had sought "le miracle d'une métamorphose," she now resigns herself to confronting a reality unchanged by flattering mirrors.

Like her self-reflexive mirrors, the windows in *Un Amour maladroit* offer no outward escape, for they serve only to isolate Bosco's young protagonist from society. She addresses the shop window separating a little girl from toys: "Un même mur, invisible comme une paroi de verre, se dressait toujours entre la vie et moi." This self-proclaimed masochist finds no outlet at her window which reminds her only of the happiness of others: "Chacun se hâte vers le but qu'il s'est choisi; quant à moi, je m'efforce de ne penser à rien, penchée à cette fenêtre qui ni débouche que sur la joie des autres." While others rush forward, she remains alone, static, petrified at her window: "J'aime cette insidieuse maladie qui me transforme lentement, inexorablement, en une statue de sel." Not unlike Anne Hébert's heroines, Monique Bosco's protagonists find themselves stationed at windows peering into vacant external worlds, or surrounded by walls that enclose an equally internalized emptiness.

Confined within *huis clos*, the narrator eventually succumbs to dizziness caused either by the contraction of walls on her psyche or by a labyrinthine branching of endless corridors perplexing her divided ego. Her reaction to her psychiatrist places her on the brink of an abyss: "Un jour qu'il avait réussi à me pousser plus loin de coutume, j'eus la sensation d'être perdue dans le corridor sombre et désert d'une mine abandonnée. Un pas plus avant et j'étais certaine de tomber dans le noir absolu d'un précipice sans fond." Though ashamed of her excessive egocentricity, she cannot renounce her martyrdom, and her quest for identity meets with failure because the walls of her own ego block her entry into the lives of others. "Je vais, je viens, je tourne en rond, sans fièvre et sans caprice, de façon inéluctable. . . . Je ne puis même pas prendre place parmi les pleureuses du mur des lamentations." The misery of her awkward love knows no company, for Bosco's obsession with walls merely accentuates the whirligig's compulsive *abyme*, shelter, and invisibility: "De cet échafaudage est ne le long mur qui bientôt m'encerclera étroitement, refusant l'entrée de ce domaine à quiconque. Derrière son enceinte. . . . Là sera mon arche, à l'abri des regards, où je serai invisible pour l'oeil même de Dieu."

While she fails to establish contact with mankind at large, she is no more successful in more particular relationships involving women, her family, and her Jewish religion. Just as she is surrounded by walls, so is she enclosed by a femi-

nine family of mother, sister, aunt, and grandmother, for she was born fatherless "en un gynécée." Where her younger sister Elizabeth (whom she considers her double) has a name, she remains "la Petite," an anonymous narrator whose patronym, the sole inheritance from her father, embarrasses her at school. Her grandmother recalls the family's flight from Poland to Paris, and her mother instructs her in the ways of religion:

> Tremble, m'a-t-elle dit, fille digne de moi,
> Le cruel dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi.

From this simple rhyme she graduates to Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* later in life and a masochistic Jewishness: "Pour m'en punir, je reprendrai la route, la longue route sans fin du Juif errant." But her wandering Jew turns inward to repeat her intramural role: "Je demeurais prisonnière de mon infernal ghetto individuel. . . . Nulle issue. Nulle sortie vers le monde." Thus, the externals of the plot — hiding in Marseilles during World War II and emigration to Montreal after the War — complement the wanderings of a central consciousness paralyzed *en abyme*, where family and religion do not help in her quest for self-identity and the world at large.

LA FEMME DE LOTH (1970) picks up where *Un Amour maladroit* leaves off with the emphasis once again on obsessive repetition, enclosure, and infinite, abysmal doublings. Structurally the division into 240 short sections furthers the atmosphere of enclosure as one section echoes another. "Toi" and "tu" reverberate throughout the novel as the first-person narrator, Hélène, addresses her departed lover Pierre in a refrain of bitterness bracketed within interwoven narrative and chronological sequences encompassing biblical history, family history, the immediate past, and the present that fluctuates between Montreal and Venice, scene of an earlier novel *Les Infusoires* (1965). *La Femme de Loth* begins and ends in circular fashion with Hélène contemplating suicide: the walls and mirrors of the first novel turn to a window in this later work which seems to have been influenced by Diane Giguère's *Le Temps des jeux* (1961). In Giguère's novel the young heroine experiences vertigo from her window overlooking an existential abyss: "ouvrit la fenêtre, se pencha sur le seuil et ferma les yeux. Son corps oscilla dans la lumière. Il y avait longtemps qu'elle songeait a cette issue, mais elle perdait toujours courage au dernier moment. . . . Prise de vertige, la nausée l'envahit et elle appuya ses coudes à la croisée." Bosco begins comparably: "Il y a la fenêtre. Un bond. Et on échappe à l'horrible son d'une voix. Douce voix, soudain transformée en voix ennemie. . . . Dans ce dur pays de froid, les fenêtres ne s'ouvrent pas sur le vide."[5] To the windows, transformations, claustral emptiness, and suicidal depression of the

earlier novel is added the image of "voice" — whether her lover's or her own that echoes in obsessive litany. As a child she suffers from vertigo near her window: "Je restais près de la fenêtre à relire interminablement mes nouveaux livres. Je les savais déjà par coeur. Je n'osais regarder au sol, à cause du vertige." The window separates the internal world of literature from external reality — a central theme in *La Femme de Loth.*

Hélène's soliloquy or interior monologue heightens the claustral, reverberatory effect. The auditory equivalent of face-to-face mirrors in *mise en abyme* would be a continuous echo, the voice and name of Pierre resounding through section after section. "Tu te moquais de mes 'litanies,' de ce besoin de répéter ton nom, à l'infini." Excluded from the world at large by her closed window and by her rejection at the hands of Pierre, Hélène repeatedly defines herself through a series of negatives that deny the possibility of human contact or relationship. She remains an outsider even to her parents, whom she regards as an ideal couple. When she asks for a baby brother her parents reply, "Il y a des maladresses qu'on ne peut répéter." Their refusal to repeat their error takes on a more poignant note as the child recalls voices that wonder why she fails to resemble her mother and father: "Et la même voix, ou une autre, différente, ou mille autres, réparties au long des années, reprenait en écho, en leur passage: 'Le beau couple. . . . C'est fou comme ils se complètent.' " Ironically her Parisian accent distinguishes her at school in Montreal, and later in life she is complimented for her voice alone, the rest of her body relegated to an inferior status.

Instead of resembling her parents, Hélène discovers that she looks more like her grandmother, the link to her Jewish background which extends from the Bible to the modern Holocaust of the Jews trapped by Hitler. The narrator regards herself as a latter-day wife of Lot, for she must learn to define herself independently of Pierre, and with an eye to the unknown future rather than a failed past.

> En laissant la ville en flammes se consumer. Sans se retourner. . . . Il faut aller de l'avant. Sans un regard pour le passé. Pourtant quand Yahvé voulut sauver Loth, il l'autorisa à partir avec sa femme, ses filles. Et malgré la présence de Loth, le réconfort des enfants nées de sa chair, elle se retourne, malgré la défense formelle, la vieille femme folle regrettant ce qui a été.

The cumulative "re" prefixes stamp Hélène's perverse predicament indelibly upon the archetype to form a palimpsest or statue of salt. This memory of her personal past and her archetypal past causes a feeling of nausea in Hélène who is constantly torn between the demands of past and future with the former somewhat less painful than what awaits her.

> J'aimerais comprendre pourquoi Dieu voulut sauver Loth et sa famille s'ils ne retournaient pas sur la ville en flammes. Je comprends si aisément la femme de Loth.

> Moi aussi, à la fin de cet été, je me serai peut-être transformée — à force de répandre des larmes sur le passé — en une autre statue de sel.

As Bosco's narrators survey their past, they naturally appropriate the myth of Lot's wife with its emphasis on tears transformed into a saline statue; this biblical leitmotif reappears towards the end of the novel:

> Loth et sa famille. Les filles sont jeunes, avec l'avenir devant elles. Pour la vieille femme, c'est tout son passé qui s'engloutit. Alors elle tourne la tête, cherchant à distinguer ce qui se passe, ce qui s'est passé. Elle se retourne, malgré la défense expresse. Pauvre vieille femme. Dans la Bible, tu n'as pas de nom. La femme de Loth, cela suffit. . . . Une statue de sel. La belle image. L'admirable symbole. Une statue de larmes pétrifiées. . . .
>
> Je me retourne, moi aussi, sur ce passé dévasté.

Re-view, re-turn, re-peat — these constitute the static actions within *Un Amour maladroit* and *La Femme de Loth,* the retrogressive pull inhibiting any future progress; moreover, these "re" prefixes meaning "back" and "again" focus on forms of doubling in the novels.

Hélène's solitary existence defines itself in contrast to forms of doubling including the ideal couple that her parents represent or the other young couples who meet and marry while she remains alone. For her this pattern extends back to the biblical archetype: "On accepte seulement les 'couples' comme dans l'Arche de Noé." So, like other masochistic heroines with whom she identifies, she looks into her mirror for a doubling, narcissistic illusion: "Miroir, miroir, dis-moi que, pour lui, je suis celle qui compte." When the flattering mirror fails, she turns to her window only to be reminded once again of her separation from any communion or community, and the impossibility of substituting "romantic" dreams in place of harsh realities: "J'ai passé des années à faire du lèchevitrine aux étalages du bonheur conjugal. L'Amérique entière affichait ses richesses aux fenêtres panoramiques de toutes les belles banlieues peuplées de couples amoureux. Il me convient de pleurer sur mon ersatz de rêve d'arrière-cour." Faced with the claustral reality of four walls, a room of her own, Hélène gains some comfort from literature — from reading and writing — where she can find some doubling fulfilment not offered by society. "J'ai toujours été étonnée de voir mon ombre se profiler sur un mur, sur le sol. J'avais donc une ombre. Des empreintes digitales uniques au monde. . . . J'essaie de les nommer, de les cerner, sur ce papier. . . . En cessant d'exister, je ferai mon premier choix de vivante. Exit Hélène." Hélène projects her shadow on a wall and a dramatic role upon herself thereby splitting herself into an acting self and a recording or observing self.

Caught between past and future, Hélène recognizes her dual personality: "Vieillarde prématurée. Fausse jeune fille prolongée. Voilà mes deux faces." Her destiny lies *en abyme*: "Je serai double jusqu'à la fin. J'hésite entre l'amour et la haine. L'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament. Parjure aux deux." Even her mar-

riage to Claude, a homosexual, thwarts any desired fulfilment; instead it provides her with another doubling role: "Il incarnait un rôle. Volontairement, je donnais ma réplique dans cette mauvaise pièce de boulevard." Her awareness of this re-plication, (deux-pli-cation), and role-playing occurs at the very centre of the novel in a series of short sections, "cette farce que je répétais" and "mon simulacre de rôle." "Le passé est passé. J'ai tort de m'acharner envers ce double d'autrefois, ma soeur d'hier. . . . On ne se refait pas." Abundant references to novels within the narrative further contribute to the *mise en abyme*; Proust, Kafka, Dostoievski, Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir provide Hélène with examples "d'y retrouver le reflet de mes angoisses." Literature, books, words, transform life and reality for her as she depicts her own metamorphosis from girl to woman; contrasting life and art, she states her purpose in creating *La Femme de Loth*: "Je n'écris ce roman que pour éloigner l'échéance de la vérité." Writing alone saves her from committing suicide by the end of the novel: "Pauvres pages. Preuve dérisoire qu'en fin de compte tout est littérature. . . . Simulacre et dérision." Through parody she deconstructs her own portrait.

BOSCO TRANSFORMS Pierre, the doctor, in *La Femme de Loth* into the protagonist in *Charles Levy, m.d.* (1977), and continues her earlier preoccupations, only now she portrays a bleak world through male eyes instead of from a feminine perspective. Dying of cancer, Dr. Lévy laments his past failures in life through first-person narrative and interior monologue. Gloria Escomel has noted "un effet d'écho" between Hélène and Charles: "ce chassé-croisé de personnages produit un effet de mise en abyme des deux romans."[6] In other words, the *mise en abyme* found in individual novels may be carried over to Bosco's entire oeuvre marking a central preoccupation in her fiction. In this latest novel, however, she carries thematic *dédoublement* and repetition one step further by adding an obsessive, stylistic double entendre.

Like David Canaan in *The Mountain and the Valley*, Charles Lévy has an incestuous relationship with his twin sister, Sarah, more satisfying than his marriage. Bosco introduces the doppelgänger motif near the beginning: "Ma moitié. Ombre de notre ombre. Double cruel d'Edgar Poe. . . . la soeur perdue, le vrai double, ma précieuse jumelle."[7] Twin phonemes echo each other and stress thematic and imagistic concerns at all stages. Like Bosco's other Jewish protagonists Charles complains about his racial identity: "Libre Lévy, sauf de la vie. O les vies non vécues de tous ces gens de ma race. Lévites. Toujours plus vites." He places orthodox Jews *en abyme*, "Ghetto dans le ghetto," and regards his personal past in similar terms, ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny: "Je ne suis jamais vraiment sorti du ghetto d'enfance."

Paronomasia pervades every aspect of his life as linguistic and existential elements fuse. The moribund physician of language diagnoses his condition *en abyme*: "ces mots creux qui prolifèrent comme mon cancer. Un mal, des maux. J'ai des maux à l'infini. Et des most aussi." Sexual distinctions also proliferate through echoing homonyms in clipped sentences with absences of verbs. "La maleheure. L'heure des mâles. Du mal." "Femme. *Fame,* faim en italien. *Fame,* en anglais." "Ombre. Ombre. Hombre! Voie des voyages. Voix. Vois. Vois l'âge." The surgeon who dissects language to this extreme ultimately loses his way and his voice in a never-ending labyrinth, "L'énorme grotte. . . . Tuyaux d'orgue à l'infini. . . . Un vide sans écho." Words turn upon themselves in imitation of the egos of introverted narrators and protagonists who stare into a series of shattered mirrors.

Thus, each of Bosco's novels reveals her preoccupation with various forms of doubling, echoing, and repetition *en abyme*. Bosco seeks shelter behind cloistered walls pierced by windows, mirrors, shadows, and the echoes of ancestral voices haunting her prose and pulling her back from the brink of a contemporary abyss. The same notes resound in her prose poem "Jéricho" (1971): "Je n'irai jamais à Jéricho. Je renonce à l'héritage. J'accepte qu'au bruit de ma voix, nul écho ne réponde. Que les autres entonnent leurs trompettes, faisant crouler les murs humains. Je reste sagement à l'abri d'un pauvre présent. Le passé est mort. Et je récuse, d'avance, l'absurde futur incohérent." And as the walls of an individual ghetto close in on Charles or Hélène, so the four corners of the earth disseminate and encompass the diaspora: "La loi de la dispersion est respectée aux quatres coins de la terre. On honore l'héritage du juif errant" (*Schabbat* 70-77).

NOTES

[1] Gilles Marcotte, *Une Littérature qui se fait* (Montréal: HMH, 1968), pp. 62-76.

[2] Gloria Escomel, "Monique Bosco ou le miroir brisé," *La Nouvelle Barre du jour,* no. 65 (avril 1978), 90-97.

[3] See Eva-Marie Kröller, "La Lampe dans la fenêtre: The Visualization of Quebec Fiction," *Canadian Literature,* no. 88 (Spring 1981), pp. 74-82; and E. Blodgett, "Prisms and Arcs: Structures in Hébert and Munro," in *Figures in a Ground,* ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), pp. 99-121.

[4] This and subsequent references are from Monique Bosco, *Un Amour maladroit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

[5] This and subsequent references are from Monique Bosco, *La Femme de Loth* (Montréal: HMH, 1970).

[6] Escomel, p. 93.

[7] This and subsequent references are from Monique Bosco, *Charles Lévy, m.d.* (Montréal: Les Editions Quinze, 1977).

"PROCHAIN EPISODE" ET "MENAUD, MAITRE-DRAVEUR"

Le decalque romanesque

Robert Major

L'OEUVRE COMPLEXE et déroutante d'Hubert Aquin a peu d'égales dans notre littérature. Seul Jacques Ferron, sans doute, peut rivaliser avec l'extrême fascination qu'exerce Aquin sur une diversité de lecteurs depuis qu'en 1965, avec son premier roman, il s'est fait connaître d'un plus vaste public que celui de la revue *Liberté*. Mais contrairement à ce qui se produit chez Ferron, où le talent du conteur et les clins d'oeils complices enferment le lecteur dans un réseau de complicité quasi tribal (sinon familial) — le contrat initial du conte laissant toute liberté au narrateur de montrer ses ficelles —, le lecteur qui se sent pris dans les lacets inextricables de la prose d'Aquin est proprement envoûté. Sensation à la fois pénible et ludique. Comment qualifier au juste l'impression ressentie de s'avancer toujours plus avant dans un labyrinthe — semé d'embûches, traversé de fausses pistes, tant les miroirs réfléchissants et déformants abondent —, mais dont la disposition intelligente est une fête pour l'esprit? Rarement victimes consentantes seront-elles allées avec autant de volupté à la rencontre du Minotaure.

Et justement, la tentation constante et bien compréhensible des critiques est de s'enfermer allégrement dans cette oeuvre protéiforme, car elle nourrit bien son homme. Mais se peut-il que la prédilection qu'affiche Aquin pour le récit spéculaire de même que sa propre fascination avec les différentes modalités de la mise en abîme soient une invitation à sortir de l'oeuvre, à aller au delà de son système de miroirs auto-réfléchissants, et à considérer de quoi cette oeuvre même est le reflet? De quelle oeuvre, plutôt, tel roman particulier d'Aquin est le reflet? Car il ne s'agit pas ici de sortir des limites de la littérature et l'évocation de la notion d'"oeuvre-reflet" n'a dans ce travail — à ce moment, du moins — aucune incidence sociologique. L'hypothèse de départ est plutôt la suivante: le principe de la récurrence semble systématiquement exploité par Aquin dans ses romans, mais pas nécessairement (comme c'est le plus souvent la fonction de la récurrence) pour assurer la cohérence et la lisibilité du texte, au contraire. Ce principe de la récurrence va-t-il au-delà de l'oeuvre? Celle-ci est-elle insérée dans une relation de dédoublement avec une oeuvre antérieure?

Si l'on s'en tient à l'examen du premier roman d'Hubert Aquin, il semble bien que l'on puisse répondre affirmativement à ces questions. La profonde parenté entre le premier roman d'Aquin, *Prochain épisode*, et le premier roman de Félix-Antoine Savard, publié trente ans auparavant, *Menaud maître-draveur*, est patente. Ce sera l'objet de ce travail d'expliciter cette relation et d'essayer d'en dégager quelque peu le sens.

Une hypothèque est à lever au départ. Le rapport privilégié qu'entretient l'oeuvre de Mgr Savard avec le roman de Louis-Hémon semble avoir occulté cette relation Savard-Aquin, aussi significative et peut-être plus révélatrice. Or il semble que *Menaud, maître-draveur*, plutôt que le terme d'une relation d'influences, devrait être perçu comme le moyen terme d'un dialogue d'oeuvres unique dans notre littérature. Et ce dialogue a ceci de bien particulier qu'il offre, malgré les apparences, tous les indices d'une rupture à la fois épistémologique et existentielle entre la première (*Maria*) et la deuxième oeuvre (*Menaud*). Monseigneur Savard peut bien reprendre les personnages, les scènes, le décor et même le texte de Louis Hémon, ce n'est que pour mieux subvertir l'oeuvre de ce dernier: pour l'essentiel, ces deux univers romanesques n'ont rien en commun. Hubert Aquin, par ailleurs, malgré l'originalité de ses personnages, de ses scènes, de son décor et de son texte, reprend le discours de Monseigneur Savard et nous offre un double troublant de *Menaud, maître-draveur.*

"Menaud" et "Maria"

La lecture en série de ces oeuvres fait bien ressortir ces divergences et convergences. Les parentés entre *Maria Chapdelaine* et *Menaud, maître-draveur* nous sont bien connues: parenté entre les personnages (Samuel-Menaud; François Paradis-Joson et Alexis; Maria-Marie; Lorenzo Surprenant-Le Délié; Eutrope Gagnon-Josime), similitude des scènes (la cueillette des bleuets, l'égarement en forêt, etc.), identité du décor (les terres de colonisation, adossées à la vaste forêt). L'utilisation hautement poétique que fait Savard du texte de Hémon a également retenu l'attention: d'abord texte entendu, puis souvenir d'audition et pôle référentiel, ensuite, à mesure que le texte s'éloigne dans le temps et perd toute actualisation trop précise, cri de ralliement et parole absolue; il devient finalement hallucination, balbutiements et prophétie d'un dément. Les multiples reprises de cette parole antérieure scandent le roman de Savard et lui confèrent une tragique grandeur.

Dans se jeu de reprises, que le texte du premier roman change radicalement de nature en intégrant le second est tout à fait normal. Non seulement parce qu'il est utilisé différemment et que la redondance lui assure un relief poétique, mais surtout parce qu'il devient partie constituante d'un univers tout autre. Car

au-delà des similitudes contingentes, ces deux univers romanesques sont irréconciliablement opposés. Entre les deux, s'est produit la faute.

En effet, *Maria Chapdelaine* nous présente un univers édénique. Certes, la vie ést dure et les journées longues, Samuel Chapdelaine se sent bien un peu penaud d'avoir abusé de la bonté de sa femme et Maria sera bien quelque peu tentée par l'appel du luxe et de la vie facile. Mais ce ne sont que des ombres au tableau, des tentations auxquelles on résiste: le paradis est sans fissures. Samuel est dure et les journées longues, Samuel Chapdelaine se sent bien un peu avant lui, et Maria fera le choix de la continuité: elle suivra, sur les traces de sa mère.

Tout autre est l'univers de *Menaud, maître-draveur*. Son point de départ — son fondement — est un sentiment de culpabilité. Au début du roman, Menaud est arrivé à la fin de sa vie; il se sent pécheur et s'avoue coupable d'avoir fait "le chien tout son règne."[1] Il s'est produit une fêlure dans l'univers plein et clos de *Maria Chapdelaine*: Menaud en prend conscience lorsqu'il entend sa fille lire des pages qui décrivent le paradis perdu. Brutalement, tout chavire, et comme ce fut le cas lors de la perte du premier paradis, le pécheur prend conscience de l'*espace* et du *temps*.

Cette conscience est justement ce qui oppose antinomiquement ces deux univers romanesques. L'espace, implicitement, est illimité dans *Maria Chapdelaine*. Six fois dans sa vie, lorsqu'il se sentait trop comprimé par l'avance de la civilisation, Samuel Chapdelaine a déménagé ses pénates. Toujours à l'avant-poste des forces de colonisation et de peuplement, il n'a jamais manqué de terres vierges et de terrain en friche. Rien d'ailleurs dans le roman n'indique chez lui la moindre conscience de l'épuisement du territoire. Le lecteur du roman sait bien que famille en est rendue aux limites septentrionales des terres arables, mais Samuel, quant à lui, ne voit venir la fin de ses pérégrinations que parce qu'il est rendu à la fin de sa course terrestre, non par manque d'espace. De même, le temps n'a aucune prise sur son style de vie. Certes, comme tout homme, il est soumis à la loi commune et la perte de sa femme signale bien qu'il est rendu au terme de son existence. Mais cette perception reste résolument individuelle, ne s'accompagne d'aucun pressentiment qu'il est peut-être parmi les derniers d'une espèce menacée et que ses fils ne connaîtront jamais une telle liberté, Maria, sa fille, perçoit confusément et dans un état de quasi clairvoyance que certains dangers se dressent à l'horizon, mais elle n'a qu'à assumer la voie rectiligne qui est tracée devant elle pour que tout rentre dans l'ordre.

Toute autre est la situation de Menaud et toute autre sa conscience de sa position. Menaud habite les dernières frontières: le territoire est occupé, la collectivité est menacée ses derniers retranchements et il livre un combat d'arrière-garde désespéré pour empêcher d'être définitivement confiné dans un enclos. En moins de vingt ans, de *Maria* à *Menaud*, l'espace a littéralement fondu. Alors que

Samuel avait vraisemblablement le droit d'aller s'installer où il voulait, Menaud n'aura bientôt même plus le droit d'accéder aux montagnes qui aboutent sa terre. De là l'urgence d'agir et la conscience tragique de la fuite du temps qui le conduit à la folie. Honteux d'avoir laissé filer les heures et les années, se rappelant à la fin de sa vie la mission sacrée que lui avait confiée son père ("Garde ça pour toi et pour ceux qui viendront, mon sappregué!"), conscient qu'il ne laisse en héritage à son fils qu'un "métier d'esclave" et les luttes qu'il aurait dû lui-même assumer:

> Lui déjà vieux et son temps utile épuisé, son fils prendrait la relève et lutterait contre les empiètements de l'étranger. (p. 43)

> Toutes ses lâchetés à lui, ses années sous le joug, c'est Joson qui rachèterait cela. (p. 80)

incapable, finalement, de s'en remettre à Joson après la noyade de ce dernier, Menaud est acculé, alors qu'il est vieux et miné par le chagrin, à une lutte dérisoire, mimique de combat contre un adversaire inaccessible. Le temps lui fait défaut. Alors que Maria n'a qu'à accepter la continuité puisqu'il ne s'est produit aucune cassure dans sa vie feutrée, Menaud doit rebrousser chemin, reprendre sa vie, poser des gestes inédits et refaire sa journée dans sa vingt-troisième heure. Sosie de Samuel Chapdelaine et son frêre de sang, Menaud se distingue néanmoins radicalement de lui par sa conscience angoissée et tragique de l'espace et du temps.

Aquin et l'ombre de Savard

Par ailleurs, malgré les disparités d'âge, de milieu, de formation, d'occupation, le héroes d'Hubert Aquin est le double de Menaud. Les deux oeuvres débutent par le même constat d'échec et le même sentiment cuisant d'humiliation face à la mission trahie: mission reçue du père, incarnation de la fidélité patriotique, dans le premier cas, mission reçue des frères d'armes, patriotes en lutte révolutionnaire, dans le second. Menaud et X (c'est ainsi que je nommerai dorénavant le "je" de *Prochain épisode*, alternativement narrateur et espion et souvent les deux à la fois) se sentent tous deux prisonniers: X est véritablement enfermé derrière des barreaux et étouffe dans son cloisonnement; Menaud se sent condamné à une "barbotière aux pirons," incapable de faire l'outarde et de filer au nord à sa guise. Leur humiliation vient en grande partie de cette restriction spatiale, image même d'une liberté amoindrie. C'est alors que les protagonistes envisagent de transmettre leur mission à des alter ego: Menaud à son fils "né de sa souche," le narrateur à un espion de sa création, qui se chargeront de la lutte contre l'ennemi. Cette transmission ne peut s'effectuer, Joson se noyant et l'espion-héros s'empêtrant, s'engluant, se noyant en quelque sorte dans les phrases

du narrateur. Les protagonistes doivent donc eux-mêmes assumer la lutte, bien maladroitement, et c'est dans le déroulement de celle-ci qu'éclate leur profonde identité.

Leur commune impuissance est évidente. Elle provient d'abord de leur inadaptation à la lutte.Tous deux portés à la rêverie et à l'introspection (à la "jonglerie" dans le vocabulaire de Savard), ils sont d'une incompétence pénible à voir en tant que militants. Poètes d'abord, maniant avec un rare bonheur un verbe vigoureux et enlevant, d'une extrême violence, constamment associé au feu dans le cas de Menaud et à un autre type de feu, celui des armes, dans le cas de X: ils sont des discoureurs intarissables. Cette parole forte et drue est nourrie par une conscience historique aiguë qui s'enracine dans un amour profond du pays: amour quasi charnel ou du moins fortement érotisé (il faut voir quel plaisir les deux prennent à la simple nomination, Menaud de ses montagnes qui lui semblent autant de bêtes familières qu'il caresse du regard, X des petits villages des Cantons de l'Est ou de la Petite Nation, rappels de la femme aimée). Les deux protagonistes se sentent en relation intime, immédiate, avec les ancêtres héroïques (décourvreurs et explorateurs ou patriotes rebelles, selon le cas) et ont conscience d'incarner la race. Menaud parle "comme s'il eût été à lui seul tout un peuple et qu'il eût vécu depuis des siècles," X affirme constamment son identité collective: "je suis un peuple défait. . . . " Cette ardeur patriotique, toutefois, cet amour douloureux du sol même des pères, ne postule en rien une quelconque efficacité militante, tout au contraire. Le chant lyrique et la violence essentiellement verbale sont à la fois un exutoire et une mimique de la lutte. La prolixité s'associe à une activité fébrile — courses en auto ou courses en raquettes — qui satisfait le besoin de bouger mais empêche toute véritable action consequente.

Si les protagonistes, au départ portés à la rêverie, doivent se résigner ainsi à un simulacre de lutte, c'est essentiellement parce que l'adversaire est absent. Car il s'agit bien du même adversaire: l'Anglo-Saxon ou plutôt la puissance financière des "étrangers" qui peut acheter des montagnes entières et en chasser les possesseurs non pas légaux mais légitimes, et qui écrase impitoyablement, avec ses forces répressives, toute velléité de résistance ou de révolte. Face à un ennemi anonyme, impersonnel, nulle part présent mais tout puissant (le capital n'a-t-il pas tous les attributs de la divinité?), Menaud veut lutter avec ses poings et X, à peine moins dérisoire, avec des mitraillettes. Ils ne trouvent devant eux que des hommes, frères ennemis de surcroît: Le Délié, traître à sa race et H. de Heutz, au patronyme francophone (par opposition à Carl von Ryndt, intégralement étranger).[2] Ennemis tellement fraternels qu'ils aiment la même femme que les patriotes et sont aimés en retour (Marie aime à la fois Le Délié et Alexis, fils spirituel de Menaud; la femme blonde — K? — aime à la fois X et H. de Heutz). Ces frères peuvent être menacés verbalement — ce dont on ne se prive pas — et les menaces peuvent même en venir aux coups. Mais dans l'économie des deux

romans, les coups ne peuvent être que superficiels (lutte dans la clairière entre Alexis et Le Délié ou coups de feu erratiques entre X et H. de Heutz). Quel sens cela aurait-il de tuer qui nous ressemble? Quelle utilité y a-t-il à éliminer un pion? Suprême ironie, les protagonistes qui ne veulent ni ne peuvent éliminer ces ennemis concrets mais ambigus, s'épuisent néanmoins à les attendre: ainsi Menaud dans sa montagne qui attend Le Délié et qui perd la raison, et X qui, dans son attente au château, est en proie aux pires hallucinations.

Ce n'est pas le moindre point de rapprochement entre ces deux oeuvres que cette incapacité partagée de représenter l'ennemi véritable. Une brève évocation de l'ingénieur dans *Menaud*, un aperçu fugace du banquier dans *Prochain épisode*, puis immédiatement s'interpose le frère-adversaire ambigu. Il s'agit là d'ailleurs d'une constante de notre littérature[3] — l'Anglais est un personnage romanesque tabou — mais plus remarquable dans les oeuvres étudiées ici du fait qu'elles créent des personnages en instance de lutte nationale à qui on refuse de présenter l'ennemi. Et les deux protagonistes, solidement encaissés dans un dilemne dont ils ne voient guère d'issue, gesticulant fièvreusement mais inutilement, en viennent à perdre la raison (ou à être soupçonné d'aliénation, dans le cas de X).

Cette folie est étroitement liée au thème de la noyade dans les romans. L'image de la dépression — mentale et géographique (les eaux du Lac Léman) — est centrale dans *Prochain épisode* ("je suis attablé au fond du Lac Léman, plongé dans sa mouvance liquide qui me tient lieu de subconscient, mêlant ma dépression à la dépression alanguie du Rhône cimbrique . . . "), et les images de plongée scandent le récit, jouant constamment sur les deux niveaux. Etre fou ou soupçonné tel, c'est être "emprisonné dans un sous-marin clinique." Dans *Menaud, maître draveur*, la noyade est non seulement mort physique (Joson) mais aussi mort spirituelle. C'est ainsi que perdu dans la tempête, Menaud s'enfonce dans un trou de neige:

> Il ramassa ce qui lui restait de force pour grimper le surplomb de neige au bord de la coupe . . . mais épuisé, vaincu des pieds à la tête, il s'affaissa dans un trou, tandis que tous les démons de la tempête hurlaient au-dessus dans les renversis. (. . .) Mais bientôt, le râle ne déborda plus du trou de neige, tandis que les pieds de l'homme gelaient dans le linceul où il était entré debout.

Debout comme un noyé. Même sous sa forme solide, l'eau manifeste sa puissance dissolvante et destructrice. Que la noyade-dépression soit le lot des deux protagonistes ne saurait nous étonner: "le salaire du gerrier défait, c'est la dépression" (*P.E.*, 17).

Par ailleurs, le thème de la noyade reçoit son pendant avec le symbole des montagnes. Elles représentent pour les deux héros des absolus, des images de liberté, des sources d'exaltation et d'enivrement. Menaud remue ciel et terre pour défendre la montagne menacée, alors que X porte constamment ses regards

vers le contour dentelé des Alpes. On retrouve ainsi dans les deux romans une thématique de montée et de descente, à la fois spatiale et psychique, les lieux bas représentant des espaces clos et dépressifs, la montagne, la ferveur et l'exaltation. Assez paradoxalement, toutefois, l'espace rêvé sera l'espace de la ruine. En effet, dans les deux romans, les protagonistes qui sont allés porter la lutte sur le terrain élevé, n'y trouveront que déconfiture. D'ailleurs, au-delà des justifications anecdotiques, n'est-il pas curieux qu'ils choisissent un champ de bataille si loin de leur domicile: les Alpes pour le Montréalais X, une montagne à trois jours de marche de chez lui pour Menaud?

Suprême paradoxe, alors que tout est consommé, que la défaite est totale et les héros anéantis, les deux oeuvres, par une volte-face qui tient du tour de passe-passe, projettent le lecteur hors de l'oeuvre et postulent un futur rédempteur, ou du moins différent. Alors que rien dans l'oeuvre ne le prépare ni ne le justifie, le dernier chapitre de *Prochain épisode* multiplie les assertions à cet effet:

> Mais tout n'est pas dit. (. . .) je me sens fini; mais tout ne finit pas en moi. (. . .) Mais tout se résoudra en beauté. J'ai confiance aveuglément . . . (. . .) Déjà, je pressens les secousses intenables du prochain épisode.

La fin de *Menaud* est plus ambiguë. La phrase de Josime se veut prophétique, mais prophétie de quoi? Sibylline à souhait, elle ne saurait se réduire facilement. Toutefois, son caractère sentencieux, la lenteur et le calme de l'énonciation qui contraste avec le désarroi des autres:

> Alors, au milieu des hommes qui se passaient la main sur le front contre le frôlement de cette démence, lentement le vieil ami de la terre, Josime, prononça: "C'est pas une folie comme une autre! Ca me dit, à moi, que c'est un avertissement."

la nature particulière du paysan-locuteur, "bon comme la terre et sage autant qu'elle," et surtout le fait que la scène se déroule au printemps, en plein renouveau, et immédiatement après que le jeune couple eut décidé de continuer la lutte, tous ces éléments confèrent à cette fin un certain caractère optimiste. Auparavant, ses compatriotes se moquaient de Menaud et n'accordaient aucun crédit à ses paroles:

> L'affaire des étrangers dans la montagne ne les énervait point. C'était partout la même réponse, fait en montrant les crocs:
>
> — Le bail . . . la loi . . . Bah! on se fiche de tout cela comme des vieilles lunes! il n'y a que le bon Dieu . . .
>
> Et Menaud revenait à la nuit tombante; et dans le chemin d'ombres touffues, il pensait tout haut, et maudissait le sol jaune de n'avoir poussé que des hommes de rien . . . "du bois d'esclave! criait-il, du bois d'esclave!"

A la fin de l'oeuvre, les voisins se regroupent chez lui, écoutent avec émotion ses cris de démence et reconnaissent leur valeur prophétique. Impuissant, alors qu'il est sain d'esprit, Menaud sera écouté, fou. Paradoxalement — et la même structure sera reprise dans *Prochain épisode* —, l'engagement patriotique ne sera doté d'une quelconque efficacité (hautement problématique d'ailleurs, car simplement postulée, et appartenant à l'avenir) qu'après être passé par le creuset de la folie.

A vrai dire, le processus (échec → folie → succès?) est plus complexe dans les deux oeuvres. A l'échec, succède la folie. Mais celle-ci ne sera affectée d'un signe positif qu'après avoir été soumise à la double action du temps et de la narration. Quelques mois suffisent dans les deux cas. Après trois mois de détention, X se met à raconter son histoire, tissu de souvenirs et d'affabulation, longue confession lyrique d'un échec dont il ressort miraculeusement optimiste. De même, il aura suffi des quelques mois d'hiver pour que l'aventure de Menaud soit reprise et merveilleusement transformée par l'action du récit. Le Lucon en devient le narrateur:

> Son titre de révolté lui avait donné un prestige mystérieux. On se rassemblait pour l'entendre parler du drame de Menaud. (. . .) A l'issue du récit, chacun retournait chez soi, et toute la nuit, les paroles de Menaud rôdaient dans le sommeil du Pied-des-Monts.

L'identité de structure semble assez claire: le salut individuel et collectif ne peut venir, ne peut paraître possible, que médiatisé par l'action du récit. Mais puisque dans les deux oeuvres le narratif se différencie nettement et même s'oppose au vécu, l'affectation d'un signe positif à la folie et à l'échec a caractère très ambigu: mensonge poétique, évasion verbale, dérobade langagière . . . Enfin: une échappatoire. Le procécé est ancien et comme tel investi d'une certaine autorité respectable. Le "désastre de Roncevaux" n'est pas devenu équipée héroïque autrement. Ce qui prenait autrefois trois siècles se faisant maintenant en trois mois (accélération extraordinaire et progrès notable, signe de notre plus grande capacité d'illusion ou de l'urgence particulière de la situation québécoise . . . ?) Mais cette ancienneté de la combine ne la rend pas moins problématique ni moins déprimante. La morale est limpide: le succès patriotique n'appartient qu'à l'ordre du récit. Morale doublement affirmée. *Dans* les oeuvres, puisqu'elles confient à la narration interne le soin de racheter l'échec, et *par* les oeuvres, puisqu'il s'agit de toute évidence de romans nettement réussis, mais de romans de patriotes dont l'action efficace reste confinée à la littérature.

Romans et vision du monde

Rien n'indique qu'Hubert Aquin ait attaché une importance particulière au roman de Mgr Savard et, pour ma part du moins, je ne sache pas qu'il s'y soit

arrêté à un moment ou à un autre dans aucun de ses textes. Au contraire, il semble, à son issu, à trente ans d'intervalle, reprendre l'oeuvre de son prédécesseur, rajeunissant l'intrigue mais n'y modifiant rien d'essentiel. Cette reproduction quasi en décalque de *Menaud, maître draveur* par *Prochain épisode* est autre chose qu'une quelconque relation de similitude et davantage qu'un rapport du type déjà codifié par la critique littéraire (influence, imitation, plagiat . . .). Le parallélisme des oeuvres est manifeste au niveau des thèmes et de la structure fondamentale. En plus des élements dégagés dans cette étude, il aurait été possible de parler de certains autres. De l'écriture "poétique" de chaque oeuvre, par exemple, le contenu du terme "poétique" variant avec les deux époques, mais s'opposant à ce que le moment offrait d'écriture romanesque plus conventionnelle. Ou encore de la fonction compensatrice des oeuvres pour les auteurs face à une activité extra-littéraire de reconquête (Savard en Abitibi, Aquin dans la clandestinité). Ou bien du réseau proprement narcissique des personnages dans chacun des roman et de leur capacité de dédoublement: ainsi la chaîne Menaud-Joson-Alexis, le premier devant agir par défaut du second, le troisième n'étant que la copie conforme des deux premiers — relations avec l'histoire et le surnaturel comprises — et devenant le narrateur du drame du premier, cette chaîne sera reprise dans *Prochain épisode*, mais l'unicité protéiforme sera assurée alors par le jeu complexe du pronom "je."

Cette profonde homologie des deux oeuvres ainsi étayée (et qu'il serait sans doute possible d'élucider davantage) pose un certain nombre de questions intéressantes. Elles se ramènent toutes à la permanence problématique d'un univers imaginaire au-delà des transformations socio-économiques, au-delà des options politiques, au-delà des changements de mentalités. Que le Québec des années trente, rural, archaïque et fermé sur lui-même et que le Québec des années soixante, urbanisé, industrialisé, balayé par tous les courants de pensée, qu'un prêtre féru de classicisme, corporatiste, admirateur de Salazar et de Franco et qu'un socialiste athée, imbu de modernité, révolutionnaire mais surtout anarchiste, puissent produire des oeuvres véhiculant au-delà des contingences, la même vision du monde, mérite certainement de retenir l'attention de quiconque prend la littérature au sérieux.

Comment expliquer le phénomène? L'utilisation d'une certaine terminologie (homologie, vision du monde) dans le précédent paragraphe pourrait laisser supposer une tentative de résolution du côté de la perception goldmannienne de l'oeuvre littéraire. Résolution difficile à effectuer, pourtant. Car nous sommes en présence, avec ces deux romans, d'oeuvres maîtresses qui ont eu de grands retentissements et dans lesquelles des groupes importants de la collectivité se sont reconnus: la droite traditionnelle avec Savard (son idéalisation du monde paysan, de la religion, de la famille, de la fidélité . . .), la jeune gauche avec Aquin (son idéalisation de la Révolution, des luttes de décolonisation . . .). Ces deux

groupes qui se considèrent antinomiques se partageraient alors la même vision du monde? Vision du monde dont les éléments fondamentaux sont les suivants: la conscience d'un échec initial, le sentiment d'emprisonnement, la volonté de s'en sortir par un geste de délégation, la nécessité d'assumer soi-même la lutte in extremis (une lutte essentiellement disproportionnée, l'action du patriote étant inefficace car verbale et incapable d'atteindre l'ennemi sur son terrain), la folie (la coupure d'avec le réel) qui en résulte et finalement la transformation de cet échec sur le plan de l'action en une réussite sur le plan de narration: l'aventure du patriote, passant par le creuset du récit, se voyant affectée d'un signe positif, même si elle a échouée. Qu'est-ce à dire? Trois possibilitiés d'interprétation se présentent de prime abord, mais les trois échappent à l'hypothèse de Goldmann selon laquelle la structure d'une oeuvre forte et exemplaire est liée à (porte à son maximum de conscience possible...) la vision du monde du groupe dont l'écrivain fait partie:

(a) Mgr Savard ne ferait pas partie, contrairement aux évidences, de l'élite cléricale, traditionnelle et corporatiste, des années trente. Il serait en avance sur son temps, le père spirituel des effelquistes de 1963....

(b) Hubert Aquin, malgré ses engagements et ses références idéologiques, prolongerait un discours de la droite traditionnelle canadienne-française et en ferait donc "objectivement" partie....

(c) La notion de classe n'a ici aucune pertinence car la vision du monde d'un auteur ne saurait aucunement se réduire à l'universalité d'une classe....

Pour ma part, je retiens de cet examen sommaire de deux de nos chefs-d'oeuvre, non pas trois possibilités de résolution mais trois indications, les deux premières d'ordre socio-culturelles et plutôt troublantes, la troisième d'ordre critique. D'abord que la race est, pour reprendre la terminologie de Sartre, un puissant élément psycho-syncrétique qui tend à gommer ou du moins à masquer les contradictions et les luttes plus concrètes: le nationalisme québécois — le patriotisme plutôt — transcende les polarisations politiques, échappe aux discours ponctuels et les rend tous cacophoniques. Ensuite que le discours nationaliste au Québec, tel qu'il s'incarne dans des oeuvres romanesques exemplaires de ce siècle, est intrinsèquement statique: d'ailleurs, la lecture la moindrement assidue de nos journaux indique que le phénomène est social avant d'être littéraire — la même situation a cours, quinze ans après *Prochain épisode* et quarante ans après *Menaud, maître-draveur*. Finalement — et cette constatation est à la fois heuristique et aveu d'impuissance (de recherches à faire, pour employer l'euphémisme courant) — qu'il faut rappeler ce que Sartre disait dans un contexte autre mais analogue:

La plupart des ouvrages de l'esprit sont des objets complexes et difficilement classables qu'on peut rarement "situer" par rapport à une seule idéologie de classe mais qui reproduisent plutôt, dans leur structure profonde, les contradictions et les luttes des idéologies contemporaines.[4]

Un pas avant dans la compréhension et la "classification" des ouvrages québécois serait peut-être fait si la critique d'ici pratiquait davantage ce qui Henri Mitterand appelle le "comparatisme intra culturel."[5] La confrontation, le rapprochement des oeuvres, non pas d'écrivains de la même chapelle ou de la même génération, mais d'auteurs éloignés, situés aux antipodes même, permettrait peut-être de préciser, lentement et patiemment, les éléments vraiment fondamentaux de notre univers imaginaire. De notre univers tout court.

NOTES

[1] Les références suivront ainsi immédiatement après les citations, avec l'indication de la page entre parenthèses. Les éditions citées sont:
— Félix-Antoine Savard, *Menaud, maître-draveur* (Montréal: Fides, Bibliothèque canadienne-française, 1966).
— Hubert Aquin, *Prochain épisode* (Montréal: Editions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1969).

[2] Cf. Michel Bernard, "Prochain épisode ou l'autocritique d'une impuissance," *Parti pris*, 14, no. 3-4 (novembre-décembre 1966), pp. 78-87.

[3] Que l'on retrouve aussi dans notre histoire. Jacques Ferron, entre autres, s'est interrogé sur cette occulation systématique de l'Anglais qui a fait en sorte que notre historien national, le chanoine Groulx, puisse présenter Dollard des Ormeaux comme héros collectif. Par quelle aberration les Iroquois, qui avaient cessé d'être une menace réelle dès le début du XVIIe siècle, en sont-ils venus à incarner l'Ennemi? C'est ainsi qu'on nous proposait comme héros un brigand qui n'a peut-être jamais existé et comme ennemis des Amérindiens dépossédés, alors que la lutte était ailleurs.

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Questions de méthode* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Idées, 1960), pp. 161-62.

[5] Henri Mitterand, *Le Discours du roman* (Paris: PUF, 1980), p. 12.

BREATH: FOR FRED WAH

Tom Wayman

you know
these mountains breathe
from below   from the valleys:
they breathe in
and Fall
floats down at noon
in the wooded hills
over the Lake
first snow on ridgelines
descends;

                    breathe out
and Spring
rises from gravel
up the yellowing slopes
between evergreens   the wind
at first with the glaciers in it
and then sun;

                    breathe out
sounds of the Lake
flowing against docks
and the rocky shore   air
tosses the willow-tops'
strands and branches   as seaweed
on a choppy day
birch leaves, cottonwood
vibrate
in the breezy light
glints on the moving water —

                    the Lake
surges uphill
through the new leaves

you see

HORSE KNEES

Wm. B. Robertson

This morning I became a horse
and round and round
the coffee table
I plodded
two kids on my back
yelling "giddyap"
my knees screaming:
"shaddap"
"buck them off"
"let them walk"
"sit down."

My knees are hockey hurt
running pounded
crack when I bend
painful testimonies
to the damage I've done
my body
and me
pushing it too far.

My body is a desecrated temple:
graffiti names ugly
on the walls
and tipped over tombstones
marking some memory
that only lingers now
when I walk
but screams when I play
hard
when I play horse
plodding round
the coffee table
two kids yelling "giddyap."

Be quiet knees
these kids see only hooves.

books in review

WOMEN & ICONS

JENNIFER WAELTI-WALTERS, *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination*. Eden Press, $18.95.

"NO ONE IN HER RIGHT MIND could possibly want to be a fairy tale princess," argues Jennifer Waelti-Walters in her new book, *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination*. Princesses, as Waelti-Walters shows, have traditionally had singularly unlucky lives, forced to subsist in exile from genuine experience of their bodies or wishes, held captive in a world of mirrors, imprisoned in dreams from which there can be no escape. These are the heroines offered to generations of young women as role models serving to inculcate the passive life of attendance, domestic and romantic, upon men who are free to move through the world and make their own marks upon it. Woman learns silence, man learns language. Woman learns to please, man to act. Eventually, defined for centuries out of positions of power, woman becomes the nothing, the absence, which with tragic irony defines her position with respect to those figures associated with being, presence, authority: men in a patriarchal society. To want to be a fairy tale princess, then, is to invite one's own annihilation — spiritual and, in one way or another, physical as well. "Girls have been taught for centuries that they should commit a smiling, lifelong suicide, deny their own nature, have no identity whatsoever," as Waelti-Walters says. Or, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it in an epigram quoted on several occasions by Waelti-Walters, "*On ne nait pas femme, on la devient.*"

Little boys, however, are born into a world which teaches them autonomy, inculcating — as these fairy tales make clear — "an overt possessor/object, master/slave pattern, the playing out of which will reinforce the self-destructive victim pattern of behaviour taught to girls." Thus begins the vicious circle which drives women into alienation, perhaps madness, even as they seek love and acceptance while enacting the "feminine" roles of dependence enforced by partriarchally-defined social "norms." The woman who steps outside this circle becomes a witch, a madwoman, a hag, and if she is lucky, gives birth to herself.

This argument is, of course, not new in feminist criticism. Waelti-Walters quotes extensively from Mary Daly's classic, *Gyn/Ecology*, and also draws on such basic texts as Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness*, Robin Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place*, Luce Irigaray's *Ce sexe qui n'est pas un* and, of course, Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe*, among many others. *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination* does, however, make a significant contribution to the emerging literature on the iconography of that hitherto vacuous phrase, "the female imagination." In furthering the recovery of that lost continent, Waelti-Walters does an incomparably better job than a critic like Patricia Meyer Spacks whose *The Female Imagination* (1972) has long been a pioneering study in the area, and does so in some interesting ways. An obvious difference is in area of concentration: Spacks is concerned with British and American fiction of the last three centuries, Waelti-Walters with French and Québécois fiction of the last quarter century. The tighter focus and severe restriction to discussion of eight works facilitates Waelti-Walters' purpose for her book seeks as much to convince readers of its political position as it does to elucidate certain features of the works which structure the discussion. Her book is quick, intense, vigorously written. We must pick up the argument swiftly and accept terms

whose history feminists will know but others may not. For the latter group, suspension of disbelief (willing or not) may well be necessary if this book is to be digested. Like many feminist critics of the last five years or so, Waelti-Walters begins *in medias res* in terms of the feminist argument; the Spacks stage of gentle guidance is long past.

So is Spacks' innocence of French feminist interest in and development of Jacques Derrida's and Jacques Lacan's theories about the relationship between word and body, textuality and sexuality. Thus Waelti-Walters presents a dichotomy which structures her book and opens into the transformations now taking place within women's literature. In the first part of her book, she focuses on texts which exemplify the fairy tale themes of entrapment within powerlessness and which mirror in their language the authors' dependence upon phallocentric language. In this group are Hébert's *The Silent Rooms*, Beauvoir's *Les Belles Images*, Blais' *Mad Shadows*, and Duras' *The Rapture of Lol V. Stein*. In the second part of the book, the focus is on the shattering of these themes and modes of expression in Hyvrard's *The Prunes of Cythera*, Wittig's *The Guérillères*, Bersianik's *The Euguélionne*, and Delaunay's "A bad reading." Passivity and violence, mirrors and blood, linguistic/stylistic conformity and the creation of new forms: these are some of the basic elements in this binary system formed not only by the two groups of texts but also, as Waelti-Walters argues, within the historical evolution of women in the last three decades. In the violent re/creation of the text in Wittig and Bersianik lies the possibility of re/vision within the female imagination, the assumption through satiric wit of a world in which equality has become a place from which to think rather than an ever-receding goal.

In return for the energy and conviction with which these points are made, one may perhaps forgive certain flaws in the book: poor editing, occasional use of Gallic syntax and idiom, the use from time to time of an oral style which doesn't always work in print, and the selection of a range of texts about which the author clearly has strong feelings but whose pedigrees for inclusion in this argument are not *de facto* obvious. Why *these* books and not other equally relevant ones? But these are trifling objections to the work of one of the very few critics expert in feminist theory and writing in English in Canada today. Beyond what this book has to teach us about fairy tales lies a purpose which surfaces repeatedly in the strength of its convictions and the drive of its prose: the instilling of the courage to see what has already been accomplished — ironically enough, not an easy task for those who have focused for so long on the terms of their own oppression.

LORRAINE WEIR

JUNGIAN DAVIES

PATRICIA MONK, *The Smaller Infinity: The Jungian Self in the Novels of Robertson Davies*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $25.00.

IN *The Smaller Infinity* Patricia Monk undertakes an important and challenging task: a study of Jungian thought in Robertson Davies' fiction. She traces the gradual eclipse of Davies' early admiration for Freud by a growing enthusiasm for Jung, and she shows Davies' affinity for Jungian thought by comparing Davies' views on folklore, myth, literature, magic, and romance with Jung's and contrasting both with Freud's. In Davies, she argues, the creative process is directed towards an understanding of the nature of human identity, which entails an exploration of illusion: fantasy, delusion, insanity, and, in the Deptford trilogy, faith.

Monk shows Davies' interest in the re-

lation between ego and persona in his first book, *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (1939); and in his creation of Samuel Marchbanks, a fictional second self, she describes Davies as stripping away his persona and externalizing his shadow. In the Salterton trilogy, Monk sees Davies working to synthesize parts into the whole of human identity, exploring various dualities and using Jungian archetypes. In *Tempest-Tost* (1951) he examines the duality of the transcendent (the world of *The Tempest*) and the mundane, focusing on Hector's encounter with his anima in his delusory love for Griselda. In *Leaven of Malice* (1954) he treats the duality of true and false identity on the mundane level of personal identity and, in Solly and Pearl's battles with the anima and animus in their parents, on the transcendent level of psychic identity. In *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958) Davies treats the themes of illusion and identity in relation to Monica's growth as she relinquishes her delusion that mundane reality is all and gains from her music true knowledge of transcendent reality. Monica's recognition of the difference between herself in the transcendent state and her everyday self can be understood in Jungian terms, Monk explains, as the duality of the self and the ego, and she traces Monica's growth as the Jungian process of individuation in which Monica confronts various of her psychic elements manifested in other characters.

In *Fifth Business* (1970) Davies treats all the earlier themes in more depth and with greater artistry. Monk points out a change in his concept of illusion, which now is seen not only as a mask that conceals reality but also as a metaphor that illuminates reality. Davies focuses on the interface in Dunstan Ramsay between the transcendent psychic reality and the mundane physical reality, and Monk discusses this interface in terms of four "psycho-symbolic patterns" in the novel: the oppositions of the psychic and the physical, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, and the reciprocal relationship of Boy's life and Dunstan's, each of which she relates to Jungian thought.

The Manticore allows Monk, like Davies, to outline the theory of Jungian analysis as well as the particulars of David Staunton's encounters with his shadow, anima and magus as she discusses David's journey towards self-understanding under Dr. Von Haller's guidance. In this most Jungian of Davies' novels, Monk finds marked ambivalence in Davies' attitude toward Jung, especially in the ending of the novel which leaves David undecided about whether to go on with further analysis or to undertake the heroic journey to self-understanding on his own, as Liesl advocates (though in fact his analyst also suggests that he is now equipped to go it alone).

Davies continues the exploration of good and evil, truth and illusion in *World of Wonders* (1975), but here he attempts to define human identity not solely in terms of Jungian individuation, but in terms of the mythic hero journey, suggested in *The Manticore* as an alternative to Jungian self-exploration, and in terms of Spengler's Magian world view, in which the mundane world is permeated with the wonder of an unseen world of good and evil spirits. Though Monk acknowledges that there is a place for the mythic hero-journey in Jungian thought and that Davies modifies the Spenglerian view in the direction of Jungianism, she concludes that in *World of Wonders* Davies places Jungianism as a myth among other myths, a way of knowing, not the knowledge itself, to be reshaped by each individual in his own search for understanding, as Davies does himself. Davies has not finally defined human identity, because it is indefinable; he is exploring "the smaller infinity" that is man.

Monk establishes convincingly both

Davies' debt to Jung and his creative independence from Jung, though she places his conversion to Jung later (1958) than she should, apparently because she mistakenly interprets a statement made by Davies in 1956 as an unfavourable comparison of Jung to Freud, when it is actually a comparison between Jung and Freud's biographer with reference to their accounts of the split between Jung and Freud. Much of the evidence she offers to establish Davies' "natural" affinity with Jung is from Davies' writing in the mid-1950's, when he was in fact well launched on his study of Jung (begun "about 1950," Davies says). *General Confession* (1956), featuring Casanova and three characters who are indisputably his shadow, his anima, and his "wise old man," is as patently Jungian as *The Manticore*, but Davies' plays are omitted from Monk's study.

Much of Monk's discussion of Jung is sound, but in the central matter of the individuation process, her terminology is puzzling, and she misrepresents Jung's theory. Monk lists the primary archetypes as the shadow, the anima/animus, the magus (Jung's "wise old man"), the sybil, and the self. Davies uses the term "magus," but neither Davies nor Jung uses "sybil" except in connection with the anima, so why Monk chose it for the great mother archetype is unclear. What is clear is that she failed to notice that Jung's wise old man and great mother are, like the anima and animus, equivalent archetypes for individuals of different sexes. Though Monk notes that Davies introduces nothing corresponding to her sybil into David Staunton's analysis, she nevertheless assigns sybil figures to Ramsay and Eisengrim and a magus to Monica.

Monk's discussion of good and evil and truth and illusion in the Deptford trilogy illuminates the three complex novels. She is least successful with *Leaven of Malice*, where her own focus on illusion and identity throws the novel itself out of focus. Even in her more rewarding exploration of the later novels, Monk's focus on a particular pattern of her own can belie the novel under discussion. She has an appealing conception of the reciprocal ego-shadow relationship between Boy Staunton and Dunstan Ramsay which she discusses sensibly except when she forces it into a complex schema born of a superficial acquaintance with Jung's ideas about the mandala and her misconception about the individuation process, combined with Liesl's description of the five-part "cabal" that killed Boy Staunton. She decides, on the basis of her identification of members of the cabal in relation to Boy and his reciprocal relationship with Ramsay, that "for Ramsay, Mary Dempster is the woman he knew, and Leola is the woman he did not know; Paul Dempster remains the man who granted his inmost wish, and Boy Staunton becomes the inevitable fifth." Mary Dempster is then cast as Ramsay's "sybil," Leola as his anima, and Paul as his magus. Certainly Leola serves as one of a series of anima figures for Ramsay, though she is far less important in this role than Mary Dempster. But Paul as his magus? To overlook Padre Blazon in this role is obviously an error which Monk falls into simply out of enthusiasm for the schema she has devised. Even her claim for Paul as the one who granted Ramsay's inmost wish rests on the fact that he introduces Ramsay to Liesl; it would make more sense to say that Liesl granted his inmost wish — but neither Liesl nor Blazon fits into the reciprocal relationship pattern, because Boy never met them, so the truth of the novel is sacrificed to Monk's schema.

As Monk rightly observes (though she does not always appear to remember it), Davies does not enslave himself to a rigid demonstration of Jungian ideas in his

novels. She deals most effectively with Davies when she discusses his exploration of illusion and truth without trying to superimpose her idea of Jungian individuation on his characters' self-discoveries.

SUSAN STONE-BLACKBURN

THE CLOWNS OF QUEBEC

GERALD SIGOUIN, *Théâtre en lutte: le Théâtre Euh!* vlb éditeur, $19.95.

IF THEATRE IN GENERAL is an ephemeral genre hard to contain within the traditional perimeters of literary criticism, the decade of the 1970's presents the historian of Canadian theatre with unprecedented difficulties. This is our decade of alternative theatre, following upon the radical theatre movement of the U.S. in the 1960's. The most interesting and original developments of that period occur in a militantly anti-literary spirit, emphasizing spontaneity, improvisation and collective creation. Brecht and Artaud are the twin deities of the movement, process, rather than product, its major goal. A product is easily described; to pin down a process in constant state of flux is considerably more difficult. Yet, this is exactly what Gérald Sigouin has attempted with *Théâtre en lutte: le Théâtre Euh!* If his attempt is largely successful, this is due to the fact that he has, wisely indeed, chosen a documentary format rather than a straight presentation. His volume is essentially a source book. Almost half of the book (138 out of 297 pages) is devoted exclusively to documentation, and the discussion itself is also heavily supplemented by documentary material.

In the first part of the book, the author examines the history and ideology of the Théâtre Euh! This young company, founded jointly by Marc Doré and Clément Cazelais, operated in the city of Quebec between 1970 and 1978. It was the most militantly marxist-leninist of the Jeune Théâtre groups active at the time, its aggressively political stance forcing a split in the Association Québécoise du Jeune Théâtre. Affectionately known simply as "les clowns," members of the troupe performed in working-class neighbourhoods, on the streets, meeting halls, cegeps — anywhere but in a legitimate theatre space. They participated at avant-garde theatre festivals in France with varied success, and ventured as far as Algeria. But wherever or whatever their productions, the central theme always remained that of the *Klassenkampf*.

Sigouin follows the evolution of the company at the hand of four major productions, devoting one chapter to each: *Quand le metriarcat fait des petits* (family and consumerism); *Cré Antigone!* (social/political revolt); *L'Histoire du Québec* (history seen as class struggle), and *Un, deux, trois, vendu!* (expropriation of lands for Mirabel airport). For each of these, detailed scenarios are given, as well as excerpts of dialogue, and production pictures. Extensive quotations from Théâtre Euh! manifestoes provide firsthand insight into the company's ideology and operating methods. The weakness of Sigouin's presentation lies in his tendency towards redundancy, towards stressing the obvious, and towards overstatement.

The second part of the book provides much useful material: a complete production list which includes date, place, and type of audience; a biography for each of the eight key members of the company; interviews with members of the company as well as with theatre critic Gilbert David (a useful balance!); and extensive bibliographies.

While there is no question about the value of the book for research purposes, one might well ask why devote a book-length study to the Théâtre Euh!, rather

than any one of the other more prominent contemporary *jeune théâtre* companies, such as Raymond Cloutier's *Grand Cirque Ordinaire*. Neither editor nor author provide a reason for their choice of this particular company, whose history has been documented better than most in the pages of the revue *Jeu* already. One can only hope that Sigouin's book will be the first in a series of similar volumes of documentation on a period of effervescence in Canadian theatre, both English and French.

RENATE USMIANI

IN RESISTANCE

MARIAN FOWLER, *The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada.* Anansi, n.p.

The Embroidered Tent seems bound to be a popular and well-used book. Briskly written, evocative in detail, waggish and irreverent in its humour, alert to signs of sexual repression below the surface of gentility, the book brings together portraits of five gentlewomen — Elizabeth Simcoe, Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Anna Jameson, and Lady Hariot ("one hesitates to use [her first name]") Dufferin — and critical readings of their autobiographical responses to the experience of living in nineteenth-century Canada. Each chapter concludes usefully with photographs and, where relevant, reproductions of the particular woman's art work. We have no book quite like it on our literary shelves. If it serves to awaken contemporary attention to the worlds of these women and the difficulties they faced over a century ago in removing from England to Canada, it will have accomplished much. Certainly, in its several interesting angles of approach and its feminist perspective it will draw readers aplenty.

At the same time it is a book that bothers me in a number of ways. First, there is the simple matter of the number of gentlewomen presented and the principles of selection exercised by Marian Fowler. Why five figures and why these five? Why not include Frances Stewart, a stalwart pioneer of Anglo-Irish descent who settled in the Peterborough backwoods nearly a decade before Traill and wrote *Our Forest Home*? Why not include Ann Langton, settler, painter, and author of *A Gentlewoman in Upper Canada*? Fowler doesn't provide a satisfactory answer, though by inference we might guess that variety and her pursuit of a book-length manuscript were major factors in her selection.

Still, *The Embroidered Tent* is not meant to be a *potpourri* like Pierre Berton's *The Wild Frontier*. Nor is it a collection of pieces like Mary Quayle Innis's *The Clear Spirit*. What Fowler tries to do is, in fact, inordinately ambitious. She aims to dramatize the "culture shock" experienced by these five women as they "stepped onto Canadian soil clutching their shawls and embroidery with tense fingers"; then she traces and judges the respective ways in which they respond to frontier and wilderness. It is Fowler's contention that the pressures of wilderness forced upon them the need to develop "masculine" attributes (to enter into what she calls "the androgynous ideal") both in practical and imaginative ways. The experience thus gave them the opportunity to free themselves from the "role-conditioning" of women in England, opening them up to new power and new freedom in Canada's frontier society. These "caged birds" become "soaring eagles" as they exchange their "fragile silk" for "strong canvas." Furthermore, not content with the mere rhetorical orientation of her thesis, Fowler also promises "to see these women whole" and to show them to us as "representative Canadians" who are "our fore-mothers."

Role-conditioning is Fowler's starting

point in each case. She puts great emphasis on the power of "conduct books" in determining a woman's sense of family, social role, duty, and personal identity. Works like William Kendrick's *The Whole Duty of Woman* (1753), Mrs. Sarah Ellis's *The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*, and Mrs. Sandford's *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (1831) are used as guides to the ways women felt and acted in the nineteenth century. Lacking evidence that her five women actually read specific books, however, Fowler often embroiders her own connections, slipping deftly from supposition to declaration and violating chronology in ways that are bound to distress attentive readers. At the same time she plays fast and loose with social realities. To say that "All five gentlewomen came to Canada from upper-middle-class British backgrounds" is to create a significant blur. It elevates the Strickland girls, Traill and Moodie, well above their position. The effect is to evade a careful look at the assumptions of class and wealth which doubtless affected not only the upbringing and education of these five women but also — when it came down to actual influence, position, and pounds — put them in very different situations vis-à-vis Canadian society and the wilderness. We may well wonder, then, whether conduct books played a more or a less influential role in the lives of the newly (and as it soon turned out precariously) rich Stricklands of Suffolk as opposed to the experience of Hariot Hamilton in Killyleagh castle in Northern Ireland. Similarly we need to query how pertinent it is to compare the brief wilderness "rambles" of Anna Jameson and the formal sightseeing of Lady Dufferin with the actual experiences of pioneering and surviving in the bush day after day, year after year, financial strain after financial strain, baby after baby. While Fowler by no means ignores these elements, she has a convenient way of building arguments and comparisons so as to diminish their due importance.

The romantic among Fowler's gentlewomen, Jameson and Moodie, receive her most sympathetic treatment. One suspects a temperamental affinity, especially given a writer who is a relentless metaphor hunter — any references to birds and animals in the gentlewomen's books are grist for Fowler's mill — and a kind of *post-facto* matchmaker, particularly with regard to that life-long bachelor Colonel Talbot. Fowler's prose is most euphoric in describing Jameson as "reborn" and "fully her primitive self" during her wilderness rambles. As a "Canadian feminist-picaroon" Jameson anticipates Ethel Wilson's Maggie Vardoe. Similarly, echoing Atwood, Fowler rises to "the double voice" in Moodie: one side of Moodie's experience bound her to female submission and the conventions of the sentimental novel; the other freed her, Fowler argues, to escape "orderly, right-angled spaces" and move comfortably in "a world of intuition and mystery," indeed to wheel and soar, if only occasionally, "in male preserves."

By contrast, Lady Dufferin and Catharine Parr Traill are, according to Fowler's thesis, failures. Lady Dufferin accepted her familial and social roles so completely and uncomplainingly that she showed little if any autonomous individuality in *My Canadian Journal* (1891). Traill is characterized oddly as a utilitarian, "a perfect Gradgrind of facts," who, though attentive to the Canadian landscape and its *flora* and *fauna*, was easily vanquished by the frontier's "crude reality" and her own fear of wilderness. Thus, she retreated back into her embroidered tent to play out her chosen role as "Mrs. Happy Homemaker." How wrong-headed this seems, how unsympathetic to Traill's formative background and particular situation, how insensitive a reading of her

temperament and her approach to writing! The more questions I asked the more *The Embroidered Tent* seemed to be a warning against slap-happy labelling, enthusiastic metaphor-hunting and, what is worse, uneven research. Fowler could have discovered a great deal of pertinent information, for example, by consulting the voluminous Traill Family Papers in Canada's National Archives, but she seems not to have made the effort. It is difficult, then, to be confident that in any of these five cases we are actually seeing these women "whole." Neither the approach nor the philosophy nor the style of writing will allow it. For all that is interesting in this book — and there is a good deal — there is a great weight of unsatisfactory generalizing and categorizing to be recognized and resisted.

M. A. PETERMAN

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

ALEXANDER WALKER, *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America in 1785 and 1786*, ed. Robin Fisher and J. M. Bumsted. Douglas & McIntyre, n.p. With editor's introduction, maps and illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography and index.

IN 1785 THE *Experiment* and the *Captain Cook* sailed from Bombay for the northwest coast of America, arriving at Nootka in the summer of 1786. Inspired by Cook's reports of an abundant sea otter population in the area, organizers of the venture hoped to establish and monopolize a fur trade between the American coast and China. The voyage itself, occurring in the years between Cook's and Vancouver's, urges us to a fresh (or recovered) perspective: for these travellers from Bombay, our western coast was more logically the frontier of the East, rather than an outpost of the West.

Among the ships' crews were fifteen soldiers seconded from the East India Company's Bombay Army. It was intended that this contingent would establish a garrison at Nootka, to get a commercial foothold in the region. This scheme did not work out, and all but one of the soldiers returned to India with the *Experiment* and the *Captain Cook*. But it is a lucky thing for history and for twentieth-century readers that the contingent did make the trip, for its commander was Alexander Walker, Ensign in the Bombay Army, and author of *An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America in 1785 and 1786*, now published for the first time, and finally disclosing the observations and insights of a thoughtful traveller who found himself, as he says, in "a Country little known" which afforded "many objects of curiosity."

Walker was only twenty-one years old when he set out for America. He made notes of his experiences in that summer of 1786, and prepared a narrative of his travels at their conclusion. But this manuscript was lost. What we have now is Walker's attempt — in late middle age — to recuperate the sense of the lost manuscript. In his fifties and sixties he reworked his rough notes of the voyage, and a copyist produced the fair draft which historians Robin Fisher and J. M. Bumsted have prepared for publication. (This draft was found among 600 volumes of Walker's writings and private papers in the National Library of Scotland.)

Should we regret that that earlier manuscript went missing? It may have been a more lively or somehow more "authentic" narrative than the deliberative, discursive text we have in its stead. Certainly, the intervening years must have influenced the shape and character of this final draft: between his American adventure and his retirement, Walker led a life that was remarkably active, both officially and intellectually. As an officer with the

East India Company, he held a number of exotic and even powerful posts. And as a thinker and reader and writer, he explored rather thoroughly the details and abstractions of custom and culture. So, *An Account of a Voyage* is, in some respects, a negotiation between the young man's surprised innocence and the older man's vast experience. I think this circumstance makes it an even more interesting document than that early manuscript must have been.

The purpose of the enterprise was commercial, not scientific. Yet Walker sought instances of native behaviour as eagerly as the leaders of the venture sought pelts. He wanted to know about the societies he encountered around Nootka and, later in the summer, at Prince William Sound. "The Savage," he says, "is the prototype of the Civilized Man," and his inquiries and interpretations lead him again and again to name certain universal elements of human behaviour at the same time as he calculates the distinctions between the "prototype" and the later type. While he tries to reckon European man's kinship with the "Savage," he also tries to measure the differences which separate them.

Particularly, he looks for signs of "higher" feelings — gratitude, generosity, hospitality, trust, "decency." He is generally disappointed. "Suspicion," for instance, "perhaps forms a natural part of the character of a Savage. He is armed against all and he suspects every Person." And he watches in vain for shows of generosity or gratitude. Seemingly forgetting that he and his cohorts themselves came only to trade, to get as much as they could for as little as possible, he remarks sadly on the natives' niggardliness and greed:

> it was plain, that they had little hospitality. They seemed to have no Idea of giving any thing without receiving an equivalent. I paid a string of beads for a drink of Water. We bestowed several little presents on them, which produced no other effect, than to make them clamorous for more. In bartering with us, they showed many instances of the most craving avidity. They expressed neither gratitude nor thanks for what they received.

Almost all the social exchanges between the visitors from Bombay and the natives were commercial transactions or preliminaries to such transactions. So most of Walker's data must be based on observations of the natives as bargainers — as must the natives' information of these Europeans. That kind of social event is bound to discourage sympathetic attachments between participants who are each trying to best the other. Nevertheless, Walker seems to have made some sympathetic contact with two of the chiefs among the Nootka — Maquinna and Callicum — for he provides brief but plausible portraits of these men and their personalities. Like Hearne's portrait of Matonabbee, these character sketches elevate their subjects from the stereotypical bundles of attributes that all travellers like to assign to foreigners. As Walker presents them, Maquinna and Callicum are memorable and dignified individuals.

It would be too much, however, to say that Walker admires the chiefs, for what Walker admires most is European man. For all his broadmindedness, his respect for native know-how and technique, his unusual willingness to examine his ethnocentric premises, there is no doubt that he sees Nootka society — and the numerous other non-European societies with which he compares it — as an earlier and therefore inferior form of human association. Members of these inferior societies may show no proper awe or reverence for displays of European civilization. They may show no curiosity or even interest in European habits or contraptions. But this doesn't shake Walker's feelings of superiority. He can explain their indifference: "Man must be far advanced in Civilization, and the refinements of life, before he can have any leisure, or inclination to inquiry."

I have said that the years of India service must have influenced the extant narrative of the American episode. This influence is clear in Walker's descriptive strategies: he compares the people of the west coast to peoples in other parts of the world that he has observed or read about, and includes a lot of information about other cultures. But this long interval between the original experience and its final description probably influenced the form of the text as much as its content. Many of his references show that Walker was a reader of travel narrative, and he arranges his data in such a way as to obey the conventions of that genre, particularly as it developed in the last half of the eighteenth century. This means that he uses two distinct organizing principles to present his material: first, he tells what happened each day, under daily headings. Then, in separate chapters, he discursively summarizes information on the arts, appearance, attitudes, and social relations of the natives, and on the landscape, products, and wildlife of the region. Unlike the narrative chapters that present facts serially, as they were discovered, these discursive chapters are organized topically, and hierarchically. A chapter that discusses the conduct of trade, for instance, begins with a topical assertion connecting a maxim to a general statement about the Nootka: "The desires and passions of Men are nearly the same everywhere: These Savages wished to secure all the advantages of our commerce to themselves." In his travel reading, Walker would have found strong precedent for his methods: many notable travellers rearranged their journal materials this way, once they got home.

This practice is conventional, but its effect on the text is nevertheless conspicuous. The reader gets no real sense of what this place *was like.* The discursive chapters abstract from the narrative sections all the elements that would provide a comprehensive setting for the doings and contacts described under daily headings. Birds and flowers and trees, for instance, appear not as environment or background to events, but in lists buried in the discursive chapters. In the narrative sections, days rarely have weather: weather comes later, summarized in the discursive chapters under an appropriate topic sentence.

This lack of context for events and persons is partly a result of generic conventions, and partly a result of Walker's own urge to classify and generalize, after thinking all this over for so many years. He was intellectually committed to his subject and its implications, and his commitment made him a good traveller, and a careful travel writer. To know the extent of his own achievement, he needed only to compare himself with one of his companions, Surgeon's Mate John Mackay, the member of the expedition who stayed behind for a year to maintain the East India Company's connections with the Nootka.

When Mackay returned from Nootka, Walker questioned him on his experiences. This was no easy task, for Mackay's "natural Stupidity prevented any Information flowing from him spontaneously." Poor Mackay had had a rough time of it. Early on in his sojourn, he had permitted the Nootka to examine his musket — and dismantle it, and carry off bits of it. Thus disarmed, Mackay apparently was no longer esteemed by his hosts, and they treated him with contempt, scarcely bothering to feed him. To make matters worse, he inadvertently insulted Maquinna: he stepped over Maquinna's sleeping infant. The Nootka were horrified, and they beat Mackay. Their superstitious reaction was mysteriously justified, for the child died a fortnight later.

Luckless Mackay somehow weathered all this hardship and obloquy, and survived his experience with the Nootka. But the details of the experience itself would

have vanished into the unspoken past had Walker not persisted in his interrogations of Mackay, and written down the result. (Mackay had been instructed to keep a journal, but one of his hosts tore his paper in tiny pieces and playfully scattered the pieces in the wind.)

Walker was disgusted with Mackay, shocked that his "observations had been so circumscribed that he could give no account of the curious People, with whom he had lived fourteen months in habits of closest intimacy." One can't help but think that Mackay probably wanted to forget those fourteen months, and put them behind him. How unlike Walker, who hoarded and tallied the summer months of 1786 for forty years! Walker despised Mackay for not making an intellectual profit on his unusual enterprise. And perhaps he had a right to do so, for Walker was a distinguished traveller: a man of his own time and his own culture, obviously, but ready to find meaning in experience, and ready to relish exotic goings-on and the challenge they presented to his mentality. Although *An Account of a Voyage* offers only minor aesthetic excitement, it is nevertheless an important and valuable document — a part of our literary heritage.

This volume contains an editors' introduction which is very interesting and well written; maps and illustrations; Walker's vocabulary of the Nootka language; and more than fifty pages of exhaustive and fascinating notes which must increase any reader's pleasure in this text.

JANET GILTROW

A MORAL PRESS

PAUL RUTHERFORD, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth Century Canada.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $35.00; pa. $12.50.

PAUL RUTHERFORD describes the daily press in late nineteenth-century Canada as "a Victorian authority" for two principal reasons. First, despite the emergence of the popular press with its top radicalism, newspapers played "a central role in legitimizing the pattern of authority." Beyond that, or perhaps because of it, Rutherford believes that it was "the emphatic moralism of the daily press which best justifies its title of a Victorian authority." That moralism, most often based on an increasingly vague religiosity (though in Quebec theology remained stronger than mere moralism), was essentially a monotonous sermon on the virtues of middle-class values: sobriety, thrift, self-help, brotherhood, sanitation, and a generally muscular Christianity.

These conclusions, and quite a few lesser ones, are supported by a wealth of sometimes overly dense detail about virtually every facet of the history of the daily newspaper in the years spanning roughly the last half of the nineteenth century. Here we can learn about ownership, circulation, profit and loss, style, form, advertising, the status of the journalistic profession, party affiliation, ideology, and more. *A Victorian Authority* is both an indispensible handbook for those interested in the history of newspapers, and a valuable addition to the study of institutions, politics and opinion in late Victorian Canada. The research is thorough, the writing plain and clear, the arguments carefully marshalled.

Each chapter takes up a cluster of questions under a theme; organization, changing technology, news gathering methods, editorial writing, relations with parties and governments, constraints created by economic imperatives. What the period most obviously illustrates is the growth of press independence, by which is meant independence from political parties. But that, ironically, meant a growing dependence upon revenues captured in the market. Papers which had once been concerned with party fortunes, now became

increasingly concerned with the fortunes of their owners. Of course, none of this is to be taken as meaning that newspapers stopped supporting political parties and governments, but merely that partisanship became less shrill as advertising revenues grew. While Rutherford argues that newspapers had definite interests to defend, and that those intersts were more and more economic rather than political, he rejects the contention of some sociologists that the press was merely the propaganda section of the capialist system. His detailed research shows this view to be far too simplistic. To Rutherford the press was neither the obedient servant of capitalist masters nor a totally independent "fourth estate." It stood somewhere between the two, sometimes closer to one than the other depending on both personalities and profit margins.

One particularly interesting aspect of the book is the comparison between the French and English language press which runs through the entire book. What is most striking is the similarity. While the French language press retained closer affiliations with political parties than their English language counterparts, the papers developed in much the same fashion, adapted to the same technological changes, adopted some aspects of the yellow press, and advocated similar causes. Ideologically they shared most of the same assumptions, though they differed about the nature of nationalism in Canada.

The one thing Rutherford tells us little about, beyond numbers, is readers. So we are left wondering how much this Victorian institution's authority was accepted, and how much it was questioned. Was it the editorials, the sports, the gossip, or the stock market reports that most won readership? Did people read papers to have their opinions changed or confirmed? Rutherford is aware of the importance of these questions, but he has no very ready way of solving them. In the last analysis he appears to be rather sceptical about claiming much influence for newspapers. But if that is so one is left wondering about the title. Were the newspapers really an authority, or were they merely a means of purveying the messages of authority, whether political, religious, economic, or intellectual?

RAMSAY COOK

NATIVE WOODNOTES WILD

EVALYN GAUTREAU, *Tale Spinners in a Spruce Tipi*. Borealis, $8.95.

DANIEL H. PAGE & VICTOR M. P. DA ROSA, *Heritage of the North American Indian People*. Borealis, $12.00.

JILLIAN & ROBIN RIDINGTON, *People of the Longhouse, How the Iroquoian Tribes Lived*, illus. Ian Bateson. Douglas & McIntyre, $10.95.

IN RECENT YEARS books about Canadian Indians have proliferated to such an extent that each new arrival prompts the question, "Is this book really necessary?" The works under review exemplify three ways of treating Indian history and folklore. In *Tale Spinners in a Spruce Tipi*, Evalyn Gautreau tells folktales of the Dogrib Indians, a tribe living chiefly between Great Bear Lake and Great Slave Lake in the Western Arctic. Any such collection must be measured by the standard of George Clutesi's *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-Shat People* (1967). Clutesi fulfils the dual motivations of the native storyteller — the desire to teach younger members of the tribe "the many wonders of nature; the importance of all living things, no matter how small and insignificant," and the desire to entertain by presenting individualized animal characters in an authentic and consistent setting. Furthermore, the Indian artist-author captures the poetic

feeling and elevated tone that, according to the Reverend Peter Kelly, characterized the original stories.

Gautreau's collection fails almost every test. There are the usual origin myths and *pourquoi* tales, explaining the pelt-like shape of land near Norman Wells or the strange sounds heard in the Wezisatla mountains. There is a trickster hero Zhamonzha, a squirrel who "prevented total darkness forever," and a bear who says "Drat it all!" and "Wowee-ee-ee this is great." Yet in spite of familiar archetypes, the collection lacks a unifying attitude and a distinctive representation of place. Describing the Dogrib Country as a "land where a curving shell of sky tucked itself neatly under the horizon" doesn't really tell us much. The greatest weakness is stylistic. Despite her assertion that she has "tried to retain the dignified tone of the original myths," her cliché-ridden prose owes more to pulp magazines than to native tradition. Scenes are delightful, eyes beady, mists soft; trees fight a losing battle, activities come in flurries, and there are plenty of "folks." The description of Zhamonzha's meeting with a strange girl is representative:

> Zhamonzha's breath caught in his throat. He studied the face with that amazingly white skin framed with hair, ebony black and flowing free in the evening breeze. He could contain himself no longer; he had to meet her. Down he plunged over the rugged path and came up beside her. The girl had been watching his descent and now she turned to him, her face smooth and white, her lips curved in a little red bow.

Publication of *Tale Spinners* was supported by the Canada Council and the Multiculturalism Programme, Government of Canada.

Heritage of the North American Indian People falls into two distinct parts which appear to be the work of different people. The first eight chapters deal with the history of native groups by region; the last three with aspects of life in Canada today. The historical sections are delightfully eclectic. There are maps, recipes, and descriptions of such activities as gathering wild rice and making pots. There are biographies of Pontiac, Little Turtle, Tecumseh, and Crazy Horse, quotations from Dan George and Tom Whitecloud, and Louis Riel's moving address to the judge and jury. Specific dates attached to various stages of development usefully relate Indian history to our familiar historical framework. Kahionhes' rather charming pen drawings show men and animals in the forest, a birchbark tipi beside a lake, and various artifacts such as drums, pipes, and feather headdresses. A list of Indian contributions to American life includes cigarettes, chewing gum, popcorn, flapjacks, corn flakes, and "the concept of a free people in a classless society."

One has some reservations about the high degree of idealization. The Iroquois are depicted as peaceable, good-hearted fellows whose energies were entirely devoted to procuring food. There were no wars until the coming of the white man. Nor is there any mention of hunger, disease, slavery, and other ills. One also questions a selectivity which devotes sixty-five pages to the Eastern woodlands and four to the Northwest coast, an area that produced a culture which has been described as one of the richest and most distinctive in the world.

If this book had ended with chapter eight, it could have been recommended as a useful resource for elementary schools. However, the final sections dealing with government policy and contemporary conditions are badly written and disturbingly polemical. The media are blamed for misrepresenting Indians and for giving them "the added struggle of retaining the average genuinity against a prevailing myth" (whatever that means!). Difficulties in holding jobs are attributed to the fact that "habituation to routine and daily hard work, including drudgery for

over a period of years, if necessary to earn a living, was also not as clearly regulated in the Indian system, particularly for men." There is no honest discussion of such contemporary problems as alcoholism and crime. The author suggests that all native "dilemmas" would be solved if Indians could be legally guaranteed a livelihood derived from raising game, fur farming, manufacturing artifacts, producing maple products, and taking over the tobacco industry.

Both *Tale Spinners* and *Heritage* show the effects of poor editing. The correct use of punctuation seems a total mystery at Borealis Press and faulty structures together with imprecise language often obscure the meaning. This complaint cannot be made about *People of the Longhouse*, part of Douglas & McIntyre's series, *How they lived in Canada*. Lucid, unaffected prose conveys factual information about traditional Iroquois life under such headings as "The People," "Family Life," "Social and Political Structure," and "Beliefs and Ceremonies." The authors are objective in admitting the harsh realities:

> The greatest proof of a warrior's power was to bring back captives to his village, ... Captives were often tortured in order to make their strength part of the strength of the village.

It was a surprise to learn that the Iroquois were a matriarchal society where the birth of a girl was welcome and the power of women was sufficient even to prevent men going to war.

Ian Bateson's descriptive pencil drawings deserve comment. His Indians are depicted in a heroic mould, with much attention to naked, muscle-bound torsoes and aquiline profiles. In such full-page pictures as that of the longhouse interior, the variety of postures, gestures, and activities (sifting ashes, grinding corn, making pottery) convey an impression of strength, liveliness, and community spirit. A three-dimensional effect is achieved by sensitive use of tonal range from dark to light. Unlike *Tale Spinners* and *Heritage*, this book for younger readers can be unreservedly recommended.

It could be argued that we now have enough retellings by whites of native myths and legends. We probably have enough accounts of native lifestyles in times past. We have a reasonable amount of fiction by whites who treat natives sympathetically. What we still need is a substantial body of writing by native authors who can provide a subjective view free from the sound of grinding axes.

MURIEL WHITAKER

VARIOUS HISTORIES

SUSAN MANN TROFIMENKOFF, *Stanley Knowles: The Man from Winnipeg North Centre.* Western Producer Prairie Books, $17.95; *The Dream of Nation*, Macmillan, $22.95.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS Susan Mann Trofimenkoff has been attracting attention as one of the more interesting younger Canadian historians, and now she shows her considerable versatility by publishing, almost simultaneously, two books of very different kinds and relating to very different currents of Canadian history. *The Dream of Nation* is an elaborately structured and well-researched history of Québec, clearly planned to establish its own kind of precedent in Canadian historiography. Her *Stanley Knowles: The Man from Winnipeg North Centre* is an almost naively informal biography of one of the most influential figures in the development of Canadian social democracy.

Stanley Knowles is biographically interesting because Dr. Trofimenkoff has sought an approach that might seem appropriate for recording the life of a man who was reared in the populist traditions of the West and never — despite his long years in Ottawa — completely weaned

from them. It is an informal, personal account, with no bibliography and very few footnotes; it is based largely on conversations, and here the biographer has certainly enjoyed an immense advantage, for she has known her subject almost all her life. As Susan Mann, she was a child of two when Stanley Knowles first arrived to live for the parliamentary sessions in her parents' house, a practice he continued for forty years. The combination of a historian's skills with the intimacy of forty years of close and affectionate association is an unusual one, and it has resulted in a very warm and sensitive portrait of an admirable man. There is an intelligence and at times an irony in Susan Mann's account that saved it from excesses of adulation and will doubtless make it an indispensable source book for the warts-and-all biography of Knowles that we must eventually expect if the area of Canadian political history he represents is to be more critically examined.

The Susan Mann who grew up in Stanley Knowles' benevolent shadow and the Dr. Trofimenkoff who has written *The Dream of Nation* seem like two different even if not separate personae, so divergent are their approaches, and it is certainly a triumph of virtuosity that the same individual should have written a pair of such dissimilar books. *The Dream of Nation* is described as the "first one-volume English-language overview of Québec history," but this does seem a rather technical claim to novelty, since Mason Wade's monumental work, *The French Canadians*, though it took up two massive volumes, presented a unified thesis, and, although it discussed Acadians and other French Canadians as well as the Québécois, embraced a remarkably thorough "overview of Québec history." It is hard to imagine that *The Dream of Nation* failed to benefit from Wade's pioneering work, yet, though *The French Canadians* appears in Dr. Trofimenkoff's bibliography, it is not even once mentioned in her text. In my view, though it carries the story forward only to 1967, *The French Canadians* still remains the basic English-language work on Québec history, and one day, perhaps, it will be updated to resume its position as the leading text on the subject.

The Dream of Nation does have the advantage of relative brevity (which is perhaps what is meant when it is described as an "overview") and there is no doubt that Dr. Trofimenkoff has the kind of generalizing ability which makes for a condensed and yet convincing account. Her narrative lacks the kind of clustering circumstantial detail that gives pleasure and conviction to a leisurely reading of history, but it sweeps boldly along and brings the history of Québec together in a kind of organic evolutionary unity, which is something different from the mythic unity imposed by the nationalist historians who have followed in the line of Garneau and especially of Groulx.

Inevitably, whether as dream or political movement, nationalism tends to dominate the book, though Dr. Trofimenkoff is perhaps rightly inclined to see this phenomenon less as a reaction to the Conquest, which it took French Canadians a long time to get into any clear perspective, but rather as the product of nineteenth-century political developments, modified by changing clerical interests. But parallel with the development of nationalist sentiment moved deep currents of social change which tended to counter the overt political tendencies, and Dr. Trofimenkoff has a great deal to say about the importance, even from the pre-Conquest period, of the role of women in Québec history, first in providing the province's earliest rudimentary social services under the auspices of the church, and later in actively assisting the erosion of conservative attitudes through the feminist movement. It is clear that her views

in some of these areas run very close to those of recent Québec historians, notably Fernand Ouellet, who have been less than committed to creating a national mythology for Québec.

The Dream of Nation is, most of all, a useful review, written at a time when we can see contemporary separatism with a degree of detachment, of the events and tendencies that have made Québec a province less *comme les autres* than even the most malcontent areas of the West, and as such it is good secondary reading for anyone interested in Québec writers and writing. Strangely enough, since she describes her book as a "Social and Intellectual History," Dr. Trofimenkoff has little to say on Québec literature; for her, intellectual history seems to end with the historians, and when she has discussed the genesis of political ideas in Québec she does not go on to show the ways in which the growth of a special francophone society has affected French writing in Canada, nor does she recognize the part novelists and dramatists have played in sustaining a sense of national identity.

The other surprising omission — one so obvious that it cannot be undeliberate — is that of the non-French communities in Québec. Only a passing reference notes that not until 1870 did Montréal cease to be a mainly English city; there is no reference to the long period during which that city remained the financial and largely the commercial capital of all Canada, which certainly affected internal developments within Québec; and the anglophone writers in Montréal who played such a historic role in the growth of a Canadian literature in English between the 1920's and the 1950's go as unmentioned as their francophone counterparts. Virtually nothing is said of the notable Jewish, Italian, and other immigrant minorities in Québec, while the native Indians appear only as enemies. Indeed, it is one of the oddities of *The Dream of Nation* that, while critically examining Québec nationalism, Dr. Trofimenkoff appears to grant the grossest of the *péquiste* myths, that the only culture of Québec is French.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

FIGHTING MEN

ELINOR KYTE SENIOR, *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854.* McGill-Queen's Univ., $29.95.

FRANK J. SHRIVE, *The Diary of a P.B.O.* Boston Mills Press, $15.95.

WILLIAM E. CHAJKOWSKY, *Royal Flying Corps: Borden to Texas to Beamsville.* Boston Mills Press, n.p.

OF THESE THREE BOOKS Dr. Senior's work on the British Regulars in Montreal from 1832 to 1854 is unquestionably the best. A meticulous scholar and a solid historian, she has produced a well-written account of the Garrison's stay in a rapidly developing city. In its four general parts we are given much factual information about the Garrison and the city itself, the Garrison as an aid to civil power, the cultural dimensions of the Garrison, and finally its financial aspects. The main text, some 214 pages, is followed by sixty-four pages devoted to appendices, notes on sources, a lengthy bibliography, and a meticulous index. But the subject is narrow in scope. Only a dim light is shed on Quebec as a whole, and we find little about the troubled years of 1837-38. There is an interesting chapter, however, on the violent days during and after the debate on the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849. The Parliament House (then in Montreal) was gutted by fire and claimants and their supporters, Loyalists and Patriots, clashed in the streets. It was a hazardous period and the British Regulars were called into action. There is also an interesting chapter on the Gavazzi Riot of 1853. But we are told little about Gavazzi

himself, save that he was an apostate Italian priest who revelled in preaching against Popery from the pulpits of protestant churches and who, following his one Montreal appearance, disappeared quickly across the American border leaving behind him battered Protestants and Catholics, some fatally injured. Again the British Regulars were involved. In brief, the work as a whole (and here I may be in error) has something of the semi-sweet odour of a reworked Ph.D. thesis. Competent and scholarly, it will be of value to readers seeking detailed information about this brief period, and it will be a useful reference work for university libraries. Finally, it is a well-produced book and has excellent illustrations of people, events, and places.

Frank Shrive was never a scholar nor a professional writer, but in September 1917, at the age of nineteen, he was already a war veteran. A private in the Canadian artillery, he had been wounded at the great battle of Vimy Ridge and was back in England recuperating. Like many of his contemporaries he had had enough of war on land and had a burning desire to take to the war that was in the air. He had also begun to write what was to become his diary. But his application for transfer to the Royal Flying Corps was complicated and long in coming and it was not until the following April that he at last found himself in the Royal Air Force, the name given on the first of April to the reorganized British air arms. The training period was slow and, somewhat to his chagrin, he was assigned to the role of an observer. Finally, on 25 August he was commisioned as a second-lieutenant, with one wing on his chest, not two. He had become a P.B.O. — a poor bloody observer. Three weeks later he was on his way to Archangel in northern Russia, a part of the abortive Allied expedition that was supposed to bring support to the White Russians against the Bolos, the Bolshies, the Bolsheviks. He never really knew why he was there nor what this particular war was all about. And he was none the wiser when he left Russia for Scotland some months later, having received the Russian Cross of St. Anne for valour.

Of the diary itself not much need be said. It is by no means a meticulous record; rather, as Shrive himself says, "it is the substance of letters sent to my mother which she so thoughtfully saved." Entries are spasmodic, and many days, even weeks, are blank. The first section, some thirty pages of text, is slow and dull; but the second, describing the role of an R.A.F. observer in Russia, some thirty-four pages, is of genuine interest, not only because it is a reminder of a strange and forgotten moment in history, but also because it gives the reader an insight into the conditions under which he and his companions lived and fought. Flying was often next to impossible; planes were not well equipped for winter weather, many of the engines were water cooled, air strips were piled high with snow or with hills of slush and muck. But he did manage to make a large number of sorties in enemy territory, dropping some small bombs on huts or villages, or working as an observer for artillery in action. He had, I believe, no actual aerial combat against the Bolsheviks, but he and his pilot were frequently in danger from ground fire, and one of his pilots, a Russian, was shot through the chest but managed to bring the plane, and Shrive, back to safety. But even in this section of the diary the tone is factual, even placid. Yet here is enough to make us realize that the very young Shrive was a man of great courage, who lived through a tough winter, and survived with a triumphant smile. And he always loved a good party, especially with the native Russians, who were cheerful, loved to dance, and had plenty of vodka.

So *The Diary of a P.B.O.*, though a minor work, does make a small contribution to a minute corner of history. It has been carefully edited by the author's son, Norman Shrive, of the Department of English, McMaster University, and has a brief historical introduction by Robert H. Johnston, of the Department of History, of the same institution. It has, also, some eleven pages of pictures, some of which are of interest.

In the last six months of 1918 I was a cadet in the Royal Air Force and all that I need say about William Chajkowsky's book on the Royal Flying Corps in Canada is that it is a complete disaster. Chajkowsky spent his adolescent years in the 1940's on the family farm near the abandoned Beamsville airport in the Niagara Peninsula. Fascinated apparently by childhood memories, he turned years later to the writing of a history of sorts but concentrated his efforts on two or three of the airports used by the R.F.C./R.A.F. and on the few months that some of the Corps spent in Texas during the winter of 1917-1918. He gathered together a mass of facts and statistics about the number of hangars, barracks, glue shops, kitchens, and mess halls, and brings in some information about the training of cadets. But clearly he is not a scholar and equally clearly he has no skills as a writer. Hundreds of his paragraphs have no more than two or three lines, with few or no transitional devices between them, and his pages are riddled by illiteracies and errors. The result is an unbelievable hodgepodge. True, there are pictures in abundance, but many are poor or repetitious. It is obvious that he had no help from a competent editor, but it is not obvious why publication grants should have been received from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

S. E. READ

REAL POETS

CECILIA FREY, *The Least You Can Do Is Sing.* Longspoon, $7.00.

RHEA TREGEBOV, *Remembering History.* Guernica, $5.00.

JANE DICK, *Conceptions.* Guernica, $4.00.

DOUGLAS BARBOUR & MARNI L. STANLEY (eds.), *Writing Right: Poetry by Canadian Women.* Longspoon, $10.00.

THE REAL POET IS BY NATURE a singularity, speaking with an unmistakable voice, perhaps a little muffled at first, but eventually clear and true. Among the three of them, Cecelia Frey, Rhea Tregebov, and Jane Dick provide a wide spectrum of contemporary vision. Each of them has developed an unmistakable voice which comes through clear and unmuffled in her particular volume. By contrast, the voices of the poets in the anthology seem muffled and hard to distinguish one from another.

The publisher's blurb on the back of Cecelia Frey's *The Least You Can Do Is Sing* explicitly limits her to "recording western landscapes, western voices and western experience," as though her sensibility were a machine which could only operate under certain limited conditions. Certainly, Frey draws upon her western environment in her poems (in "Badlands," for example), and so transmutes it into poetry (rather than transfiguring it as the blurb suggests — the distinction is subtle but important) as all poetry transmutes its subjects. But in doing so, she transcends the limits ascribed to her, and her poems speak universally. She understands the demonic underlay of human experience; in "Bush Camp," she suggests the ever-present threat of madness in the isolation of the bush:

> If I remember a few basic rules
> there is no reason why
> I should not return exactly
> as planned....

She is aware, too, of madness lurking in other aspects of human experience: in the

pressure of the northern winter on an immigrant in "The Man from St Kit's," and in the pressure of a constant irritation on almost anybody who has to put up with it for too long, so that the constant sound of the wind in "Wind at Oyen, Alta." makes the persona "each night dream of madness / the form I will take." But although the demonic exists and cannot (and must not) be ignored, the undemonic grows out of the demonic, as the persona in "Slough in November" learns:

> we come upon
> the fisherman, his bloated remains
> I cannot look until you show me
> how from the soft cavity of his mouth
> sprout branches, leafing....

One of her distinguishing characteristics as a poetic voice is to invest even the demonic presence with a non-demonic humour; the persona of "Song and Dance" speaks in a truly human tone of exasperated patience while preparing a truly demonic "exquisite torture" for the other character, and leaves the reader smiling nervously and unable to forget the poem. This is an impressive first collection.

Rhea Tregebov's collection *Remembering History* should more accurately be called *Condemning History.* Justifiably, Tregebov is angry — angry with the male domination not only of the past itself, but also of the records of the past (history) and of the present (future history). In "Graffiti," she insists of history that women must "make it written / make it read," and the final lines of the poem condemn the male history-makers of history with cold finality:

> it is you
> who have been found
> wanting.

But they also imply a warning to the makers of future history: if women allow men to shape and record it alone, all of them, men and women, will be found "wanting." Her anger is signalled by vivid images of blood, dismemberment, and murder. In "Life in the Diner," where Tregebov comments on the waste of women's lives, she shows her protagonist, Jane, as she "wipes blood onto her apron / offers coffee. / Her education got her nowhere." In "Room," the anger is against the constricting of women to purely domestic roles:

> It may be the garden is irrigated
> with blood, that some girl's blood
> (wife or slave) sweetens the dough.

In "Icon," the young girl considering her identity recognizes that "Pieces are manageable. / Something took her to pieces." Anger is directed against women who conform to men's domination in "There Are Angels," where the persona strangles her conformist self in a parodic version of Jacob's wrestling match with the angel in Genesis. Such anger requires — and receives in her poems — a controlled but vigorous irony. In "Necessity," the persona remarks:

> As a physician, I can understand
> the passion for money.
> I myself, after four
> or five hours in the operating room,
> prefer an object that won't bleed.

Here, the ironic tension set up between "passion" and "object" is finely controlled and deeply disturbing. "Women Are Not for Burning," a poem inspired (perhaps provoked would be a better term) by a 1979 newspaper report of "a young bride set on fire by her husband's family because they were dissatisfied with the dowry" according to Tregebov's note, notes ironically that "The law, now, doesn't sanction / the selling of women; / their burning is prohibited," and in these lines there is a disturbing ambivalence about the word "now." This also is an impressive first collection.

Set beside the commanding presences of Frey and Tregebov, Jane Dick regret-

tably does not convince as strongly. Her sensibility is essentially introspective, and she writes with some sensitivity of the inner domain of her private and personal relationships. The poems on this subject constitute by far the largest group in the collection, with only two or three which attempt to look at external reality. The last poem in the book, "Warriors," is one of the few poems which appear to concern themselves with the world outside the poet's skin, but its insight into its subject — a child in an overcrowded and badly underequipped orphanage — is limited. In the poems of the inner world, Dick is both more at home and more convincing: the irony of "When the Bleeding Stops" is well controlled, although it might be described more accurately as ambiguous than as ambivalent:

> as soon as we know
> which of us is the patient
> one of us will die;
> it will be an act of mercy.

But even at her best, she is uneven. "Inception" is a small and enigmatic poem, which opens excellently with the image "need tumbled from her lips / like silence," but after a few lines the reader stumbles over the bizarre lines "he opened his body / like a seed / and planted her with words." There is considerable promise in these poems, but Dick's talent has yet to develop fully.

As a result of being given a chance to show their work in individual collections, Frey, Tregebov, and Dick all manage to speak with a very clear and true voice to the reader. But as I have already suggested, cramming sixteen poets into the pages of the anthology, *Writing Right: Poetry by Canadian Women*, does all of them a disservice by muffling their voices and crowding their talents. I suspect that it has been produced as a teaching anthology of women's poetry for use in high schools, community colleges, and universities, since most of the poets have at least one individual collection already published. This makes it impossible to review the selection from any of the poets as a representative sample of her work, since the needs of a teaching anthology are specific and do not always coincide with an anthology assembled for more general purposes. The tone of the collection is strongly feminist (this is a descriptive note, not a complaint, since I have nothing against anthologies of feminist poetry), and its tendency is to include younger and/or less well known poets (this makes for a roster of names which clearly represents the idiosyncrasies of the anthologists, which is probably par for the course, but I have to say that it is not an anthology I could see myself teaching from). Its title is misleading, making the volume sound like a composition text. The design of the book is dismal and not improved by including a handful of illustrations. Its usefulness will, I suspect, depend on how far the teacher using it shares the views of the anthologists as to which poets should or should not be taught.

PATRICIA MONK

SKIRMISHES WITH THE PAST

F. G. PACI, *Black Madonna*. Oberon, n.p.
MARK GORDON, *Head of the Harbour*. Groundhog, $10.95.

Black Madonna is very much a novel of the new world in the twentieth century, one which speaks for the children of European immigrants to Canada, Australia, and America. It tells of their struggles — not with the new society, which is now their own, but with the language and values and traditions of the old. In this peculiar conflict between the generations, all the advantages of time and moral

force are on the side of the elders while those of geography and cultural dominance lie in the hands of the children; but of course there are no "winners" here except for time and whoever is last to arrive on the scene.

Black Madonna is particularly the story of an Italian family in Sault Ste. Marie, but it is not exclusively so, nor is it exclusively "immigrant" in significance. The dominant point of view is that of Marie, the daughter, which gives the novel a refreshingly wide and thoroughly modern sensibility; for it is the female role which has undergone the most radical changes as a result of the move from the old world. It therefore produces the greatest stresses within the individuals concerned.

Predictably Marie, a bright girl, was not content to remain in the Sault after completing high school and winning a scholarship to a university. She moves south, gets a degree, a husband, a job, a child, and a divorce — becomes the complete North American female in short, the antithesis of anything her parents envision for her.

An apparently necessary part of the process is almost total alienation from both her parents and her brother who stays home to play hockey and work at the factory. Her family feels she thinks she is too good for them and the town and everything they stand for, either in Canada or in Italy; and to a large extent they are right. She knows no Italian, nor wants to even though it would mean at least a chance at communicating with them. To a certain degree then this alienation from her background is an alienation from a part of herself which in the final analysis she needs to understand.

This is a nagging point from early on in the narrative when Marie returns "home" upon the death of her father. A wealth of internal reminiscence complete with guilt and defiance stirs up and forces the children to deal both with their past and with what to do about their mother in a society which has no place for her and in which she has never sought a place. Marie is less willing to confront these questions than her brother, but she must ultimately solve them.

They would like to send their mother "home" to Italy, and there are relatives willing to have her back again, but she will have none of that either. They are cheated to a certain degree by her death shortly afterwards, but the interval serves its narrative and thematic purposes well in Paci's hands.

They are cheated because "in dying she had forever shut the door on herself." They have no chance to regroup in this particular skirmish with the past, yet this experience forces them to face up to its strange force in their lives, which increasingly becomes the force of absence. It is something they know little of and would have liked to forget; it is something they would like to deny as not of them but also what they cannot be complete without coming to terms with. Now the chance to do all that seems to have itself become a part of the past.

An interesting implication here is that it makes no difference whether you stay home or not. Marie's brother is marginally closer to his parents but not fundamentally so. Considering that he comes so much nearer to fulfilling their expectations for him than she did, his failure to understand them (and their failure to understand him) is much greater.

Paci's narrative, while dwelling in the past, avoids the sentimental and infuses the obvious with such dispassionate good sense and sense of fair play that *Black Madonna* has much to say to both generations, male or female, Italian or Canadian. It underscores the fact that for some time to come we shall remain a society

of immigration and that it is only fitting our literature should reflect this.

Novels like *Head of the Harbour* underscore the value of a good editor, not so much for typographical considerations, but for the weightier task of deciding just how much of an author's manuscript should see print. *Head of the Harbour* is literally too long by half, and someone should have been at hand, and had the dispassionate good sense, to manage Gordon's propensity for recording and then developing seemingly everything of any interest, and more. It might be an unenviable task but it would have made a great difference here, I think.

There *is* a story here, and one probably worth telling to a considerable number of readers if only Gordon had been able to get at it, if only the reader could be allowed to read it without having to wade through the swamps of the author's uncertainty.

This uncertainty extends further than a judgment about what makes the novel and what doesn't, however. Gordon lacks confidence in his very ability to describe and give the feeling of the simplest events and emotions. The tone is set early on with the following paragraph:

> The Air Canada jet circled the airport outside Halifax. The pilot was trying to guide it around the fog-shrouded trees, *to lower it, not on its fragile belly, but plumply, on its three sets of wheels.* (my italics)

Five hundred pages of this sort of overstatement is tiresome indeed.

This is too much the story of the young student striving after experience and then trying to make that experience meaningful, because after all, he *is* a writer, *has decided to be* a writer. What it really amounts to is a sort of journalism of the maturation process, with the result that there are a lot of questions posed and answered in a never-ending internal monologue.

Essentially this is a novel of underdevelopment: underdeveloped themes, characters, scenes, and structure — ironically presented through overdeveloped prose. This is Mark Gordon's second novel, after *The Kanner Aliyah*, but I suspect that the bulk of it was completed much earlier, while he was attaining the skills which made *The Kanner Aliyah* a so much more polished production. He should have resisted the temptation to "work up" a novel out of such as yet raw material.

SIMON RUDDELL

ON TARGETS

WILLIAM GOEDE, *Quantrill.* Quadrant Editions, n.p.

DON AKENSON, *The Lazar House Notebooks.* Quadrant Editions, n.p.

CHRISTMAS EVE, a farm near Independence, Missouri. Out of the night comes a party of Redlegs, led by a young man from Ohio who calls himself Charley Hart. They carry carbines and ammunition courtesy of a group of well-meaning Boston abolitionists; their aim, to relieve another Missouri farmer of his slaves, take them into abolitionist Kansas, and pack them off to Canada. Hart makes a secret deal with the farmer, however. Within hours three of his co-riders are dead and "Hart," now resuming the name William Quantrill, has exchanged a career with the "Emigrant Aid Society" for the protection and pride of the slave-owning Walker family.

Quantrill's act turns out to be a choice of sides in a bloody and devastating civil war. A Confederate army is reported to be in training down in Arkansas, Fort Sumter is shelled, and Quantrill finds himself treated as a symbol of the Southern cause, exhibited to one fascinated and respectful Missouri family after another as a kind of "plaster saint." They want him to explain his defection, to point out

its moral, but all he can do is tell over and over, with varying degrees of elaboration, a half-fictitious account of his dealings with the Redlegs of Lawrence and the repellent, duplicitous Jim Lane. Creeds, beliefs, principles are not in Quantrill's line. If the truth exists anywhere, it must be in a story.

The great strength of Goede's novel is exactly this: it avoids the comforting, conscience-placating explanations. The ready-made pieties of history are demolished as in scene after scene Goede convinces us: this is how it must have been. Such terms as "historical novel" do not really fit the book, because the usual aim of the historical novelist, to reveal the cogs and wheels of history, the hidden motives and pressures that drove men and women to act in certain ways, is absent. Goede knows the temptations and the danger of trying to understand one's subject better than he understood himself. Rather, Goede shows us the intransigence of history. It does not abide our question. All we can do is to tell stories: "this is how it was." The motives we attribute, the morals we append, are for our own purposes and always after the event.

Quantrill becomes leader of a group of bushwackers or resistance fighters that eventually numbers several hundred. A skilled strategist, a convincing leader, he knows how to win the war for the Confederacy, by infiltration and subversion of Yankee territory; but though Jefferson Davis loads him with medals and presses him to accept a commission in the Confederate army Quantrill is given to understand that the Confederate President must remain free from any taint of direct involvement with Quantrill's methods. "*We* are not a President of guerrillas!" So Quantrill is free to carry out his raids and reprisal killings, but without official sanction.

Yet Quantrill is no rampaging, psychotic killer, and the quality of his leadership is of a kind that many a commissioned officer might envy. He does not welcome men who want to join the Quantrill Company just to get revenge, because he knows that such motives make for poor discipline and endanger the safety of them all. He sets his face against rape, looting, and indiscriminate killing. Planning a daring raid on Lawrence, Kansas, in retribution for the death and maiming of fifty women, all sweethearts and relatives of Quantrill's men rounded up by the barbarous Yankees, Quantrill tells his followers "you aren't going to run in anywhere unless you work it all out ahead of time... you got to be subtle." One favourite liberal myth that the novel handles very roughly indeed is the belief that in order to be a good killer you have to be psychotic. Much is made of the "darkness" inside Quantrill — the large area of himself that he does not question and reveals only intermittently, in a shy, puzzled way, to a few confidants. But the most compelling parts of the book are those in which Quantrill comes face to face with a darkness deeper even than his own: in the Canadian, George Todd, whom he makes his lieutenant; in Anderson, the scalp-hunter, malicious and trigger-happy; in the thirteen-year-old Jesse James, a boy with the eyes of a snake; and in the bestial Lark Skaggs, out to "get me a woman" in defiance of Quantrill's strict prohibition against rapes. After an interview with Todd, Quantrill is forced to consider how far and deep *their* meanness and darkness runs among his company, and whether it is even the hidden power that activates them.

Here is the book's central theme, its appearances sometimes heralded with a noticeable banging of verbal drums. Goede does not give us easy answers, however, nor are there any elaborate Conradian structures of theory or symbolism erected around the psychology of Quan-

trill and his henchmen — only a chilling glimpse into the powers that are let loose when men start killing each other. Quantrill is no dedicated hero, no Southern gentleman, and he even dislikes the institution of slavery which he is fighting to defend. His courage, intelligence, and leadership are unquestionable. Yet even Quantrill cannot control the meanness he has helped to focus, and tried to discipline. He remains an outsider, distrustful of official social ideals and still resenting his parents' cold, doctrinaire moralism and the piety of the wealthy, do-gooding Yankee abolitionists of Lawrence — the "untouchables." From his point of view, society is a conspiracy of fine-sounding nonsense, and something he can never belong to. But neither can he countenance the bestiality of Skaggs or the bloodlust of Anderson and Jesse James. The disturbing question that this well-made book poses is whether Quantrill's ad hoc code of honour (what one of his men calls Quantrill's "high ideals") is based on anything more than a commander's self-preserving wish to keep his men disciplined, whether "the rules" represent anything more than the self-interest of those who happen to be on top for the time being.

Don Akenson's *The Lazar House Notebooks* is a satirical farrago, always scurrilous, occasionally clever, but failing in the long run because it does not identify its targets with sufficient clarity. A team of researchers from the "Division of Human Realities" in an unnamed academic institution ("the Firm") is investigating the geography and history of an obscure island in the Inner Hebrides. Dr. S., the author of a history of the island (which he writes in reverse, beginning with the index, then moving to the final chapter and so on), is helped and hindered by an unlikely crew of assistants: a Bahamanian ("the Immigrant"), a Jesuit (married, and obsessed with purchasing life insurance policies), a Polish Prince, and a female fundamentalist. His efforts are also frustrated by the philistinism of the philandering Chairman, whose own academic achievements are of course contemptible. In this chaotic circus of academe some of the side-shows are enjoyable, such as the account of the way the Chairman's mistress ("the Godmother") catalogued the papers of William Mckenzie King-Lion ("Canada's greatest Premier" [*sic*]). The Godmother is succeeded in the unenviable position of Chairman's mistress by Dr. S.'s wife, who writes articles for *The Housewife's Human Enquirer and National Home Sexuality Helper*. Ultimately, however, the book does not achieve genuine comedy but disintegrates into a series of rather sour academic jokes.

ANTHONY JOHN HARDING

MULTICULTURAL WE STAND

HEDI BOURAOUI, ed., *The Canadian Alternative*. ECW Press, n.p.

A CONFERENCE MAY BE AN EFFECTIVE way of opening up new vistas and of stimulating intellectual growth among its participants, but its proceedings do not always make an effective book. A good case in point is *The Canadian Alternative*, the edition of eleven papers given at a conference on "Cultural Pluralism and the Canadian Unity" held at York University in 1979. The papers are generally strong on *Kulturpolitik* rhetoric, platitudes, wishful thinking, as well as good intentions; and they are correspondingly weak in either pragmatic insights or inspiring theories. Perhaps this is to be expected of public papers dealing, in a conciliatory academic atmosphere, with such mettlesome parenthood issues as multicultural-

ism, Quebec's threat of separation, and Canadian unity.

Of the five participants that address themselves specifically to improving French-English relations for a united Canada only two add some spark, which in their cases, however, is likely to arouse merely anger. Rejecting separatism as unchristian, Leo A. Brodeur exults in a sort of mediaeval Catholicism as the only way to unify a multicultural society. Thus protestants, for instance, and social reformers outside the Roman Church become the cause of Quebec separation and Canadian disunity. Memory tells one that so-called Popish plots have always coloured popular history and have sometimes led to first-rate literature, yet how can one rationally accept any form of religious totalitarianism in Canada? Not as extreme as Brodeur, though similarly malapropos is James N. Porter's praise of a half-French/half-English Canadian language. Ironically, Porter himself illustrates the necessity of a thorough knowledge of a language: he seems to miss the ambiguities in the title of René Lévesque's *La Passion du Québec*. Based on his partial reading of *la passion* as desire, he generalizes about English Canadian insularity and fears of desire which he detects in the book's English title of *My Quebec*.

Moreover, such faulty argumentation is symptomatic of a missing clarity that makes Porter's paper a key example of the obfuscation accompanying policies and discussions of multiculturalism. The paper's first few sentences may suffice to underline my point:

> The aim of this inquiry is to aid in the formulation of the ideas of multiculturalism in a way that enables one to see the good it represents. Our interest is to understand how and for whom multiculturalism could be attractive, and how and for whom it could be repulsive, so we want to imagine the kind of life that devotion to multiculturalism produces. Our aim is not to produce a description or definition of multiculturalism, for we do not wish to treat it as a thing to be possessed or ignored. Our aim is not to give information about it . . .

Fortunately, two of the collected papers allow me to redress my overall negative impressions of the book as a useful document for students and the general reader for whom it is meant especially (and who of course helped fund its publication through a government grant). Stanislav J. Kirschbaum presents an historically and theoretically concise view of Canada's growth toward a *state* made up of a confederation of culturally diverse communities within provincial boundaries, rather than toward the *nation-state* or *bi-nation-state* it was to have become in traditional English and French perspectives. Focusing on the individual within such communities Jamshed Mavalwala views multiculturalism "as a basic ethic that says that each person is an individual in her or his own right." Avoiding jargon and political gestures, stressing ethics rather than ethnicity, the individual rather than the group, Mavalwala makes multiculturalism a grass-roots issue in keeping with liberal education in the humanities.

Linking multiculturalism to the role of ethnic groups is the more traditional approach, though, as the papers by George Korey, Alex Chumak, Johnny Lombardi, and Rudolf K. Kogler exemplify. Yet one should question Korey's assumption that the non-English and non-French minorities form a collective front of one-third of Canada's population. What about the perpetuation of Old Country preferences and prejudices among and within ethnic groups? What about the lack of, for instance, social and religious homogeneity within various minorities that are groups only in a StatsCan sense? What about the time-given factors of acculturation and assimilation? Moreover, one should question Chumak's and Kogler's concerns about the vagueness of official policies

and definitions regarding multiculturalism. The survival of a culture surely depends on its quality and on its aliveness in individuals; its survival cannot rely on government intervention. People, not governments, keep a culture alive.

This point is well demonstrated in Kogler's demographic assessment of the Polish community according to the 1976 Census results. He implies that an ethnic community without its inherited language will lose its sense of identity. By extension, multiculturalism without multilingualism is unlikely to thrive. Yet one might ask to what extent language and other cultural phenomena constitute trappings of veiled materialism rather than evidence of a sort of ethnic biology. In this context, Theresa Kott's paper, though fragmented in its argumentation, is a useful reminder of the conflict between individual rights and group rights that is manifesting itself increasingly in ethnic quota systems.

Most of the papers reflect a welcome uneasiness with terms like *ethnic* and *multicultural*, as if to say that ethnicity and multiculturalism tend to become labels only. In his paper, Hédi Bouraoui actually calls the term multiculturalism "banal and misleading." His implicit ridicule of other papers in the volume is amusing, though, as Bouraoui's substitute notion of "transculturalism" is hardly more useful; nor is his term "unicity" (by which he does not "mean either 'Anglo-conformity' or 'Franco-conformity,' but a dialogue between and among peoples which will highlight their common experience as Canadians, as well as the rich heritage their original cultures have left and will leave to the New World"). Underneath such jargon and hyperbole, there is the undeniable fact that Canada's majorities and minorities — the good multinationals — have contributed enough leaven of change for "the re-confederation of Canada" that Ian H. Macdonald wants to see achieved through the strengthened "leadership of the moderates," the traditional Canadian way.

Judging by the papers' subjects and the participants' multicultural backgrounds, affiliations and professional qualifications, the book promises more than it delivers in its commonplaces on Canadian society. Even the title is misleading. The reader does not get *the* one alternative but hints of several alternatives for the country's growth, and they are not particularly Canadian in kind, only in degree. After all, it is a simple paradox of the common day anywhere that "something there is that doesn't love a wall" and "good fences make good neighbours." It is good to remember this beside the sartorial praise of any secular state as an over-nation.

K. P. STICH

ALAS, POOR BEAVER

CHARLES STEELE, ed., *Taking Stock: The Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel.* ECW Press, n.p.

WHEN THE CALGARY CONFERENCE took place, it became quite a *cause célèbre*, primarily because of the infamous List. For those who had their eyes and ears closed during February 1978, it might be best to begin by stating what the List was.

In *Taking Stock,* Malcolm Ross is very careful to define what it was not: not "the greatest," not "the best," and certainly not "the only." Rather, it was meant to represent the one hundred "most important" Canadian novels. Even this is of course vague. And Ross displays some very careful footwork in maintaining this vagueness. In the letter which he sent to the various critics and teachers who voted on the list, the purpose must be ascertained by inference rather than directly:

> It will be the aim of the Conference to examine the diversity, quality and availability of appropriate texts of Canadian

> novels for use in the classroom and for scholarly research. It is also hoped that the Conference will be able to propose a list of significant Canadian novels that can serve as a guide to those interested in the masterworks of our literary tradition.

There is no more explicit statement of the criteria to be used in voting.

One need not be a social scientist to recognize that there is an inadequate testing mechanism employed here. The subjects didn't really know what they were deciding. And we, as assessors of the published data, are given little sense of who the subjects were and how many of them there were. How would you judge a test which took an arbitrary number of people, chosen in some unstated way, and asked them to put various items into an order from most to least, although most and least what is not exactly explained.

I suppose the List has some redeeming value. Although I had not been at the conference, I was asked to appear on local radio to comment. In the five years since I have not been asked again to talk about literature. We should thank anything that makes Canlit hot news. Still, *Taking Stock* shows that the List was only a part of what was going on, a symptom of a larger condition.

As W. J. Keith points out towards the end of the book, the first words of the conference, spoken by Robert Kroetsch, were, "F. R. Leavis." Kroetsch's subject was "Contemporary Standards in the Canadian Novel," but within this there was an awareness that in some way the conference was engaged on a Leavisite quest: what is Canada's great tradition? In the appendix, Charles Steele refers to the "attempt to define" a "*corpus* of novels." The programme mentioned four conference objectives and concluded: "The final result will be the identification of those novels which have established themselves as Canadian classics."

Do you trust all this? My immediate reaction is like that mentioned in Kroetsch's paper: "Let each reader read everything and decide — if he or she believes in that kind of decision." But then he decides that "one of the ways in which we build a culture is by selecting and elaborating a few texts."

I think Kroetsch should have stuck to his original guns. My argument is the simple one of cultural relativism. Best in one time, in one place, is only good in another, mediocre in a third, and perhaps bad in a fourth. The example often used by art historians is Whistler. Prices for his paintings have gone up and down like a yo-yo, according to prevailing tastes.

Barry Cameron's response to Kroetsch begins to address this problem but in a complex terminology and through a series of allusions to critics that obscure his message. One point which he makes is that if we could only agree on a criterion for evaluation then at least for our time and our place we could make our list. Although he would not support the choice himself, he suggests a possible yardstick might be the degree of national consciousness.

Very good. But could we expect any agreement even on this ground? I presume that national consciousness would be a major part of the evaluation procedures employed by Margaret Atwood and Robin Mathews. But would their lists be the same? Would not each have a number of inclusions and exclusions with which the other could not agree? My implied answer is obviously yes, because even our nationalisms are of very different orders. And even if they weren't, could any of us set up our personal evaluative computers to deflect criteria which are not nationalist, such as our opinions on socialism, feminism, or comma faults?

Everyone at the conference wished to assert that the List was not meant to be anything other than a starting place for dialogue. A comment in Hallvard Dahl-

ie's introduction suggests the larger problem, however: "requests for the list kept coming in from all across Canada and from overseas long after the immediate furor of the occasion had died down." It would be nice to assume that this just reflected an international need for Canadian conversation-starters, but I suspect the purpose was much more precise.

Ever since *Survival* was published, most academics have fulminated against it. This is not because it is a bad book but because of its effect on education. Atwood's choice of writers to consider in her study was idiosyncratic but no more than most. But many teachers, who knew nothing about Canadian literature but were asked to teach a course in it, used *Survival* as their sole source for text selection and, often, for interpretation. I suspect all university teachers have observed at least some of the pernicious effects of this practice.

I think this list will be used in a similar manner. And the short list from the conference, meant to be the ten *best* Canadian novels, is probably a still greater evil, especially outside Canada. As a student of Commonwealth literature I have often been asked by teachers in other countries to suggest texts for a Canadian literature course. Usually these teachers have known little about the subject but have been operating out of *Survival*. Now the *Taking Stock* list might replace it, but I don't think to much benefit.

One obvious problem for this latter group is the absence of an indigenous perspective. The average Australian academic knows more about Canada than we know about Australia but that isn't saying much. If he asks, the Canadian High Commission will supply him with some material, but it probably won't be much more than *Survival* and perhaps a bit of Creighton to brush up the history. To speak from personal experience, my sense of the corpus of Australian literature was changed greatly by living in Australia. And I can think of no Australian list of the great works which would in any way replace my personal hierarchy. I think a foreigner would find the same with *Taking Stock*.

The list also raises other questions about insiders and outsiders in the question of regionalism. Without knowing the selection procedures for the voters it is impossible to assess whether the Atlantic novelists were fairly treated. Can Upper Canadians and Westerners evaluate our literature?

But this is a small quibble in comparison to the treatment of another region, Quebec. Various respondents at the conference attempted to deal with our bicultural problem but with little success. Ronald Sutherland provides a very personal impression of the two heritages which is quite compelling, but it leaves me with only a vague wish that we all could have Sutherland's profoundly French-Scottish background. I suspect that my own is much more representative: no French relatives; the first Francophone I ever met was my Grade Nine French teacher, and she was from Paris. Thus, from my perspective, when Sutherland claims that Leonard Cohen is much closer to Jacques Godbout than to Frederick Philip Grove I say yes, but he's much closer to the American Hubert Selby than to either. And what does that do for the Canadian cause?

The point must be that they may both be part of one country but French and English Canadian literatures are of two cultures. Yves Thériault speaks of the Calgary conference as "foreign" and one need not be a separatist to observe that for a Francophone it must have been. Someone like Sutherland cannot overcome this foreignness anymore than Bharati Mukherjee can make Canada seem like India.

The list certainly brings this home.

Titles of French novels are listed in English translation. There are only nineteen French works included but of these six are by Gabrielle Roy, the English Canadian's favourite French Canadian. A few more difficult figures are included: Aquin appears once, in fifty-fourth place, with *Prochain Episode* (untranslatable?), and Godbout's *The Knife on the Table* is Number Ninety-five. Still, there are many obvious exclusions, such as Victor-Lévy Beaulieu. Sutherland refers to him twice but he was not even included on the preliminary ballot.

At the end of the conference there appears to have been some discussion of this inadequacy. The result was a call for more translations and for more French instruction in the schools, but such expressions of concern don't get to the heart of things. When will people learn that with the very few exceptions of people like Sutherland, we lack the knowledge or awareness to pronounce upon two cultures? My comments here show that I am not attracted to any list but I would find it much more acceptable if it had been left as an English-Canadian list. Perhaps if enough people realize that an admission that we are too ignorant to judge Quebec literature is not part of a separatist plot, those involved in Quebec literature might cease to regard us as patronizing.

Which leads to the value of *Taking Stock*. I have just become emotional about Canadian literary politics. I doubt that there is much knowledge to be gained from the volume but most of the typical opinions are there — often, as in the case of Sutherland, expressed by their leading supporters. We have covered evaluation and the French-English split. There are other sections on regionalism and thematic criticism.

Neither of these stir my soul the way evaluation and biculturalism do but for others there might be enough to get them heated up. Eli Mandel gives a careful elucidatiton of what regionalism might be. Frank Watt continues this argument and then suggests that Canadian literature is becoming more concerned about the regions, rather than "Toronto, or Montreal, or Ottawa, or . . . some equally non-distinctive place." Rudy Wiebe replies that "either there is only regional literature or there is none at all. . . . There is only the individual writer's imagination. . . ." I am inclined to support Wiebe's view in that each writer must define the particular in order to reach the universal. It may seem that Bay and Bloor or Oxford Circus are less regions than Joe Batts Arm, Newfoundland, but I suspect that this is in the eye of the beholder.

W. J. Keith upholds the banner of the anti-thematic critic, but he tends to wander into thematic criticism himself, which is not surprising. It is difficult to see how the most phenomenologically hermeneutic semioticist could avoid themes. The damn little things worm their way in everywhere. As to Keith's support for evaluation, I think I have diatribed enough on that.

Still, the context of Keith's call for evaluation creates an interesting subtext: "I first studied English at Cambridge and therefore came under the influence of evaluative criticism at what some might call an impressionable age." Thus through Keith a decidedly British approach is subtly applied to Canadian literature. This might be compared with Warren Tallman's comments: "Continental Flying Object kept pace, black hole in the middle. But this same 1950-time, that Author-ship arrived at California in the West, it also arrived at Canada in the North." Tallman's Americanization of Canlit is about as subtle as one of John Wayne's battlecries. Cambridge tea-party meets Iwo Jima on corpse of Canadian beaver.

But to be fair to Keith, his central concern seems a very worthy one, a desire to focus on the individual texts, to overcome a tendency in our search for general patterns in which various thematic forests obscure the view of the trees. He also states that we should look only at "first-rate" texts because that is all we have time for. He seems to reject the value of the kind of thing done in *Survival* or *The Bush Garden* or the various works of his three respondents, D. G. Jones, Laurie Ricou, and John Moss. But the point should be made that all literature, and this most definitely includes the most inferior, is part of a number of larger cultures, and those cultures form various patterns. Jones states that he sees larger patterns and if he sees them he shall study them.

Ricou's comments are entertaining and sententious but I think they are also perhaps the most important ones made at the conference, in that they provide a necessary corrective. The tendency of the conference, perhaps shaped by that amorphous *corpus*, is to be prescriptive: what is and what isn't, what should be included and what shouldn't be. Ricou is specifically attacking Keith's anti-thematic criticism criticism for its tendency to use its own bête noire, the Procrustean bed, to attack those whom Keith views as thematic and thus Procrustean themselves. Ricou's reply might be metaphorically expressed as "let a thousand flowers bloom."

Which is my final reaction as well. There is little information to be gained from *Taking Stock* and at least some of it is mis-information (Elspeth Cameron claims ahistorically that "the notion of two cultures originates with Hugh MacLennan's phrase 'two solitudes'..."). But there is a good deal of energetic debate, which can stimulate the reader as much as it obviously stimulated the participants. Still, it is difficult not to conclude that the whole idea of the conference was essentially wrong-headed. We might finish with one more glance at that name which opened everything. Is there any Canadian critic with so little fear of Marley's ghost that he would create our own Leavis, even a collective one?

TERRY GOLDIE

LETTER TO THE AUTHORS

ANDRE BROCHU & GILLES MARCOTTE, *La Littérature et le reste*. Quinze, n.p.

DEAR ANDRE BROCHU and Gilles Marcotte:

In your recent book, a collaborative venture, I was pleased to overhear your conversation about the theory and philosophies of criticism which have shaped your earlier works of practical criticism: *L'Instance critique* and *Le Roman à l'imparfait*. Through your charges and countercharges I have learned much about your ambitions for a "national" critical tradition in Quebec (a Parisian suburb in your view, Marcotte, which has yet to produce a great critic with an original theory). Now it is my turn to hit the ball into your court. With two racquets against my one the rally will be short, but this extended play will enlarge the perspectives on the game. As you can see, I am both echoing the tone of your book and adopting your game metaphor.

These allusions you make — to hockey, baseball, football — do more than describe the alternations and oppositions which govern this exchange of letters between May 1978 and October 1979. They constitute a large part of that "all the rest" mentioned in your title. Indeed, reading that and your opening sally on the Stanley Cup Playoffs, Brochu, I thought I would be reading phenomenological criticism which would articulate the process whereby meaning comes into

being as the world is rediscovered in the perceiver — the sort of open criticism where the *material* circumstances of one's life are recorded in what become extended documentaries of one's reading. Process I found, but not document. The conversational format of your letters does maintain an open dialogic form, as advocated by Bakhtin to whom you refer frequently, and your questioning — especially your probing, Marcotte, of Brochu's reading of *La Nausée*, launched with an "And so what?" — becomes an intersubjective reading, your coming together in the work, recorded in conversation. However, your letters are not really about "the relation between writing and living," as Marthe Robert (to whom you also refer frequently) writes, but about writing and philosophy. Nor are they as disjointed as her diary form, but retain the shape of the academic essay.

Another metaphor might more aptly reflect the aim of your book, a musical analogy. For music's formal properties of repetition — polyphony, theme and variation, canon, fugue — would convey the interlocking features of your book more precisely than does the game analogy which is based on opposition and aggression. Moreover, it would more fully mirror what was for me the book's most compelling feature, namely the elegance of its sustained conversation — witty, erudite, provocative. As you avow, Brochu, the art of dialogue is a difficult one, little practised today, at least in the university, as is corroborated by you, Marcotte, with your description of a university conference, "by definition a tower of Babel." Your letters, however, create this rare phenomenon. Perhaps your conversations are so stylish (your sports metaphor does encourage you to discuss hits and misses and to underline those moments when dialogue is refused) because you both write fiction. Or it may be the inheritance of the legendary conversations in the brilliant intellectual community of Montreal in the 1940's and 1950's which your compeer, Jean Ethier-Blais, has talked about. While it is clear that your letters do not get involved with the material realities of living, they do reflect on the relations between reading and writing. And here they follow a direction charted in France which makes criticism "strong writing" like fiction, writing which abandons the paraphrase and quotation of traditional criticism for the less marked allusions and common topoi of creative writing in the manner of Blanchot and Barthes, whose names you mention in another context. Both of you seem to have such a project in mind. For you, Brochu, dream of writing either a free essay which would be the story of your intellectual formation outlining the impact of ideologies on your development (a processual hermeneutic) or of writing "a total book," one where a new relation with reality based on Québécois reasoning would be conveyed through writing. For you too, Marcotte, through your link with journalism, personal writing is to be preferred to distant and objective academic criticism.

The personal note is most obvious in the rhythm of your letters. Prolific during summer holidays, the letters come more slowly during the academic term. Then, too, they become less speculative and theoretical, more practical, culminating in your extended exchange over Brochu's semiotic analysis of Sartre's *La Nausée*, the most conventional part of your book, the most rigorous analysis and the only example of close reading. The summer introduces more fragmentation, jottings, more doubt, especially for you, Brochu, as the New Jersey sun induces unwanted indolence of thought. The New England sun agrees better with you, Marcotte, inciting you to a declaration of pluralism and fondness for anglo-saxon critical approaches, notably the work of Auerbach

and Northrop Frye. Not the theoretical Frye, you make clear, but "the well-tempered critic" who writes *The Bush Garden*, criticism intent on making the fine discriminations between literary works which you feel are central to the critical act, not the construction of an autonomous system of words. Your broad North American sympathies — expressed, as you say, more easily in Maine than in Montreal — lead you to reject a narrowly nationalistic criticism to express Québécois reasoning. American criticism exists, you write, because there are great critics in that country. Frye's example shows that critical skills grow from studying the great writers about whom a critical tradition has developed which obliges one to take a position, make that leap to originality, and not from close attention to one's own minor literature. Consequently, you hesitantly suggest that the teaching of Quebec literature be reserved for doctoral studies after students have cut their critical teeth. Your reflection on "minus Quebec" is one which finds many echoes in English Canada where recent issues of periodicals such as "Minus Canadian" (*Studies in Canadian Literature*, 1977) and "Beyond Nationalism (*Mosaic*, 1981) indicate a similar concern for literature *qua* literature with no attempt to find a national specificity. Still, from outside Quebec your depression about critical activity in the province seems somewhat exaggerated. There are many critics who offer interesting readings within an elaborated theory — critics such as Jean-Charles Falardeau, Gérard Bessette, Suzanne Lamy. But then it may be that their sociological, psychological, and feminist perspectives are too "absolute," too divorced from "reality" for your taste. This would mean your position diverges from that of "minus Canadian," because it would inject more rigorous theory into the perception of the literary text, would divorce it more from its context.

Your critical stance, Marcotte, is dictated by more than geography, having deep personal roots in your politics — your federalism — and in your experience as a journalist, your interest in literary "facts." You find few barriers between the language of literary criticism and that of social science; you move easily between the personal criticism of creative writers and the explicative criticism of coincidence and complicity practised by journalists. For you, the question of the function of criticism is not as anguishing as it is for your colleague Brochu, who dreams of an autonomous criticism, one which will be a philosophical absolute, yielding an "infinity of meaning." Jesuit trained, Brochu, as you remind us, you hope to find in literature a replacement for religion, criticism becoming secular scripture, popular philosophy. Philosophy thinks lived reality, literature expresses it. As you see it, literature's function is to question the formulation of meaning in contemporary thought, the work putting knowledge into question even as it is interrogated by knowledge. Criticism then is mediation between two fields, between art and knowledge which relate to two kinds of truth, subjective and objective. In this perspective, literature has an ordering function, giving meaning to the gestures and language we use. From this position, Brochu, you challenge Marcotte to make more precise the ideology of mimesis underpinning literary sociology. Your "railing against pluralism," your hunger for the absolute, Brochu, which launches these fast balls at Marcotte's bat, are also issues of personality and history. You and the other young Turks of the Parti Pris group would seem to be new "clercs," for your literary nationalism would seem to be as theological as that of the Abbé Casgrain, though your absolute is now a faceless one. And ironically, it is your approach to literature as a source of meaning that most resembles that of

the "internationally" famous Frye. Unlike him, however, you leave behind the texts to harp on that infinity, that plenitude of meaning you hope to reach. And almost lost me as a reader in the process. Fortunately your articulation of your existential malaise through the reading of Sartre opened the dialogue with the reader again. There were some other nuggets you offered along the way in compensation, like your formulation of Quebec literary history in light of Jakobson's functions — the novel having moved through descriptive, representational function, to the expressive function in the sixties and on to the metalinguistic function of the present. Still I was left hunting for "the pleasures of the text" which seem to be adumbrated only in their absence.

As you can see, I was more attracted to your pluralism, Marcotte. For one thing, it has permitted the emergence of my feminist readings of texts. However, I am equally concerned with the text as a producer of meaning. While I am thankful to you for sharpening the distinctions between and dramatizing these different positions, it seems to me that the opposition between them is a false one. Both critical theories and textual analysis are necessary, and as I wrote in another letter last week, theory needs to be related to specific texts.

There are broader implications to this, generational ones. Your cry for theory, Brochu, is being raised by critics of your generation in English Canada for whom literature has an epistemological and metaphysical function. Yet while there is an attraction to French critical theory in which the word is the absolute signifier or which wishes to decentre this word from its primacy — still within a philosophical system — there is also a general resistance to a flight into the empyrean of abstraction, a desire to retain contact with the concreteness of all those details and facts that delight you, Marcotte.

Your letters point out the truth of Jacques Ferron's description of Montreal as the halfway point between Belgium and Kentucky. They clearly indicate the implications of the decisions to be made between two critical positions, though your geographical metaphors obscure the fact that these are more general issues of contemporary critical theory, not unique to Quebec. I should like to thank you for having so lucidly and wittily disentangled the issues in this critical problem.

Sincerely, BARBARA GODARD

IN CONVERSATION

JEAN ROYER, *Ecrivains contemporains. Entretiens I: 1976-1979.* Editions de l'Hexagone, $12.50.

THE EPIGRAPH TO Jean Royer's collection of interviews with thirty contemporary writers indicates the perspective that is central to the book's success:

> Tout livre a pour référent general, non pas un sujet, mais un moment historique où se croisent la biographie de son auteur et l'état de la société. La biographie et l'état social communiquent en permanence à travers la culture et l'information.
>
> (Bernard Noël, *L'Outrage aux mots*)

With a couple of exceptions such as Julio Cortazar and Milan Kundera, the writers represented in *Ecrivains contemporains* are francophone, and although writers of Québec dominate more than half the book, their views are usefully placed beside comments from writers responding to particular cultural contexts in Algeria, France, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Argentina.

Since most of the conversations recorded here were first published in either *Le Devoir* or *Estuaire*, their focus and format vary considerably according to the occasion for Royer's contact with the writer. Thus we meet Antonine Maillet just after her return from accepting the Prix Goncourt for *Pélagie-la-charette* and encounter several of the writers from out-

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side Canada during their attendance at international writers' conferences organized in Montreal by *Liberté*. Each interview is preceded by a brief formal bio-bibliographical introduction, but only a few conversations are recorded as formal questions and answers. More commonly, Royer replaces his own comments and questions with brief bridging statements, thereby permitting his subjects' views their deserved prominence. On those occasions when he does present his own impressions, Royer emerges as enthusiast rather than sycophant despite the fervour with which he plays tribute to Gaston Miron as the guiding spirit of Québécois poetry during the past twenty-five years and argues in the book's final interview that Claire Lejeune's *L'Atelier* is "un livre essentiel à la vie de ce siècle."

Just as he relieves the most sterile conventions of the formal interview with his interspersed comments, Royer also avoids the rigidity of either alphabetical or chronological structure. Instead, the conversations are arranged so that each interview takes up issues introduced in those preceding while also introducing new topics which may be developed later in the book. Given that the interviews were conducted without any such preconceived pattern in mind, the recurring topics are clearly those of greatest interest and concern to Royer. But at no point is a writer's individual achievement overshadowed by the discussion of his or her work in the context of particular aspects of contemporary poetics and politics.

Perhaps the best example of Royer's success in arranging the interviews emerges in the placing of the conversation with Antonine Maillet beside those with Pierre Jakez Hélias and Pierre Perrault; each of these discussions presents individual perspectives on the relation of oral and literary expression and on the role of the writer in bridging traditional and metropolitan cultures. Maillet insists that the importance of the Prix Goncourt lies in the respect that it may confer on the language and people of Acadia:

> je suis plus petite que mes personnages: ils ont été faits par trois cent soixante-quinze ans d'histoire. J'ai été tributaire de ces personnages que j'ai rendus au monde. Mais d'autres les ont faits avec moi.

Pierre Jakez Hélias sees his role in relation to the people of Britanny in similar terms: "je suis un témoigneur. C'est-a-dire un témoin actif." With the chronicles of *Le Cheval d'orgueil*, Hélias introduced an almost forgotten culture to the French public; he attributes part of the best-seller status of the book to "une sorte de nostalgie des origines paysannes," a phenomenon not unrelated to the success of Maillet's book two years later. As film-maker and poet, Pierre Perrault responds to and presents the people of Ile-aux-Coudres and Charlevoix as embodiments of a vital cultural alternative to the metropolitanism of contemporary Québec. While Maillet stresses the importance of Acadian culture as a gift enabling her to communicate her personal vision, Perrault stresses the public aspect of the writer's role: "Notre réalité n'avait pas été imaginée.... J'ai pour fonction de dire l'intérieur du sentiment collectif québécois avec les outils de sa vie."

Part of the impact of these initial interviews may stem from those with Hélias and Perrault being twice as long as most later selections. Yet the book gains a cumulative interest as the later conversations move to other topics while maintaining a focus on questions of language, expression and the writer's role. Reacting to the idea of a feminist élite, Marie Cardinal insists on acknowledgement of "la femme la plus enfoncée dans la boue, celle qui ne sait même pas qu'elle existe" and sees her own role as "leur donner des mots comme des armes." Having seen her account of her five years as a Parisian prostitute become a best-seller, Jeanne

Cordelier's reflections on that book and its significance in her own life appropriately follow the Cardinal interview even as they anticipate later explorations of sexuality and psychoanalysis. Rachid Boudjedra's insights regarding the colonizing power of language in Algeria precede and provide a context for Jacques Ferron's assertion that

> le bilinguisme n'est pas fonctionnel. On peut avoir une langue qui n'a pas d'écriture avec un langue de civilisation, mais pas deux langues aussi voisines que l'anglais et le français, qui ont le même bibliotheque!

As Gaston Miron and Pierre Vallières restate their views on the political achievements and responsibility of the writer within Québec society during the past quarter-century, their arguments assume fresh interest by being placed beside those of two writers in exile, Julio Cortazar and Milan Kundera. "L'écrivain populaire" serves as an introductory title to the interview with Claude Jasmin but the conversations with Yves Thériault and Jacques Poulin reflect the same focus in revealing the writer at work. In the latter part of the book, the interview with Victor-Lévy Beaulieu introduces several personal meditations on poetry, silence and solitude as he argues that the writer no longer has any social role in contemporary society: "J'écris parce qu'il n'ya pas de solution. S'il y avait des solutions, je ferais autre chose." Beaulieu's successors move towards their own conclusions, and, as throughout the book, their views stimulate interest and questions, both independently and in the context of other points of view.

The end-papers of *Ecrivains contemporains* announce a forthcoming second volume presenting interviews of 1979-1982. The attractive format and careful editing evident here, supporting Royer's informed skills as an interviewer, should ensure the success of both collections.

LESLIE MONKMAN

THE GÉLINAS REVIEWS

GRATIEN GELINAS, *Les Fridolinades, 1941 et 1942, 1943 et 1944.* 2 vols., Quinze, $14.95 ea.

DURING THE YEARS 1938-1946, the highlight of the French-Canadian dramatic season was Gratien Gélinas' annual review of his newly industrialized, urbanized, and Americanized society. An entertaining mixture of drama, song, and dance, the shows were a tremendous success with audiences and critics alike. Acclaimed by journalists of all ideological persuasions, they also played to sold-out (1,400-seat) houses for five consecutive months of every year. Despite their success, the shows were still considered examples of local, popular culture, thus not sufficiently universal and literary to merit having their scripts published.

Fortunately Gélinas kept his work, deciding in 1980 that the time had finally come to publish it. He is releasing the scripts in stages and in reverse chronological order. The middle years of the review, presented in the second and third volume of scripts, are the subjects of this critique. The last years of the review were printed in the inaugural volume, while the earliest years should be appearing soon in the series' final volume.

The scripts make worthwhile reading, for even by today's standards they are entertaining, moving, well-written theatre. Perhaps their most surprising quality is their apparent modernity. Although the middle reviews are set against the backdrop of World War II and the Canadian war effort, their specific subjects — the industrial exploitation and political impotence of French-Canadians, the frustrating search for love and happiness in economically disadvantaged milieux, and the limited roles open to working-class women — are those typically associated with "modern" or post-1960's Quebec theatre.

In fact, Gélinas' texts often bear striking resemblance to the works of authors who defined the characteristics of this stage. For example, his realistic plays present a picture of the French-Canadian, working-class family which is familiar to all readers of Michel Tremblay. The suite of plays "Les Misérables ou la journée d'un perron de porte" (1942), "Le Mariage d'Aurore" (1943), and "Ils furent heureux" (1944) occur in two (by now classic) locales: the communal entrance-*cum*-veranda of a multi-family dwelling in Montreal's East End, and one family's kitchen. The first is the setting for the standard scenes of French-Canadian tribal life, while the second, enclosed and female space is reserved for the requisite intimate disclosures about love and marriage.

All the stock characters appear on these stages. There are the older women, caught in an unending cycle of debts, pregnancies, and recriminations, who seek to escape their frustrations in quiz and bingo games. Then there are the younger women, for whom the dawn of a new life never comes as the fortunes gained in working at the munitions plants are as quickly spent on ephemeral pleasures and fancy men. As for the fathers and husbands, they know themselves to be "né pour un petit pain." Even with their high war-time salaries, they cannot provide their women with the necessary comforts. Already they are taking to drink and losing themselves in fantasies about storybook heroes. Only the lighter, less unrelievedly tragic tone of Gélinas' realistic works, which were written after all at a time when the urban condition was still new, differentiates them from their modern counterparts.

Gélinas also writes satirical works about French-Canadian history and the contemporary political scene which bring to mind the "nouveau théâtre" of dramatists like Jean-Claude Germain. The sequences "La Légende d'un peuple" (1941), "La Véritable Fondation de Montréal" (1942), and "Le Défilé du Tricentenaire" (1942) are as wild a mix of disparate dramatic genres and styles as any found on the contemporary stage. While the first is a loose parody of Louis Fréchette's noble epic, the second a re-creation of history, and the third a satiric re-enactment of French-Canadian patriotic parades, all move nonchalantly from Brechtian songs to comic monologues to naturalistic tableaux to Busby Berkeley style dance numbers.

The general aim of all these works is to provide amusing, alternate interpretations of important events which reveal the group and class interests camouflaged by the official versions. For example, in the second work a recognizably French-Canadian character introduces himself as the French director of a company of French actors, and announces that they were the people who really founded Montreal. He then re-enacts the story of how they went to the king for their passports "et de l'argent américain" and set off to visit "les Sauvages de cet endroit, afin, primo: de les civiliser, secundo: de les dépocher." The resulting chronicle exposes the true mission of explorers, American capitalists and French artists in Canada. Although Gélinas, who is writing during the years of wartime censorship, does not badly state why his clerical-bourgeois elite disguised the real aims of these missions, he does suggest that his leaders profit politically from their actions.

Gélinas' reviews share one final similarity with the works of Quebec's "nouveau théâtre": they are composed so as to encourage audience participation in a theatrical event which seeks to help the public free itself from the alienating effects of reality. In Gélinas' shows, Fridolin is the character who defines the nature of the activity to take place in the reviews and who teaches the audience its role.

Most people remember Fridolin for his endearing personality and his poignant monologues. A youthful precursor of Tit-Coq and Bousille, Fridolin captured the hearts of French-Canadians with his accounts of the adventures and sorrows had by a young boy growing up in the East End. But Fridolin is not just a character in the reviews, he is also their author and the master of ceremonies.

Gélinas called his reviews "Fridolinons," which is the first person, plural imperative of a special verb invented by Fridolin. "Fridoliner" means to use language to create an imaginary world in which French-Canadians could recognize, mock and come to terms with the principles of their existence. At the beginning of each production, Fridolin explains the significance of the reviews' title when he invites the public to join him in creating a world in which they can deal with reality as they see fit, instead of simply suffering it in silent rage. The shows' record at the box office confirms that his invitation was regularly and enthusiastically accepted.

Reading *Les Fridolinades*, the name under which the reviews have been published, is a must for anyone interested in Canadian theatre. Examples of first-rate theatre from our past, they show that the themes and forms of modern Quebec theatre do indeed have historical antecedents.

JOAN E. PAVELICH

ASKING TOO LITTLE

W. O. MITCHELL, *Dramatic W. O. Mitchell*. Macmillan, $19.95.

THE FIVE PLAYS IN THIS ANTHOLOGY span the six years in which W. O. Mitchell's reputation as a writer for the stage has grown in Canada to match his position as a novelist and short story writer of major importance. In his Introduction to the volume the author offers an opinion that ironically suggests why his reputation as a playwright remains one of size and not stature, a situation this book is not likely to ameliorate:

> the novelist asks more of his reader than the playwright does. The playwright invites his audience to be involved spectators and listeners; a novelist wants his readers not only to watch and to listen but to enter envelopes of consciousness as well, giving the illusion of inner dimension belonging to humans alone.

While disagreeing with Mitchell's assessment of the central difference between a novelist's and playwright's intent, I nevertheless acknowledge its applicability to the difference between *his* novels and plays. Although all the plays in this collection have moments of insight and intensity, none develops a sustained illusion of inner dimension for either the characters or the worlds they inhabit. Certainly Mitchell demonstrates here a strong sense of "the dramatic"; but he is as yet unable to shape this into plays of unity and depth. Thus, even as the volume suggests Mitchell's potential as a playwright, it reveals the theatrical problems he has yet to solve.

The most obvious of these is his inability to create structures that reveal and extend the ideological level of his work. His ear for language that works so convincingly in his radio scripts is just as strong here. But quite probably because he recognizes that theatre demands more than authentic-sounding dialogue, he strives for the dramatic moment by utilizing the physical languages of the stage in ways that too often obfuscate his ideas. This is most evident in *The Devil's Instrument*, the first play in the collection, in which Jacob Schunk, a 16-year-old Hutterite, breaks away from his community after being condemned for playing a mouth-organ. Divided into 28 short scenes, the play requires a complex audio-visual design that reads like a screenplay

and radio script but rarely like a work for the theatre. Scene five, for example, is a "*montage*" [*sic*] without dialogue "*showing . . . the colony awakening*"; it follows a scene in which Jacob and his roommate Peter toss in their sleep as an elaborate sound collage reveals their dreams. While both scenes suggest Mitchell's imaginative approach to the stage they ultimately contribute to a fragmented progression as theatrically inappropriate as it is impossible. Moreover, by vertiginously cutting between a cafe, a horse-drawn buggy, hillside, bedroom, kitchen, strawstack, wool shed, etc., the scenes diffuse the tension and drain the characterizations of depth. The conclusion in which Jacob hitches a ride to the city is followed by the direction "*Jacob Schunk may not know it, but this is victory. . . .*" Unfortunately, the audience who may *sense* a victory at this moment — if only because an orchestra (presumably on tape) begins a "*crashing and triumphant finale*" — also may not know why. Form, in other words, obscures content.

This book makes clear that Mitchell's difficulty with endings is a consistent structural problem. It is most frustrating when, as in *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* — probably his most popular play to date — the playwright works with a clever idea. Here Wullie MacCrimmon, a harness and shoemaker in the foothills town of Wildrose, strikes a bargain with O. Cloutie in which he gambles his soul on his curling team's ability to defeat the Devil's crew in a travesty of a bonspiel that is meant to suggest a black mass and a reworking of the Faust myth. The premise is exhilarating but Mitchell's panoramic style again strains theatrical possibility as he attempts in Act One to reveal simultaneously the Main Street of town and its various shop interiors and intermittently utilizes voice-over tape sequences to suggest Willie's reveries. The play works better than *The Devil's Instrument* only because Mitchell roots the action in strong characterizations and, in Act Two, restricts the action to one set by focusing on the curling match. Unfortunately the theatrical efficacy of this is at odds with the play's thematic purposes for it leaves unresolved the subplots introduced in Act One. Developing the comedy and tension of the bonspiel Mitchell all but ignores its moral dimension, forfeiting intellectual depth for superficial drama. By the time Wullie curls his last rock, the audience should feel that more than the game is at stake. That Wullie ends the victor is obvious; yet, as with Jacob's victory, the audience may not know why.

Back to Beulah, the other play in this collection that suggests Mitchell's imaginative approach to staging, also presents structural problems even though it is the most tightly focused of the three. A taut drama about three female occupants of a half-way house for the mentally disturbed who kidnap their psychiatrist, the play challenges notions of mental illness and health by having the psychiatrist, Dr. Anders, collapse at the end of the play. To dramatize the doctor's mental breakdown Mitchell introduces a voice-over tape and a series of images projected on the back wall of the set in the play's final moments. Pulling out all the theatrical stops, he once again works the scene for its fullest dramatic potential as the psychiatrist careens into the agitated behaviour of extreme regression. Effective in itself, the scene is jarringly out of place with the naturalistic drama of character conflict that has preceded it. Moreover, it is both psychologically naive and improbable. Straining for effect, Mitchell ironically weakens his complex study of illusion by transforming it into a simplistic statement about delusion. As the lights fade to black nobody wins in this play, least of all the audience for whom Mitchell's point-of-view has been lost.

Opting for oversimplification of character and theme is also the major problem of the two other plays in this volume. While *The Kite* presents the plays' most fully realized character in the person of Daddy Sherry, the oldest man in the world, it offers little else, its other characters reduced to either types or caricatures and its plot left all but incidental. Although Daddy's speech is indubitably entertaining in its anecdotal, feisty fashion, it can't compensate for the play's thread-bare circumstance in which the dramatic high-point is the flying of a kite. Any possibility for creating an "inner dimension" is ignored here as Mitchell asks the audience merely to watch and listen as the garrulous, irreverent old man recounts his life and reconsiders his decision to die. The anecdotal quality of the play also is typical of *For Those in Peril on the Sea,* Mitchell's most recent play and the one that concludes the collection. Like *Back to Beulah,* this play depicts a group of eccentric characters living in a claustrophobic atmosphere — in this case, a boarding-house that Mitchell intends to suggest a ship lost at sea. Unlike *Beulah,* however, *For Those in Peril* substitutes stereotypes for characters and fails to transcend the level of predictable confession. Although the focus shifts from a preoccupation with one character to a more balanced exploration of the group, it offers little insight into the inner conflicts of community that Mitchell presumably desires. The "envelopes of consciousness" that he locates in the novel definitely are lacking. Of all the plays in this collection, this piece asks the least of the reader (except patience) and suggests that for Mitchell to improve as a playwright he must first believe that his audience can and will accept more challenging material.

For the student or teacher of drama, this volume also lacks information that would make the collection useful, if not its for the plays are incomplete or non-existent. Except for the brief notes by the satisfying. Cast lists and production cred- author that precede each play and his one-page Introduction, the volume offers nothing by way of discussion of Mitchell's career or the context in which it has developed. Nor does it provide critical bibliography or even a list of the writer's publications. With the exception of the one excellent photograph of Theatre Calgary's production of *For Those in Peril of the Sea,* the few photos it includes do little to reveal the physical nature of the plays in production; most are badly reproduced closeups of unidentified actors. Although Mitchell is not yet the accomplished playwright he may become, he already deserves better treatment than this.

ROBERT WALLACE

RUTS & RIDDLES

ELPSETH CAMERON, ed., *Hugh MacLennan: 1982,* Canadian Studies Programme, University College, Univ. of Toronto, n.p.

E. D. BLODGETT, *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures.* ECW Press, $9.95.

CANADIAN PRACTICAL CRITICISM has brought forth both its Leola Cruikshanks and its Liselotte Vitzlipützlis, its simple souls and its sophisticates. Although critical innocence has predominated, we have recently been attempting to establish new standards and to profit by developments in contemporary literary theory. The two works under review here illustrate both the earlier norm and our new directions. One shows too little critical sophistication; the other, if that is possible, too much. One we can read but need not; the other we should read but cannot.

The papers of the 1982 Hugh MacLennan conference in Toronto served a function as a basis for some satisfying scholarly interaction among MacLennan

specialists. They fail, though, to sustain a monograph. Only Eli Mandel's "Hugh MacLennan and the Tradition of Canadian Fiction" shows originality or theoretical complexity in proposing MacLennan's work (in the manner of Harold Bloom) as a misreading of MacLennan's literary tradition and a rewriting of Frederick Philip Grove. And even this is cryptic, elusive, and preliminary.

Hugh MacLennan: 1982 is organized, sometimes inconsistently, into analysis of MacLennan's social vision, critical readings of his fiction, and identification of his place in the Canadian literary tradition. In addition, fellow writers Kroetsch, Chaput-Rolland, Engel, and Beresford-Howe provide moving though uninformative tributes. Critiques by other participants follow the major papers: some, like Brian McKillop's, simply reworking the earlier argument; others, like David Staines', using the previous piece as starting gate only. Several of the papers are in French; and the contributors include a sociologist and an historian as well as professors of English and French.

As Elspeth Cameron herself has pointed out, MacLennan criticism has sunk deep in the rut of national-sociological commentary. Yet this collection, edited by Cameron, spins the enterprise a little deeper in these tracks. Worse still, given the general topic and particular ideology, any thoughtful MacLennan reader could write most of these papers (for all their occasional revelations): criticize MacLennan's social-political vision from a Marxist perspective (Stanley Ryerson); point out sociological omissions in MacLennan's portrait of French Canada (Jacques Brazeau); demonstrate how MacLennan's philosophical idealism evades problems of class (Robin Mathews). (Curiously, the understanding that literature is not mere documentation, that, as Mathews acknowledges, "too often [MacLennan's] work has been obscured by . . . critical, political battles fought with his texts as a basis," has led not to suitably literary analysis but to Brazeau's and Mathews' disingenuous disclaimers that their barbed commentary is descriptive only, not evaluative.)

Even Bill Keith's discussion of *The Watch That Ends the Night*, while showing more of a literary sense than many of the papers, is mainly a flying of team colours in the old tug-of-war about MacLennan's discursiveness. With a much-discussed author like MacLennan, an inching forward in old tracks is no longer adequate. We must have the impetus of entirely new questions and literary methods.

The critical naïveté which weakens *Hugh MacLennan: 1982* and much other criticism of Canadian literature is absent in E. D. Blodgett's *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures*, a more substantial offering. Along with an eclectic combination of familiar techniques based on Aristotle, classical rhetoric, formalism, and historical, generic, and archetypal criticism, the author draws heavily on the methods and terminology of contemporary semiotic and structural theory. His aims are commendable. We welcome those who emerge unscathed from caves of modern literary theory bearing with them Aladdin treasures for the world of practical criticism. Blodgett's fingers glitter with new rings. He has, however, in the course of his adventures been sadly maimed in his prose.

The collection of essays includes readings of individual texts (MacLennan's *Watch*), reinterpretations of an author's *oeuvre* (the comic pattern of Grove's fiction), comparative studies (the house in Hébert and Munro), overviews (ethnic prairie literature, Canadian pastoral, and the West in anglophone and francophone fiction), and theoretical analysis (methodologies in Canadian comparative studies). Peppered with new insights and

close readings, never predictable or obvious, it establishes Blodgett's credentials. Here is a critic of admirable breadth and learning. His application of relevant developments in related disciplines (history, philosophy, even geography), his easy commerce with world literatures, his fluency with works in other languages (Grove's early novels — finally explored at length — and untranslated Québécois works often overlooked in English-Canadian criticism), his awareness of literary movements (the place of Grove's *Fanny Essler* in the German *Neuromantik* movement) and of generic distinctions, and finally his range of knowledge in Canadian literature enrich individual discussions.

One cannot help but be enlightened or challenged, whether by passing comments — "the bifocal ease with which [Mitchell] can look upon the world dominated by death and call it good" — or larger arguments — "the frontier shared by Western francophone and anglophone writers was marked by the unreality of the former and the pseudo-reality of the others." At least the discussion is at a suitably advanced level. And Blodgett is perspicacious enough to anticipate, though not always to answer satisfactorily, objections to his arguments.

Objections there are. The strained thesis of the MacLennan article, that *The Watch* participates in the poetic universe of Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydike Hermes," confirms my suspicion that "intertexuality" is often an indulgence in the joys of source hunting without the rigour of having to demonstrate influence. (Blodgett acknowledges, in a postscript made valuable by long quotations from his correspondence with MacLennan, that MacLennan has not read the poem.) The distinction between Hébert's metonymy and Munro's metaphor is so subtle and opaque as to be sometimes indecipherable. Blodgett's final contention that Canadian literature is not realistic, that there is "a certain formality and abstraction in Canadian writing," demanding formal analysis more than other literatures do, is a product of the critical apparatus he has brought to bear on the texts, for all his protestations to the contrary.

The main difficulty with *Configuration,* though, is stylistic. At the prospect of a small word, Blodgett breaks out in syllables. Unhappy neologisms — "vehiculed," "thematizes," "epigraphal," and "meta-travel" — struggle along shoulder to shoulder with anaemic abstractions and jargon — "textology," "ideational," "macrostructure," and "metatypal morphologies." In some cases ("the semantic code of the novel" when "the novel" would do), the terms are used more as buzz words signalling membership in a scholarly fraternity than as the legitimate tools they can be. In other cases, concepts like "prolepsis," "anaphora," "synecdoche," and "metonymy," while applicable, are over-used, becoming verbal twitches.

Configuration, in the jargon of the semioticians, must be decoded. This is unfortunate because Blodgett's collection has considerable potential. A good mind has passed this way. Unfortunately, it has covered its tracks quite thoroughly.

HELEN HOY

CHLORINE PLEASE

KEN DECKER, *Backyard Gene Pool.* Quadrant, n.p.

WHAT DOES ONE SAY about a book whose cover calls it a "soporific"? Which calls it (not inaccurately) "a group of sentences which have been, more or less in accordance with the rules of behaviour called ENGLISH GRAMMAR . . . booked in for a quick tryst," under a picture of the au-

thor — a portrait of the artist as a young booking agent, no doubt. By departing to such a large extent from the conventions of mainstream fiction — and even the emerging conventions of post-modernism — it also departs from convenient critical contexts in which to discuss it. A collection of largely unconnected short pieces, most of which can loosely be called fictions, with some of indeterminate form or intent, the book clearly goes well beyond post-modernism, though to what isn't clear.

Backyard Gene Pool begins conventionally enough (in the context of post-modernism, at any rate): "Having solicited eye contact, my primary concern is to keep you reading; I don't want to lose you." Yet it does just that. Explicitly fearing "the boredom produced by reflexivity in any form," it promptly falls victim to it. Where Calvino (in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*) can begin in like fashion and charm and engage the reader, Decker disengages, distances. Earnestly and self-indulgently it belabours its ideas — some of which aren't bad — so that what kernels there are sink into the chaff. This narcissism, this drawing out of a line of thought which becomes progressively less interesting, is such that the occasional flippancy and rude colloquialism seem merely to make the tone jarringly uneven. Where *Traveller* succeeds by cloaking its seriousness in playfulness and wit, by appearing to take itself lightly, *Gene Pool* cannot conceal the fact that it takes itself too seriously. It postures cutely, hoping that someone will pat it on the head and call it avant-garde. Instead, it's often like trying to read porridge.

Nonetheless, *Gene* (as I'm sure it would like being called) has its redeeming qualities. Having abandoned mimesis, it has not abandoned the aim of much of fiction: to show us something of the world we live in. It works — when it works — by suggestion and resonance and juxtaposition, by images (often violent, often unpalatable), by connections which are imaginative rather than logical, to give a reflected, refracted sense ("image" is too precise a word) of our world. The reader must see that the book is not saying "this is what our world looks (and sounds) like," but "the feeling that this gives is the feeling that the world gives"; in place of "show and tell" is evocation. Until the reader grasps this, it is like seeing a radar screen (and not knowing what it is) when he was expecting photographs. Realism is inadequate, the book seems to be saying, so all I can give you are untethered forays into verbal worlds which will leave impressions which resonate with those our world produces for me.

The main interest of the book, then, is cultural and sociological: mass culture and technology intensify the sordidness of life. Hence the revolting images are intended to be just that, and the ugliness and insensitivity of the scientific and technological language with which the book is littered (from "Hexagonal Throughput": "'The major damage is that which was inflicted upon your central nervous system that you are singularly ill-suited for survival in this biosphere,' picking at the head of a large boil under his damp, white shirt.... 'Confronted with the false dialectic of a basic altruism being frustrated by cynical post-structuring of events, your homeostatic drives . . .'") is not so much a fault of the book as an attempt to portray the revulsion, the ugliness and insensitivity of science, technology, and mass culture. Maybe.

There remains the suspicion that the impressive and extensive array of allusions and terminology — literary, technological, and social-scientific — is partly to impress the reader, to make him see that the author is highly intelligent, informed,

and well-read. Calling a character "Dr. Herman Eutix" may well provoke a smile, but having a character, for no apparent reason, sing, "I bin werking on the hwal-rad" seems merely an authorial nudge in the ribs: "Get it — Old English. Get it? Get it?" And even if the density and impenetrability of the technical language (which is the main reason the book is so unreadable) is simply to indicate to the reader how dense and impenetrable language has become, it is a clear case of overkill; more disturbing are the times when Decker actually seems to like using that sort of language.

A deeper fault of the work, however, is its "untethered" nature. The first paragraph asserts that "it is apparent that I have no predetermined strategy, am in fact a text intuitively spilled from a typewriter." This is no doubt intended to be disarming and endearing, the way Calvino and Tom Robbins can be, and perhaps ironic as well, but the fact remains that it accurately characterizes the book. In this collide-oscope there is a lack of focus, within the parts as well as the whole; the reader often wonders what the point is. Where other writers of fiction can create bizarre worlds — Kafka, Borges, or the Australian, Peter Carey, for example — they are self-contained, delimited, and complete worlds, their laws and workings apparent or deducible, even if they are initially disorienting. And one is convinced that, even if it is not apparent, there is a clear purpose to them. Not so, unfortunately, in *Backyard Gene Pool.*

I expect that, because of its formlessness and the apparently scant regard it has for the reader, this book will be quickly dismissed by most who come to it; one reviewer held that it did not contain "a shred of evidence to justify its publication." But such a comment is unfair to the extent that it misses the attempt (albeit less than successful) at an imaginative and linguistic representation of the jungle of mass culture and technology. Perhaps it does deserve to be dismissed — but not *too* quickly.

DAVID INGHAM

LOST VOICE?

RUDY WIEBE, *My Lovely Enemy.* McClelland & Stewart, $18.95.

EVEN AFTER a second reading and considerable reflection, Rudy Wiebe's *My Lovely Enemy* seems, indeed, to be as unfriendly as any book could be to its author's hard-earned reputation. That reputation, only recently celebrated by W. J. Keith and others, is for a writerly career marked by unswerving commitment to a prophetic and innovative vision, and with it, the achievement of a distinctive and prophetic voice. The particular intonation of Wiebe's voice (awkward for some contemporary ears but appropriate to its own character and dedication) owes to the fact that he has habitually spoken words out of the past — old history translating to new story on lips and tongue distinctive enough to make us believe that there could be meaning for the present in memories of the past.

All that seems to be water under the bridge. History professor James Dyck, on-again, off-again narrator of *My Lovely Enemy,* has no such vital communion with the past, either his own or the past of the Indian culture he studies. One senses he must have had it once for both, but that history has lost its power to charm or challenge, that ego and the present have completely won him over. The past has become academic, in both senses of the word.

In the opening chapter, we see Dyck, a residual Christian defending nominal Christianity against the deprecations of a cocktail party atheist, who asks if God's

omnipotence is sufficient for him to change the past. The reverberations of this curious and unanswered question lack any mature philosophical resonance in this novel, but they do echo throughout at the level of innumerable soap-opera clichés concerning the suburban Canadian male in climacteric. Typical of such a figure, Dyck is presented as having a semi-professional attitude towards his work. Yet what we see him doing in the library is research of a different order — instant horseplay with a woman he hasn't met before, who just happens to barge into his microfilm cubicle and straddle him. This is only the beginning of an unimaginative litany of horsy (or doggy) encounters in the novel which, in an apparent attempt to outdo soft-porn schlock in linguistic special effects, include too many ludicrous moments. "A man was made to love a woman to destruction on all fours," says an orgiastic but still philosophical Dyck after watching his wife (or is it his mistress — he can't be sure) being mounted by the man he has been cuckolding: "this violent vicious giving and taking without reservation and relentless and again and again, through passion into spaceless ecstacy." In another choice moment of his towering passion Dyck confides to his readers: "She fills me round and full as a suckable grape." Good grief.

However Wiebe wishes us to read his protagonist (and I do earnestly hope he intends an irony, though the evidence is strong against it), this sort of verbiage must be counted as horrific stuff. Are we to imagine that Wiebe intends a larger distance between himself and his menopausal narrator and actually to criticize a moral and intellectual lightweight run, as it were, by his Dyck? It is difficult, on the evidence of the novel, to come to a flattering answer. For if irony or distance is what Wiebe intends, then a hodgepodge of dark Alberta metaphysics and dismal technical failures prevent us from seeing the purpose clearly. Even in the old joke about Mennonite sexual postures and dancing, Wiebe has somehow got the rhythm wrong — does faltering language mirror a fumbling imagination? Given the western as well as academic ambience of the book one is tempted to suggest a different jacket design, perhaps the famous renaissance illustration of the dilemma of logical effeminacy, which depicts Aristotle being ridden about (on all fours) by the naked Phyllis, her whip in hand. For something seems to be nagging Wiebe, or else his control is deteriorating badly.

Dialogue has never been Wiebe's greatest strength, but his is perhaps nowhere weaker than in this book. Gillian, the young mistress, with "face of purest porcelain, and her voice," is indistinguishable in her voice from wife Liv or daughter Becca. While this may be intended as an analogue to Dyck's inability fully to distinguish them in his fantasies (he seems to lust after them all), the reader surely requires more differentiation to control the perspective. The heavy theological dialogues between Dyck and his wife, Dyck and his mistress, like the philosophical discussion concerning history between Dyck and his junior colleague (the husband of his mistress), are tedious, vacuous and — worst of all — of no narrative consequence worth the space. The citation of Teilhard de Chardin (*The Evolution of Chastity*) as an epigraph doesn't much assist in this respect either; in fact, it makes things worse. At bottom, the theorizing about conversion without guilt, like the narrator's triumphant conclusion that choice between wife and mistress is unnecessary or nugatory, is indistinguishable in its quality, as dialogue or as philosophy, from Dyck's commitment to intimate realism in description of his bathroom ritual, laced as that is with reflections that "good gracious the Queen does

this too" and learned citations: "but love has pitched his mansion in the place of excrement."

This book is jammed with literary allusions: narratorial Dyck is afflicted with total recall. Much of the great literature so invoked, however, is used so perversely as to make the citations not only specious in the mouth of the narrator, but also a kind of sacrilege on the page of the author. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, the Romantics, and others are used in contexts which make the allusions banal (the mistress "cannot nor ever will be an enduring Griselda") or worse ("All lovers live by longing and endure: / Summon a vision and declare it pure," following recitation of "Love is not love that alters," as Gillian mounts again). If Dyck's (and Wiebe's) distorted invocation of great authors is not to be thought of as a kind of blasphemy, there will surely be some among his readers who will find blasphemy in the Jesus/God who appears in the stacks of the University of Alberta Library and at Dyck's first hotel room tryst. His function is apparently to offer extensive socratic conversations, during which he quotes Castiglione, Plato, and Hosea to illustrate his thesis concerning sexual liberation and the corporal theology of D. H. Lawrence (or is it J. A. T. Robinson?). Like his alter-ego Dyck, he quotes out of context (e.g., St. Augustine: "If you love God you can do what you please"), pontificates pseudo-philosophically ("to love genitally is a kind of beginning," "to love is to be . . . love is exquisite health," etc.), and rationalizes. Though Dyck uses the opportunity to ask his "divine" visitor "How can a human being live the good life?" it is difficult, even for this pedantic spirit, to get an answer in edgewise; Dyck interrupts him obsessively, preoccupied with irritations concerning the authority of Jesus in matters excremental and sexual, complaining that Scripture doesn't talk about these things in enough realistic detail to satisfy him. Wiebe's collegial "divinity," devirginized and foxy, nevertheless aids and abets Dyck's insistent aspirations: "The truth of the spirit is your body," he solemnizes, then laughs in the lingo of the locker-room. We are not to wonder that this special revelation should assist Dyck in his increasingly learned lovemaking; he is the sort who enjoys debating a putative sex life for Jesus and quoting Donne's Holy Sonnet ("Batter my Heart three-personed God") while copulating with whomever under a piano.

The book concludes its May to September odyssey and carnal allegory in a two-part sequence. The first, predictably perhaps, is in a typological hell, a mine-shaft outside Edmonton converted into a restaurant where buffalo foetus with cactus dressing is served at black-out orgies. It is here that the all-things-dark-and-beautiful philosophy of Dyck and his protégées plumbs its depths of peroration and performance. The concluding chapter involves a preposterous and effectually gratuitous resurrection of his mother by the professor, who calls her forth from the grave with the very words of Jesus to Lazarus, only to hear her say, "Well, that is nice." Then, a farmer driving his combine off-course just happens by with a nice little typological luncheon which wife, mistress, cuckolded junior colleague, and mother get to share with Dyck and the mortician (who seems, after all, to be Jesus again, in another guise). At this communal repast it seems only fitting, and to Dyck entirely gratifying, that the mortician should anticipate for them all a blessed hereafter in which heaven is actually a state of open marriage. Unsurprisingly also, in this dialogue as in earlier appearances, the mortician-Jesus speaks in accents indistinguishable from those of Dyck. The Professor's shadowy interlocutor, however, like his counterpart in other texts, occasionally utters an

appropriate truth: "All words are image, speaking is the only way human beings can handle large reality. But the difference between the image and the reality has to be clear...." One finds that a lack of such clarity in Wiebe's own narration is a major impediment to the articulation of his characteristic voice. Even the dedication ("Blessed are the dead who die in the faith of Christ") — at the very least, surprising in this context — seems to underline a profound confusion. No matter how looked at, the *Enemy* seems distinctly unlovely.

For all that, there is something here entirely worthwhile. Spliced into the fabric of *My Lovely Enemy*, in two sections, is a truly remarkable story by Wiebe (previously published in *Canadian Forum*, 61 [March 1982] as "The Broken Arm"). The story of Maskepetoon is one of the best that Wiebe has written, out of the historical vein which he has so successfully mined in the past, and it is a worthy example of the storyteller's art. It embodies all that Wiebe does best, and reminds us of the achievement represented by *The Blue Mountains of China*, *The Temptations of Big Bear* and *The Scorched-Wood People*. None of his readers, I hope, would condemn Wiebe to mere repetition of earlier formulae for success. But the plain truth is that in *My Lovely Enemy* the Maskepetoon sections stick out like two lilies on a garbage heap. The Indian story is from every point of view superior writing, more convincing both in dialogue and as narrative. By contrast, the body of the novel (into which Maskepetoon in no way fits properly) is cliché-ridden, hackneyed, and trite in its ultimate statement.

Narratively, and in terms of dialogue, some problems of this book are anticipated, I think, in Wiebe's disappointing *Mad Trapper* (1980). Wiebe seems most successful with a strong voice, one which is used to the powers of "absolute word" and which is secure enough or protected enough to afford a stance oblique to the general culture. "Absolute word," it need hardly be said, requires the authentication of strong character, character which is achieved in Grandmother Friesen, Maskepetoon, or Big Bear, but not in Dr. Dyck.

Other slippages of voice, especially narrative "inner" voice, seem to be anticipated as early as Wiebe's story about a psychotic killer, "Did Jesus Ever Laugh?" Printed in *Where is the Voice Coming From?* (1974), it also is a first-person narrative, similarly disturbing in ways which can cause it to undermine deeply our confidence in the author's controlling perspective. Elsewhere in his pursuit of distinctive voice Wiebe has, like his sometime model Tolstoy, reached beyond himself into a community of authenticated personalities, making withal surprisingly credible use of absolute word and extraordinary character. In this latest book it seems Wiebe has made a deliberate choice for "personal landscape," a trivialized world in which "Tolstoi does not count. He is simply with us, his lolling happy face" merely that of a hapless suburban lap dog. Those who have admired the Tolstoy in Wiebe will grieve for so extreme a diminishment.

DAVID LYLE JEFFREY

OUTRAGE

GREG HOLLINGSHEAD, *Famous Players*. Coach House, $7.50.

SAM SPILLER, *Stories of Men and of Rats*. Exposition Press, $10.00.

THE LOWER RIGHT CORNER of the cover page of *Famous Players* appears to be dog-eared to expose half of John Diefenbaker's face. This visual joke introduces stories which trace the ironies of the search for personal meaning through contact with "famous players." Typical of

the protagonists who chart the centrality to their lives of brief conversations with people such as Princess Margaret or Richard Nixon, the narrator of the first story, "Life with the Prime Minister," has had only occasional contact with Trudeau, watching him talk to two men in Inuvik, attempting to lend him a tie at a Charlottetown political rally. Searching for significance in Trudeau's every word and gesture, he is frustrated when the Prime Minister takes him to a Burt Reynolds movie: "I assumed that it would be a special movie, a premiere or a private screening of exotic pornography." Meeting Trudeau on a Bahama beach, the narrator expresses his disenchantment with women, money, and power and demands, "What would you have me look for?" Trudeau laughs, "Don't ask me," and walks off into the sunset with his wife. The next scene, the last of the story, records the narrator's appreciation that the Prime Minister visits him in the hospital. Hollingshead has treated the emotional collapse of this unnamed narrator through a short series of vignettes which reveal the subtlety and economy of a Hemingway story.

Hollingshead can also spin an outrageous tall tale. Glen Samchuk, the protagonist of "Red Muffins," travels from small town Saskatchewan to London where he is picked up by the very rich Celia. They happen upon a country house where they join the eccentric, stoned, and exceptionally accommodating celebrants of an engagement party. After a series of mishaps, Glen leaves Celia to Doddy, who played with her in the bathtub at age five, and stumbles off with Red Muffins, one of the life-size puppets which had been danced from the roof of the house by the bridegroom. The colonial doesn't belong; he continues his Grand Tour alone. The psychological realism of the conclusion provides an ironic twist to the hallucinatory exhilaration of the bizarre world of the rich, if not famous, players outside Glen's normal experience.

The endings of a number of Hollingshead's stories which use the O'Henry convention, the ironic twist which surprises the reader into re-evaluation of the story as a whole, are more arbitrary. "Cooper," for example, ends with cannibalism, which certainly provides an easily dramatic concluding flourish, but it seems unwarranted by the events of the story. Such apparently gratuitous violence, in a book which is otherwise a fine first publication, provides a point of distinction from the horror which, as a vehicle of social protest, pervades *Stories of Men and Rats*.

In "Revolution of the Poor," H. G. Francq, under the pseudonym of Sam Spiller, tells the story of Jacques Vingtras, the pseudonym of Jules Vallès, a leader of the 1871 Paris Commune. This initial confusion of historical fact is echoed in the next story, "Diary of a Convict," which, as Spiller explains, is "a short adaptation of Georges Darien's account of his confinement as a military convict.... under pretext of military discipline, human beings cowardly tortured other human beings." But the story is not of Darien but of one Froissard. Yet the French cadences, which suggest that the works are translations and the footnoted references to nineteenth-century books, argue the historical veracity of the stories. What focus does Spiller intend?

Desperate violence pervades both stories, and resistance to evil is shown to be futile. The 1871 Revolution collapses into civil war and the return of oppression. Froissard succumbs to the violence of his officers; the agonies of forced marches, the courts-martial, the torture of weak prisoners, the hunger and thirst finally drive him to murder. Froissard ends many sections with refrains such as "I really don't understand how we can take more of this and keep standing." (The

reader has to agree.) Having served his term, Froissard attacks the system by publishing the story of its atrocities. His story concludes: "In a darker night still the oppressed will have to raise their voices. *Paris, 1888.*" From the historical perspective of one hundred years, we know that justice has not been done. What is Spiller advocating?

Distorted identity, horror, and futile protest underlie the final story, "The Great Plague of Bronston," as well. The setting is Bronston, a thinly disguised Brandon, in 1989. Spiller satirizes processed food, joggers, rock groups and, especially, the farce of education at universities and the exploitive capitalist system of government and business — all this as armies of rats, the work of Providence punishing decadent humanity with extermination, overrun Bronston with the plague. When they leave to attack Winnipeg, Bronston is in flames, its inhabitants all dead, except for six social misfits. Spiller, a retired Brandon University professor, again has used a fictional double — one of the survivors is a retired Bronston professor, author of a book on the 1789 French Revolution — to tell the horrors of a repressive regime and the ultimate futility of its destruction. "It was doomsday, ashes to ashes and dust to dust." This conclusion of the last story reflects Spiller's stance: part Old Testament prophet and part Swiftian satirist. But he allows no redeeming humour or justice, only rage, disguise, and horror.

ELEANOR JOHNSTON

NO SECOND STAGE

CAROL SHIELDS, *A Fairly Conventional Woman.* Macmillan, $18.95.

JOAN BARFOOT, *Dancing in the Dark.* Macmillan, $17.95.

DURING THE 1970's, Canadian women writers created an exciting and innovative range of fictional "new" women, including feminist pioneers surviving the rigours of wilderness rebirth, one determined founder of a women's commune, and a boldly unconventional pig farmer. But this major thrust of the past decade towards the fictional presentation of strong, autonomous women — rebels and explorers who cross previously sanctioned boundaries — has been deflected or discontinued in the recent work of Carol Shields and Joan Barfoot. The middle-aged housewife heroines of their new novels, much like the main character of *The Ivory Swing*, are caught on the horns of a dilemma. As the "fairly conventional woman," Brenda Bowman, sums up: "She had come to this awkward age, forty, at an awkward time in history — too soon to be one of the new women, whatever that meant, and too late to be an old-style woman." Ultimately what Shields's Bowman and Barfoot's fanatical Edna Cormick value above all are normalcy, order, shelter, enclosure, protection, and safety — the very opposite of what the rebellious 1970's heroines craved: independence, self-actualization, novelty, risk, adventure, possibility. In redirecting attention to the discarded image of the "happy housewife," however, neither Shields nor Barfoot digs deep enough to discover new insights.

A Fairly Conventional Woman covers the same five-day period in the life of the Bowman family of suburban Chicago as does Shields's earlier *Happenstance* (1980). Previously Shields narrated the story of how ho-hum historian Jack Bowman coped with two pubescent children and a string of midlife crises in the neighbourhood while his homemaker wife was away at a conference in Philadelphia; the companion novel now traces Brenda Bowman's experiences while attending the National Handicraft Exhibition in the Franklin Court Arms Hotel where her quilt, "The Second Coming,"

wins honourable mention, her room-mate screws like a mink, and she encounters a refreshingly non-predatory male, a Canadian metallurgist, Barry Ollershaw.

In post-Vietnam America, with moral distinctions blurred, divorce rampant, and marital fidelity as quaint as white bucks or saddle shoes, Brenda and Barry re-enact a love story — complete with a chance meeting in a hotel elevator, roses, dinner for two by candlelight, and a night spent sharing a bed — but they choose not to embrace "the new sexual freedom." What Barry offers Brenda is companionship, support, and fatherly nurturance, seeing her through what she perceives as her first real disgrace — getting drunk during a protracted interview with an odious newspaper reporter — and vomiting all over her room, even on her prize quilt. Brenda, in return, offers Barry sympathetic understanding, sanity, and steadiness, unlike his incapacitated wife who has suffered a severe breakdown.

The clue to the dilemma of Brenda Bowman's midlife crisis, which follows her mother's sudden death, calls into question her love for her husband of twenty years, and is tied at some level to her emerging career as a quilter, seems to be not only her lack of connection with contemporary women's history, but also the fact of her fatherlessness. Born to Elsa Pulaski, a single, working-class woman of Polish origin, and raised, never knowing who fathered her, in a small apartment over a dry cleaner's in Cicero, Illinois, Brenda developed into a popular and pleasing young woman, graduated from Katharine Gibbs, worked for a short time as a secretary-typist, and then married at twenty, primarily, she recalls, because she was "dying for a pink kitchen." Clearly rejecting the image of self-sufficiency provided by her large, capable, unconventional mother, Brenda has hungered for domesticity and dependence and all the material trappings of suburbia and the feminine mystique.

Shields's heroine is not without insight: "There she had been, diapering babies, buying groceries at the A & P, wallpapering bathrooms, while other women — who were these women? — fought for equal rights, while a terrible war raged, while the country teetered on the brink of revolution." She chastizes herself for taking "the coward's way out," but this critical consciousness does not lead to personal change, and Brenda refuses to get involved in the handicraft exhibitors' protest against the hotel management for discrimination against their group, almost all women, in favour of the International Metallurgical Society, almost all men. Her prize quilt, "The Second Coming," embodies no Yeatsian apocalypse. In the end, Brenda Bowman, priding herself on her down-to-earth realism, is a superficial, materialistic, mundane, and rather boring character. The narrative, filtered through Brenda's consciousness and recording her verbal interchanges, fails on artistic grounds, almost wholly "in bondage to facts and to the present moment." The problem which Wordsworth identified some two hundred years ago — how to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser without repeating the effects of dullness and garrulity — irreparably damages *A Fairly Conventional Woman*. It all but destroys Joan Barfoot's *Dancing in the Dark* as well.

This psychological novel, Barfoot's second, is narrated in the first person by Edna Cormick, aged 43, incarcerated in a mental institution for the "insane" act of murdering her husband with a kitchen knife. She spends most of a year filling notebook after notebook with meticulous re-examinations of her life.

The elder and less attractive of two daughters of a stiff, domineering mother, who defied the advice of the women's magazines of her day and embarrassed

Edna, and of an ineffectual hardware-clerk father, Edna managed to break out of the confines of her small town home by going to university. What she cannot shake off, however, are her feelings of inferiority to her beautiful younger sister, Stella, and a pervasive sense of fear and desolation — the subjects of the one and only poem she has ever written. Edna feels so deeply indebted to the first man who courts her — Harry Cormick, whom she eventually marries — that it seems as if she owed her life to him. With blind devotion, she sets out to be the perfectionist housewife that her mother was not. Her disappointment in not being able to conceive children is masked by fanatical attention to the domestic details of vacuuming, cooking, decorating, and listening to Harry as he moves from promotion to promotion, a successful businessman. Even when times change, the women's movement exposes the cracks in the feminine mystique, and Harry himself begins to doubt whether Edna can be truly fulfilled as a stay-at-home wife after twenty years, she expresses no interest at all in another role, failing to imagine how a woman could manage an outside career while maintaining proper household standards.

One clue that her life may not be as satisfying as she protests is Edna's recurring fantasy of performing on stage — dancing or singing — and being the centre of attention. All the rest of the time, however, Edna makes it abundantly clear that she prefers the security of limits and rules over individual freedom, that she welcomes "eventlessness," and that she cherishes the safety of the repetitive domestic routine. She congratulates herself on how "I'd longed for the normal, the ordinary, and now here was my life, normal and ordinary. . . . It was like having the pattern of a dress to sew, merely a matter of taking something already laid out and cutting and stitching it properly, following the lines."

Initially it appears that Edna's life has been crowned with greater happiness than the beautiful Stella's. Marriage to a local plumber has trapped Stella in the small-town, working-class ambience that Edna has fled. But when Stella divorces her husband after learning of his affair with her best friend, she finds a constructive purpose for her anger and forges a new life for herself in a law office in Vancouver, eventually remarrying and combining career with motherhood. Learning nothing from this example, years afterward, when Edna is informed that her husband is having an affair with his secretary, she broods on his "betrayal" for a twelve-hour period, then butchers him with a kitchen knife, and ends up totally isolated in a mental hospital. Moreover, Edna's rage and murderous hostility seem totally contrived; there is nothing in Barfoot's portrait of this timid, orderly housewife, either before or after the murder, to make this wild, aggressive, criminal act the least bit credible. The plea of insanity in the novel — as so often in real life — seems a convenient cop-out.

The first person narration, controlled, restrained, devoid of passion — a fine reflection of the deadpan, emotionless state of the central character — is relentlessly realistic. But, unconscious of any oppression whatsoever apart from the final revelation of a clichéd affair, Edna Cormick is an impoverished and superficial commentator on her own condition. The careful polish of Barfoot's style serves no apparent end since it fails to illuminate the depths, as well as the surfaces, of a woman who embodies the mythical, selfless state of the "happy housewife" of the pre-Friedan era; paradoxically, the seamless style renders totally obscure the origins of the suppressed fury that explodes in the novel's final pages. Neither *Dancing in the Dark* nor *A Fairly Con-*

ventional Woman offers any challenge to that powerful, landmark portrait of the harrassed middle-aged housewife, *The Fire-Dwellers,* nor does either explore the current realities or future prospects of *The Second Stage.*

WENDY KEITNER

TOO MANY POETS

DANIEL DAVID MOSES, *Delicate Bodies.* blewointment, n.p.

AUGUST KLEINZAHLER, eds., *News and Weather: Seven Canadian Poets.* Brick, $6.50.

Squid Inc 1982. Squid, $4.00.

JOHN NEWLOVE, *The Green Plain.* Oolichan, $6.00.

MAE HILL BROWN, *Tracings.* Oolichan, $6.00.

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Yeats recalls a particularly well-attended meeting of the Rhymer's Club in London: "I remember saying one night at The Cheshire Cheese, when more poets than usual had come, 'None of us can say who will succeed, or even who has or has not talent. The only thing certain about us is that we are too many.'" How would Yeats have responded to these five recent collections, representing among them eighteen people, all clamouring to be read, and all finding willing publishers? Clearly, if they could articulate a mood or theme that was inspiring or iluminating, they would merit attention and support, but such is not the case. The first three of the above volumes contain mainly rhetorical echoes of genuine poetry; the fourth is more successful; only the fifth is a real delight.

In *Delicate Bodies,* Daniel David Moses filters the natural world through a sensibility more neurasthenic than poetic, resulting in tepid verses in which it is usually raining or drizzling. As his speaker stares moodily at the pervasive grey of the landscape, he yearns to merge with it; thus, in "April" the sight of "city puddles" provokes the lyric cry,

> Oh I could swell
> full of this spring water smell
> if my tongue were the muscle
> to breach it....

The image of a tongue "breaching" a smell is extremely silly; rarely has the romantic longing for transcendence seemed so forced.

No one could dare accuse the seven poets included in *News and Weather* of being silly. These poets — Robert Bringhurst, Margaret Avison, Brent MacKay, A. F. Moritz, Terry Humby, Guy Birchard, and Alexander Hutchison — write in what their editor calls "dead earnest"; moreover, they "would rather have no reader at all than a smug, lazy one." The first alternative seems more likely. Margaret Avison's poems are reprinted from *Winter Sun* and *The Dumbfounding,* and have been anthologized elsewhere, while the work of the other poets, unlike hers, is pedantic without being profound. In "Night Snack," for example, Terry Humby describes the opening of a refrigerator door with near-epic pretension:

> A slow pull on the door, a wedge jumps free,
> expanded ghost of lemon pie
> drags my kitchen into yellow particulars.
> But I am hungry — stray light pales
> before the refulgence of operating theatres.

Here is an educated mind in love with its own learning, mistaking a sterile cerebralism for personality, and left circling endlessly in the bell jar of its own creations.

Unlike the *News and Weather* poets, the eight people published in *Squid Inc 1982* at least seem to be enjoying themselves. Heather Cadsby, Polly Fleck, Maria Jacobs, Eric Layman, Richard Lush, Pam Oxendine, Jim Roberts, and Martin Singleton, their anonymous editor explains, are "an intimate association of working poets" whose "common interest is in getting it right. The art. Right!" Of

the group, Pam Oxendine and Jim Roberts probably have the most potential. Oxendine's "Beating" is the most powerful poem in the volume — an explosive, moving description of a small child escaping a whipping:

> get back to the house! she screamed
> beating welts into a tightened little ass
> bitter slash rebounds
> off face bones
> soon the brown belly slides up corrugated
> bark
> ankles scratch
> shoved by toes fanned and gripping
> well, she'll never find you here.

However, as Martin Singleton says of his own work, most of the poems in *Squid Inc 1982* "are not so much poems as exercises in rhythmic word control," a disclaimer which seems extravagant praise for something like Richard Lush's "Josepha Among The Cabbages": "How I came when she came / Against me. She was every goddam thing I / dreamed of."

There is no such yelping in *The Green Plain,* in which John Newlove attempts to move beyond his characteristic position of demoralized inertia, to affirm and even celebrate "the land around us green and happy." But although this long poem of about one hundred lines reveals the keen ear for rhythm and cadence that readers by now expect of a Newlove volume, the poem is, finally, rather nebulous and empty. In his almost incoherent preface, Newlove explains that the source of *The Green Plain* is "a tangible vision of paradise" he experienced as a child. "It is so simple," he remarks, "that I cannot describe it to you, or to myself." The vagueness of this observation implies Newlove's problem: he cannot find an objective correlative adequate to his vision. Instead, he relies on flat, declarative statements which reveal only that the possession of Truth does not always result in compelling poetry. Perceptions such as "There are no surprises, there is only / what is left" and "There is / this only world" are not particularly earth-shattering. A "vision of paradise" may be a joy to the visionary, but how to communicate it?

Mae Hill Brown's *Tracings* provides a possible answer. Brown shares Newlove's sense of wonder, which she expresses in a series of quiet, intelligent lyrics, such as "A Candle Burning One Holy Glow," where she describes "a memory itself half- / remembered":

> green grows the candle
> glows the light
> a flame tree set in a garden
> where nightingales sing
> no mocking bird is allowed

Here, indeed, is a vision of paradise, forcefully stated, in images which linger in the memory. Brown was born in 1908, but waited until 1982 to publish *Tracings,* her first poetry collection. Unlike some of her more prolific but less-talented colleagues, she does not strive to be "literary." Her concern is with the poem, with the image first perceived in isolation, but then shared in communion. Here, for example, is her "Slow Convalescence," which poignantly evokes the often bewildering sense of convalescent euphoria that can follow a serious illness:

> moving with the crowd
> was new
> was like
> saying bon voyage
> to a ship
> not leaving

Brown's poetry seeks an audience beyond the English department, beyond the incestuous circle of the poetry collective. In the true sense of the word, her poetry sings — in her own slpendid phrase, it is "a psalm to celebrate / renewal."

PETER KLOVAN

METASYNTHESES

LINDA HUTCHEON, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, $9.25.

THE LARGER CONTEXT FOR *Narcissistic Narrative* is by now a familiar one: the claim that there is a kind of fiction, more common now than fifty years ago but by no means entirely new, that is resolutely about fiction, i.e., that it includes within itself a commentary on its own linguistic or narrative status, and that it forces on its reader a new self-consciousness about the very activity of reading. More, that it allows him or her powers of creation previously accorded only to the writer. Thus, for example, Roland Barthes on the readerly text. Within this polemic Hutcheon's contribution is as a synthesizer, indicating points of contact and divergence among a wide spectrum of critics (among others: Jean Ricardou, Robert Scholes, Frank Kermode, Hans Robert Jauss, Georges Poulet, Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser, Wayne Booth, Gerard Genette, Umberto Eco, Northrop Frye), and as a reader of contemporary French or Italian fiction. Many of the texts she refers to are well known already, and as metafictions. It is no surprise to see Barth, Robbe-Grillet, Nabokov ranged together. However, the discussion of French and Italian writing in the 1960's and 1970's — in particular of the *Tel Quel* group pre-1968 (Jean Ricardou, Julia Kristéva, Philippe Sollers and, as their antecedent, Raymond Roussel), and the *Gruppo 63* (Angelo Guglielmi, Giorgio Manganelli, Edoardo Sanguinetti, Renato Barilli, among others) — provides a lucid and informative survey of important writers who remain unfamiliar and largely untranslated in North America. It also makes thoughtful distinctions between writers, noting that though they share "a desire to push the novel form to its linguistic limits and, in theory at least, to surpass it," Italian and French radicals work "out of different literary, political, and social institutions." Interestingly, in her last chapter, Hutcheon links issues raised by the European writers with two Montreal novels of the 1960's: Aquin's *Trou de mémoire* and Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*. Her claim is that metafiction is not merely "self-preening introversion." On the contrary, Aquin and Cohen have written narcissistic novels "as incitement to revolutionary activity." The political claim is not entirely convincing, but it is good to see French and English Canadian writers read together, and in a wider context than is usual for CanLit.

As Hutcheon herself makes explicit, her book has a double aim: to investigate the modes, forms, and techniques of narrative narcissism, and to study "the implications of these formal observations both for the theory of the novel as a representational genre and also for the theory of the interpretative and the creative functions of the act of reading." In fact, this is a book that gets decidedly better as it goes along, perhaps because it shifts from the first aim to the second. Taking off from Ricardou's horizontal and vertical mapping of self-reflexive writing, Hutcheon proposes a four-part typology composed of diegetic narcissism (texts presenting themselves as narratives), and linguistic narcissism (texts presenting themselves as language). Each of these, in turn, may be either explicit or implicit — that is, thematized or actualized. Thus, four possible categories of writing, each of which is discussed in a separate chapter. The closing chapters are the most interesting. In these Hutcheon explores the territory at the outer edges of the genre, suggesting that we are no longer dealing with novels when texts go beyond self-consciousness to anti-representation, when (often for ideological reasons) they deny mimesis and even

diegesis. With writers like Roussel, for instance, we need extra-textual help from the author (*Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*) or from the back-cover blurbs in order to read at all. In such cases, Hutcheon argues, we have a kind of writing that escapes the novelistic. Curiously, then, in spite of the critical revolution that has taken place in the last thirty years, New Criticism's insistence on fiction as radically self-sufficient still seems to hold. However, Hutcheon adjusts the model by making the reader no passive consumer of verbal icons.

Hutcheon begins her discussion of narcissistic narrative with an allegorical reading of the Narcissus myth. This is done against the grain of Ovid's reading, in which Narcissus destroys himself, ironically, by his obsession with himself. In Hutcheon's view, the hero does not die, and the novel is not dead. She takes up the myth to argue that narcissism is the original condition of the novel as a genre and not a post-modern aberration. Like Narcissus, then, born of Ciriope and Cephisus the river-god who ravishes her, the novel too is the child of rape, "self-centred and self-beloved from its very birth." Hutcheon locates this self-obsession in a long tradition starting with Cervantes, Sterne, and Diderot, but never really specifies who stands as mother and father to the genres, and why its conception must be understood as a rape. According to her metaphor the moment of origins for the novel is one of violence and/or deception. Reading the myth selectively, however, Hutcheon leaves this part of the allegory unexplored and diminishes its paradigmatic force. Given what we know of the complicated and multiple antecedents of the genre it would be more appropriate to describe its origins as a gang-rape or simply an orgy. Shamelessly, perhaps, an endless stream of mothers and fathers continue to step forth to claim their rights over the bastard child. With this phenomenon, however, Hutcheon is not concerned. Similarly, in reminding us that Narcissus is full of contempt and mockery for those who desire him (spurning so many that finally he is cursed with their fate: "may he himself love in their way and not possess the thing he loves"), Hutcheon raises another unresolved question. Is the novel really so unfeeling a genre? Was it ever as self-important and unself-critical as she suggests? Even the "other" tradition of formal realism suffered from anxiety in its relation to other genres. It was hardly so mocking and self-righteous as Hutcheon implies. On the contrary, as Walter Reed argues persuasively in *An Exemplary History of the Novel* (1981) the novel, of all the genres, is most suspicious of itself and most desirous to embrace the widest possible field of discourse.

Hutcheon also uses the myth as a historical parable, indicating three general stages in the novel's trajectory. She refers to *Don Quijote* and *Tristram Shandy*, but also to Van Eyck's "Betrothal of the Arnolfini" to show that the self-consciousness of contemporary writing is hardly new. In these works there is already a playful yet very serious insistence on the presence of the artist as maker. From such beginnings, then, the conventions of formal realism are a deviation. In a somewhat tangled argument Hutcheon identifies the second stage, the growing hegemony of the novel, with Narcissus as the object of desire (i.e., with the beautiful youth who answers love with mockery and contempt). Under the regime of formal realism in the nineteenth century the fate of language is like that of Echo, spurned by Narcissus but endlessly desiring him. She "cannot remain silent, cannot be ignored, and yet cannot be a creative, autonomous force on her own." She is like novelistic language, which also "cannot be silenced,

for it exists independently of its artistic function" in its life as ordinary language, and yet which depends radically upon the work in which it appears "as one of its means and one of its ends." Formal realism (the villain in Hutcheon's scenario) refuses to acknowledge its medium, language. According to Hutcheon the cost of such denial was enormous: "like Echo's bones which turned to stone, all that appeared to remain were skeletal structures and petrified conventional terms to be adopted uncritically by the conforming novelist." Blissfully unaware of its self-engendered weakness, "the novel continued to prosper, seemingly self-important and unself-critical, until [at last] it became Romantically intrigued with its own reflection." Thus, stage three: "The process of narration began to invade the fiction's content." And so we have novels about novelists, about novels, and about the reading of novels. Metafiction takes up the tradition of Sterne and Cervantes but increases the reader's freedom and responsibility. It shifts the focus from the writer of fictions to the reader, and suggests that reading parallels or even perhaps equals writing. In doing all this, it lays bare what fiction has always done but has sometimes wished to repress. When Narcissus looks into the reflecting pool and falls in love with his own image his end is not death, for Hutcheon, but metamorphosis: "And now they prepared a funeral pile and brandishing torches and a bier, but his body was nowhere to be found; instead of the body, they find a flower." Not death then, for the novel, but life in a different form.

It is precisely in the contemporary situation of the genre that Hutcheon sees its greatest hope for survival. This is at least in part because she argues for a widened sense of the word mimesis, which she acknowledges as central to the novelistic project. Returning to Aristotle she notes that for him diegesis — the act of narration — is part of the content represented by the work of art, and not external to it. According to Hutcheon the nineteenth century excluded the process and reduced representation to a mere mimesis of product. Modern metafiction, on the other hand, continues the long and genuinely novelistic tradition of a mimesis of process, for which art and life are not distinct entities because fiction-making in language is inherently, and necessarily a human activity. Like art, life is both product and process. The point on diegesis is well taken and useful — if somewhat insistently reiterated throughout: how many times do we need to be told that narcissistic fiction is more "vital," more widely and deeply mimetic than the ostensible realism of Victorian fiction? A certain strained defensiveness in Hutcheon's argument leads me to wonder why it is so important to redefine the genre's mimesis so as to return Barth *et al.* to the novelistic fold. I would assume it is so that we can read metafiction properly — and this Hutcheon certainly helps us to do. But it should also help us read the aberrant texts — the presumably unself-conscious writing of Balzac, Eliot, Dickens. Here Hutcheon is considerably weaker. There is little evidence of more than a sidelong glance at those earlier works, so convenient as models and yet, in fact, so much more complicated and interesting than Hutcheon allows. Fredric Jameson, Patricia Tompkins, and Jonathan Culler, among others, have warned us recently that the moment of interpretation is over, that elucidating texts, passages, or references is no longer the proper task of the critic. It is time to ask larger questions, describe wider fields. This may well be so. And yet surely a touchstone for the reader of theory, and a measure of the theoretical critic's skill is the precision and insight with which models can address individual texts. I am

not satisfied that Hutcheon has given writers like Balzac the full measure of her intelligent attention. Or perhaps her paradigm — useful as it is to flog the past and claim the primacy of the new — can only do so by caricaturing the earlier texts. To be fair, however, I should note that in a closing chapter Hutcheon softens the distinctions: all narratives, she says "are to some extent 'scriptible' ... produced rather than consumed by the reader."

I wonder, too, if there is not a generic problem here. Hutcheon has chosen to explore metafiction by reference to a very large number of texts, many of which are allowed no more than a citational space: a few sentences perhaps, at times just a phrase. Obviously she wants to show how wide-ranging the phenomenon is, but too often we simply have to take her word for it. There is an element of self-display built into this mode which is not always to the purpose. Who, after all, will read *Narcissistic Narrative*? An academic audience, to be sure. But it is most unlikely that we are all familiar with the same texts and a shared ground needs to be established. At times there is too much exposition, at others not enough.

A final quibble. It is irritating to have French and Italian quotations — whose meaning is essential to the argument — left untranslated, even in a footnote, while Spanish and German texts — whose verbal qualities might be just as crucial — are never quoted in the original. This is, as Hutcheon points out in her occasionally stilted way, "for reasons of authorial linguistic competence." Understandable perhaps in a dissertation; rather less so in a book. At times I wish *Narcissistic Narrative* had freed itself more completely from its origins as a thesis. Nevertheless, in its knowledgeable discussion of current French and Italian writings, and in its account of the edges of a genre, the book is thoughtful and thought-provoking. We know that Italians are interested in our literature. Hutcheon shows us, too, why we should be seriously interested in theirs.

JENNIFER LEVINE

DOWN THE RED LANES

PATRICK LANE, *Old Mother*. Oxford Univ. Press, $6.95.

ONCE UPON A TIME there were three brothers: Red, Pat, and John. Their mother was a teacher who loved reading. She read to them from books. Their father was of wild prairie stock, descendent of hard sadistic men and submissive women. The boys grew up in British Columbia's Okanagan country, children of the Great Depression; and in the sixties Red became a legend. He descended on Vancouver as fiery poet and protester against war; but also in his poetry, tender and gentle, fascinated by the innocence of children. One week in December 1964 three poets joined him in giving a poetry reading in a bookstore on Granville Street: Milton Acorn, Judy Copithorne, and myself. Red Lane's poems for children warmed our hearts. But only a short time later Red Lane was dead, of an embolism.

I thought of him as a Peer Gynt figure — even more so when Patrick Lane a few years later in Edmonton read a long poem in eulogy of his brother. "I feel I have to take on his task, become a poet with a social conscience." He has done so, but with his own very individual slant in form and content. The voice is not Red Lane's but his own; yet inexorably drawn from the same background of male toughness, sensitive perception, violence and guilt, fear of death, tender yearning for the fragile unprotected creatures in nature and in human life. All of these elements are to be found in his latest work, *Old Mother*.

The title itself is drawn from a gouache by John Gould titled Woman and Bird. It depicts an old, cowled woman sitting. Above her descends a black bird of prey, white claws extended. She seems to be resigned, awaiting the inevitable. And in the opening poem, "Old Mother" the poet identifies the bird with the woman:

I hold you to me like a sacrament.
I drink your endurance.
I keep the point of your talon
deep in my heart.

That image is repeated throughout Part I: a small boy cowering, hidden, watching adult men at a Side Show (shades of *The Tin Drum!*); a young girl falling into a mess of broken eggs, spurting with half-formed bodies; a woman axing a rooster; and on to a series of apocalypses, some violent, some tender and grieving. Poems not easy or pleasant to read, but constructed with clean, compressed language. Whatever one's sense of revulsion in reading these poems in Part I they are compelling because of the care taken with intonation, internal music and dramatic intensity. From Hell they climb towards Heaven.

Not so, the poems in Part II. The middle section of the book is Patrick Lane's attempt to write a prairie documentary à la Kroetsch, à la Bowering, à la all those bright youngish Canadians who have scorned what Duncan Scott had done, what Pratt had done, what Birney had done but who try and catch up. I do not believe that this is Lane's forte. But there is a third Lane who appears in Part III — the real Red Lane? For this section, "The China Poems," concerns a visit to Red China along with four other Canadian writers. By some magic or simply by an effort of will Patrick Lane has cleansed his thoughts and his words of all the hate, violence and irony of his previous poetry. In simple direct language he describes individuals and their way of life as friends, as humans.

A grandfather sits playing with a child.
She laughs as she runs through his hands.
He could catch her but what for? She is
young and her laughter is good in the sun.

Any one of us, we think, could write as simply as this. It is refreshing that Patrick Lane can do it at last, naturally, admitting:

What I want to take back from China
is found only in the dream of the red
chamber.
Ashamed, I walk into the crowds on the
street
where young women, bright as birds,
run laughing among the Wu t'ung trees.

DOROTHY LIVESAY

AUX ANGES

GINETTE ANFOUSSE, *Le Savon*. Les éditions La courte échelle, n.p.

GINETTE ANFOUSSE, *L'Hiver, ou le Bonhomme Sept Heures*. Les éditions La courte échelle, n.p.

YVES THERIAULT, *Popok le petit Esquimau*. Les éditions Quebecor, n.p.

CLAUDE JASMIN, *Les Contes du Sommet-Bleu*. Les éditions Quebecor, n.p.

"'PICHOU, je suis certaine que toi, au moins, tu me comprends.'" La petite Jiji a raison, Ginette Anfousse semble l'illustrer dans *Le Savon* — ce sont les animaux (et non les mamans) qui s'entendent avec les enfants comme les deux doigts de la main. Les animaux n'ordonnent rien, mais les mamans sont comme le bon Dieu. Maman "VOIT tout, SAIT tout, DEVINE tout," le remarque Jiji. Ses yeux se fixent constamment sur le ciel; elle ne peut faire autrement que d'endosser, en principe, le règlement maternel exigeant qu'une petite fille doit toujours se garder propre. Pichou, le bébé-tamanoir si mignon de Jiji, participe silencieusement à la vie réelle et imaginaire de son amie. Par consequent, il sait qu'en réalité Jiji ne sera pas "TOUJOURS, TOUJOURS propre." La crème glacée au chocolat est

tellement séduisante et le champ de madame Côté si attirant! Les mamans ne comprennent-elles pas qu'un enfant ce n'est pas "une image dans un cadre"? Mais oui. Jiji sait bien qu'en entrant sa mére lui pardonnera et lui dira: "'Jiji, cours te laver!'" Les dix-neuf pages de l'histoire gaie illustrée en couleurs vives par Ginette Anfousse dépeignent ce dont la petite Jiji est consciente: il y a de bonnes raisons pour le savon. Maman Anfousse est d'accord.

"Cloclo Tremblay l'a vu, lui, le BONHOMME SEPT HEURES." Le loup-garou, le marchand de sable, et ce BONHOMME, ils existent en vérité. À la troisième page de *L'Hiver*, on voit Jiji et Pichou qui regardent par la fenêtre, fouillant du regard la noirceur hivernale. Ils cherchent à voir le monstre hideux qui cherche les enfants lorsqu'il n'y a pas de lune, pas d'étoiles. L'image du BONHOMME SEPT HEURES s'approche, tout proche, si proche.... "SEPT HEURES ET UNE MINUTE." Maintenant on peut dormir. Cette histoire anime une des sortes de crainte qu'ont souvent les enfants — et les adultes. L'art de Ginette Anfousse est d'une simplicité astucieuse.

"À chacun ses habitudes," se prononce le narrateur de *Popok le petit Esquimau.* Mais la leçon qu'Yves Thériault donne aux gens du Sud souligne, au contraire, la présence d'une vie spirituelle dépassant les particularités culturelles et linguistiques. "Votre ami Popok, mon ami Popok, notre ami Popok" — nous sommes tous des nôtres. *Popok le petit Esquimau* amorce une histoire d'amour qui nous mènera un jour d'un bout à l'autre du monde.

Popok n'a que huit ans, mais il a de grandes idées. Ce garçon débrouillard, habitant du village de Povungnituk (situé sur les bords de la baie d'Hudson), voudrait le désir ardent de son créateur, d'un retour à un monde qui n'a jamais connu la chute de l'homme et la tour de Babel. "Ce qu'il voulait surtout, Popok, c'était de pouvoir aimer tout le monde sur la terre, qu'ils soient blancs... noirs... jaunes ou rouges, ou de n'importe quelle couleur. Et qu'ils parlent n'importe qu'elle langue!" Popok se fera-t-il comprendre à tous? Sans doute. Différent des adultes, ce garçon connaît même le parler de toutes les bêtes. Et c'est ainsi que débutent les aventures de Popok: il sauve la vie à Hua-Hua (le grand ptarmigan), à Pacopaco (le phoque espiègle), et à Bourlouki (l'ours blanc trop bon pour chasser sa nourriture). À l'aide de ces trois amis, Popok porte secours à une bande de chasseurs de son village qui se sont égarés dans un brouillard au large de la baie. En témoignage de leur reconnaisance, les villageois accordent à Popok la permission de garder avec lui ses trois compagnons; ils s'engagent même à l'aider à les nourrir. Popok, avec Hua-Hua, Pacopaco, et Bourlouki, aura de nombreuses aventures qui nous seront "sûrement racontées dans l'avenir." Les lecteurs peuvent s'attendre à ce que Thériault tienne sa promesse.

Une histoire d'amour, *Popok le petit Esquimau* s'addresse (il est ironique à le constater) aux "guerriers" qui aiment construire des forts en hiver. La vigeur masculine est toujours pour quelque chose chez Thériault, un "constructeur," pour ainsi dire, qui "fait des romans comme on se fait des muscles" (v. *Dictionnaire pratique des auteurs québécois,* 1976). Certes, Popok est de la famille d'Agakuk et de son héritage à bien des égards. Mais Popok jouira-t-il d'une grâce accordée peu fréquemment dans ce bas monde, de la jeunesse sans fin? Ou un jour deviendra-t-il adulte? Nulle réponse pour le moment. En attendant, on peut se permettre, en compagnie de l'auteur, de rêver d'un paradis terrestre. Où, d'après Thériault, trouver ce paradis? Dans le Grand Nord qui hante toujours son esprit. C'est là que se situe son éden

qui se répand, par la voie de l'imagination, dans tout l'univers.

Les oeuvres du vigoureux Thériault visent le public jeunesse à maintes reprises — neuf romans "pour les jeunes" dans les années soixante, par exemple. Avec la parution des *Contes du Sommet-Bleu*, Claude Jasmin, lui aussi qui s'est penché sur le thème du "retour à l'innocence" (v. François Gallays, *Livres et auteurs canadiens*, 1967), s'addresse aux enfants pour la première fois. Et le personnage que joue Jasmin en tant que narrateur et auteur est dissemblable du rôle que s'adonne le raconteur de *Popok le petit Esquimau*: non d'un père de famille trés grand, très sage, et très fort, mais d'un "mon oncle" doux, prêt à chaque instant à participer aux jeux et à la vie des enfants. "Aux enfants, on peut tout dire," Jasmin nous avise. Auprès des enfants, on peut beaucoup apprendre.

En compagnie de ses deux neveux, Christian (six ans) et Pierre-Luc (huit), le narrateur du premier des *Contes du Sommet-Bleu*, "Le dragon," arrive à comprendre ce que ressent un serpent insolite pris dans un petit lac et qui souhaiterait s'épanouir dans la mer. Les autres contes — d'un crapaud géant qui demande qu'on l'emmène à un lac, d'un grand loup qui s'est échappé d'une cage de cirque, d'un orignal qui choisit de regagner la montagne, et d'une famille d'ours qui, à la fin, monte plus au nord, par exemple — nous ramènent à ce thème: la liberté. Les animaux parlent aux hommes pour un moment — et puis s'enfuient. Même l'ours grégaire de Jasmin finit par quitter le lieu des hommes: la sensibilité et l'enchantement ne refusent d'admettre le jugement mûr chez Jasmin. Ces histoires merveilleuses nous proviennent d'un maître raconteur à la fois doué et modeste. Un régal pour nous tous.

CAMILLE R. LA BOSSIERE

TIME-TRAVEL

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, *Junction*. Black Moss, $6.95.

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, *The Way Home, New Poems*. Oberon, n.p.

CANADIAN FICTION has never before seen a train like the one in *Junction*. It carries Ariana Vail, the novel's widowed, middle-aged heroine, from a mysteriously metaphysical junction back to her youth as Ary Oliver in 1948 in a small Ontario town. Not having learned how dangerous it is to doze on this train, Ariana is transported once again in the second half of the novel, this time to 1910, and transformed into her aunt, Ariana Crandall. Brewster's train is a kind of CN branch-line version of a time machine, which, at the very least, gives new meaning to the phrase, "the national dream."

The matter-of-factness with which the novel accomplishes this dreamy trip from reality is part of its ingenuity. But beyond ingenious conception the novel will not go. Wisely perhaps, Brewster avoids too much artifice with her dream-train, and the novel foregoes any post-modernist labyrinth of reality *à la* Robbe-Grillet (even though one of Ariana's namesakes is Ariadne). Nor is the novel primarily a witty or ironical investigation of a displaced character like Nabokov's Pnin, who also has trouble with trains. And *Junction* is not (thankfully) a novel in which the past is re-animated so that the dead may speak with stony faces about the present. What the novel would like to be is a study of a richly sensitive consciousness struggling to focus the blur of dream, nightmare, fantasy, and, in this case, Ovid's metaphysics, for the novel's epigraph invites us to see the work as an exploration of the notions that only change is permanent, that "nothing dies," and that "the spirit wanders, comes now here, now there, and occupies whatever frame it pleases. . . ."

Certainly, the heroine is more ether than flesh, and the further Ariana travels from the present, the closer she comes to losing her immediate identity and becoming a character in the past. She is aware of the problem: "I'm dreaming her dreams, she thought." Such dreaming suggests that Ariana is a Borges character exiled to rural Ontario, but in fact, she's a blander version of an Atwood character surfacing from a time warp.

The contradictions of Ariana's predicament are numerous, and Brewster must contrive explanations for these. As Ariana Crandall, Ary Oliver is in the compromising position of having to "remember" a life which she knows very little about. Conveniently, she is spared the agony of embarrassing errors because Ariana Crandall suffered amnesia; thus Ary Oliver does not have to fake the finer points of quilting. Brewster makes better use of other paradoxes, but for the most part the predicaments are neither threatening nor humorous — but at best curious. The interior monologue concerning these paradoxes (full of too many rhetorical questions: "Was this a practical joke?") is especially stiff and colourless: "If Danny and Priscilla knew that they would quarrel and never marry, they wouldn't sit so happily eating their poached salmon," muses Ariana. And she adds with ecological seriousness that "there wouldn't be salmon from the river for sale thirty years from now. . . ."

Such monologue is necessary because of the heroine's isolation; she has no one with whom she can share the strangeness of her experience. Not that she particularly wants to, for she tells us that she was "trying to be as inconspicuous as she could. . . ." But it is difficult to remain interested in a character who would really rather fade into the parlour's floral wallpaper. One senses, in fact, that Brewster is more interested in the wallpaper, in the texture of history, than in the psychology of her heroine. The result is a lot of late Victorian knick-knackery and early twentieth-century rural detail: corsets and lace, violet scents, and chokecherry jelly. Incident and plot are upstaged by Canadian Ensigns, period postage stamps, automobiles — and Halley's Comet, which, as a periodically returning astral body, at least has symbolic import and keeps the wandering spirit of which Ovid speaks fresh in our minds.

The spirit of Brewster's poetry wanders just as far as the spirit of her fiction, and like Ariana's life, it grows more diffuse the further it travels from home — which, in the case of Brewster's poetry, is where the heart is. Of the three sections which comprise *The Way Home,* the first ("The Hoop"), because it contains the most intimately observed, deeply felt, and intricately imaged poems, succeeds in a way the final two sections do not.

The opening poem of the volume, "Tired of Books," declares an emphatic, if not entirely convincing, poetics:

> Tired of books
>
> I don't want to write
> literature
> the stuff students are examined on
>
> just notes
>
> a few memories

She has succeeded. Occasional images invite remembering, but for the most part the verse is leisurely and carefully prosaic, gliding by both ear and eye in syntactic chunks, more paragraph than stanza. The poems of memory, and of childhood in particular, are the most evocative. Of these, "The Hoop" deserves mention because it so forcefully repeats the issues which are prominent in *Junction* and which so obviously preoccupy Brewster. Like Ariana Vail, the speaker in this poem wants "to go back in time / further and further"; time goes "unreeling and unreeling" until "Alpha and Omega meet / and time begins again / circular

as a child's hoop." Ovid again. In the past, Brewster finds not only recycled time but also erotic girlhood fantasy ("The Young Girl Waits for Love"), and unsettling readjustments of youth and family life in such poems as "Seeing My Picture as a Young Girl," "Graduation Evening," "Birthday," and "Spellbound," while in others the time frame is extended by invoking the archeological past. "Playing the Bones" is a poem which connects the immediate family skeletons with the skeletons of the primitive family of man, and "Remembering Eden" concerns an unearthed Ethiopian skeleton ("Eve-Lucy") with whom the speaker identifies by virtue of their common experiences of love and fear. Yet, as so often happens in Brewster's poetry, the image collapses into a heap of prose. About Eve-Lucy's life, she asks:

> Was life good then
> or neither better nor worse
> than it is now?

Such laxity becomes even more prominent in the final two sections of the book.

In the Canadian section, "East and West," there is a rambling associative poem, "Calgary as a Christmas Tree in February," which tries to capture the distinctiveness, the "thisness" of particular times and places, but, like other poems in the volume, its effect depends too much on the resonance of the final line. We also find museum poems that are cluttered with catalogue: a battle poem, "At Batoche"; one on New Brunswick's folk hero, Houdini, "The Hero as Escape Artist"; and a longer narrative poem, "Helmcken House, Victoria," which shows that Brewster's casualness wrenches narrative as well as lyric.

Brewster looks for her Byzantium in the Antipodes, though the South Pacific is not the colourful mosaic which she expected; she decides in "Comparisons and Expectations" that it is her own "sub-Arctic landscape / that dazzles more." In other poems in this final section of the volume ("Cook's Gardens") she attempts to make the foreign familiar by insisting that she is "no alien / wherever sun and water meet" ("The World is My Country"). And in the poem "Cook's Garden," the speaker is disoriented by the fauna ("I see a sudden / graceless jump of — / a kangaroo? wallaby? —"), but she feels at home with the moon because it remains "neither English nor Australian." There are vivid images in these poems (an Australian sun is a "gold wafer dangling / divine, dangerous"), but largely, one senses that the poet is reaching for subject matter. The poems are littered with reflective moments in hotel rooms, on tour buses, and in museums, but the moments lack a sense of poetic experience and capture instead the desire for it.

Travel poems present special problems for the poetic imagination. The experience may not be so much felt as observed, and there is always the temptation of empty description. One response to these dangers is itself another danger — prosaic speculation, which characterizes much of *The Way Home*. The themes of colonization, of nation-building and "home," of "the family of man" are significant enough in themselves, and one senses that they spring from genuine sources: skepticism, fear, and a desire for the soul's permanence. Yet one wishes that Brewster would indeed find the way home to the poems of the first part of this volume, where experience, though less exotic, is more intimate and imaginatively crafted.

BRENTON MACLAINE

LE RÊVE

MICHEL TREMBLAY, *La Duchesse et le roturier.* Leméac, $14.95.

JEAN ETHIER-BLAIS, *Les Pays étrangers.* Leméac, $24.95.

LE TROISIEME VOLET des Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal — le quatrième sera *Des nouvelles d'Edouard,* lettres — ramène les principaux termes de la série et les multiples personnages de la tribu: la placide et intelligente Grosse Femme, ses fils, son mari (très peu), sa belle-mère, sa belle-soeur, sa nièce Thérèse, adolescente délurée, qui vivent tous sous le même toit. Edouard, quadragénaire qui *sort* beaucoup, fait le lien entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, la maison et la ville, la vie et le spectacle. *La Duchesse et le roturier,* c'est lui, deux personnes en une seule: homme-femme, vendeur de souliers et travesti, snob et simple.

On connaissait Edouard par le monologue dramatique de *La Duchesse de Langeais* (1970), on le voit ici surtout de l'extérieur: avec ses *chums* du poulailler du Palace, avec les vedettes de variétés, dont la Poune et Juliette Pétrie, dans sa famille, écrasé par l'amour de sa mère, libéré par la compréhension de sa belle-soeur. Après bien des péripéties, il triomphe, déguisé en duchesse, lors d'un récital de Tino Rossi. Sa propre soeur ne le reconnaît pas. Il décide alors de partir pour Paris, via New York.

Ce roman du spectacle est un roman du rêve, du mythe, de la *vision* intérieure. Sortant des coulisses du *show-business* et des bars spécialisés, on tombe dans des rues enneigées, redevenues compagnardes. Nature et artifices se combattent, s'appuient. "Le rêve était devenu une seconde nature chez lui." Chez Edouard, qui imite les *stars* afin de se trouver lui-même; chez le neveu Marcel, qui ira peut-être à l'asile pour avoir caressé un chat imaginaire (Duplessis), fréquenté les trois Parqes (Rose, Violette et Mauve) et improvisé prodigieusement sur le piano à queue d'un grand magasin; chez la Grosse Femme, qui lit des romans pour s'évader et s' "aider à vivre!"; chez son jeune fils, futur écrivain. . . .

Le livre lui-même est spectaculairement — ou spéculairement — présenté. Précédés d'une multiple dédicace et de mercis, de deux épigraphes d'Andersen et de Balzac, le prologue, les trois parties et trois intercalaires s'ornent des "dits" de Victoire, la sage et immémoriale grand-mère, figure folklorique (soeur de Josaphat-le-Violoneux) et personnage réaliste: "Les signes du ciel viennent rarement d'en haut." Le roman se termine, fait exceptionnel, sur une brève bibliographie des ouvrages consultés, dont *le Burlesque au Québec* de Chantal Hébert.

L'immédiat après-guerre, entre *Bonheur d'occasion* et *Tit-Coq,* est saisi par Tremblay dans son atmosphère et ses ambiguïtés: religiosité sans religion, ignorance et ouverture, quartiers villageois, chaleur et lumières. On s'enferme *ou* on sort, on travaille *ou* on s'amuse. On est pauvre, mais on consomme et on produit du rêve. Le monde traditionnel n'évolue pas, il bascule. *La Duchesse et le roturier* est à lire en même temps que *les Pays étrangers* de Jean Ethier-Blais: le plateau Mont-Royal enforce Outremont.

Jean Ethier-Blais est à l'aise dans tous les genres de la littérature intime: il a un *Dictionnaire de moi-même* (1976), tient sûrement son Journal, prépare ses Mémoires. Critique, romancier, chroniqueur, il nous entretient toujours de ses états d'âme, souvenirs ou impressions. Il *lit* sa vie comme il lit Saint-Simon, Proust ou Madame du Deffand. Jean Ethier-Blais est à lui-même son propre classique, son meilleur personnage.

Il devait un jour ou l'autre écrire *Les Pays étrangers,* dont il emprunte le titre à un proverbe allemand: "Chaque homme porte dans son coeur un pays

étranger. Il ne devient lui-même qu'après l'avoir découvert et exploré." Ethier-Blais n'a rien découvert ici — il savait déjà tout —, mais il a exploré en détail sa pré-adolescence, ses maîtres et amis de collège, Borduas et le milieu aristique, intellectuel, mondain, politique, du Montréal de 1947-1948. Pays familiers.

"Les personnages de ce roman relèvent de l'imagination de l'auteur et parfois de la vie," indique une note liminaire. J'inverserais les termes: la mémoire est ici plus précise, plus fertile que l'invention. Elle en est même encombrante. Il y a plus de clefs que de portes ce roman interminable. Le portail, bien en évidence, est le Père Bergevin, qui publia *Leur espérance* sous le pseudonyme de Germain Laval, comme le Père Rodolphe Dubé avait écrit *Leur inquiétude* sous le nom de François Hertel. Le collège de Mont-Pelé correspond parfaitement — même s'il est rapproché de Montréal — au Collège du Sacré-Coeur de Sudbury, *alma mater* de Jean-Ethier Blais qui deviendra Jean Ethier-Blais. Celui-ci serait-il le jeune et brillant Pierre-Paul du roman? Modestement, "l'auteur de ce livre" se classe parmi les "médiocres et paresseux" anonymes du centre de la classe. N'en croyons rien. Il tire trop bien les ficelles. "Ah! que ne suis-je Dante!", pourrait-il s'exclamer, devant la cheminée de l'INCO, comme le Père Bergevin à sa descente du train.

Jean Ethier-Blais, qui a toujours rêvé de fonder un ordre religieux et de le diriger sans en faire partie, appelle "angélistes" — ce nom leur convient mal — les jésuites dont il fait sonner le trousseau de clefs. Il leur donne une origine italienne (non basque espagnole), des *Ecrits* fondateurs au lieu des *Exercises*, etc. Le recteur du collège, historiquement le Père Guy Courteau, doit sans doute le nom de Bérenger au prénom de sa soeur, Bérengère, qui publia quelque chose. Leur oncle célèbre, Marcel Dugas, apparaît dans *Les Pays étrangers* comme une ombre errant dans son exil parisien et sa mort montréalaise.

Les "pays étrangers," ce sont d'abord l'art et la littérature, puis les amitiés à décanter. La vie se déroule, le livre se fait par évocations et connotations: des citations latines, un cantique de Jean Racine à la chapelle, une entrevue avec Robert Elie, conseiller artistique, un portrait de François Meurice, "critique d'art, professeur à l'université, gros blond souriant et caoutchouteux" qui doit son nom à *Maurice* Gagnon et son prénom à *François*-Marc Gagnon, son fils. Les *happy few* pourront se délecter à ce jeu de masques transparents.

Ethier-Blais n'a pas la rigueur hautaine de Montherlant. Il (se) raconte avec une verve qu'on pourrait dire journalistique. Tout est ici écho, rumeur, anecdote, discours. Tantôt complice, tantôt ironique, l'auteur fait revivre une époque, ou plutôt les idées et les clichés sur une époque. Pour le peuple, voir Michel Tremblay. Ethier-Blais s'est réservé l'élite, toutes les élites: les bons élèves, le clergé instruit, un chien aux "grands yeux de philosophe," Borduas et Duplessis en personnes, quelques notables et fonctionnaires, un couple (le seul) de bourgeoises raffinées, Mesdames Soublière et Dupré, mère et fille — c'est la famille de Pierre-Paul —, qui aiment les "visions de neige" d'Ozias Leduc et ouvrent une galerie de tableaux rue Laurier.

Voilà le dernier salon où l'on cause, voilà le centre géoculturel des *Pays étrangers*. Tout se noue et se dénoue autour de ces dames: Bergevin défroque, Borduas mijote son *Refus global*, Philippe Aycelin fait sa cour à Madame Dupré, Claude Gauvreau et Martha Jackson font de la figuration intelligente. Pour les vacances finales, Pierre-Paul ira voir mourir son meilleur ami, le solide Simon, dans une ferme nicolétaine qui est une véritable gentilhommière. "Inutile de

voyager lorsqu'on a l'avantage d'être à l'étranger chez soi!"

LAURENT MAILHOT

ON HÉBERT

ANNE HEBERT, *Les Fous de Bassan.* Le Seuil, $12.95.

ROBERT HARVEY, *Kamouraska d'Anne Hébert: Une Écriture de la passion suivi de: Pour un nouveau Torrent.* Hurtubise HMH, n.p.

LES FOUS DE BASSAN, a complex, terse, yet ambiguous novel, won its author the prestigious Prix Fémina for 1982. But though Anne Hébert has spoken openly and honestly about her work and herself as a writer, the novel remains enigmatic, perhaps because of its richness and the multiple readings it offers.

The title refers to the familiar name that the inhabitants of Bonaventure Island give to a type of seagull. The novel is about birds, but also about the connections between man and nature in an imaginary place called Griffin Creek. The four families of American Loyalists living there since 1782 have learned to exist in better harmony with nature than with men. Incapable of adapting to American Independence, unwilling to abandon their atavistic beliefs and allegiance, they formed a closed society, convinced of their superiority and proud of their singularity. But the small colony is slowly dispersed after the sudden disappearance the night of August 31, 1936, of two cousins, almost sisters, aged seventeen and fifteen. Their death broke the link that kept the colony united. The link was made of common lust, shame, guilt, fear, curiosity, cruelty — but it had motivated the life of the village for the previous two hundred years — and the same secrets, indolence, beliefs, and complicity which had kept them united now caused their slow dispersion. Only a handful of decrepit citizens and houses is left, and the novel begins with the mock celebration of the bicentenary of the village's founding.

Throughout the novel, the reader is hoping to find out who is responsible for the deaths of Nora and Olivia, yet almost from the beginning it is obvious that the distinction between guilt and innocence is irrelevant. All the inhabitants of Griffin Creek are guilty and innocent of the same desire, the same hypocrisy, the same bad and good faith. The closeness of their cohabitation has forced them to remain secret to each other, to hide fears and dreams. Only the violence of nature seems adequate, to reflect their own inner turmoil; hence it becomes a rival.

The novel, instead of resting on the manichean opposition between light and darkness, good and evil, life and death (a pattern many critics have often found in Hébert's work), seems to me to rest more on the notion of simultaneity, and to focus on the imperceptible shifts in the form and substance of given patterns of behaviour as dictated not by love or reasoning but by the imperative desire to affirm life. If Stevens is responsible for the murder of Nora and the rape and murder of Olivia, it is almost as if he were trying to match or surpass the violence of the wind, the piercing screams of the birds, the intolerable constancy of the waves. The competition is between himself and nature. People, like objects and plants, have their own centred existence: their nature is to exist; they are neither good nor bad. The match is between organisms both of different species and different orders: man and nature, man and time, man and objects. To relieve the tension caused by these fruitless, almost mythical, confrontations, men subjugate women in this novel, and women humiliate men. Yet the novel is not about hate but about sensual cravings, indomitable will, and at times even conscience.

Just as the characters are somewhat greater than life-size, so is the novel's

form, for it uses patterns reminiscent of the New Testament. Five characters give six different accounts of summer 1936. The book of the Reverend Nicolas Jones is written in October 1982; the letters of Stevens to an acquaintance in Florida are written like a journal during the summer of 1936; the book of 15-year-old Nora Atkins is written during summer 1936 and ends before her disappearance; the book of Perceval and others is also written during summer 1936; a posthumous chronicle by Olivia is written from the depths of the ocean; and a final letter from Stevens Brown to his acquaintance in Florida is written, like the minister's version at the beginning of the novel, during the fall of 1982. The common trait of all five characters seems to be the incapacity to humanize the dreams, the aspirations, the desires, and the hidden furor of each heart. The four central versions of summer 1936 reveal the specificity of each personality (much as the four Gospels do), but also neutralize the notion of guilt. The two other versions (one book and one epistle written in the present) frame these four. Jones's book follows the Pauline tradition, somewhat obscurantist, dogmatic, self-centred, and eminently unkind to women. But Stevens's version is decidedly diabolical. Jones cynically invokes Saint Paul and uses both New and Old Testaments to punctuate his reminiscences and to illustrate the many facets of his tyranny, but Stevens invokes Rimbaud and shows both the cynicism and the fascination with risk that often is attributed to the poet.

The most moving versions of summer 1936 are Nora's, Perceval's, and Olivia's. Nora's version, the most direct, vital, unencumbered of the three, reflects with fairly simple and repetitive sentence structures her joy in a newly found sexuality, her discovery that she can choose what to accept and reject of tradition. Nora is lucid, in a hurry to live, filled with anticipation, hope and the sureness of her attractiveness to men.

Sixteen-year-old Perceval Brown is a very shy man and therefore has a wild and unpredictable side to his personality (Perceval is also the name of the fiery stallion in Hébert's *The Torrent,* the alter ego of François, the central character, and an agent of justice). The Perceval of this novel is the only character who has passion, will, conscience, but no visible reason. He is considered the village idiot. He has compassion and seeks tenderness. He has the human qualities that his brother Stevens does not possess. He is, however, incapable of expressing himself with words: only cries surface from the depths of his being to signify either joy or anguish. His narration reads like a list of nouns, verbs, onomatopeic interjections. Instead of standard French sentence structure, he produces a chain of words — linked by free association of ideas though respecting linear chronology. Perceval's narration is interrupted by that of other witnesses; theirs is grammatically and intellectually more coherent, but the juxtaposition of the two styles makes the idiot's version all the more lyrical. It is also through Perceval's eyes that the events following the disappearance of the two girls is seen. Thus the whole machinery of justice is questioned through the lucid vision of the idiot.

The most touching chronicle, however, is that of Olivia; it sounds more like a prayer than a narration. She has gained eternity by becoming a sea creature. The ocean took her dead body from the shore of Griffin Creek and never returned it. Yet her unappeased desire still haunts the shore and the village: she returns with the tide and the wind to recall her joyous youth, the mystery of the death of her mother, her devotion to her father and her brothers, her attentiveness to the dictates of the women who preceded her, and her attraction to the man who had

the power to make havoc of her orderly, calm universe. A delicate balance of nostalgia, humour, innocence, eroticism, and fury makes this character's version of summer 1936 the most elegiac and moving. As with the other characters' versions, she stops short of writing about the final violence.

It is tempting to say that the novel, because of the particularly skilful interweaving of narrative voices, the continuous shift in perspective, the juxtaposition of time segments, the variations in style, and the numerous intertextual references, is a true feast of technical virtuosity. It is, of course, all of that, but the formal sophistication is secondary to the emotional tension it creates. It is certain that thematic, archetypal, formalist, and linguistic critics will find a banquet. I am at a loss to say, however, which method will account best for the particular atmosphere of savage beauty, desolation, movement, sensual loneliness that emerges from the fibres of the novel. The insistent, piercing, inconsolable cries of the birds emulate perhaps the laments of craving of the inhabitants of Griffin Creek, but they also conjure up and exorcise the enigmatic and wild beauty of the landscape along the St. Lawrence "between Quebec and the Atlantic Ocean." What people can inhabit that space? Naïve fanatics and madmen would venture the risk, like the inhabitants of Griffin Creek. This novel is in their honour.

* * *

Since the early 1970's an increasing number of Québec academics have practised literary analysis in the tradition of formalist and post-structural criticism, concentrating their research more on the mechanics of creativity than on the sociological and philosophical affiliation within the general development of cultural history. Québec fiction writers have furnished an almost untouched target for this particular type of synchronic perspective. It has, in fact, enlarged, enriched, and supported the predominant diachronic and thematic approach of many well-established critics of the previous generation.

Robert Harvey is inspired mostly by the works of French critics and theorists: Genette, Todorov, Barthes, Sollers. For the study of *Kamouraska* he concentrates on the technique of distancing used by Anne Hébert. The essay on *The Torrent*, by contrast, is methodologically less systematic; it offers, nevertheless, a new reading of the short story, situating it in the Judeo-Christian tradition of predestination, suffering, and redemption. According to this interpretation, the hero, François, at the end of the story, rather than contemplating suicide, has acquired a new consciousness of life. We, the readers, therefore, are confronted with "The Passion" of François, much in the tradition of the Passion of Christ. In the analysis of *Kamouraska* the idea of passion as suffering is maintained, but the sacrifice, in this instance, is seen as leading to a double transgression: the first is the murder of Elisabeth's first husband, the second an extension of the first, but at the level of the word, the expression, the particular way in which the central character reconstructs her role. It is in this part of the analysis of the narrative technique that Robert Harvey shows himself most clearly as a disciple of Genette.

He examines the diversity of the narrative voices (those of Elisabeth, the omniscient narrator, the moribund second husband, and the chorus) which are at odds with each other and undermine the reliability of the characters' perceptions of the present (Elisabeth waiting for her husband to die). He then studies three realms of the narrative text: the dream of Elisabeth, her effort to reconstruct the past, and the ambiguous role

of the principal narrator, who is both subject and object. The narrator, commenting on the double role, is trying to reach narrative autonomy.

Another chapter examines the fusion between past and present time and the subsequent "contamination" of the past by the present. In fact, the central thesis that Harvey proposes is that different techniques of retrospection and anticipation stem from one single project: "to exorcise the past by the force of the present." The last chapters study Elisabeth's imaginary reconstruction of the crime. Harvey proposes to consider the novel as a "commemorative ritual," with traits of Catholic liturgy, because it functions according to a double transgression: human (the murder) and narrative (the scrambling of chronology, the questioning of the narrator's reliability). Recollection (in this case invented) thus becomes commemoration in "the vertiginous silence of profanation" and acquires mythical dimension. Both studies stem from one central premise or intuition: that Anne Hébert's writing celebrates the passion of man and has both the form and the tone of sacred scripture. The observation is certainly pertinent and well-founded. Yet what Harvey does not succeed in accounting for is the humour, the vitality (without being blasphemous or bawdy), the sensual tension, and the ambivalence of desire as destructive and exhilarating forces. The concern to apply rigorously and meticulously specific analytical guidelines (to account for the narrative distancing, by the analyzing narrative voices, levels, and chronology) has somewhat obscured the spirit of the original text.

The wish to respect the sequences of narration as they appear in *Kamouraska* rather than to pursue a central idea thesis is perhaps responsible for the seeming fragmentation of Harvey's book. In Chapter 1 the narrative voices are studied mostly in the events preceding the dream of Elisabeth, Chapter 2 studies mostly the dream, and Chapter 4 deals with Elizabeth's imaginary reconstruction of her lover's journey to kill her husband. It thus becomes difficult for the reader to grasp the relation between the conclusions in one chapter and those in the next, or to detect one or several premises (formal or philosophical) which might have guided the entire research. In short it almost seems that the theoretical framework occupies the place of honour. The study, nevertheless, is judicious, thorough, and filled with sound and astute insights.

GRAZIA MERLER

ENDLESSLY TALKING

ROBERT WALLACE and CYNTHIA ZIMMERMAN, *The Work: Conversations with English-Canadian Playwrights*. Coach House, n.p.

I HAVE OFTEN LONGED to meet a medium who could conjure up the ghost of Shakespeare so I could ask him some questions. Did the same actor play Cordelia and the Fool? Did Falstaff really babble of green fields? Why *did* Hamlet hesitate to kill Claudius? And what — nudge, nudge — was all that about the second-best bed?

Living playwrights can be interviewed, and Canadian playwrights are — repeatedly. Sometimes, incestuously, the interviewer even asks questions about statements made in previous interviews. Playwrights are not the only subjects of such investigations, of course. Novelists and poets and other kinds of writers also submit to the ubiquitous tape recorder, so much so that one can expect an academic study of the interview as genre any day now.

The temptation to ask the living playwright what he feels about a production of one of his plays, how he regards the

state of theatre in Canada, and just what he meant to convey about such-and-such a theme or character in a play is a powerful temptation indeed. Why bother struggling to produce a critical examen of a play when you can get the scoop straight from the horse's mouth? Yet the interview as genre presupposes that the playwright is willing — and able — to answer one's questions, and willing — and able — to do so honestly. Such is not always the case. Tom Stoppard, for instance, is an interviewer's dream, because he gabbles wittily and at length. But you can't always trust what he says. And Harold Pinter, asked what his plays were about, once snapped, "The weasel under the cocktail cabinet" — and has to his chagrin seen his put-down quoted, analyzed, mulled, and worried over in print by critics ever since. The Canadian playwrights interviewed in *The Work* are more co-operative, if less witty. Only occasionally sardonic and almost never refusing a question, they do their earnest best to respond fully and thoughtfully to the questions posed by the interviewers. And yet, and yet. Can we really believe George F. Walker when he claims he never writes parody? And John Gray, when he claims he is not particularly interested in publishing his work? Should we accept the meaning an author says he intended to convey when it conflicts with what we understand?

The Work occasionally deals with such intention, such meaning, but more often the interviewers' questions elicit explanations of the process of writing and producing plays rather than comment on the meaning of the final product. Perhaps it is natural that a book about theatre should have such emphasis, and indeed theatre historians coming to this book will find much of interest and of use. Teachers and students of dramatic literature will find less. One can dip into the interview with Rex Deverell and learn that he called a play *Boiler Room Suite* partly to make fun of Neil Simon's *California Suite*; one picks up a few details about the research that Sharon Pollock put into *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident*. Such facts help the literary critic, but they are thinly sprinkled in these discussions about artistic directors, theatre finances, and plans for the future. Ephemera dominates, as it does in the theatre itself.

Wallace and Zimmerman are well informed about theatrical ephemera; they have done their homework on the playwrights and on the Canadian theatre scene. They canvass the central questions: regionalism, nationalism, the importance of success in New York; workshopping, second productions, collective creations; naturalism versus experimentalism; the degree to which plays are autobiographical, the degree to which Canadian theatre is healthy. Yet to read *The Work* straight through, as a reviewer must, instead of dipping into it, is to grow weary of questions about these same issues and their predictable answers. Mercifully, the interviewers' questions do not sink to the level of "Do you write your first draft in longhand or on the typewriter?" and only occasionally do they stoop to such an unanswerable banality as "Why was your play such a success?" or "Why has your play not had a second production?" But neither do their questions rise to the challenging or the theoretical. They do not ask, What books do you read? What are your politics and why? How important is language in your creation of a character and how do you cultivate your sensitivity to language? Why do you write comedy? Is tragedy possible? Perhaps playwrights are incapable of theoretical or conceptual analysis and self-analysis — some claim to be — but one would like to know a little more about their minds.

The playwrights' minds are ill-served

by what I presume is faithful transcription of interview tapes. The "yeah's" and "you-know's," and "well's" and "I mean's" make these creators of speech sound particularly inept as speakers themselves. And appalling ineptitude was at work somewhere in the process of transcribing and printing their speech. Wallace, Zimmerman, and/or Coach House Press have produced a bookful of misprints and howlers: actresses "clammer" to play a role, "I was only they're five days," "holis bolis," "straightjacket." Surely an editor somewhere along the line could have caught the obvious phonetic errors and some of the other illiteracies. It's a disgraceful printing job from cover to cover, including, on the back cover, the promise of "*auto*biographical" notes.

The biographical notes are useful, the lists of published and unpublished plays (not always accurate) give a sense of the scope of each playwright's work, and the "Selected Criticism and Commentary" on each author's works helps the reader find out more. What one finds out most vividly is how little analytical and evaluative criticism of Canadian drama there is. These lists are selected, indeed spotty, but they must of necessity emphasize newspaper and journal reviews of productions and publications because there isn't much more. The playwrights themselves occasionally write about plays and theatre, and they submit to endless interviews. But even *Canadian Drama*, where, by analogy with *Modern Drama*, one would expect to find serious academic criticism, produces mainly reviews, historical overviews, and still more interviews. There is an occasional essay; there is a book, perhaps two. But no more. The scarcity is understandable: the critic is as always caught in the dilemma of whether he is analyzing theatre or literature; the dramatists are alive, and talking; the drama is young. But however young it may be, Canadian drama is no longer in its infancy. And it's time for serious criticism of Canadian drama to climb out of the cradle too.

ANN MESSENGER

EQUESTRIANS

RAFAEL BARRETO-RIVERA, *Voices, Noises*. Coach House, $6.95.

BP NICHOL, *The Martyrology, Book 5*. Coach House, n.p.

ONE HALF OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN here ride forth from the Coach House. The first rider brandishes his first major poetry collection, while the second rider brandishes the long-awaited fifth book of his life-long poem. Images of creation and apocalypse abound, as journeys are undertaken and documented. Answers are sought in language and silence. These two are master equestrians.

Co-foundership of the sound poetry ensemble, the Four Horsemen, continued friendship, a shared publisher (Rafael Barreto-Rivera's book was "seen through the Press by bp Nichol"), and coincident publishing dates — these specifics link Barreto-Rivera and Nichol and justify their joint consideration here, despite all the particular differences between their two books.

Barreto-Rivera, born in Puerto Rico, immigrated to Canada in the early 1960's. He has published poems in magazines and chapbooks, done translations, and been a part of the Four Horsemen's two books and two records. *Voices, Noises* reflects the diversity of his past. Forms and subjects vary; lengths and patterning differ. While some poems are fairly traditional, others display a post-structuralist discontinuity. Barreto-Rivera reflects on his Puerto Rican heritage and describes both the island of his memories and the island of his more recent visits, while he also considers Canadian friends (Nichol

and other members of the Four Horsemen among them), Canadian places, and his own vocation. Many of the poems are an attempt by the poet to come to terms with his world: his return to Puerto Rico ("The Marriage of the Prostitute in Puerto Rican Folklore"), the island's poverty and exploitation ("San Juan Bautista"), and the ugly reality of war ("Bolivian Warfare"). The Puerto Rican landscape is often described in fulsome, sexual terms, with sea, moon, lotus, lily images recurring. Love is both the harsh sale of the prostitute ("the best meat of the island") and the releasing joy of a free relationship ("Risking Rescue"). Birth is both the individual experience ("Landside"), and the cosmic nascency ("Memoranda from the Milky Way").

As a poet, Barreto-Rivera is fundamentally concerned with creativity — the problem of, joy of language. Words do not come easily in the last quarter of the twentieth century after the terrible deceptions and excesses they have been made to detail or defend. But more than to most, the inadequacies and imprecisions of language are evident to Barreto-Rivera, for two tongues impel and confound him. Spanish, his birth language, is familiar but largely now forsaken. English, his adopted language, is still full of foreign overtones. Uncertainty dogs the poet in his "search / for lasting speech." Even while claiming his deficiencies, Barreto-Rivera ironically demonstrates his power and versatility:

> speaking bad English
> mutilated Spanish
> because my language, God
> is not
> of human sound
> but of a growling kind
> that growls even in happiness,
> lacking refinement —
> it breaks
> and binds the roots and bark
> of sense
> for lack of subtle hands.

Barreto-Rivera's two most important long poems, "Report from Antiface" and "Base Infinite," both explore creativity and the voices within, the beckoning siren-call of silence, and the need to speak out. He describes the masks he wears, the journeys undertaken to seek self-understanding, and the resultant self-expression. The discordant noises of his heritage, the growls of "a halfmute speaking," must be transformed, through love, caring, and renewed vision, into a voice true to his poetic ideal, "a sub-angelic mix / of [his] loved languages." "Base Infinite" describes "the anxiety of influence," but nevertheless Baretto-Rivera recommits himself to "the life of writing" which is still ironically "the life he neglects":

> There
> every thought demands
> its contradiction; every form
> forces itself into
> some new deformity; every fact
> aspires to be fiction: every need
> becomes a chance
> for its fulfillment; every he
> is he becoming him along the axis of
> his thinking.

With admirable insight and ambition, Barreto-Rivera concludes "Base Infinite": "He is and he would be / more than he is." For Barreto-Rivera is the uncertain newcomer to the English language, but he is also the deft, poetic craftsman. His desire for excellence, his "search for lasting speech," results in *Voices, Noises*: the transliteration of the world's cacophonous welter as well as the capturing of "the very songs the very ifs / of seeing."

Journeying to understand one's place and past with a lengthening poetic line and form, both Barreto-Rivera and Nichol seek a renewed vision and language. There is now a significant number of writers in this country with a renewed sense of place (or remembered, dreamed, or mythologized place), a communal regionalism that provides a strong support

and basis for the writing of poetry ("these friends writers struggle as i do / make a mend / join the torn letters of the language"). A large proportion of these writers is also using the long poem form, always important in Canada, but now used with more experimentation, more openness, and certainly much energy, in an attempt to solve structural dilemmas. In *The Martyrology, Book 5* Nichol locates his place very specifically and explores in puns and word-play the particularities of Toronto's Annex area. Myth and map both structure his lines, as the grid of streets prefaces the book, and their names repeat in new combinations to create Annex myths. Writing elsewhere about Dennis Lee and Andy Warhol, Matt Cohen emphasizes one irony of Canadian regionalism (used throughout here in an expansive, positive sense, not an insular pejorative one):

> where but in Canada does a poet get praised for being regional if he or she lives outside of Toronto, but damned for it if he lives *in* Toronto? Why is it so laudably human to write about the gulls of Vancouver, or the snakes and gophers of a Prairie childhood, but parochial and power-mongering to write about Jarvis Street or Yonge Street?

Nichol unapologetically takes the smaller Toronto streets of his own particular milieux and creates an authentic mythology replete with the "tension between place and culture" which Eli Mandel claims is so necessary a part of regionalism in Canada today. Nichol's placement of place is also the mapping of a consciousness, cartography as a means of understanding. He travels across Canada and across the Atlantic in search of signs. Robert Kroetsch says, "To understand the long poem of our time would be to understand our time." This, then, is Nichol's endeavour. His individual time includes his place, his roots, his heritage, his language, and like many others he sets off poetically to discover them, while in so doing discovers his "retroactively recognized formal model (the *utanikki*)," that is the poetic diary of Japanese tradition. The *utanikki* accounts for the travel journal aspects, heightened awareness of time, universalization of personal events, fictionalization of happenings, and (to use Earl Miner's words) "the free floating of art." This seems a long way from the Canadian long poem, but in fact there seems to be a growing practice of the *utanikki* in this country (Nichol, Fred Wah, and Roy Kiyooka to name a few), but this is subject for a larger consideration and is important here only as it pertains to Nichol's latest volume.

The first two books of *The Martyrology,* in mythic form, describe the lives and travels of several "imaginary" saints. The next three books are more personal, with lyric descriptions of the poet's friends and loves and his travels across the country and to Britain. All five books present the search for a renewed poetic language as a search for spiritual renewal. Nichol explains, "Book V was structured on the idea of the chain — chain of thot, chain of images, chain of events — so that in the writing when a branching of thot occurred i would try to follow all the chains that opened up." This indulgence is both the book's richness and its confusion. What the reader is faced with is abundant choice and continually new experiences of the poem. There are twelve sections or chains which can be read consecutively, or the reader can follow Nichol's complex thought processes and when signalled by what appears in the text as a footnote notation, jump to the section indicated. Such directions appear throughout the book, and some sections are noted more than once.

The difficulties and methods of structuring the long poem are here concern and subject. Nichol is both playful and profound, seemingly in search of an altered state of truth in which words com-

municate through the placement and replacement of individual letters, and sense is discovered in puns. "Complexity dissolves into simplicity," says Nichol. But the jokes are not simplistic, they are clever, humorous, annoying, and ultimately illuminating. (The earth becomes a seer's ball, "(ou sphere / (which is the global view / glow ball crystal vision / clear)).") Nichol's "mirthology" recognizes the solemnity in play, as he claims "i ... find my 'own' path / back into language thru play." And this route is necessary because language needs reclaiming: "we name as fits our purpose / shape language to our own ends / all the lies, dishonour, death, and treason such a use portends." Foregrounding his language, Nichol employs syntactical ambiguity, lingual transformations, bilingual wordplay, vowel shifts, and the realignment/realinement of letters. In fragmentation — continuity and hope. In search of a meaningful semiotic system, Nichol tries theatrical and musical notations, the atomization of words, and the ideal of an ultimate and lasting condensation of thought, feeling, and form (chain 10 is one line only: "every(all at(toge(forever) ther) once) thing"). Nichol explores synchronicities (linguistic, aural, visual, historical, mythical) of the past (voyagings, mappings, discoverings, creatings, bridgings). For St. And, that saint of connections, seems still to preside over Book 5.

Like Klein's "nth Adam" Nichol names his world into a new existence, and his nominalism becomes a political statement:

> living out the latter days of a civilization
> distrusting systems for the lures they are
> wanting
> nonetheless
> 'a solution' or
> some way to light the candle
> reveal finally the face of oppressor and
> oppressed
> dispel the clouds of rhetoric
> beneath which their distress breeds

Despite apocalyptic fears, renewing himself and his language, Nichol reasserts his basic humanity:

> simply to have said
> i began them [these few books]
> carried them thru to
> the end or
> was outlived by them in a way to
> begin to
> be human

The contemplation of language leads to answers in life. The contemplation of life leads to answers in language. "A writing against the end of speech": Nichol's humanity is manifest. Book 6 is already underway, but there is plenty to reflect on in Book 5 until the next one is published.

ANN MUNTON

MISSION MEMOIRS

WILLIAM HENRY COLLISON, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, ed. and annotated by Charles Lillard. Sono Nis, $14.95.

IN 1873, WILLIAM COLLISON responded to the call of the Anglican Church Missionary Society for volunteers to work among the Indians of the West Coast of British Columbia. *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, published in 1915, is his memoir of more than forty years of missionary work among the Tsimshian, Haida, and Nishga Indians.

Not unexpectedly, Collison's narrative sense was more informed by the Old Testament than by the novel: incidents crowd one another in his memoir without much distinction; it sometimes becomes difficult to differentiate names and anecdotes, one death-bed conversion seems like another. But despite the lack of considered narrative structure (and again like the Old Testament), certain figures and situations *do* stand forth vividly from the welter of anecdote, particularly those

connected with the Haida. That they do is the effect of Collison's very real strengths as a memoirist. Among the first white men to visit the Indians of this area, he observed them before proselytizers like himself swayed them from native custom. His keen eye for social customs and his marked sense of adventure produce an account rich in detail about the people he was trying to convert.

Sono Nis has reprinted this memoir with help from Charles Lillard's editing which removes many of its difficulties. Almost all the misprints of the original have been corrected (some of those remaining have an amusing appropriateness: a wolf-infested trail becomes a "trial"; and Collison finds himself unable to "altar" a decision). What Lillard has most carefully done for the memoir is to provide a frame of reference, through notes, for readers less familiar with West Coast missionary activities than the "friends" for whom Collison wrote. He does so unobtrusively, with a dry concision which leaves the imagination, historical or otherwise, little hold. Collison gives fascinating hints, for example, that there was a good deal of rivalry between himself and his Methodist counterpart on the coast. Unchristian and sectarian though this collision may have been, one would have liked Lillard to have developed its drama in less modest notes. Lillard has also modernized Collison's spelling of place names and provided a glossary of equivalents between the original and this text, an invaluable help to anyone tracing Collison's movements on a map. But the only map reproduced is Bishop Ridley's (1904), a map most inadequate to the demands of this memoir.

Lillard's other major editorial activity has been the excision of "those overtly religious passages our ancestors so enjoyed, which today are of little interest or historical value." These excisions produce a readable account, but they leave Collison's Christianity a mixture of the statistical, the muscular and the medical. We are frequently told how many are baptized or married, but there is little spiritual reflection in the memoir as edited. However, because Collison's Christianity had a strongly practical side to it, this editing is less distorting than it might have been, given a different subject. For Collison's dangerous canoe trips, his willingness to share primitive conditions and a diet of dried fish and eulachon grease, his endurance on the trail and his skill with a rifle, do as much to win the Indians as does the Word. Similarly, his account raises the suspicion that the medical skills of the Collisons earned the Church more converts than his preaching; that his war against the medicine men was a medical more than a spiritual battle; that, in convincing the Haida to inter their dead instead of leaving them about the camps to rot, he was moved by sanitation as much as by belief in Christian burial.

Collison's memoirs suggest he could occasionally be overbearing, righteous, and momentarily given, faced with a "barbarically" clad congregation, to believe that clothes made the Christian. But he more consistently shows himself a man of tact and energy and of quick and fair judgment. What finally emerges from his memoirs is evidence of the missionaries as a genuine civilizing force. Civilizing not because they spread the Gospel, but because, in their dedication, they were (temporarily at least) victorious against gambling and *hootchinoo* and the killings which attended both; because they ended slavery among the Haida; because they introduced smallpox vaccine and opposed shamanism with sanitation. Whatever the destruction of those who followed him, Collison left the life of the West Coast Indians improved.

SHIRLEY NEUMAN

DES MOTS & DES MAUX

CLAIRE DE LAMIRANDE, *L'Occulteur*. Québec/Amérique, $12.95.

PIERRE CHARBONNEAU, *La Baie heureuse*. Pierre Tisseyre, n.p.

YVON PARE, *La Mort d'Alexandre*. VLB éditeur, $14.95.

QUE CE SOIT AU NIVEAU des mots — de leur pouvoir d'illumination, de métamorphose et aussi d'occultation — que le dernier roman de Claire de Lamirande construit son sens n'est pas étonnant puisque le titre même du roman est un néologisme qui a pour effet d'annoncer, d'un seul geste, l'écriture d'un récit non seulement "moderne," mais éminemment conscient de sa modernité.

Dans ce roman dense, poétique et riche, jouer avec les mots veut dire accéder au langage de l'imaginaire et à l'expression d'une jouissance verbale. Car avant même de retracer les lignes de la fiction, le lecteur est frappé par les composantes émotive et ludique qui enveloppent cette histoire. Les mots — multiples et évocateurs — se conjuguent sous le rythme du désir, de l'euphorie et de l'angoisse. Le temps du récit, qui est également soumis à ce rythme, se dérobe à toute certitude et à toute finalité, renonce à exprimer ce qui est, ce qui était ou ce qui sera, pour dire au conditionnel ce qui pourrait être: "Je serais un enquêteur pressé d'en finir avec cette enquête." Et comme pour confirmer la joyeuse incertitude disséminée par le langage et le temps de la narration, ce sont des fragments de rêve qui tiennent lieu d'introduction à chaque chapitre.

S'agit-il alors encore d'un autre roman qui ne raconte rien? D'un roman où, selon l'esthétique moderne l'aventure de l'écriture gommerait toute trace d'une aventure réelle? D'un roman qui ne ferait rien d'autre que "se dire" et "se signifier"? On peut répondre à ces questions, sans complaisance, par un oui et par un non.

Commençons en affirmant la négation. Sans aucun doute, *L'Occulteur* raconte une "vraie" histoire. Une histoire, certes, qui tient de l'irréel mais, néanmoins, une histoire cohérente et intéressante. En bref, il s'agit de la recherche d'un enquêteur qui après vingt ans de quête à travers le monde s'installe dans un village du grand Nord, tout près de la forêt, afin de résoudre le mystère d'un vol de cinq mille briques d'or. De nombreuses amitiés (dont celle en particulier avec un ébéniste alter ego), des fêtes joyeuses (fêtes — ablutions, fête de travail) et le désir soutenu de trouver la clef du mystère tissent la trame du récit. Et parce que l'histoire est ponctuée par la narration de rêves, de cauchemars et d'incidents bizarres, on n'est pas surpris lorsque les fameuses briques d'or se transforment, ou bien pour emprunter un motif cher au récit, se "métamorphosent" en un splendide "condor." Cette métamorphose est vraiment bien réussie puisque tout y demeure intact: les motifs du vol, de l'or et de la recherche. Tout y compris la structure de l'intrigue.

Et pourtant! Se serait, nous même, occulter l'aspect principal de ce roman que de s'en tenir à l'intrigue. On est d'ailleurs bien averti par le narrateur de la présence d'une certaine complexité: "Sous les couleurs visibles, les lignes apparentes, on sentait les autres: les multiples autres sous la couche de surface." Et ce sont, en effet, ces "multiples autres lignes" qui confèrent au roman une spécificité proprement poétique. Les jeux de langage, l'alternance de deux voix narratives (celle de l'enquêteur et celle de l'ébéniste) voix qui finissent par se confondre, la répétition dans le texte des fragments de rêve, les références multiples à l'art, à l'écriture et surtout la rendondance du signe "mot" inscrivent incontestablement ce roman sous l'égide de

l'écriture. Tout se passe comme si la joyeuse métamorphose décrite dans l'intrigue se situait en réalité au niveau des mots et de leur potentiel signifiant. Ainsi, à l'image de l'enquêteur-occulteur qui narre en partie le récit, Claire de Lamirande joue admirablement le jeu double de l'écriture, jeu où il y a en même temps recherche et occultation du sens par le langage.

Dans *La Baie heureuse* de Pierre Charbonneau, les mots sont utilisés surtout pour exprimer une nostalgie de la jeunesse et du passé. Tout à fait traditionnel de par son style et sa structure, ce livre en est un qu'on apporterait à la campagne et été pour se détendre. Il s'agit, en effet, d'un roman peu complexe dont le mérite principal est de sonder avec une certaine finesse les thèmes de la mémoire et des amours de jeunesse. Le personnage principal Jouve, un jeune adolescent en proie à de nombreux rêves et souvenirs, attend tout doucement au bord d'un lac l'arrivée d'Anne, jeune fille qui représente pour lui à la fois le souvenir, "Elle n'était plus qu'une forme grise, imprécise, presque irréelle" et le désir. Entre les moments de rêve et celui de la rencontre (rencontre qui advient un peu trop tard dans le roman pour être efficace), le récit bifurque pour raconter la vie des différents personnages. Or ce qui transperce admirablement dans ces anecdotes diverses, c'est non seulement un amour intense de la nature mais également une nostalgie profonde pour le "bon vieux temps" où la vie était plus simple. Mais si ce roman est assez séduisant en ce qu'il projette le lecteur dans l'univers des souvenirs, il demeure décevant sur le plan de l'écriture. Les clichés abondent dans les descriptions de la nature, certains dialogues sont franchement artificiels et la fin même du roman est minée par la banalité du style. On souhaiterait que le soleil soit moins "rouge," "rose" ou "mauve," qu'Anne ne soit pas nécessairement "transparente et pure ainsi que l'eau dont elle était la déesse," car les mots ici, donnant dans la facilité, trahissent de projet original qui les sous-tend.

Par contre, dans le roman d'Yvon Paré *La Mort d'Alexandre*, les mots servent à exprimer avec violence et authenticité les maux de l'existence. Faisant écho aux écrivains de Parti-Pris, ce récit provocateur, grinçant et touchant se situe en plein dans le registre du réel à cause de l'emploi systématique du joual dans tous les dialogues. Le roman est si fortement marqué par ce niveau de langue qu'à certains moments il peut être difficile pour un lecteur non Québécois de saisir le sens: "Mé picoche pis picoche, essaye d'un bord, essaye de l'aute, prend une biére pis un aute biére, tu sé comment ça fait. Y avait un Pilote dans gagne. Un amanchure de gars, fort comme un boeuf pis pas peureux à part d'ça! Grave ... Y arait vendu sa mére pour une piaste." Ce langage toutefois n'est nullement gratuit. Au contraire c'est précisement par le biais des déformations linguistiques, pour ne pas parler des nombreux jurons et des blasphèmes retentissants, que le roman témoigne d'une certaine rage de vivre face à la mort.

L'intrigue est simple et bien menée. Emile Parent, le personnage principal, revient avec son frère Gabriel après une absence de quinze ans au village de son enfance lors de la mort de son père. Ce trajet dans le temps, dans l'espace et dans la mémoire permet la narration de nombreuses anecdotes loufoques. Et c'est ici que règne la démesure. Tout, en fait, y passe: la violence, la boisson, la sexualité (crue mais aussi effervescente) ; bref, tout ce qui permet à un bucheron de faire face à la mort de son père. C'est ainsi la mesure-même de son existence qui est mise en question par cette démesure. Il revient à Yvon Paré le grand mérite d'avoir exploité avec verve, humour et compassion une préoccupation

universelle dans un récit régionaliste: "Que cé qu'tu veux ... Tout le monde passe par là."

JANET M. PATERSON

IMMIGRANTS

PAVEL JAVOR, *Far From You.* Hounslow, n.p.

WACLAW IWANIUK, *Evenings on Lake Ontario.* Hounslow, n.p.

CELESTINO DE IULIIS, *Love's Sinning Song and Other Poems.* Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education, $6.75.

GEORGE HINES, *Stephen Gill and His Works: An Evaluation.* Vesta, $8.50.

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE in Canada today is somewhat different from the experience of those who opened up Canada during the nineteenth century. Certain elements are still common; for example, the initial disorientation at one's new environment, compounded by nostalgia for familiar sights and surroundings left behind. But unlike earlier immigrants, who had to confront Canada's harsh bush and harsher winters, the new immigrants have the comforts of technology and city life. In these four volumes, which share a common link in the immigrant sensibility of the authors, we do not have much of landscape-painting or farm life or adventure-trails; though Iwaniuk has Lake Ontario as his setting, the city is always part of the landscape.

All four writers — Javor, Iwaniuk, Iuliis, and Gill — are themselves immigrants, but this common link does not make them fall automatically into the same group (we often tend to use this pigeonholing method of placing women-writers in one coop, minority-group immigrants in another and so on); in the context of literary criteria, Pavel Javor stands apart and superior to the other three. He is a mature poet. Iuliis and Gill are obviously novices. What each poet says about poetry effectively reveals his quality:

But suddenly
quite unexpectedly,
when nobody listens,
something very old
sobs within
...
And it's a poem. (Javor)

I know that my body
holds itself
in a kind
of unique state.
...
while I behave
like an atom
ready to explode. (Iwaniuk)

Ah, master poet,
masturbator,
when will you tire
of pretentious noise? (Iuliis)

As infant to mother
or moth to flame
this bard dismayed
turns to you
O' fount of wine. (Gill)

Pavel Javor is the non-de-plume adopted by George Skvor (1916-1981) who was an established writer in his native Czechoslovakia when he came to Canada in 1950, following the communist takeover of his country in 1948 ("Javor" is the Czech word for "maple" and was chosen as an expression of commitment to his adoptive land). *Far From You* contains 46 poems, most of them translated from the original Czech by Ron Banerjee; several were translated by Alfred French earlier. The 46 poems are in three parts — "Smoke from Ithaca" with 12 poems; "There in That Land" with 26 poems; and "The Land Under the Cyrillic Alphabet" with 12 poems. "Smoke from Ithaca" contains poignant poems of separation as the persona leaves his native land on his Odyssey and reaches Canada. The other two parts are his mind-screen views of Ithaca, long after the smoke signals have vanished from sight.

Many of the poems translated by Alfred French have a rhyme scheme and

metrical composition similar to the original. Maria Nemcova Banerjee, in her essay on Javor at the end of the book, mentions these metrical traits of the poet. Those translated by Ron Banerjee have no rhymes and they sound stronger in cadence and in content.

The Canadian poems, though only a handful, poignantly go through phases of immigrant experience; from the dismay of "My God, where have you sent me? / Under the Rockies, on the world's brink," through the lostness of "Alone and hungry, through the streets I roam / In this strange city in a stranger's land," to the familiarity of "If you are poor, with only shadows / in your pockets, / you make it on foot to Mount Royal."

However, it is in poems of exile, of expatriation rather than of impatriation, that Pavel Javor's poetry has the impact of a sledge hammer: "I repeat, / choking on pain, on anger / What Esenin once wrote: / Finished — no return"; "Czech blood (cursed-forever blood). Damn you! You, who betrayed us!" he curses those who betrayed his country in 1938 to the Nazis, and again in 1948 to the communists.

Waclaw Iwaniuk, born in Poland in 1915, came to Canada in 1948. He is the author of ten volumes of poetry and of translations from English to Polish. However, *Evenings on Lake Ontario* is his first English work and consists of 44 poems of uneven quality. The opening poem with its "The country is enormous but its brain is still growing" and his general picture of Canada reminds one of Earle Birney's short poem written in 1948 that compares Canada to an adolescent. There is a narrative quality in the first part that is well suited to his informal satirical thrusts:

> Tall trees picketed the gateway to the Milky
> Way,
> only the local birds conversed
> fluently in both English and French
> the bilinguals of Ottawa.

The cadence of some lines could be improved considerably, but the humorous observations of local ways and comparisons to other settings are always interesting.

After a brief sojourn in Edmonton where "I broke out in a sweat / staring at the enormous plains, / with the enormous sky," the persona settles down in Toronto, and the poems set there bring the city alive. The lake is a pervading presence that becomes, by the end of the first section, a part of the persona, flooding inside him even as sunlight floods brilliance on its water.

The second part of 23 poems move into another mode. The persona is more city-oriented and far too preoccupied with being a "poet." His imagery and message get tedious. "I like words. / I am at ease with them," he says in one of the many confessional poems about poetry. That seems to be the problem — he is too much at ease with words, spinning them out a little too facilely as he expresses trivia.

Iuliis's *Love's Sinning Song* says it all in the title even more clearly than the other two self-explanatory titles. The volume is beautifully brought out with its intriguing cover picture of half of a woman's face, and the Introduction says Celestino De Iuliis was born in Italy in 1946 and came to Canada in 1953. The sequence of the various parts is intersting in the context of his immigrant sensibility. Whereas Javor and Iwaniuk, who came to Canada as adults, speak first of their disorientation and then with familiarity of their adopted land, De Iuliis, having come here as a child, speaks of love's sinning song and of sensuality in the first part and then, in the second part, about his origins. The father-figure is the pervading presence in the latter section. The second generation search for roots — another phase of the immigrant experience — is in evidence. Like Iwaniuk, De Iuliis

also indulges himself too much with his poetic calling, an overindulgence that jars one even when it comes from one as forceful and unequivocally great as William Wordsworth. In Iwaniuk and Iuliis this becomes downright boring.

George Hines' *Stephen Gill and His Works* is a wordy paneygyric on a very minor writer, a Shadwell who needs a Dryden, not a literary critic. Stephen Gill, an immigrant from India, has written several books of poetry, fiction, and criticism, none of them particularly noteworthy. The writer — George Hines — is indiscriminate both in evaluation and in vocabulary. There is endless paraphrase of poems and stories; to one familiar with Gill's work, the extravagant praises lavished on his literary skills sound somewhat of a parody. If Gill is to be given any recognition, it would not be for being a writer but for being an entrepreneur who has set up a publishing house to accommodate South Asian writers in Canada.

Together, the four volumes reveal a recent phase in Canadian immigrant literature that is distinct from earlier phases. One does not get a feel of the vastness of the country or a sense of history. One does not get the feeling of a stream within a stream — the so-called ethnicity that we see in Jewish, Mennonite, or Icelandic writers. Each speaks as an individual, of himself as a person rather than as a part of an ethnic group. This trait might have implications for sociologists who deal with the multighetto nature of Canadian society that is otherwise called the multicultural mosaic.

UMA PARAMESWARAN

ED. NOTE: Re Ralph Gustafson's "The Saving Grace" (*CL* 97): readers should change "bitterness" affirmation (p. 18) to "bitterless"; remove comma from "the grace, surely" (p. 20); add "pole" to "yard telephone" (p. 21).

WEBWORKS

ANNE CAMERON, *Earth Witch*. Harbour, $5.95.

MONA FERTIG, *Releasing the Spirit*. Colophon, n.p.

JERRY RUSH, *Earth Dreams*. Coteau, $5.00.

JOHN NOLD, *Open Squares*. Coach House, $6.50.

THE POEMS IN *Earth Witch*, by Anne Cameron (also known as Cam Hubert, author of *Dreamspeaker*), begin with an interesting enough premise: the speaker announces the intention to redefine her identity by recasting traditional female archetypes. Nourishing, child-bearing Earth Mother is replaced by Earth Witch, whose magic and dangerous embraces both devour and strengthen the women who seek her. This prepares us, it seems, for the exploration of an exciting alternative awareness, although we might be anoyed by the triteness that occasionally enervates the early poems:

she held me
her skin soft
her movements gentle
her eyes her voice
her lips
until I slept
in her arms.

Typical is the poet's use of three dots: "I imagined / . . . so much"; "It is just . . . how she is . . ." — Cameron wants those dots to suggest meaningfulness beyond words, but this is cheap fakery, the mark of a lazy and inarticulate writer. Still, the dynamic figure of Earth Witch and provocative references to Morgana La Fey, Isis, and Lilith carry the reader through those first few pieces.

What a disappointment to discover, half-a-dozen poems into the book, that Cameron has reached the end of this imaginative path. The speaker abruptly abandons archetypal considerations, turning instead to what she apparently wanted to deal with from the beginning: a lesbian relationship. The poetry at this

point collapses into self-indulgent exhibitionism. The lazy triteness seen earlier becomes the norm rather than the exception:

> I want to hold you.
> I want to feel your lips
> against my throat . . .
> I want to press my face
> against your belly
> and circle my tongue
> in your bellybutton.

And on and on. This book embarrasses the reader by the chasm between the pretension of its theme and the puerility of its art.

Mona Fertig, in *Releasing the Spirit*, sets herself the challenge of working in a heavily mythopoeic mode, thus risking the cliches of myth-encrusted vision. She meets the challenge splendidly. Her book is full of symbolic gardens, fruits, caves, snakes, seas, and a Blakean "Devil Angel called / Imagination." What she calls "a New Monster a New Spirit" is in one sense not new at all, but the genuine intensity of Fertig's blast-furnace imagination transforms chunks of traditional symbolism into fiery new weapons of poetry:

> Feathers. Angels. A nuclear warhead. Clearing the way. Carving its own name a new shape a scullscape a continual wavelength reaching back into history and forward into the front lines.

No quaint and dusty myth-hunting for Fertig; mythic awareness becomes adrenalin that charges her poetry. When she thinks of hell, she pictures not Dante but New York City, where "the streets are live wires":

> in the middle
> of all this hell-fire
> electricity
> 8 million people live.

Her symbolism does not ultimately beckon us backward:

> the finger that says
> no turning back
> to the garden
> points at you.

Instead, we are exploded into marvellous and threatening possibilities of the present:

> Feed this Monster this
> Beauty this Art. With your life.
> Without which we are sad things.

The poem "Rain" summarizes the fertility and vitality of Fertig's vision. "The garden," she tells us, "is for picking"; the vegetables are for "digging up. Uprooting. Like your past." Just as rain brings the ancient cycle of life to bloom in the present, so also poetry brings myth-consciousness, "as old as time," alive to nourish us today. It is, the poem concludes, "a practical art."

Earth Dreams, by Jerry Rush, includes half-a-dozen photographs of rural Saskatchewan, focused with crystal precision, so that each tiny perimeter encloses a world of fine detail. Likewise, Rush's best poems are sharply defined portraits of the small corners of experience. They are at their best when Rush accepts the discipline of this approach, as in, for example, "Fuel," where he swiftly etches the small but vivid world of a prairie family looking for "droppings of half-wild horses" and "cured pies of roaming cattle." The dried dung is used for fuel,

> And the earth smell in the kitchen
> mixed with warm brown loaves
> and steam from the stew pot
> bubbling.

Rush's method draws him to the quirky (a farmer who installs a linoleum rug on his ceiling — "just wear out on the floor") and the grotesque (song sparrows impaling themselves, "throat-hung / on barbed wire spikes," and flies that "mouth" the wounds of kittens mangled by an old tomcat). His eye seeks the poignant, private detail, not, for example, the obvious flesh of fruit, but

> the lacy seed's pattern, flesh gently
> pinched; syrup, on the rusted stone
> at the core.

At other times, Rush tries different, less successful tactics. In a number of pieces, he amuses himself by imitating "Canajan" dialect:

> ya wanna solve gall stones heh
> bijeez   ya know what ya want
> lotssa plants an things

The attempt falls flat because it has been done so much better by others. A flying/falling/Icarus motif runs through the last third of the book, but references to "floating" and "jumping" become clumsy and predictable. Rush is not at his best when he tries to weave large patterns or become abstractly reflective; he leaves us wishing for more of his sharply focused, limited-angle shots of the "rusted stone / at the core."

Weaving large patterns is exactly what poet John Nold does best. The first hint of something interesting in the structure of *Open Squares* occurs with a footnote that leads us to "The Context" — actually four "Contexts" — at the end of the book. Numbers in the poems direct us to notes in Context One — explanations, credits, or unashamed digressions. Those notes refer to further notes in Context Two, which in turn lead to Contexts Three and Four.

But this is only the beginning. The reader then realizes that the poems themselves are a maze of cross-references, and continuous lines of thought can be discerned only when the fragmentary poems are reorganized, not into a "right" order, but into several possible orders. Nold's patterns are usually based on foursomes: squares superimposed on other squares. For example, there are suites of "colour poems," each suite having four numbered poems scattered throughout the book. Once all the "Yellows" are brought together, a "yellow" theme appears, but links between "Yellow One," "Red One," and "Blue One" are at least as important as the links between the four "Yellows." The strongest through-lines materialize only after one notices that each colour poem is four pages long; the first pages of all the colours cohere, as do all the second pages, and so on. Squares within squares within squares.

In short, the book is a massive Chinese puzzle or Rubik's Cube with many solutions, imitating the webwork of human understanding. There are moments of great discovery and delight, such as when one stumbles upon Context One, note thirteen; there is no number thirteen in the poems and the note confesses to being "completely *out of context* but here it is here like the thirteenth floor of a building that doesn't exist." There are also, however, many moments when it is all too clear that the game of solving the structural puzzle is more interesting and memorable than the poetry on any given page. "Structure is content," one poem tells us, but, like much ingenious formalist art, *Open Squares* may leave us wondering whether structure is quite enough to satisfy our appetites.

For the four books under review, the real issue is the question of what challenges the poets have set for themselves. *Earth Witch* fails because its author fails to impose discipline on her work; she fails to choose a challenge. The remaining three books achieve their uniqueness because their authors choose challenges of myth, image, and structure, respectively.

BRUCE PIRIE

MUCH ADO

PETER VAN TOORN & KEN NORRIS, *Cross/cut: Contemporary English Quebec Poetry.* Véhicule, $17.95; pa. $8.95.

AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE living in Montreal recently told me that being English in Quebec now is really a case of coming to terms with stagnation. This, he

claims, is in itself a fascinating endeavour. Well, that may be. But judging from this anthology, it hasn't made for any particularly distinctive poetic sensibility, nothing like the energy around the First Statement and Preview groups. At least not yet.

Because there is nothing distinctive about the seventy poets gathered here, *as a group* at any rate, Peter Van Toorn, author of *Cross/cut*'s seventeen-page introduction, is hard pressed to make a case. Rather than dealing with the issue at hand — What, if anything, is going on with English Quebec poetry? Why this anthology? — Van Toorn provides us with generalizations on a whole variety of topics. He begins with some apple-pie definitions of poetry:

> At once a philosophical and historical mode, poetry refines our most public and private — and, therefore, our most elusive — currency. When it succeeds in providing a symbolic form for significant states of mind, poetry restores a balance and radiance not only to language, our spiritual currency, but to the imagination in charge of it, the human spirit invested with the awesome task of employing that currency with dignity.

That sort of inflated prose runs through most of the introduction, except that it is often less clear than in the section quoted above. We get vague comments on the relation between art and social upheaval; a discussion about how difficult it is to be recognized as a poet in this country, using the slightly outdated examples of Lampman and Klein; some stuff about "imaginative dereliction" as regards Smart, Baudelaire, Van Gogh; comments on "an indigenous Canadian imagination ... found in the paintings of Tom Thomson ..."; and to top it all off, an observation on the interest in French civilization by "writers diverse as Dostoyevski, Goethe, Wordsworth, and Pien Chih-Lin." One finishes the introduction wondering if perhaps it isn't a grand put-on. I really hope it is.

There is also a lack of focus in the choice of poets. It seems as if anyone writing in the English language in Quebec was eligible. And there are inconsistencies. For example, Irving Layton, who has not lived in Quebec for eleven years, is included, while Seymour Mayne, who now lives and teaches in Ottawa, was not included even though it is widely acknowledged that his poetic roots are firmly implanted in Montreal.

The fact that *Cross/cut* is a pseudo-anthology ought not detract from the fact that some very fine poems appear in it. I'd like to conclude by mentioning them: David Solway's "Lines Written in Dejection" and "Noah"; Endre Farkas's "Lyric" and "Scribe"; Stephen Morrissey's "Waves" and "Poem"; Frances Davis's "Woman"; Artie Gold's "Untitled"; Robyn Sarah's "An Inch of Air"; Michael Harris's "Owls Hooing at my House"; Raymond Filip's "Hank Williams Meets The Music of the Spheres"; Ken Norris's "Ode to the Possibilities." The anthology also contains one of the most powerful elegies ever written in this country, namely Gary Geddes's "Sandra Lee Scheuer."

KENNETH SHERMAN

IN GLOOM, GOLD

TERRY GRIGGS, *Harrier*. Brick Books, $2.50.

GEOFFREY URSELL, ed., *Saskatchewan Gold: 25 Stories of the New West*. Thunder Creek, $3.50.

RON SMITH & STEPHEN GUPPY, eds., *Rainshadow: Stories from Vancouver Island*. Sono Nis and Oolichan, $9.95.

THE SHORT STORY in recent decades has been an energetic form frequently marked by imaginative and narrative daring and by wit, in the intellectual and linguistic sense. What first strikes one about most of the forty-one stories contained in these three volumes is how conservative they

are. Many could have been written half a century ago, and going through the collections, one has the sense not just of having read them before but of reading them over and over.

Harrier, by Terry Griggs, finely produced as a kind of chapbook, is one of the better works, though perhaps overpriced for a single story eleven pages long. Set in what appears to be a small village possibly on the east coast, the story follows the quest of a young girl for her grandfather, a mysterious man her grandmother could not or would not marry. Much in the story seems deliberately vague, and the apt title suggests both hunting (the search, in this case, for spiritual nourishment) and the annoyance caused by the elusiveness of the prey. The whole process verges on myth-making: by inventing various roles for her ancestor, the girl invests her own past, her life with meaning.

Both the cover of *Saskatchewan Gold* and its effusive Introduction blazon the idea of newness — a new collection of a new vision of the new west; the stories themselves, however, give the impression that not much has happened in Saskatchewan in the twentieth century. A surprising number of them focus on a period prior to World War II and look into nostalgia and dull documentary realism at common experiences ranging from childhood to old age.

As the characters get older, the stories seem to become more substantial. Those that stand out attempt more than local colour, colloquial yarns, or a clichéd fascination with drinking and adolescent sex. Bradd Burningham's "The Girl with the Baby Arms," for instance, in the form of a rambling letter from a graduate student stalled on a Spanish island on his way to study in France, displays both evocative description and psychologically intriguing human contacts. Edna Alford's "The Garden of Eloise Loon," though its imagery is sometimes unfocused, gives to the dilemma of an abandoned Indian woman and her child a haunting and powerful despair. And Lewis Horne's "What Do Ducks Do In the Winter" recalls on a smaller scale Joyce's "The Dead" through its treatment of a middle-aged academic addressing a dinner party that includes his increasingly estranged wife. The story deftly and intelligently captures the tension between the two and its eventual eruption into violence.

Very few of the stories experiment with form, though Connie Gault's "at dusk / just when / the Light is filled with birds" shows a concern with the nature, the fictiveness of fiction. Similarly, "The Woman Who Talks to Canada Geese," by Byrna Barclay, is a stylistically ambitious account of a woman caught between her fighting husband and son and identifying with migrating geese which to her symbolize escape. And in "Reflections," Bonnie Burnard shows an elderly couple facing the imminence of their own deaths by treating the basic situation twice, from each point of view. What results is a distorting mirror that actually enriches the characters for us. Finally, Brenda Riches' "Clara Smiling," though hardly more than a short sketch, ably catches the mood of an apparently senile woman who has just murdered her sister.

On the whole, the fifteen stories in *Rainshadow* show greater variety and a higher level of literary accomplishment than do those in *Saskatchewan Gold*. A commemorative volume, *Rainshadow* celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Canada Council. This is a handsome edition, with appropriate silver colours, though the text is marred by an unusual number of typographical errors in a work intended as a tribute. For $100.00, a limited hardcover edititon is available signed by all fifteen authors, many of whom are well known, such as W. D. Valgardson, Leon Rooke, Jack Hodgins, W. P. Kin-

sella, Seán Virgo, and Robin Skelton, and all of whom have some connection with the Island.

Again, it is the stories that go beyond the anecdotal level and the standard conventions of form that percolate in the mind. Consistently adventurous, Leon Rooke plays with narrator, tone, and structure in "Sing Me No Love Songs, I'll Say You No Prayers," a humorous account of relationship between an itinerant lumberman and his wife as they scrounge a rudimentary existence out of fringe lumber companies. Also solidly realized are Seán Virgo's "Kapino," set in the Solomon Islands where the ghost of a native woman mistreated in her marriage wages a vendetta against any kind of romance, and Mildred Tremblay's "Lily and the Salamander" which convincingly depicts a woman's progressive los of contact with conventional reality and her uncomprehending family's reactions.

A South American influence seems to be present in "The Tale of the Rat-Catcher's Daughter" in which Stephen Guppy, one of the volume's two editors, recounts a bizarre and comic epic descent by the son of a Nanaimo coal baron in search of ultimate fulfilment, and in Wilfred Watson's "Four Times Canada is Four" in which a reticent academic, planning to leave Edmonton to spend a sabbatical year in Paris, finds himself inhabiting a strange, dream-like world of mirror duplications where reality parodies itself.

Almost all of the stories in these collections are competently written. If only a handful seem amply to reward the reading and to cast the rest into shadow, this is partly because one has come to take competence for granted and because, to borrow Pound's phrase, in the blandness of the ordinary, "the gold gathers the light against it."

R. H. RAMSEY

MARLATT IN PARENTHESIS

DAPHNE MARLATT, *Selected Writing: Net Work*. Talonbooks, n.p.

DAPHNE MARLATT, *What Matters: Writing 1968-70*. Coach House, $5.25.

YOU DON'T HOLD A Marlatt poem in mind, not the whole poem anyway, in the way you might an Emily Dickinson lyric, or even an Al Purdy ramble. The drifting in and out of consciousness (which includes body) is Marlatt's principle of composition, so that a parenthesis — "the sea is only (lonely) where the freighters come" — incorporates the aural association which momentarily passes through the writing mind. Her frequent use of the enclosed parenthesis implies moving into a digression, or an elaboration, and never returning to the main thought. But Marlatt is just as likely to use parentheses where there is, on the face of it, no digression at all, or to be parenthetic with no typographical signals in view. "If at any point," she explains, "this story doesn't break in two but runs, on . . . there is only the unfamiliarity of the world to thank." The reader tries to follow the "paths leading, leaving . . . ," paths made by surprise, by the composing mind's constant discovery of the unfamiliar — in matter, in language. The result is certainly intensely, marvellously poetic, if attention to the richness, subtlety, delicacy, and complexity of words is any criterion. But, as Marlatt acknowledged in an interview with George Bowering in 1974, the framework could be more accessible: "I've always wanted to publish a book of poems or a book of writing of an equivalent density, embedded in a series of extracts from a diary or a journal of letters, that would give them a more prosaic matrix."

What Matters is the collage of poems and journal entries Marlatt described in

1974. The book is in three movements — California, Vancouver, Wisconsin — and moves through the passages of marriage and giving birth, of searching for home and a poetic voice. During the period 1968-1970 Marlatt found that "the 'drift' [of language] could ground my experience." Writing of that difficult experience in 1980, it seems she is now prepared to introduce herself by giving the reader a "ground" for her own drift of language. At the centre of the book is the earlier published *Rings* (1971), that remarkable recreation of the birth of her son. But now it's framed by the matter-of-fact journal entries: "he was born Saturday afternoon May 3rd at 7 minutes to 5 on a sunny day," and the diary's immediate feelings "I 'gave him life' as they say, but was powerless doing it." Similarly, *Vancouver Poems* (1972), although not reprinted here, is given "a prosaic matrix" by the account of its genesis.

There is no doubt that such grounding makes the "spiralling" of Marlatt's poem easier to follow. Which is not to suggest that Marlatt is abandoning a stubbornly won poetic, a commitment to phenomenological composition. On the contrary, the entire field of "elements occurring in consciousness at once" presumably includes even conventional linear syntax and chronology. And there is a fuller biographical context here, consistent with a poet who has always insisted on including her biography/biology in her writing. *What Matters* defines, as it questions, Marlatt's ways with language and perceptions. The result is a rich and exciting book, combining great density, with many elements of the introduction.

These two books, in different ways, fulfil this desire: both are "introductions" to Marlatt's work. *Net Work*, in Talonbooks' important series of inexpensive classroom collections, is an intelligent selection from all Marlatt's books, including the poem/journal of her return to Penang, published in *The Capilano Review*, and recent uncollected poems. *What Matters*, which ranks with *Steveston* in achievement and significance, is a still more valuable introduction to the evolution of Marlatt's poetic, and of her sense of self, in the late 1960's.

Marlatt, more than many another poet, poses a problem for editors, since, as Fred Wah's Introduction explains, "'book' for her is a very intentional form." It's difficult to excerpt *Frames of a Story* successfully since both the accumulating frames, and the story, are lost. So with *Steveston*, or *Zócalo*, which in this selection has a great deal to do with being a tourist, and very little to do with the shifting relationships between man and woman which are so crucial in the novel. On the other hand, of course, whatever is lost by *selecting* from Marlatt, the drift of the composing — through sound patterns, "semantic thickness," embedded haiku, etymologies, and out to the "limits of syntax" — and the new ordering of poems, can be appreciated for themselves. "For Marlatt," Wah claims, "the 'word' is a place to focus the enegy of the intelligence." Using this theme, Wah writes an Introduction, which is generally clear and succinct, an excellent companion piece to the Bowering interview published in *Open Letter*, from which he quotes extensively. There is, for example, a sure sense of Marlatt's development, as direct an explanation of proprioception as one is likely to find, and a helpful basic bibliography.

In Marlatt the "what" does matter. In her poems/prose, it's *things* to which she responds: everything is rooted in the senses, in fine detail, in place. And, then, *what* matters, because like every single word, it is unique and uniquely resonant. And, then, of course, there's an interrogative and the questioning constantly matters, the questioning of matter, of what matters. This book carries the

reader much further into this exploration than I am able to itemize (e.g., "mater (mother) [is] in matter"). In short, the title of this book is itself a poem, an introduction to the "interplay of sensory being-in-a place and thoughts about" which forms Marlatt's work. The density suggested by the title is sustained throughout and makes *What Matters* matter very much.

LAURIE RICOU

PEARLS & SWINE

GWEN HAUSER, *Gophers and Swans*. Fiddlehead, n.p.

LEN GASPARINI, *The Climate of The Heart*. Vesta, $5.50.

ROSALIND EVE CONWAY, *Townswomen and Other Poems*. Mosaic, n.p.

GERTRUDE KATZ, *Duet*. Mosaic, n.p.

GREGORY M. COOK, *Love En Route*. Fiddlehead, n.p.

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, *Digging In*. Oberon, n.p.

DIANNE JOYCE & EVA TIHANYI, *Stone Wear / A Sequence of the Blood*. N.p.

IN THIS FLASH DOCUMENTARY world of ours, where everything is communicable and communicated instantly through sneezes and the mass media, we seem to have a new ars poetica. "Let it all hang out," battle cry of the sixties, is protruding in contemporary literature. This is good and bad. Roses do grow in dunghills. However, it often seems there is a lot of dunghill and very few roses. The craft of poetry seems to be suffering. This is the overwhelming impression created by the seven books of poems reviewed here. A lot of dunghill. A lot of swine. Some pearls. I wonder if it is expecting too much to ask for more.

Gophers and Swans by Gwen Hauser records the tortured journey from briefest innocence to the crucible experiences of a woman compulsively resisting the status quo. "Singing for her life," Hauser celebrates the ugliness of compulsive rebellion. The only alternative to singing is madness in a world she perceives as dominantly male and brutal. There is no state of grace for the lower case "i" of these poems who "fought and got away but never went home again." By holding it up to us without flinching, Hauser makes us share her pain.

I probably shouldn't put Hauser back to back with Len Gasparini, poet and reviewer of the macho school. However, here he is, hoisted on his own petard, skewering *Climate of the Heart* in a rather smug poem, "The Book Reviewer":

> How can I venture a further judgement of
> them,
> except to repeat what Auden said,
> "Some books are undeservedly forgotten
> none are undeservedly remembered."

To put a finer point on it, I think we should let Gasparini continue in his own voice:

> "Forget it" said the tattoed one. I'd rather
> jerk off than pay that much."

Or:

> Ten more days and we'll be home
> Drinkin' beer and pissin' foam.

Finally we have his advice to a newborn son:

> You are a bright new arrow
> For the bow of Sagittarius.
> Life be your target, my son.

Lock up your daughters!

Townswomen, by Rosalind Eve Conway, is a suite of poems based on women characters in the poems and stories of other writers, the premise being, I suppose, that since we already have an emotional acquaintance with these characters, the facets in this woman's world in microcosm will fall into place more quickly. The danger in this kind of vicarious writing is that déjà vu often comes off as

"Second Hand Rose." Hovering between exposition and psychological truth, these poems lack the incandescence of real or fresh fictional people. *And Other Poems,* last in the title, first in the book, do not flow into *Townswomen.* There are some felicitous moments, but mostly the poet seems to be "tangled in some spider-web story of her own devising."

Gertrude Katz' *Duet,* an ink blot trip through the family album is an eclectic collection which moves from the banal to the frankly vulgar ("To Cum or Not to Cum"), only occasionally penetrating family jokes to family pain, where the real history lies darkly under the skin of self-conscious caricature. In this book, we have everything from Irving Layton's holy chorus of saints dancing across the "milky semen way" to "halos spinning hysterical purity," a very powerful image. Refinement, closer editing, and ruthless culling will move Katz, and others with her, further from throw-away journalism and closer to art.

Gregory Cook, in *Love En Route,* takes the highway as an extended metaphor creating an "unending dance" from cover to cover. His highway is "a no man's land cleaned of dead animals by crows." The poems are clean and gentle glimpses through an open window. Cook has created a sense of movement through landscape and family history that allows us to transcend pain and vulgarity as we lie

> ... on our wet backs in the starred dust
> shouting our sudden fear of the earths' shake
> into the warm black of our spent fires.

Always there is the sky above and the earth below. *Digging In,* by Elizabeth Brewster, describes the poet as juggler attempting to balance stairs and rabbit holes, the tiny graves for every living moment. It would seem she sometimes hardly knows which of the circling balls are future or history. Out of this confusion comes some uncertainty about herself as artist. The "renewable glory" she seeks is elusive. Her deity is flawed. The shining past may be dressed in fools' gold. The others, her predecessors, after all

> left garbage behind
> as we do.

In *Stone Wear* and *Sequence of the Blood,* a tandem collection by Dianne Joyce and Eva Tihanyi, there is a conscious effort to turn all faces to the light and to create a unity in the patterns of light and shadow, the irreconcilable halves. In "Birthright," Joyce affirms:

> You watch me into the deeper waters.
> When I emerge I will have myself renamed.

Stone Wear poems come with the heartbeat rhythms of a chisel in the hands of a gentle artist. Eva Tihanyi's poems follow with an affirmation that through miracles blood can flow through stone. In this union, she finally finds

> her selves in perfect unison
> a synthesis of snow on snow.
> This is more like it.

LINDA ROGERS

(UN)MAKING

ARNOLD ITWARU, *Shattered Songs.* Aya Press, $6.00.

PAUL SAVOIE, *Acrobats.* Aya Press, $6.00.

IN THE PUBLISHED PROCEEDINGS of an international symposium on Vico (Johns Hopkins Press, 1969) Elizabeth Sewell gives a bracing account of "Bacon, Vico, Coleridge, and Poetic Method." She shows how method, for all three, includes unmaking for the sake of new making. She gives us Coleridge suggesting that the poet's task is to reconstitute chaos for us so that making and remaking can begin again, and she quotes him in typical aphoristic flight on the matter: "All other men's worlds are his chaos."

In *Shattered Songs* Arnold Itwaru's poems are unambiguously in the phase, the rhythm, of unmaking. They unmake up a closely knit series of anti- or pre-meditations enacting personal chaos, a psyche in throes of extreme deconstruction. (These anti-meditations come one to a page so, for lack of titles, I'll refer to them by page number.) Numberl 29, for example, throws up our old archetypal friend, the mad poet, and exactly answers to "All other men's worlds are his chaos."

Rereading this volume I think of kaleidoscopes. During the first headlong, feverish turns the hysterical confusion of splintered phrases achieve no patternable song; they deliberately evoke chaos. Then the kaleidoscope's rate of turn seems to slow and glints of song become darkly visible — shattered though they may be. We seem to move through possessed anti-renditions of incohate agony and rage into relatively stable syntactical vistas of agonized musing in which, by Number 38, there is enough semantic and rhetorical space for the persona to watch himself acting a part in a play which is the real thing which is a play. And from there, fairly rapidly, to the silence of shattered songs that ends the work. Itwaru's would-be singer produces a season in hell: a kind of orphic orphan — still a child at nearly 40 (Number 45) — is finally torn to pieces by a treacherous lexicon. To give pain a name should be to conjure it into livable versions of the self but his words, words that are always already not his, are themselves pain-bearers, subjecting him to continuous dismemberment and rememberment. One ruling project, or fated burden, discernible in all this to to find a habitable locale for the psyche — the book's subtitle is "(a journey from somewhere to somewhere)." The journey is excruciatingly dangerous. All somewheres are crawling with agents and intimations of autodestruction: a decomposing subject shifts elusively among various personae, keeps vanishing into undifferentiated, dopplegangerish you's, her's, and they's; primal guilts, murder, and incest, seep in then gush up (Numbers 8, 15, 23, 28, 32, 37); the pulse — a major image of signs of life, of a viable self — is variously eaten, severed, strangled; things are wrong way round:

> in rented moments meals devour us,
> dust to dust,
> dream to dream,
> these rooms rent us out. (20)

To stay deep inside is tempting but it invites drowning in the self's own detritus; to make a real move outwards is imperative but "out there, remember, sons eat fathers" (13). The child of nearly 40 has got nowhere. Out of being unmade he must try to make something, someone. He must do this with words that make and unmake; words that in locating, dislocate and, in patching up a self, deconstruct it.

If throes of unmaking dominate *Shattered Songs*, Paul Savoie's *Acrobats* is poised (sometimes precariously) in the making phase. There is enough detachment and sense of an achieved self to permit a good deal of reflection, observation, and narrativity. This maker, though, is alert — well aware of how close unmaking can always be. The opening poem, "Time of Arrival" is cautionary tale enough. And even a well-rendered still life such as "Spoons," or a mundane, middle-of-the-night excursion ("The Tap") to track down the leaky faucet, ends with a distinct whiff of danger, of boobytrapped ordinariness.

Two other features of these collections invite comparison and discrimination. Like *Scattered Songs*, *Acbobats* has striking wrong-way-round images. In the former, such imagery embodies radical dissociation and discomfiture; in the latter, images of wrong-way-round botany, for example, "like old barges growing out of

fungus," or of wrong-way-round climatology:

> The rain comes,
> its voice a raucous engine
> pumping fluid from the ground
> ("Night Vision")

seem rather to affirm sudden recognition of a wary solidarity with the world. The two collections also have in common imagery of the theatre, with associated images of dance/dancer. In *Shattered Songs* Numbers 38 and 39 are late companion pieces that (except for the quaint "yesteryear" in 39) register very powerfully a sort of exhausted scepticism under the sign "merely a play," "only a play." In *Acrobats* the emblematic title is first expounded in "The Performance":

> Soon the open curtain
> and the unbearable weight
> of light on my face
> the strong throb of expectant eyes. . . .

And tropes of performing or being at a performance, of watching a performer or being in the gaze of many eyes, are used to explore various situations and semantic permutations. A few examples: the sensitive, unsentimental "Seamstress"; the "Pianoman," which reads like the script for a supermod, punk and/or camp advertisement; and then the titlepoem, where theatre as circus swings between "let the acrobats / that we are" and "let the acrobats / that we dream up" in an acrobatics of high emotional risk.

A number of Savioe's poems are formally rather interesting and impressive. His use of repeated phrases, for example, offers not only the routine felicities of repetition; such phrases often operate rather like the recurring master-lines of a villanelle. Some of the best pieces in *Acrobats* are like villanelles out of uniform. Sprung villanelles, so to speak, as in "I Am Not a Lingerer" where lines from section I and a modified phrase from section II are recombined with sharply pleasing effect in section VI. Another formal device is the postponement of syntactical and hence semantic gratifications. Once or twice, perhaps, postponement is somewhat too indefinite but usually we are engaged to good purpose to produce a large, developing share of our own meaning. This device works best, I think, in "River," where postponement of syntactical gratification multiplies diffuse meanings or impressions into a haunting sense of some primal diaspora, some almost unimaginably distant ur-migration.

It is not easy to tell, in contemporary rhythms and idiom, a modest domestic story that's clearly wired up to the ancestral repertory of romance or fairy tale. The risk of blown fuses is considerable. Nevertheless "Winnie Finds the Treasure," "The Quiet That Surrounds Us," "Trampolines and Trapeze Artists," and "The Child" all work well. Each is ordinary in the sense of not exotically lolling about in faery casements forlorn, but each has its own mix of those family traits of dangerous mystery or mysterious danger.

I enjoyed both these collections. In the friendly advice department: noting that *Shattered Songs* is about as confessional as it can be I'd suggest that, since there is no limit to matter for confession, the time soon comes to discourse in other modes as well. In noting that most of the poems in *Acrobats* are effective, I'd suggest that at least half of them would be all the better for more austerity of style. I like my adjectival foliage as much as any man but even some of the best poems in *Acrobats* would not, I think, be in the slightest compromised by pruning. I sign off by congratulating Aya Press for getting its poetry series away to a good start.

IAN SOWTON

CONVICTION

ANNE MARRIOTT, *The Circular Coast.* Mosaic, n.p.

THE EMBLEM OF SUCCESS in a poet is an ability to create poems that are simultaneously simple and complex, small and large, light and dark. These contrarieties are encountered readily enough in music, painting, and theatre, but perhaps less obviously in recent poetry. They are certainly found in the poetry of Anne Marriott, and more particularly in *The Circular Coast,* a selection of old and new poems that is attracting various shades of attention since its publication in 1981. At first glance, the book is vintage Marriott, filled with poems that show the poet's easy handling of words, of sounds, of responses to her inner and outer world, all cultivated since she started first to write in the thirties, easily reminding the reader of those qualities that brought recognition of her work when she won the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1941. But at a second and third and fourth reading — and the book gave me so much pleasure that I did so — it begins to cast off its straightforwardness; never losing its clarity, it grows harder and harder to fathom as the poems spill into each other. The language tosses itself back and forth, creating links of thought and word; and the last poem, "My Soul, there is a Countrie," knits the collection together with the same joy and pain that one feels when a broken bone begins to heal. Marriott tells that "I hold the whole thing now / vast mysterious origins," as she recognizes that though one does not again go home, one is "never out of home"; she holds her world of gull cries, gulf's verge, forgotten ships, as a

> circle in my hands
> green
> luminous
> in the white dark
> bright
> waking
> night

She does not attempt to transform the world, nor does she abandon it; instead she captures its changing essence as she shapes herself with it. The collection becomes a portrait of the poet as growth.

From the beginning of her career as a poet, Marriott obviously has been intrigued by the rhythms of the form and the sound of words. For her, language is almost an obsession, a powerful conviction; she is not, like so many of her contemporaries who have written poetry over the years, merely preoccupied with it. Many poets who have been writing for almost fifty years as has Marriott — Finch, Layton, Dudek, and others — involved as they are in a respect for rhythm and of rhyme, let their words follow too rapidly upon each other so that undue attention is given to the craft of creating rhythm. Again and again, I feel that some of our more mature poets — those over sixty, with Dorothy Livesay being an obvious exception — by their use of language prompt me to await the inevitability of their rhythms rather than to be persuaded by their control and self-assurance.

There is no doubt that Anne Marriott is a professional poet and not a dabbler; the book is a compilation of her best, of work that reflects the times in which it was written, of poems carefully gleaned from what could be many notebooks of started, yet unfinished, poems — work that she does not want to put into the public domain. The output is not that large, but what there is reveals an astringency and care, that she would not place just any poem into a collection, as many Canadian poets seem to be doing. The poems reveal work, a travail, creating a hardness and a success similar to the kind that only writers like Phyllis Webb, Margaret Avison, Marya Fiamengo — to name three of too few — achieve.

The book is divided into three sections, focused in subject matter and mood per section, rather than the poems in chronological order. Section I, "The Littoral," contains poems written from 1936 to 1979, revealing Marriott's ability to glow and blossom with rhythms, to find an original image; in "Woodyard in the Rain" (1936), "with a last fierce gesture rain / smallpocks the oil-green water with a hurled / ten million wire nails," the image is apt and true, for not only does the picture sting, but also the sound cuts, into the consciousness. In "The Skin" (1972), she writes of getting older, of old skin, which she tries to remove, and does, but she says "I try to sew the fraying edges / but they flake to dust." Similar images abound in this section, amazing by their freshness, their scalpel-like incisiveness. Yet they are more than merely clever, or new, or conscious; rather they serve as links to a mind that is tuned and timed to saying things exactly.

Section II, "The Interior," is for the most part concerned with places, with discovering their meaning for Marriott's individual psyche; in this section she is at her most personal, and reveals herself in unassuming ways. She emerges as a person who feels things deeply, but is also capable of a certain kind of ironic self-deprecation and wit that wins the reader. This section contains "The Wind Our Enemy," now a classic poem about the prairies at the time of the Depression. The poem still stands as a magnificent tour-de-force with its images of the shifting land, the good years and the bad, the dust and the wind. The poem's success lies not only in its portrayal of the wind, but also in the juxtaposition of those years when the prairies bloomed with fields of golden wheat:

> In autumn it was an ocean of flecked gold
> Sweet as a biscuit, breaking in crisp waves
> That never shattered, never blurred in foam.
> That was the last good year . . .

Though the poem echoes a bleak plight of desolation, the resounding chord is one of hope and optimism unrestrained. It will rain again, "it will"! The essence of the Canadian character may be one of survival — as we are constantly reminded by other, and lesser, poets and critics — but the root, the heart, of that survival lies in the capacity to discover, grow and build, captured best by Marriott in this poem, and articulated best in fiction by Wiseman in *The Sacrifice*.

The last section of the book, "Countries," is a suite of six poems. The first five poems — numbered but not titled — reflect that undercurrent of optimism and faith in man that marks Marriott's work. For me, the poems ring of a Canadian consciousness; they are even patriotic. They celebrate a call on "a green country / to give me love." The poet is a patient in a hospital, searching for renewal, exploring ways to be well, to find a reason to go on. The poet/patient is lonely — as the two always are — but from that loneliness strength emerges, finally embracing country/poet/patient with a commemoration of life. There *is* revelation. And if you want revelation, read Marriott's *The Circular Coast*. I was happy to see this book, to find the wonders in its pages, to be caught again and again by the use of language. Marriott's poetry is not automatic; piquant imagery enlivens both the thought and the form. Moreover, Marriott's presence is warm and winning. Read these poems, "sad listener," for in Marriott we have a fine poet, and I think that it is about time we all told her so.

DONALD STEPHENS

LEAH

LEAH ROSENBERG, *The Errand Runner*. John Wiley, n.p.

THIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY will henceforth be an obligatory item in any study of Mordecai Richler, for it is written by his mother. It may also be of some interest to sociologists studying the transitional process of immigrants to this country in the early decades of the century. Of itself, it is not remarkable. The writing, for instance, particularly in the early part of the book, is unattractive — effusive, incoherent, at times burdened with elegant inversion: "Lavish is the panorama of my memories."

Even as a reference book, it will have to be used with caution, for it is an oddly uncandid autobiography. As Leah Rosenberg says, "To protect the reticent members of my family, I have given them all new names," and other kinds of information are not more reliable than the names. Of the migration journey, which included an ocean voyage from Hamburg to New York and a delay of some days at Ellis Island, she says, "We left Warsaw on October 18, 1913, and arrived in Toronto on October 30" — a remarkably swift passage for the time.

The book was published after Mordecai Richler had written eight novels — the latest, *Joshua Then And Now* — and what Leah Rosenberg seems intent on establishing is the difference between the culture in which she grew up, in a family of distinguished Chassidic rabbis on both sides, and that of the transported ghetto in which her son grew up and wrote about. In Poland, "We were the people of the book . . . the equivalent of aristocracy in the community," her father "a lion of a man, a king of Israel — he was endowed with all of God's graces." And in Canada, after the family had moved to Montreal, Rabbi Rosenberg's fame as a scholar grew, and their home became an intellectual centre for Chassidim, "a religious mystical movement that arose in Europe in the eighteenth century."

Since the rabbi knew neither English nor French, Leah, the youngest daughter of her mother's seven children, became his interpreter, his errand runner, and on occasion his assistant. Twelve-year-old Leah, too young to come under the no-work strictures, carried her father's small bag of instruments as he went forth on a Sabbath to perform a circumcision. She was present when an elderly man came at Passover time in distress about his single set of dentures: Could he use them for both meat and dairy? The rabbi consulted the law books with care and said yes, if he soaked them for six hours in salt water between dishes. And there is the incident of Leah's sister undressing her shortly before her marriage to show her how the sex act is performed. The rule-bound, sheltered life was far removed from the steamy, seamy, grasping, rough-and-tumble, knees-to-navel world of St. Urbain Street.

The marriage, arranged by her parents in 1922 when Leah was seventeen, was a mismatch. Unhappiness deepened with the depression when the father-in-law lost his money and they were all reduced to penury. It was during this time that Leah's younger son, Mordecai, was born in 1931, and during this time also that she moved to the cold-water flat on St. Urbain Street. In 1935 her father died and her mother had a stroke from which she never recovered. She was taken to the flat, where Leah nursed her for seven years.

Prosperity returned with the wartime boom — there is no mention of the European agony — and Leah got her long-desired divorce in 1944. "My sons, now thirteen and eighteen, proceeded to inform me that they had become illegitimate." She supported herself with vari-

ous jobs, saved some money, bought a boarding house as insurance against old age, and in the fifties realized her dream of travelling, visiting Mordecai in London and going on to Russia and to Israel. "In a sense, my trips became the culmination of my life. I was now my own person." No longer an errand runner.

Leah Rosenberg is, of course, the mother-figure in Richler's books, presented quite directly in *The Street*, which generally tallies with her own account, thinly disguised as Leah Goldenberg in *Son Of A Smaller Hero*, and usually shown in unsympathetic contrast to the easy-going, vacillating father-figure. The autobiography's account of the marriage of an ambitious woman to an unambitious man, the miseries of the depression, the life-draining burden of invalid parents, a woman's struggle for financial independence — all these are twice-told tales. They serve Leah Rosenberg as an explanation, a defence, a vindication, a rationalization of the Richler mother.

In the world outside Leah's family there had been revolutionary changes from the end of the First World War on, in social conventions, in dress, in habits, in manners, in religious ties — and of course the upheaval had affected Jewish life too. In *Son Of A Smaller Hero*, as Noah reflects on "the shifting of the ghetto sands," he says, "There is no longer anything that one could wholly belong to. This is the time of buts and parentheses." Leah faced this reality when she looked for jobs and discovered that she would have to give up Sabbath observances if she wanted to earn a living. She feared "destruction-assimilation," but she concluded that "while observance is an integral part of Judaism, Jewish life does not hinge on it. Judaism is a consecration of the soul and spirit, while observance is like an outer garment." The dreaded "destruction-assimilation" was to come closer, however. Both of her sons married outside the faith. "It was like a tornado that burst upon me. . . . Where had I failed?" On reflection, she realized, "It had not occurred to me that I was anti-Gentile as some Gentiles were anti-Jewish. I had been bigoted and intolerant. When I understood this, I began to regard my sons' wives as equals." The rabbi's daughter had come a long way.

MARGARET STOBIE

TALE TYPES

EDITH FOWKE, *Folktales of French Canada*. NC Press, $7.95.

ANDRE E. ELBAZ, *Folktales of the Canadian Sephardim*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $14.95.

"FRENCH CANADIANS have preserved by far the largest and most interesting heritage of folktales in this country, but most of them are unknown to Anglo-Canadians." Edith Fowke's introductory statement in her Foreword certainly reflects both the collecting and publishing activity which has characterized the work of French-Canadian folklorists since Marius Barbeau's early forays into his native oral narrative tradition. Barbeau's dynamism led him to serve for many years as an associate editor of the prestigious *Journal of American Folklore*, in the pages of which appeared, between 1916 and 1950, a number of large collections of French-Canadian folklore, in the original French. Most, if not all of this material, has remained inaccessible to all save professional folklorists.

Fowke's intention, then, is to present a small sampling of French-Canadian folktales, in translation, "for the general reader, old and young." Fowke, one of the few Canadian Fellows of the American Folklore Society, has drawn almost entirely upon material published by Barbeau and his co-workers in the first half of the century. A second aim proposed

by Fowke is that her translations "follow the originals as closely as possible." This is certainly a laudable aim, as previous translations of French-Canadian folktales have generally been more concerned with "preserving the plots but not the style or the phrasing of the originals."

I will shortly return to the question of oral style and its presentation in published form, but first, a word on the actual contents of the collection. Folklore scholars, following the classification of the Finn Antti Aarne set out in his *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (1910), subsequently translated, revised and enlarged by the American Stith Thompson (1928, 1961), divide folktales (broadly speaking, the fictional element of folk narrative), into four chief categories: Animal Tales, Ordinary Folktales, Jokes and Anecdotes, and Formula Tales. In Western tradition, for which *The Types of the Folktale* (Thompson's English title of the *Verzeichnis*) was in reality conceived, Animal Tales are not very well represented; while medieval literary tradition (Fables, the *Roman de Renart*) drew on oral tradition in part, tales in which animals are the protagonists, rather than humans, are few and far between. Fowke provides two examples, one of which, The Fable of the Bear and the Fox, is probably the best-known animal tale in Europe and European-derived tradition.

Ordinary Folktales include what folklorists term *Märchen*, and what are known to the general reader as Fairy Tales. This is not a good term, as there are seldom any fairies in them; fairies, in fact, are more in the realm of legend (broadly speaking, the non-fictional element of folk narartive). The tales are, however, filled with marvels and wonders: seven-headed monsters, enchanted princesses, seven-league boots, and the like. Fowke offers eight specimens of such tales. She also provides eight examples of Jokes and Anecdotes, and five Formula Tales.

A fifth section of the collection is made up not of folktales in the strict sense of the term, but of legends, i.e., stories either told as truth, or which depend originally on an element of traditional belief. Fifteen legends are presented, several of them, by Fowke's own admission, showing all the signs of literary reworking. The collection is completed by notes on the Informants (at least those for whom Barbeau provided notes), Sources and References, an Index of Tale Types (according to the Aarne-Thompson *The Types of the Folktales*), an Index of Motifs (according to Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols., Bloomington, 1955-58), a bibliography of French-Canadian Folktales and further bibliographic references.

There is no doubt that *Folktales of French Canada* will find a ready market amongst the general public. The book's presentation is clear, the translations are not overburdened with too-literal renderings. But there are nonetheless some points which need to be raised of a critical nature.

Firstly, Fowke's desire to present accurate translations aimed at capturing the original style of the French tales is all very well; but the original French tales themselves show every sign of editing. They do not sound at all like the narrations of French-Canadian peasants. They flow too well, the French is by and large polished. Now up until quite recently, this was normal practice amongst folktale scholars, for whom the plot was the thing; few attempts were made to capture the spontaneous oral style (and even fewer to indicate non-verbal aspects of tale performance) of folktale narrators. The question here is, then, why did Fowke not consider more modern versions of folktales, collected by scholars who do not attempt to rewrite their material, or to

smooth the rough edges of oral narrative diamonds? They are certainly not lacking. In other words, Fowke herself is interested primarily in the plot of the tales she translates, a view supported by her introductions to each of the five sections of narratives.

Fowke's references to the Aarne-Thompson *The Types of the Folktale* and Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature,* where she provides appropriate classificatory numbers, will be completely meaningless to the general reader. While such references are essential for scholarly works, they are of little use to people ignorant of the scholarly foundations upon which they lie. And nowhere does Fowke attempt to explain or describe the theoretical issues which led to the compilation of both *The Types* and the *Motif-Index.* They were conceived as methodological tools to be used in solving problems of the origins of folktales, specifically, the so-called "Indianist" theory, which argued that most complex and many simple tales in oral tradition came to Europe from India. This theoretical concern is now largely disregarded by contemporary scholars, although they do use both classifications for purposes of convenient reference and identification. If, in a book designed for the general reader, young and old, such lists are to be provided, a word of explanation is essential.

Finally, one may well take issue with Fowke's inclusion of literary embellishments of oral narratives. Part of the reason is no doubt (this is especially true for legends) that narratives based on traditional beliefs are rarely narrated in nice, well-rounded form. They tend to be fragmented, incomplete (at least in the eyes of the compiler), so that their presentation to the public necessarily poses this problem: to be scholarly (and provide not very readable texts), or popular (and provide conflated versions)? Fowke has generally opted for the second solution, while attempting to maintain a scholarly appearance by the addition of various critical tools.

There is no doubt that translations are useful and important; perhaps they may encourage Canadians to want to read the originals, and thereby learn one or the other of our two languages. *Folktales of French Canada* is a welcome addition to the field if only for the above reason; its scholarly utility is very limited, despite its claims to the contrary.

André E. Elbaz's *Folktales of the Canadian Sephardim,* on the other hand, successfully combines scholarly and popular appeal. It reflects the vigour and dynamism of some of the younger Canadian scholars working in the field of folklore. Like Fowke's collection, it is a translation, but from the original field collection made by Elbaz in the Moroccan Canadian Sephardim communities mainly in Montreal and Toronto. The original languages are those of Moroccan Jews: Judeo-Arabic, French, and Judeo-Spanish. The translations read easily, naturally, fluently.

Elbaz's study is far more, however, than a well-translated collection of ethnic narratives. Sponsored in 1976 by the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies of the National Museum of Man, Elbaz set himself the task of evaluating the aesthetic worth, the originality and the importance of Canadian Sephardim folk literature. To achieve this end, he followed the late MacEdward Leach's methodology; Leach, a folklore scholar and teacher of considerable repute at the University of Pennsylvania, proposed four broad essentials to good folktale study. They included (1) collection and presentation of folktales as oral literature; (2) study of their "matrix," or social context; (3) study of the story-tellers; and (4) study of the aesthetics of the folktale.

The term *Sephardim* originally re-

ferred to the descendants of Jews who lived in Spain and Portugal before the expulsion of 1492. Today, all Jews living around the Mediterranean basin consider themselves Sephardim. Elbaz provides a brief historical overview of the group, identifying religious and intellectual factors contributing to their sense of ethnic identity. He carefully notes the relationship between oral and written tradition in Sephardim society, a relationship which tends to be overlooked in many western cultures, especially by literary scholars. Elbaz continues with commentary on external influences on the folktales of Canadian Sephardim, underlining the factor of westernization (leading to "a gradual abandonment of ancient traditions").

Elbaz discusses the concept of truth and fiction in his corpus (the insistance upon the "truth" of apparently fictional narratives, in ballad or tale, has preoccupied some folklorists ever since Herbert Halpert drew the attention of scholars to the question in 1939); he briefly analyses the tale corpus before considering the issue of aesthetics. This is a fascinating section, far too brief, in which Elbaz summarily evokes aspects of tale performance observed in the storytelling sessions in which he took part. This is a relatively new area of concern to most Canadian folklorists, and one would like to see a much more extensive treatment of the subject by Elbaz, perhaps under the aegis of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada.

Elbaz discusses the thematic content of Sephardim tales, emphasizing the cult of the Saints. He examines the functions of the tales, noting the dual rôles of entertainment and teaching; and concludes with an examination of the Sephardic tale in Canada, noting somewhat pessimistically that the future does not bode well for the survival of Judeo-Moroccan folk literature. The brevity of the tales does suggest a weakening of the tradition, but it can be suspected, as Elbaz himself suspects, that many themes will survive in perhaps novel functions.

Elbaz provides a very comprehensive scholarly apparatus to his narrative material. Unlike Fowke, however, he does not assume that his readers are familiar with *The Types of the Folktale* or the *Motif-Index* and explains the utility and background of these important reference tools. He provides full tables of tale-types and motifs, and precedes each tale with brief but interesting comparative notes, in addition to tale and motif numbers. A brief and useful glossary, and an extremely well-organized bibliography add to the value of the study.

Folktales of the Canadian Sephardim is one of the finest collections of Canadian folktales to have appeared in a long time; its essentially popular appeal explains why folklorists will want more thoroughly documented publications by Elbaz, whose study is nonetheless exemplary. This is an invaluable contribution to Canadian folklore studies, to ethnic literature, to popular awareness and, I daresay, to multiculturalism. The folktales themselves? They are highly entertaining. André Elbaz is to be warmly congratulated.

GERALD THOMAS

VOYAGER'S MASKS

SHERRILL GRACE, *The Voyage that Never Ends: Malcolm Lowry's Fiction*. Univ. of British Columbia Press, $24.00; pa. $9.95.

IN HER NEW BOOK, *The Voyage that Never Ends: Malcolm Lowry's Fiction*, Sherrill Grace borrows Lowry's idea of "the voyage" to develop her own approach to all his major work. Using as starting point Lowry's 34-page unpublished document which describes his 1951 plans for his finished and proposed novels as a series, "The Voyage that Never Ends," and using other of his statements

which began as early as 1940 to allude to his oft-changing "Voyage" master-plan, Grace discusses the relation of Lowry's works — *Under the Volcano*, the "magnificent Popocatapetl among lesser, but by no means uninteresting, peaks," along with virtually all the rest — to each other, and the individual works in their own right, in terms of their representing Lowry's exploration of the expanding human consciousness.

This consciousness has its main representation in the character of Sigbjørn Wilderness, who was to have been the protagonist of the planned frame for the entire "Voyage" series, and who is in some sense present in all the novels in between:

> Sigbjørn Wilderness is both the author reliving his life in *Under the Volcano, Dark as the Grave* and the other novels, and the protagonist in the [framing device, "The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness,"] where his life is being written; therefore, he is contained not only within his own books but also within the imagination of the writer of the "Voyage." This concept of fabulation as a metaphor, not only for the activity of the human mind, but also for life is the cornerstone of Lowry's "Voyage."

Grace stresses the importance of what Lowry called the rhythm of continuous "withdrawal and return" in his interpretation of life as never-ending voyage. In this thematic context, or the context of life ever demanding of man his "striving upwards," *Under the Volcano* (1947) presents man's negative condition, his state of "withdrawal," and is followed in works such as *October Ferry to Gabriola* by the rejuvenation of "return." *Under the Volcano* would, finally, have been located in the centre of the "Voyage" series, preceded by such works as *Ultramarine* and *Lunar Caustic*, followed by such works as *Dark as the Grave* and *October Ferry*:

> Each of the "Voyage" novels creates a stage in Sigbjørn Wilderness' journey through life — the initiation, repeated ordeals with failure and retreat, followed by success and development, that in turn give way to fresh defeat. At each stage the same lessons recur: man must learn to change and evolve by courageously accepting his past and joyously creating his future. With *Ultramarine* the voyage begins. In *Lunar Caustic* the hero descends into a hell of self that climaxes in the apocalyptic vision of *Volcano*. In *Dark as the Grave*, a new effort begins that, with constant setbacks, will be renewed in *October Ferry to Gabriola*. Together Lowry's novels express his myth which is "his-story" of life repeated over and over again in "The Voyage That Never Ends."

One of the pleasures of reading Grace's study comes from her managing to examine Lowry's work, virtually from first to last, unpublished as well as published, without her so much as pausing to explain the incomplete and fragmentary state of so much of that work. Indeed, though Grace notes at the outset that Lowry did exist in the extremes of a private heaven or hell, and that his productivity often suffered because of the extremes he felt, her determined affirmation even of Lowry's unfinished efforts, and her acceptance of Lowry's statements of his best intentions, make of Lowry a man and writer of surprisingly good health and wholeness, at least in the context of a generation in which, as Grace notes, so many writers were alcoholics. Her sustained emphasis on Lowry's overall vision in and for his work sweeps into place her approach to work after work, and serves as an antidote to the relatively flamboyant treatments of Lowry's excesses in such well-known works as Douglas Day's biography, *Malcolm Lowry* (1974) and Donald Brittain's film, *Volcano: An Inquiry into the Life and Death of Malcolm Lowry* (1976). She refuses to entertain those aspects of the "Lowry legend" which restrict our view to his having been only a one-book author and an alcoholic.

However, dealing as it does with so much of Lowry's promise, with so many

of his promises, Grace's interpretation at times seems too earnest, too inflexible, too laboured (with sentences sometimes straining under too many a "because," "therefore," "this," "thus"). Here and there I wish, actually, for a dose of the customary Lowry according to Freud, for Lowry the alcoholic, or, as would be appropriate in Grace's study, for Lowry as jester, as performer, as clown.

Grace does refer to Lowry's penchant for delightful self-parody in his fiction, his keen sense of the ridiculousness in his (or his protagonist's) roles as writer, his extended use of mock-serious tone and ironic jibes in work such as "Through the Panama." Indeed, at the outset of her study she emphasizes that Lowry was a man "with a wry sense of humour," a "charming, sly, humorous man." Yet she takes all too literally the 1951 "Work in Progress" statement. She has limited herself too much in choosing not to regard Lowry's protests to publishers and editors (the 1951 "Voyage" document was a major part of Lowry's "Work in Progress" report which he sent to his New York agent, Harold Matson) as, at least partly, a desperate performance staged by Lowry to humour, dazzle, seduce, divert, convince, and/or entertain them with something of what he thought they might want to hear in New York: something concrete and coherent from this writer in the Canadian wilderness. (And, of course, while buying time from New York, or simply throwing his publishers off the track with his words of cheer, Lowry was writing to himself, too.) In noting that Lowry claimed that the entire "Voyage" series, though demanding much new writing, might take only five years to complete (after *Under the Volcano*, a work which Grace usually plays down a little too much in this study, had taken ten), Grace seems all too prepared to take Lowry at his eager word, and exclaims only that his promise does sound incredible.

Thus, while Grace rightly suggests that the reader must respond with and to Lowry's fiction emotionally, she puts aside the question of the emotional implications and invitations of the 1951 document. While she suggests that the "most important feature of Lowry's concept of self creation is the idea of constant change" in his fiction ("By creating masks, the individual consciousness expands"), she forces herself into a kind of impasse by accepting as absolute his "Voyage" concept, or mask. She notes of Lowry that "for a writer terrified of 'being written,' the danger of withdrawing finally into his own work was only too real." In a way, Lowry's bold parade of promises for the "Voyage" series must have been — for one thing — a defence against such danger; but after the intensity of *Under the Volcano*, its pat neatness could hardly have pointed him to an alternative to the danger of withdrawing finally into his own work. Just as Wilderness sees through his writer's game at the end of "Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession," so Lowry must have been able to see in some way through his.

But what I would regard as Grace's losing an opportunity to exploit ironically Lowry's stated intentions does not invalidate her approach to the work, of course; her study stands, and has value, quite apart from the question of Lowry's intentions. To be sure, for all her literal use of the 1951 document, she herself does not seem to want to commit herself wholly to it. For one thing, that she never does give us the whole document suggests that she prefers to stand at a little distance from it.

Indeed, throughout her undertaking, just as she does not become enslaved by the document, neither does she become enslaved by any temptation to reductively utilize those patterns she finds recurring

in Lowry's work. Rather, her study analysis of the respective "Voyage" texts, as well as of the related work, *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place*, intriguingly presents Lowry's work with a wholeness and continuity we are unaccustomed to seeing. She has enriched her picture of wholeness by dipping shrewdly into the mass and minutiae of manuscript and marginalia essential to a study such as hers. The most important results of her explorations, perhaps, are in her providing us — directly and by implication — with a new reading of *Under the Volcano*.

Grace's interpretation of Lowry's actual and proposed achievements is always ennobling, and her seeing in his work an all-pervasive ethical thrust provides a means of enlarging our reading of *Under the Volcano*. By looking at even so dark a work as *Under the Volcano* in terms of the context she provides, we see with her that Lowry's vision and fiction, in one sense so boldly post-modernist, are essentially "romantic in their emphasis upon unending voyage and Promethean desire to bring the word to the world.... Malcolm Lowry is one of the small number of writers who has tried to express what it means to be fully human...."

PAUL TIESSEN

AS IT IS

ROGER BOULET, *The Canadian Earth: Landscape Paintings by the Group of Seven*. Cerebrus/Prentice-Hall, $75.00.

ROGER BOULET BEGINS HIS historical introduction to the Group of Seven by citing Lawren Harris on the state of Canadian art at the turn of the century. "Artistically, as in many other ways, we were a dependent people living in the gloom of a colonial attitude." That Canadian art should have been dominated by "European ways of seeing" is not surprising. No indigenous artistic convention existed within the young country to serve as a guide or impetus for growth and change. Already outdated European traditions were the norm in Canadian art: for example, Montreal in 1910 (where A. Y. Jackson was designing cigar labels for a living) contained more Dutch paintings than any other city in North America. So when distinctive new landscape artists began to appear, critics were naturally slow to respond. Jackson's sketches, said the Toronto *Star* in 1913, belonged to "the Hot Mush School." To the reviewer for *Saturday Night* two 1916 landscapes by J. E. H. MacDonald "might just as well have been called *Hungarian Goulash* and *Drunkard's Stomach*." But something powerful was stirring out there in Algonquin Park, in Georgian Bay, and it was not to be denied. "We are endeavouring to knock out of us all the preconceived ideas," Frederick Varley wrote, "emptying ourselves of everything except that nature is here in all its greatness, and we are here to gather it and understand it ... *not* as we think it should be but *as it is*...." The Group that emerged has defined for us to this day our vision of Canadian nature "as it is," and that vision is what this book is about.

The Canadian Earth is a coffee-table art book and a fine example of the genre. Boulet has chosen to make his twenty-three pages of text informative and entertaining rather than critically discriminating, and much of the time he wisely lets the artists speak for themselves. We follow their pilgrimages to progressively farther northern locales and watch their evolution of a purer, and in the case of Lawren Harris almost abstract, sense of the Canadian landscape. In spite of nearly bogging down in a morass of details about their various camping trips, Boulet's clear if at times pedestrian prose provides a good introduction for the gen-

eral reader at whom the book seems to be aimed. The same cannot always be said for the brief and somewhat redundant biographies of each artist contributed by Paul Duval, which in places suffer from obscure art criticism rhetoric. What does it mean, for example, that Franklin Carmichael's "crisply refined, but not brittle, rendering of form requires some attention from the viewer"?

The heart and bulk of this book, though, are its high-quality colour plates. Each of the nine artists, presented alphabetically (Franklin Carmichael, A. J. Casson, Lawren S. Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Frank H. Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J. E. H. MacDonald, Tom Thomson, and Frederick H. Varley), is represented by eleven works, except for Johnston and Varley (five apiece). The book's large format and sizeable reproductions (up to 24 x 30 cm) allow the reader a real sense of just how stunning the best of these paintings must be in the original. Those that stand out are Lismer's dramatically bold bay and lake scenes, Harris' magnificent *Mountain Forms* and mystical arctic vistas, and Casson's pastoral treatments of southern Ontario village life — the latter a welcome relief from the unremitting and overwhelmingly inhuman landscapes that comprise so much of this book and the country its artists made vivid for us.

SUSAN & JERRY WASSERMAN

WRONG SIDE OF THE CAMERA

GARY GEDDES et al., *Chinada: Memoirs of the Gang of Seven.* Quadrant Editions, $8.95.

THIS IS A STRANGE and somewhat eccentric book. A group of Canadian writers — Gary Geddes, Robert Kroetsch, Adele Wiseman, Patrick Lane, Alice Munro, Suzanne Paradis, and Geoffrey Hancock — set out on a trip to China at the invitation of a writers' organization there. They were given much the same offhand treatment as one hears about from other shepherded groups. There were welcomes and dinners. The itinerary was cavalierly arranged and reshuffled. The travellers seem to have spent most of their time in and around routine places like Peking, Shanghai, and Canton. They were put off from going to Kueilin which they wanted to visit by a tale of shortage of hotel rooms, though by accident they spent two hours there when a plane was diverted, and their stay in Xian was truncated for similar reasons. Perhaps the most moving occasions were when Chinese writers, notably the veteran novelist Ting Ling, talked of the persecutions they had endured under the Cultural Revolution and in this way revealed what a stubborn growth the urge to create artistically may become in the human will.

These were not the circumstances likely to produce good travel writing, and Geoff Hancock, an inveterate wanderer, is exceptional in his sharp and interesting prose observations of the country as he saw it. In another genre — a cycle of more than a dozen poems — Patrick Lane shows the same power of empathizing with a strange landscape and of catching the resonances of another people's history as he did in Peru. "Silk Factory" is a good example, since it catches the way in which the patterns of the past — dragon and phoenix in the white brocades woven in the factory — survive in modern China, and not only in artifacts but also in the human condition as it is exemplified in the lives of the silk weavers:

> a weaver-girl
> laughs at a young man and he trips on nothing.
> When she moves he cannot see where he is going.
> Grey with silk dust, windows rattle
> and the glass is frosted with snow.

> The bitterness of Ch'en Tao is long ago
> and the shuttles are no longer lumps of ice.
> Still, the brocade the weaver-girl makes
> is not for her, and the young man, though
> he labours for many years, will never buy
> the white silk she works so hard to weave.

Clearly Patrick Lane got a good part of a new book out of the trip, but one cannot see such immediate results in the journals and notes which his fellow travellers have contributed. We have to wait for the experience to congeal into significant writing later on, if it ever does. Apart from Hancock and Lane, none of these wanderers has been able to perform the act of detachment from the anxious self that is the prime need for good travel writing, and their nervousness in a strange world is shown in the way their comments tend to centre rather subjectively on themselves and on a relationship with their fellow travellers whose jokey joviality is threaded through with dark veins of half-suppressed unsureness. If only there had been a great row! If only a love affair had burst scandalously to the surface! It might have cleared the air and produced some better prose than that which normally accomplished practitioners like Alice Munro and Robert Kroetsch and Adele Wiseman have given us here.

Apart from Hancock, one always goes back to the verse, for not only is Patrick Lane's the best section of the book, but the best fragments of some of the other sections are poems embedded in undistinguished prose, like Gary Geddes' appealing renderings of Tu Fu and Li Po and the garland of small quiet pieces with which Suzanne Paradis ends her contribution.

There is, of course, nothing that is not grist to the archival mill, and despite its very mixed quality, *Chinada* will undoubtedly find its place as one of the collectible curiosities of Canadian literary history. I suppose there is even an archival justification for the 40 pages of rather murky "we were there" photographs that fill the centre of the book, though these in fact stress the essential weakness of *Chinada*, for the real traveller finds his place behind the camera, not in the picture. And so, in the end, the title loses its look of eccentricity, for most of these travellers, failing to lose themselves, have taken their country with them and what they have found is not China but Chinada indeed.

ANTHONY APPENZELL

MAGNETIC FIELDS

RICHARD B. WRIGHT, *The Teacher's Daughter*. Macmillan, $19.95.

> "... and with a tale, forsooth, he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner."
>
> Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* (1595)

SOME FOUR CENTURIES later, in the age of Atari, Sony, and Dolby, Sidney's haunting evocation of the magnetism in a spinning tale applies more readily, perhaps, to the hypnotic matrix of flickering shadows on a screen than the spellbinding net of words woven by a master storyteller. New media, evidently, create new centres of domestic gravitation as well as new messages. Yet, magnetism is a condition of polar separation; we are attracted by the mystery of estrangement: sexual, natural, or supernatural. Surviving custodians of the wordspinner's wheel, such as Richard Wright, remind us that no mystery is so timelessly seductive, or elusive, as the dark forest of another's mind, and that the linear, causal structures of language yield nothing to other media in their power to cut trails through this particular forest where motive rather than motion is the source of fascination.

In *The Teacher's Daughter*, Wright comes to us with a tale, an oft-told tale of frustrated courtship, this time set among

the sprawled shopping centres, stereotypic architecture, and numbing traffic patterns of suburban Toronto. His courtiers share the surface banality of both setting and subject. Janice Harper, the titular "daughter," herself a schoolteacher, unmarried, not spectacularly attractive, feeling the cold breath of middle-age at her back, living in the basement of her mother's neat bungalow, moves casually into the magnetic field of her opposite pole, James Hicks, a labourer, unemployed, spectacularly handsome, several years her junior, living in squalid separation from his wife and son. Such unlikely conjunctions usually afford bystanders the opportunity for vicarious prurience and comfortable moralizing, but Wright both exploits and transcends such curiosity. With flawless control of narrative pace, perspective, and detail, he locks readers into the consciousness of both protagonists, monitors their discordant idioms, and thereby denies us the role of either voyeur or juror. We are drawn from play or fireside less as spectators at a diversion than as participants in a ritual celebrating the mystery of human motivation.

Individually, Wright's characters themselves glimpse limited facets of this enigma; in concert their private glimpses reveal its scope. Janice, thinking about her parents' marriage, "wonders how her father ever put up with this nice birdbrained little woman for thirty-six years. But he loved her. O yes, he did. She exasperated him nearly every day of his life, and he retreated into his study of history. But for all that he loved her. Mysterious!" Equally "mysterious" for her mother are the antics of celebrities, remote and awesome, hyperbolized to mythical dimensions, in the sensational gossip of *The National Enquirer*, while her father's "retreat" into history merely brings him into confrontation with the same sources of mystery in cumulative abundance. He was "endlessly fascinated and repelled by the complexities and contradictions in humanity," and on his deathbed asks for as summative epitaph: "He Found Life a Damn Strange Trip." Each is a frustrated courtier, and beneath its mundane surface, Wright's tale functions as a type of parable, probing for the source of "complexities and contradictions" common to domestic, mythic, and historical mysteries.

While Hicks and Janice dance awkwardly through conventional strategies of romantic courtliness, from poetry and picnics to wining, dining, and bedding, their thoughts move to a subtle counterrhythm of attraction and repulsion tracking impulses more social than erotic. Each sees the other as a kind of symbol endowed with the exotic strangeness of an alien class. Hicks is driven by passionate desperation to escape the hopeless vulnerability of his condition: unskilled, poorly educated, increasingly expendable in a technocratic economy. He steals "self-improvement" manuals from the public library, and Scotch-tapes their more impressive homiles to his refrigerator door: "In every person lies the capacity to realize his/her potential." Indeed, his mental life pulses to a confused homiletic beat of derivative fragments, mismatched and unexamined, echoing the eclectic shopping malls, garish bars, fast foods, and casual sex that form his natural habitat and the staccato of mawkish country-music titles that punctuate his monologues, throbbing from the radio of his supercharged Trans Am. By turns optimistic and cynical, he strives to reduce baffling complexity to simple formulas, inevitably prone to frustrated anger when the world refuses to march to his reductive drummer. Education means intelligence; intelligence means success; success means money; money means survival. "If you've got it, you're laughing at the rest of humanity.... The world's a jungle.... If you're on the bottom of

the pile, somebody's going to step on your face no matter what those old fuckers in the library say about things like socialism. ... The guys who make the big dollars are the guys who are mentally alert. ... What's mostly needed is a positive approach to selling your talents. And everybody has a talent. ..." Janice Harper is his supreme act of simplification; in courting her he courts, by imitative magic, education, taste, dignity. To possess Janice is to "realize potential."

Janice, too, is attracted by the potential for escape from the oppressive monotone of her life offered in the raw masculinity and alien social norms of Hicks, but the rhythm of her mind, dry witty, protectively ironic, clashes discordantly with the mercurial anguish of her suitor. Although she is touched occasionally by this anguish, and senses the vulnerability at its core, such moments are rare, fleeting, and on reflection, threatening. Her version of Hicks' reductive impulses is a desire for "the uncomplicated life," and any challenge to monotony is also a threat to comfort. As much imprisoned as Hicks by the homilies of her class, she recoils from the very mystery that attracts her and wraps superficial layers of bromide around her own vulnerabilities. "We are worlds apart, damn it. ... Outside of bed, its often impossible to find anything to talk about. ... What I have trouble dealing with is the plastic flowers in the vase. ... Everything he likes is tacky. ... It's a question of taste. With a touchy man you don't argue too strenuously about matters of taste." For the privileged reader, "touchy" and "tacky" stand as ludicrous misconceptions of Hicks' baffled passion, as does Hicks' reduction of Janice's complex insecurities to stereotypes, alternately idolizing her for being "superior" and damning her for feeling superior. Each lacks the categories either to accommodate the other's alien reality or to recognize and articulate their own. Lacking our privileged access to motives, they remain estranged, their erotic courtship a parody of its unacknowledged social counterpart, turning corrosive, accumulating accidental and deliberate cruelties as it moves intricately toward calamity.

Only in the aftermath of calamity do categories of understanding begin to emerge, and their source is literature. Janice sees Hicks as Meursault, Camus' "outsider" in *L'Etranger*, hypocritically condemned in criminal court for failures as a social courtier. Hicks is in court, however, because he confesses in apparent identification of himself with Raskolnikov, the repentant murderer in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the only book he completed from a list of "self-improvement" aids requested of Janice in his perceived role as "student" to her "teacher." It is a measure of Wright's skill as a storyteller that both identifications seem apt: Janice and Hicks, like their literary prototypes, recreate and epitomize in this suburban tale of frustrated courtship the bedeviled history of failed human community. Janice's father, the "history teacher," damns American civilization for too much "know-how" and too little "know-why," recognizing that history is a poor teacher unless we look for motives behind its movements. The mystery of "why" is the mystery of motivation, and Wright's cautionary parable justifies Sidney's doctrine that the magnetic power of fiction to reveal cause, not catalogue effects, makes literature a better teacher than history.

MICHAEL F. DIXON

AMOURS

JACQUES FOLCH-RIBAS, *Une Aurore Boréale*. Seuil, $6.70.

ROBERT LALONDE, *Le Dernier Été des Indiens*. Seuil, $9.95.

SOLANGE LEVESQUE, *L'Amour langue morte*. HMH, n.p.

TENDRESSE, SENSUALITE, velléités d'aimer, c'est sous ces différents aspects que se présente l'amour dans les trois romans québécois que nous analyserons brièvement ici.

Une Aurore Boréale, qui vient d'être réédité en format de poche, a valu à son auteur le prix France-Canada lors de sa parution en 1974. Le héros, Pierre, est une sorte de "bon sauvage" adolescent, dont le père était Blanc et la mère mi-Esquimaude, mi-Indienne. Un hiver, les parents de Pierre se sont pas revenue de la chasse et l'enfant a grandi seul dans les bois, loin du monde civilisé qu'il n'entrevoit que lorsqu'il va vendre du poisson ou du gibier aux estivants. Un jour, il rencontre une petite fille en larmes; c'est Marie, qui est venue passer l'été à la Baie-des-Epaulards avec sec parents adoptifs, des détraqués qui la négligent. Les deux enfants joindront leurs solitudes: Pierre apprendra la nature à Marie; Marie lui enseignera la lecture et l'écriture, peut-être les seules vraies richesses que la civilisation atir à offrir.

Leur idylle durera le temps d'un été, assez longtemps pour que les leçons de Marie portent leurs fruits. Il semble que le livre, où un narrateur parlant à la première personne se confond parfois avec un auteur omniscient, soit l'oeuvre de Pierre. D'ailleurs, selon la citation de Mallarmé, en exergue au début du roman: "Tout au monde existe pour aboutir à un livre."

Une Aurore Boréale est une oeuvre fraîche, charmante, où le style est parfaitement adapté au sujet. A la fois amusants et touchants, les dialogues des deux enfants sont toujours justes. L'auteur a su éviter le mièvrerie, danger auquel sa matière l'exposait. Dans des pages pleines de poésie, Jacques Folch-Ribas a évoqué les paysages changeants de la Baie-des-Epaulards. Ce Canadien d'adoption — il est né à Barcelone — semble connaître à fond la flore, et surtout la faune, du bas du fleuve, et les détails pittoresques que donne Pierre sur les moeurs des animaux captivent tout autant le lecteur que Marie. On comprend d'ailleurs que Pierre ait été séduit par la piquante adolescente qui est d'une franchise désarmante avec lui, mais rusée comme un renard lorsqu'il s'agit de berner les "civilisés." Si, pour le lecteur, les leçons de Marie sont moins intéressantes que celles de Pierre, la faute en est à la matière et non au professeur: la nature renferme des mystères autrement fascinants que l'orthographe. . . .

Comme l'indique le titre, les événements du roman de Robert Lalonde durent aussi un été. Le héros en est également un adolescent et la nature et la société s'y opposent comme elles s'opposaient dans *Une Aurore Boréale*. Mais nous sommes loin ici de la tendresse où baigne le roman de Folch-Ribas. *Le Dernier Été des Indiens* se situe à l'époque de "la grande noirceur." Michel, que sa famille destine à la prêtrise sans lui demander son avis, se révolte contre l'hypocrisie du clan, contre une religion qui lui semble faite de simagrées, contre l'esclavage qu'on veut lui imposer. Toutefois, au lieu de crier sa révolte, il fuit. Il fuit le village figé dans les traditions pour se plonger dans la rivière, domaine fluide de l'Indien Kanak. Au monde blanc de la non-vie, il tente de substituer le monde rouge de la passion et de la liberté. Il s'agit d'ailleurs d'un désir atavique, car la grand-mère de Michel était Indienne et son grand-père, que le garçon évoque souvent pour s'encourager à lutter contre le clan, lui a inculqué l'amour de la liberté. Mais ce n'est pas une mince entre-

prise pour un adolescent que d'affronter l'opposition de tout un village.

Le roman est écrit à la première personne. Michel y raconte, d'ailleurs assez graphiquement, ses amours avec Kanak; il dit sa joie de nager dans la rivière, de se sentir libre dans la nature. Mais une partie importante du livre consiste en réflexions sur les effets paralysants de la peur, sur l'inanité des idées reçues, sur le droit d'être soi-même. Dans le premier roman de Lalonde, *La Belle Épouvante* (prix Robert Cliche 1981), le narrateur s'extasie, pendant cent cinquante pages sur les bienfaits d'un amour qui le guérit, peu à peu, d'un passé étouffant. Ce qui sauve ce roman, malgré certaines répétitions assez agacantes, c'est l'humour de l'impertinent narrateur. Mais *Le Dernier Été des Indiens* adopte un ton terriblement sérieux. Il faut ayouer que les continuelles récriminations de Michel finissent par devenir ennuyeuses et que le lecteur a parfois l'impression de se trouver devant un ouvrage polémique qui répète des idées ressassées. Il est vrai que Michel manifeste son désir de se libérer de façon originale. Malheureusement, l'auteur n'est pas parvenu à nous rendre sympathique l'adolescent qui retient soigneusement les leçons du clan qu'il renie, puisqu'il est lui-même un hypocrite fieffé. Quant à Kanak, bel animal tout instinctif au début du roman, on accepte difficilement qu'il se transforme à la fin en un être tendre et sensible.

Pourtant, l'ouvrage n'est pas dépourvu de qualités. Le grandpère, toujours évoqué avec tendresse, est convaincant et attachant. Surtout, Lalonde possède une parfaite maîtrise de la langue. Le rythme de sa phrase épouse celui des émotions ressenties par son héros. Il excelle à trouver le mot évocateur et lorsque le narrateur décrit la nature ou la beauté de Kanak, il devient poète.

L'Amour langue morte est le second ouvrage de Solange Levesque. Le premier est un volume de contes, *Les Cloisons*, où se révèle déjà un style très personnel. Et bien que *L'Amour langue morte* soit un roman, chaque chapitre a son titre et constitue un tout qui pourraît être considéré comme une nouvelle. Il est vrai que le premier chapitre nous présente Gabriel et qu'au dernier, il est attendu par Sylvia; mais entre temps, nous avons maintes fois perdu Gabriel de vue et c'est Sylvia qui est devenue le personnage central d'un roman où il ne se passe presque rien, où les personnages n'évoluent guère. Même si Sylvia va "cueillir Gabriel" lorsqu'il revient à Montréal, rien ne prouve qu'elle l'aimera, car du désir d'aimer à l'amour, la distance est longue.

Ce que Solange Lévesque nous livre dans son ouvrage tout en demiteintes ce sont des pensées fugitives, des ébauches de souvenirs, des impressions et surtout, des états d'âme. Nous entrevoyons les visages que Sylvia a aimés et qu'elle évoque dans des moments de nostalgie, traversés parfois de joies brèves ou d'énervements intempestifs. Mais l'univers de Sylvia n'est pas peuplé uniquement de visages réels ou évoqués; c'est aussi un monde où les objets s'imposent. Rares sont les écrivains aussi conscients du monde matériel que l'est Solange Lévesque, comme le montre déjà le premier paragraphe:

> L'homme avec un jean de velours crème, une chemise en toile et qui remonte la rue, c'est lui. C'est Gabriel. Il porte dans son sac une plume et un journal, un cahier de dessins, un fruit, un livre aussi, plusieurs crayons, son porte-monnaie peut-être, à moins qu'il n'ait laissé libres dans une poche les quelques dollars.

Sans doute le fait que Lévesque est peintre explique-t-il cette prédilection pour l'objet. La converture du livre reproduit une huile de l'auteur. Telles les amies d'enfance du roman, trois femmes vont s'éloignant sur des routes irrémédiablement parallèles. Disons d'ailleurs que le volume est un plaisir pour les yeux.

La présentation en est soignée, l'impression nette, et chaque chapitre s'ouvre sur une attrayante illustration. Ici aussi, on a eu souci du détail.

Car l'art de Lévesque est essentiellement l'art du détail et peut-être convient-il mieux à la nouvelle qu'an roman. Dans *L'Amour langue morte*, on voudrait que se dissipât le brouillard qui enveloppe la ville et les sentiments; on souhaiterait voir éclater le soleil et la passion. Mais ce n'est pas dans l'éclat que réside l'art raffiné et discret de Solange Lévesque.

D'autre part, comme l'écrit Sylvia à Geneviève, "le brouillard porte toutes les issues." Peut-être, après tout, l'amour n'est-il pas vraiment "langue morte."

P. COLLET

WORDS ALONE

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Letter to the Past. An Autobiography.* Fitzhenry and Whiteside, $21.95.

BIOGRAPHIES NEED to be well printed. A handsome book betokens the stature of its subject. At the age of 70 George Woodcock, a master among biographers, has been accorded a remarkably handsome publication for the first of his autobiographies. It is only right that it should be so rewarded, since *Letter to the Past* is a sibling to his eleven major biographies at least in their form as what he calls "accounts of the creative life." It records with some precision and a lot of summary the salient influences on his mind up to the time he finally left England for Canada.

The creative life for Woodcock is a matter exclusively for words. Illustrations are a normal accompaniment to any biography, and in modern times the autobiographer who ignores his family album is a rare bird indeed. Woodcock's biographies made few concessions to the pictorial. His autobiography makes none at all. That principle (it must surely be an overt and reasoned matter of choice, since he acknowledges on page 145 that his memory is strongly visual) even extends to maintaining the anonymity of his wife, who is mentioned once, protectively, on page 259, and thereafter exists only as the mute half of the "we" who moved around England, Wales, and France and who jointly decided on escape to Canada in 1949. Presumably it was the same reticence over visual images which kept any picture of the subject out of William New's *A Political Art: Essays and Images in Honour of George Woodcock* in 1978. All we have of Woodcock's face is a keyhole drawing on the back of *Letter to the Past*'s dust jacket. Perhaps this chosen reticence is designed as an indication of the Janus role he has played since 1949, as doorkeeper of exchanges between Britain and Canada. To the British who know him chiefly as a biographer of anarchists he emphasizes the creative life of words alone (words alone are certain good). For the Canadians who know his poetry and his role in letters he offers an autobiography of his formative English years. Neither audience is expected to need the face which accompanied the words.

As a first volume of creative autobiography, *Letters to the Past* is noteworthy for other omissions too. There is no political argument, only short accounts of the events which formed the signposts along his road to anarchism. Nor is he concerned to offer detailed insights or even anecdotes about the famous among his friends. The finest, most visual, and vivid accounts are of his two childhood homes at Marlow on the Thames and Market Drayton in Shropshire. Vague summary impressions are all that appear of the London of his adult life. Nothing stayed still for long in the twenty years up to 1949, and the impression is paradoxically

of a greater inwardness and isolation in those years than the solitary child ever experienced. The mind's attic, as he calls it, when unpacked shows the creative influences (at least of that memory which holds the door) to be strongest when the subject was youngest, even when the subject is such an emphatically late developer as George Woodcock.

One formative influence did bother this reader a little. On page 107 we are told of a Welsh ex-serviceman teacher at Borlase School in Marlow during the First World War who was provoked by the militarist cant of a pupil to quote Sassoon's "The General" and to denounce the reality of war as it contrasted with the myth of it at home. A similar Welsh teacher quoting the identical poem appears in R. F. Delderfield's *To Serve Them All My Days*. Perhaps Woodcock omitted to mention Delderfield's presence in his very short list of distinguished Borlase Old Boys.

This is a true autobiography, though not a great one. It is cool, honest, and openly subjective in its guiding principles. The primacy of the creative life conditions everything. It is only the second-rate artist who, as Woodcock's master Wilde said, has the most interesting personality. Woodcock's concern is all with creativity. He sees himself as improving with age while noting the Dorian Gray pattern of so many brilliant youths who came to nothing. A poet at twenty-eight, a prose writer at thirty-three, his prime fifteen years after that, the story of his first thirty-seven years is a record of his growth into creativity. The complete Janus will only be seen when he writes about the other side of his doorway.

ANDREW GURR

FOX-TROT

JOSEF SKVORECKY, *The Swell Season*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $16.95.

THE TUMESCENT IRONY in Paul Wilson's translated title of Josef Skvorecky's eight-year-old novel, *Prima Sezona*, reminds us that the author's young swell, spiritual lover of twenty-three girls, is in a rut in more ways than one. In Czech, the title would not appear to echo the same swollen urgency of teen-age sex, nor the slang that accompanies petting and hickeys. I can only guess. Translators should be creative too.

The Swell Season is a loosely connected novel of half a dozen stories narrated by student and saxophonist, Danny Smiricky, set in the provincial town of Kostelec, where many more inhabitants suffer from the mill's cotton dust than from the Nazis who occupy Czechoslovakia. No matter what the season, Danny is seldom successful in ways he wants to be. He can't ski, he's a poor swimmer, a worse mountain-climber, and he puts his arm out at gym. Whenever he tries to show off in front of girls, he falls off something: skis, diving boards, mountains, gym horses — inevitably, it seems, his own high horse. Things are not so swell. Pleasures are certainly fleeting, and his passions interrupted by angry fathers, insincere girls, and swells handsomer than Danny.

His lustful glimpses of underclothes and female anatomies are frequent and good. We have purloined peeps of crotches, white-skinned bottoms, backs of knees, dimples, blueberry-stained mouths, cleavages — black brassieres, pink brassiers, black stockings, black garters, zippers. Lists, especially the one starting on page 160, of the names of Danny's girl friends, have a Nabokovian air of verisimilitude; and the comparative anatomy is remindful of Nabokov too: "Irena's

figure tended towards the baroque, but Alena got hers from reaching for rebounds."

Moral poles in the novel are Reich and Church. In "Charleston in a Cage" a parish priest persuades Skvorecky's young skirt-chaser to help in recopying the entire marriage register to prevent the Gestapo from discovering the marriage of a Catholic and Jewess. This follows, in the same story, the problems of gaining the Regierungskommissar's approval of a libretto, translated from Czech into German for his endorsement. (Censorship's absurdities echo Skvorecky's earlier novel, *Miss Silver's Past*, about Communist censorship of a later decade in a Prague publishing house.) Yet in Danny's world the Reich isn't so confining a "cage" as the Church. More responsible for his unhappiness than Nazi racism, is a Catholic conscience, because this strengthens both the resolve of girls to resist him, and Danny to feel, if not guilt, then certainly frustration — "And I suppose that is all the Lord God will ever allow me, a few hickeys on the necks of Kostelec girls and, if I'm very good and burn candles as though they were going out of style, on girls from Linz as well."

"Sad Autumn Blues," the last chapter-story, is the other one in which the Nazi occupation touches Danny's preoccupations of jazz and girls. Dance music, no longer permitted, must now be played in secret. The interplay of zoot-suiters and jazz, foxtrots and ideological discussion culminates in the most striking line in the book, spoken by the clarinetist Lexa, whose life is shocked into awareness when he discovers that "They shot my dad." In this final scene of youth, Danny too is morally affected.

His epiphanies are not usually so intense. A pattern of ideal, unattainable girls enhances the comedy without obviously deepening Danny's wisdom. He gains little insight by being rebuffed, and rather enjoys the reputation his sexual failures have won him. The picaresque quality is in the nature of this novel, for its style consciously resists the reflective, elegaic tone of the earlier *The Bass Saxophone*. That novella, though depicting the narrator's life at almost the same age, is denser and its language richer. In *The Swell Season* it is as if Skvorecky has tried to remove the distance of time and casually set us down in the period.

Trying to catch the flavour of youth has led to some curious lapses. Phrases such as "sitting there like a bump on a log," "screwed up my courage," "Then it hit me," "a pair of cute little knees," "had to pan out," "took a swig," are surprising. Presumably, as a professor of English, the author allowed these clichés to pass as faithful translations of his original Czech. If we are to believe that Danny's one good subject at school is composition, then the enterprising quality of his imagination should be reflected more evenly in his narration. "I looked around and suddenly I saw a guy standing under a pine tree, urinating." The word "guy" rests uneasily here alongside the more sophisticated word for peeing. Occasionally, the lapses are embarrassing. "And she blossomed right before my eyes, with her sweet little noggin obviously full of what was going to happen in the woods between ten and midnight." I'm not entirely convinced that this kind of unevenness is the translator's fault, for there are times when his English will resist the middle ground for poetic heights: "Through a kaleidoscope of fabulous dazzlement," narrates Danny, "I saw the tail of the little white gosling, studded with four pearly stars like St. John of Nepomuk, swim up to my face." The gosling here is an ice-cream cone; the stars a girl's fingernails. Surely it is Skvorecky's abundance of metaphor and simile, rather than Wilson's imagination

or Danny's effusion, that makes this sentence so spectacularly bad.

The Swell Season deserves the enthusiastic reviews it has received; it is a charming book. Skvorecky's genius is for scene-making — think of that brilliant scene in the train at the end of "Emoke" in *The Bass Saxophone* — and in this way he continues to evoke an era, to cast a wistful and indulgent eye, to relish the pleasures of reinventing his own youth yet again. If there's an air of book-making about the work, buttressed as it is by epigraphs, quotations, titles, and subtitles, it might have come from an unnecessary attempt to worry the parts into a whole, when it's the whimsicality of the parts that bewitches.

KEATH FRASER

FIRST THOUGHTS

MARGARET ATWOOD, *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose.* Anansi, $22.95.

MARGARET ATWOOD begins her Introduction to this book with the disclaimer that "I don't like writing the kinds of things that are brought together in this volume nearly as much as I like writing other kinds of things." The Introduction concludes, "I began as a profoundly apolitical writer, but then I began to do what all novelists and some poets do: I began to describe the world around me. This book is part of that description." In its chronological presentation of a selection of Atwood's non-fictional prose, *Second Words* charts the emergence of a third face of the writer who is probably Canada's best-known poet and novelist, from a preliminary deft sketch of the quick-witted book reviewer of her student days, to a full portrait of the committed social critic of the late seventies and early eighties. The essence of Atwood's concerns — individual and national identity, sexual and power politics, the malleability and limitations of language, the forms and stereotypes we use to structure our perceptions and experience, the appalling myopia of North America's commitment to materialism — has remained more or less constant over the years. As she says (in a review of Valgardson's *Red Dust*), "It's a critical fallacy of our times ... that a writer should 'grow,' 'change,' or 'develop.' ... If you look at what most writers actually do, it resembles a theme with variations more than it does the popular notion of growth. Writers' universes may become more elaborate, but they do not necessarily become essentially different." In her own case, elaboration has taken the form of fulfilling the implication of her 1973 remark that she sees writers "as inescapably connected with their society," and recognizing the power given to her by her enormous international following. As her popularity has expanded beyond the borders of the Canadian world of letters, she has sought to exert her voice, to meet the weighty responsibility of the modern fiction writer whom she sees as having inherited from the now discredited priest and politician the role of "guardian of the moral and ethical sense of the community." In the passionate wisdom of recent pieces like "An End to Audience" and her 1981 address to the world meeting of Amnesty International, she asserts that "The writer *bears witness.* Bearing witness is not the same as self-expression," and that literary art cannot be separated from politics in the broader sense of "who is entitled to do what to whom, with impunity; who profits by it; and who therefore eats what."

This is only one of the matters covered in this book. At the risk of repeating a cliché, I must at least mention Atwood's astonishing productivity and versatility. Whether writing heavily footnoted serious criticism for *Open Letter* or *Cana-*

dian Literature, appreciatively reviewing modern (usually women) writers for major American newspapers, or entertaining university audiences with her cleverly provocative addresses, Atwood displays a chameleon-like ability to simultaneously adapt to her environment and retain her distinctive voice. And while her vision of the world from the perspective of a Canadian woman writer gives rise to many wry observations on the situation of Canadians, women, and writers (and the various permutations thereof), she extends her range of topics to include Canadian humour, Canadian monsters, Australian Writers' Week, and a touching personal memoir of Northrop Frye.

Atwood appears to have made this selection herself. All but two of the fifty pieces have been published before, many in places not rapidly accessible to the Canadian reader (two reviews from 1976 and one from 1978 even escaped the attention of bibliographer Alan J. Horne). Partly because Atwood's policy is not to review books she dislikes, the persona that emerges from this collection is both generous and incisive, speaking confidently and clear-sightedly in a style which combines it with eloquence.

As Atwood is fully aware, audience is an important element in her work: "What gets said ... depends a lot on whom you're saying it to." Hence she has courteously included both a good index and a complete list of acknowledgements which allows the reader to easily place each piece within its original context. The general Atwood fan will most enjoy the later pieces directed towards a wide audience, particularly those first prepared as oral presentations, such as "The Curse of Eve," "Witches," "An End to Audience," "Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties," and "Writing the Male Character." The literary historian will relish the early reviews and critical essays from *Acta Victoriana* and *Alphabet* for the insights they provide into their author's youthful literary sensibility, and the selection of reviews which proclaim her sympathy with writers as diversified as Al Purdy, Marie-Claire Blais, Timothy Findley, and Adrienne Rich. And while Atwood has assiduously avoided analyzing her own writing the way she has analyzed that of Rider Haggard, John Newlove, Gwendolyn MacEwen, and Jay Macpherson, the student and the teacher of CanLit will have difficulty resisting the temptation to apply her comments on other authors to her own poetry and fiction.

CAROLE GERSON

DRUDGES

DEAN TUDOR, NANCY TUDOR, & BETSY STRUTHERS, eds., *Canadian Book Review Annual 1980*. Simon & Pierre, $49.95.

ROBERT I. FITZHENRY, ed., *The Fitzhenry & Whiteside Book of Quotations*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, n.p.

IT SEEMS DECIDEDLY inappropriate to review a book to which one is a contributor, but that's difficult to avoid in the case of *CBRA 1980*. By my count it includes 195 contributors, all of them potential reviewers — and how many other of us poor drudges are out there?

Unfortunately that term, "drudge," seems all too appropriate here. It's hard to say why people agree to review books. It is partly a sense of duty, I suppose. Someone must do it. But it is also presumably some manifestation of the ego, the same as almost all writing. The reviewer believes that he or she has something to say and that it can be said in a review. Which takes the review well beyond a simple evaluation. Some reviews become so interested in themselves that they lose sight of the book. But the best are able to keep both reviewer and

book in the foreground and spin cunning comments.

There is little sense of that other level in *CBRA*. Perhaps the brevity of the reviews it contains, approximately four hundred words each, limits the reviewers, but even then there could be a bit more spark. There are far too many phrases like "a good read" and prosaic descriptions of contents. One of the few reviewers who gets beyond this, Vivienne Holland, says of one novel, "This passionate Canadian saga, set against the haunting expanse of the prairie landscape, is full of grand cliches." I would like to see more of that but all too often the clichés are neither grand nor ironic: "Readers are certain to be stirred by the lure of the wild."

Yet perhaps flair isn't really an appropriate request for a work such as this. It incorporates 550 reviews and attempts to be encyclopedic: "to locate and include all titles that met *CBRA*'s criteria." The main body of material is "trade books carrying a Canadian imprint and a 1980 copyright date," plus other works with "obvious trade appeal." For some of the books this appeal seems less than obvious. Also, I can think of at least a few works which are in the mainstream and fit the criteria but are not included. Still, *CBRA* was in limbo for some time after the demise of their publisher, PMA. Both the editors and the new publisher, Simon & Pierre, should be congratulated that there even is a 1980 volume.

But to what end? *CBRA* seems to provide a service in its collection of competent though uninspired reviews, well-indexed. But who reads it? In my experience the only ones who know of *CBRA*'s existence are contributors. I've asked librarians if it's of value in book purchases but they give the obvious answer: it comes out too late.

Even when they didn't have publishing troubles *CBRA* appeared at least a year and a half late. A number of the works in *CBRA 1980*, and not just ephemera, are already out of print. Speaking of ephemera, do we really need a review, three years after publication, of *The King's Wife's Cookbook*? (To let you know how quickly popular culture can fade, the title refers to Mrs. Al Waxman, whose husband used to be "King of Kensington.")

Anyway, *CBRA* does a reasonable job of what it does, whoever it does it for, and I shall continue to review for it, for whatever reason. It's difficult to be even that positive about *The Fitzhenry & Whiteside Book of Quotations*. I can only assume that it is a product of Robert Fitzhenry's habit of collecting bon mots and a desire to have F&W's name on a book like this, like Oxford or Penguin.

F&W adds little of interest to the usual collections of quotations. In the preface Fitzhenry himself notes "This book does not have rich indices of key words of first lines or any of those detailed and valuable aids. I leave these to the great scholarly collections." But it doesn't even have a cross-reference for subjects or, presumably the least one could expect, titles of sources. It's almost impossible to look up a specific quotation but even if you find a likely one, you can't tell where it's from. Fitzhenry tells us it's Dickens or Shakespeare, but what Dickens, which Shakespeare?

Even when you don't like it, it's impossible to leave a collection of quotations without a few useful tidbits. I'll take one by Samuel Butler: "Books should be tried by a judge and jury as though they were crimes." At best, *F&W* is a minor felony. If Robert Fitzhenry must write he might try a more purposeful form of larceny. How about book reviews?

TERRY GOLDIE

opinions and notes

CANADIAN COPYRIGHT DEPOSITS IN THE BRITISH LIBRARY (1895-1924)

THE SYMONS REPORT and the Canada Council Consultative Group on University Research Libraries stated effectively in 1975 the need to locate and preserve Canadiana; the Canada Council acted immediately to create the Canada Institute for Historical Microreproductions.[1] No one working in the field of Canadian Studies needs to hear the arguments for preservation; research in historical Canadian Studies still follows that classic receipt for cooking a goose which begins with the fundamental formula "First, catch a goose." The question still remains, where to look for such a goose. Copyright deposit collections, such as that in the British Library, are, in fact, a logical place to institute a search for Canadian printed documents and books. As early as 1839, publishers in Nova Scotia were required by law to deposit copies of their printed materials; the principle of copyright deposit collections is longstanding. To introduce the nature and scope of our project, this paper will focus first on the history of the various copyright deposits collected by law in Canada, and secondly, on the copyright deposit collection sent to the British Library between 1895 and 1924, which is our particular concern.

Copyright Legislation in Canada

The history of copyright legislation in Canada is considerably documented but little attention has been accorded the implication of Canada's copyright laws for sources of Canadiana.[2] Initially, it may be helpful to survey the various copyright legislation in Canada and the earlier British North American Colonies. Beginning in 1839, publishers in Nova Scotia were required to deposit a copy of any work printed in the province in each of the two Legislative Libraries as a condition of receiving copyright.[3] Other provincial libraries which received free deposit copies under copyright legislation were the Province of Canada between 1841 and 1868,[4] Prince Edward Island between 1861 and 1873,[5] and Newfoundfoundland between 1888 and 1912.[6] In 1868, the federal government re-enacted the Copyright Act of the Province of Canada as stop-gap legislation to apply in the new Dominion; publishers were required to deposit two free copies with the Minister of Agriculture who kept one in the Copyright Office and deposited the other in the Library of Parliament, established by the purchase of the legislative Library of the Province of Canada for $200,000 in 1867.

The first complete copyright legislation in Canada was the Canadian Copyright Act of 1875. This act, which was substantially re-enacted with some alterations first in the *Revised Statutes of 1886* and later in the *Revised Statutes of 1906*, supplied the basis of copyright in Canada between the years 1875 and 1924. It granted copyright for twenty-eight years from the time of registration to any person living in Canada or other part of the British dominions; and recognized the copyright for a similar period of a citizen in any country having an international copyright treaty with the United Kingdom. The impetus for the legislation came from business interests and thus concerns itself primarily with the commercial aspects of printed and published works rather than the right by authorship

to a written work.[7] To register a work and thus obtain copyright under the Canadian law, the person, often the publisher and not the author, must have complied with the following conditions: first, such literary, scientific, or artistic works must have been printed and published, or reprinted and republished, in Canada; or, in the case of works of art, must have been produced or reproduced in Canada; and secondly, two copies of the book, map, chart, musical composition, photograph, print, cut, or engraving must have been deposited at the Office of the Minister of Agriculture; for paintings, drawings, statuary, and sculpture, a written description of such work could have been substituted and sent to the Minister. The Act of 1875, as had the 1868 Act, instructed the Minister of Agriculture to deposit one copy of the work in the Library of Parliament and to retain the other copy in the Copyright Office. In 1895, section 10 of the Act was amended to require that three copies be sent to the Minister; the third copy was to be forwarded to the British Museum, now the British Library.

The deposit requirement under the 1875 Act and its amendment of 1895 remained unaltered until the passing of the Act of 1921. The 1921 Act repealed and superceded all prior copyright legislation in Canada and, with its various amendments, is the basis of Canadian copyright law today. Sadly, the 1921 Act (which was not proclaimed until 1 January 1924) contained no provision requiring deposit copies of books, in Canada or elsewhere. The Library of Parliament, the Copyright Office, and the British Library all lost their free copies of Canadiana on 31 December 1923. This situation prevailed until 1931 when a bill was passed, "not intended to revise generally the Copyright Act, but to amend that Act only in so far as is necessary to bring Canadian copyright legislation into conformity with the provisions of the Rome Convention" of 1928. In addition to its above stated purpose, the amendment included a provision to restore deposits to the Library of Parliament:

> The publisher of every book published in Canada, within three months of the publication thereof, shall deliver or cause to be delivered, at his own expense, to the Librarian of Parliament, who shall give a written receipt therefor, two copies of the first edition and two copies of each subsequent edition if such subsequent edition contains additions or alterations either in the letter press or in the maps, prints, or other engravings thereto belonging.

The rationale for this action was explained in a subsidiary note in the amendment: that such copies, when deposited, would form the nucleus of a National Library for Canada.

The dream of a National Library, shattered by the Depression and World War II, did not become a reality quickly. Not until 1952 did the National Library Act pass through Parliament. Section II of that Act gave the new library the responsibility of collecting and systematically preserving Canadiana by requiring Canadian publishers to deposit two copies of each publication in the National Library within one week of its release for public distribution or sale.

Copyright Deposit Collections in Canada

Everything copyrighted in Canada prior to 1924 or published in Canada after 1931 found its way as deposit material into official libraries. This system would seem to have guaranteed ready access today to all published Canadian material; time and circumstance, however, have served to offset the intent of the various Copyright Acts. The Acts produced four sets of collections: the provincial materials gathered prior to Confederation; the Library of Parliament/National Library Collection which was augmented by the purchase of the

Province of Canada Library in 1868; the Copyright Office collection; and, finally, the British Museum collection.

The Pre-Confederation Collections

The major defect in the pre-Confederation provincial legislation requiring deposit was, primarily, the absence of penalty for non-compliance with the law, and, secondarily, the calibre of the provincial librarians. In practice, the official librarians for the British North American colonies served other functions as well — janitor, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain — and frequently their appointments lasted only for the duration of the legislative assembly.[8] Despite these handicaps, some materials were received, and anyone searching for materials published in Nova Scotia between 1839 and 1868, in P.E.I. between 1863 and 1873, or in Newfoundland between 1887 and the present, would find the Legislative Libraries of those provinces a proper place to begin. The limited diligence of the official libraries to collect the materials, and of the authors or publishers to request copyright, gainsays the completeness of any of these collections.[9]

None of the material received under deposit by the Province of Canada, however, remains in Toronto or Québec City. In 1841, on the Union of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, the libraries of the two legislatures were amalgamated and began receiving legal deposits of everything published in the combined province. With Confederation in 1867, Ontario and Québec were funded with $100,000 each to establish new legislative libraries and "donated" their amalgamated library to the new Dominion as the basis for the Library of Parliament. The Library of Parliament ideally should have included everything published in the Canadas between 1841 and 1867, everything copyrighted in Canada between 1868 and 1924, as well as everything published between 1931 and the formation of the National Library in 1952.

That this collection no longer exists in its entirety is due to a series of fires. During the riots in Montréal following the enactment of the Rebellion Losses Bill, the Library of the Province of Canada and its collection was almost totally destroyed by fire on 12 April 1849. Although the collection was substantially rebuilt, fire again ravaged the library on 1 February 1854.[10] Thus the collection of the Province of Canada, which would form the basis of the Library of Parliament, contained only material deposited for copyright after 1854.

The Library of Parliament Collection

As was the Province of Canada Library, the Library of Parliament itself was diminished by two fires. The first fire in 1916 began in the Library and would eventually destroy the rest of the Parliament Buildings. The Report of the Joint Librarians indicates the extent of damage:

> The disastrous fire which destroyed the Parliament Buildings, in February, did not leave the Library unscathed.
>
> The fire originated in the reading room, which contained a large and valuable collection of books, as well as the current newspapers.
>
> When these took fire, the whole collection of books was hopelessly doomed to destruction.
>
> During the night, the water thrown upon the burning buildings found its way ultimately to the Library, and the floor was flooded to the depth of many inches, during the two days which followed.
>
> Much damage was done by this flood of water; but owing to the exertions of some members of the Library staff, who were on duty, the books on the lower shelves were, as far as time allowed, removed and placed in higher shelves.[11]

A second fire began in the dome of the Library of Parliament in 1953 and water damage again caused most of the destruc-

tion as it cascaded down upon the collections.[12]

The collection was not totally destroyed by these two fires; the Report of the National Librarian in 1957 observes that several "large transfers have been made by the Library of Parliament, and about 100,000 of these volumes have been unpacked and placed on shelves."[13] By 1967, this transferred material had been catalogued simply in a composite file, known in the National Library as the "In Process Catalogue," and included 86,223 items; the In Process Catalogue, however, was not integrated into the National Library Catalogue.[14] Michel Theriault of the National Library, in charge of the Canadiana 1967-1900 Project, stated during the Learned Societies' Meetings in Halifax in June 1981 that the transferal from the Library of Parliament does not contain a full set of deposit materials. Similarly, Maria Calderisi Bryce, Music Division, National Library, noted in correspondence last summer that "a great number of legal deposit copies . . . have not been located in our own collection,"[15] and the National Library should contain the first deposit copy of every book published in Canada between 1868 and 1923 but, in fact, can not claim to house this full collection. Destroyed in the Parliamentary fires of 1916 and 1953, lost in transit to the National Library in the 1950's, or simply stored and forgotten in a warehouse at some intervening date, a complete set of the first deposit copies of Canadian material published prior to 1952 is not accessible in the Library of Parliament nor the National Library of Canada.

Copyright Office Collection

The history of the Copyright Office Collection, consisting of the second deposit copies received after 1868, is more tightly documented. With the assistance of the Hon. Robert Stanfield, then Member of Parliament from Halifax, a memorandum dating from 1937 was traced: because of its impending removal to new premises the Copyright Office requested direction on the disposition of its collection of deposit material, since the new offices lacked the necessary storage space. Forces of continentalism outweighing nationalism in 1938, the Committee of the Privy Council determined that few of the "several thousands of volumes of books, catalogues, periodicals, pamphlets, sheet music, maps," etc., had any value. An Order-in-Council, signed by Lord Tweedsmuir and Prime Minister Mackenzie King, ordered that the material be offered for selection to the Secretary of State Library and that the Copyright Office dispose of what remained. The Secretary of State Library observed shortly thereafter that "One hundred and fifty-five books of prominent Canadian statesmen and the history of Canada were obtained from the Copyright Office, together with some sixty volumes of Canadian fiction." A search of the Public Records Office did not reveal further correspondence on this subject; the remaining 40,000-odd pieces were, we must presume, destroyed.[16]

Perhaps confusing Canadian with American and English copyright law requirements, some applicants continued to submit deposit copies after the legal obligation to do so ceased in 1924. Items that continued to accumulate in the copyright office after 1938 were collected by the Department of Indian Affairs in the mid-1960's and distributed to schools and libraries, particularly in the Northwest Territories.[17]

This brief description of the collections deposited by copyright in the Provincial Libraries, the Library of Parliament, the National Library, and the Copyright Office demonstrates a lack of concern prior to 1952 for the systematic and complete assembling of Canadiana. It also

shows why hunting for the "goose" in these collections is not always successful. The Library of Congress in Washington and the British Library in London which have systematically collected the published output of the United States and Britain, make the researching of American and British topics easier. Those "geese" are not only caught, but plucked. The elusive Canadian goose continues to hide.

The Formation of the British Museum Collection

We now must consider the third deposit copy received by the Copyright Office. The disposition of these items provides the second focus for this paper, the British Library Collection. The deposit copies for the British Library began arriving in London in 1895: "The works transmitted to the British Museum commence with those registered on July 23, 1895, viz. nos. 8035-8040 or the latter nos. of the list in the Patent Office Record vol. 23, no. 7, July 31, 1895. [Signed] F.B.C."[18] Valerie Broomfield's valuable *Guide to Resources For Canadian Studies in Britain* reports that "coverage of Canadian publication is virtually complete for the years 1842-1886," in the British Library collection.[19] The information supporting this assertion had been supplied to her by a staff member of the British Library, but the deposit of these Canadian materials to which the Library was entitled by the Imperial Copyright Act of 1842, and that which was actively desired by British Library staff at the time, had not, in fact, ever arrived.

The ideas of Antonio Panizzi dominate the British Library's philosophy of acquisitions in the nineteenth century.[20] On 12 October 1836, soon after being appointed Keeper of the Books, Panizzi wrote his first report to the trustees on the subject of acquisitions, the first principle of which was the following:

> 1. The attention of the Keeper of this emphatically British library ought to be most particularly directed to British works, *or to works relating to the British Empire*, its religious, political, literary as well as scientific history, its laws, institutions, description, commerce, arts, etc. The rarer and more expensive a work of this description is, the more necessary it is to endeavour by all means to secure it for the library.[21]

Lack of any specific response by the trustees regarding this statement of acquisition policy, Panizzi regarded as tacit acceptance of that policy. That Panizzi continued this policy throughout his career at the British Library is demonstrated in his statement some twelve years later to a Royal Commission:

> The Museum is the library of the English nation, and there ought to be in that library every book that was printed, either by Englishman or in English, or relating to England.[22]

This philosophy of acquiring everything in the English language, combined with Panizzi's friendship with the intelligentsia of London, probably led to the inclusion in the new act when he insisted that the British Museum should offer equal hospitality to any book without distinction as to its country of origin, or its political or religious basis, Panizzi was accepting the tradition of nineteenth-century liberal thought. Although he numbered many of London's intelligentsia among his friends, it is difficult to document Panizzi's precise influence upon the Parliamentary Committee considering copyright in 1842. The legislation it produced, however, demonstrates its grounding in the same liberal tradition by its measures to enforce the collection and preservation of all printed material. Thus by the "Act to Amend the Law of Copyright" passed at Westminster in 1842, every publisher in Britain and the British Colonies was required to deposit a copy of every published monograph in the British Library.[23] Enforcement of this law in Great Britain

was difficult until Panizzi launched in court 158 law suits against publishers who had failed to comply;[24] the enforcement of the law in the Colonies, however, was impracticable as Panizzi admitted in earlier testimony to the British Museum:

> Of the works published in the provinces, I believe we get a certain number, but nothing in comparison to the number which is published; of the works printed out of England, I mean Scotland and Ireland, I believe we get almost none at all; and of the works published in the colonies, to which the copyright extends, we get none at all.[25]

This testimony has serious ramifications for anyone interested in nineteenth-century Canadian material in the British Library:

> The law is not stringent enough.... As things are at the present we lose the books because they do not come by copyright, and *I do not feel justified in purchasing them* (my italics).[26]

To purchase such books, by right copyright deposit material, was tantamount to compliance with the lawbreakers, and beyond Panizzi's ethical undertaking. By its failure to purchase, however, the British Library grew weak in many areas of later nineteenth-century Colonial material,

In 1886, an Imperial Act removed the requirement of copyright deposit copies from all Colonial publishers including the self-governing Dominions. Since Imperial legislation could not guarantee Colonial deposits the British Library now looked to diplomatic channels in the various Dominions as a means of assuring transmission of such materials. In 1889 an amended Canadian Copyright Act had passed through Parliament, but failed to receive Royal Assent. During the considerable discussion in England and Canada that followed, the proposed bill came to the attention of the Trustees of the British Museum. On their behalf, E. Maude Thompson, Director of the British Library, wrote to the Marquess of Ripon at the Colonial Office requesting that he "keep the interests of the British Museum in view in the course of the negotiations with the Canadian Government" and "that, if the Canadian Government obtain any realization of copyright regulations in their favour, they should undertake on their part to comply with the law as regards the deposit of books in the British Museum."[27] The Marquess of Ripon forwarded the request to the Earl of Aberdeen:

> I have the honour to transmit to you, to be laid before your Minister, a copy of a letter from the British Museum, respecting the supply to it of copies of books first published in Canada.... The collection in the British Museum is, as you are aware, the only national collection, and I am sure your Ministers will agree with me that it is important that it should be complete, and especially in respect of works issued in the most important of Her Majesty's Possessions.[28]

Although the 1889 Act failed to receive Royal Assent, Canada's Parliament did agree that works published in Canada should be part of the British Museum's collection. An 1895 amendment to the 1875 Canadian Copyright Act directed that three copies of each work be deposited with the Minister of Agriculture — the third copy to be deposited in the British Museum, now the British Library. The rationale motivating the Canadian legislators to require a third copyright deposit copy for the British Library was, according to the Report of the Privy Council, that it "would be the means of introducing the works of Canadian authors to the large and influential class of readers who frequent the library." In actuality it was probably a political move to gain concessions from the Canadian authors and the British government who had both opposed the proposed 1889 Canadian copyright legislation.

The unpublished "Canadian Copyright Lists" of the British Museum indicate nearly 100 percent receipt of the deposits

at the British Library between 1895 and 1924.[29] A memorandum of 27 March 1899 stated that, "It is not proposed to ask for 'Insurance Plans' (Canadian), in as much as their value is purely local — nor for English Novels published in England, which are reprinted in Canada."[30] Despite this disclaimer, these materials continued to be sent by the Canadian Copyright Office, and, for the most part, to be received by the British Library. The "Lists" for 1914 reveal that "Copyright exhibit Nos. 28790-28806 registered between May 14 & 19 have not been received — they were presumably lost in the wreck of the Empress of Ireland on May 30."[31] In addition, dozens of incendiary bombs fell on the British Museum on 10 May 1941 and the resulting fires in the southwest quadrant caused the loss of some 200,000 volumes. The principal destruction among Canadian copyright deposit books was in the shelves containing law, stenography, and cookery. Despite its losses, the British Library collection of Canadian copyright deposit material remains, we believe, the most complete, of both English and French published materials, for the period between 1895 and 1924.

The British Library Collection Today

Herein lies the significance of the collection: not that individual items are unique, but that the whole is, for the most part, housed complete in one library. Our current research project[32] has been undertaken to edit the "Canadian Copyright Lists" of Canadian deposit material to a more useful form, and to add British Library Shelf-marks for each entry.

The task has not been made easier by the change in philosophy instructing the officers of the British Library at the turn of the century. If Panizzi and his immediate successors were eager to receive Colonial and Empire material, George Knottesford Fortesque, who became Keeper of the Books in 1889, was not. Rather, he and his deputy, A. W. Pollard (who followed as Keeper in 1919), were dedicated instead to the elimination of gaps in the library's holdings of early English books and incanabula, at the expense of contemporary material. On this change in philosophy from the nineteenth-century liberalism of Panizzi and his successors, combined with depleted staff and finances during the First World War, depends the placing of some material, uncatalogued, into "dumps." Likewise, small pamphlets or individual sheet poems were placed in guardbooks (scrapbooks) which were never indexed for inclusion of each item in the printed catalogue.[33]

A further problem for determining the location of Canadian items derives from the preparation of the "Canadian Copyright Lists" from information supplied by a clerk at the copyright office in Ottawa. Catalogue entries, however, were prepared by trained library personnel from the actual book or document. The British Library catalogue is arranged by author, but the copyright lists often omit the author of a general text, contain spelling errors where names appear, or attribute authorship erroneously. Any error in the original list may take hours to circumvent.

In addition, the Canadian material has been dispersed throughout the various divisions of the British Library without consistency. Maps are located primarily in the Map Library, but some are uncatalogued in the Woolwich "dump." Lyrical poem broadsheets should be in the Reading Room Catalogue, but might be in the Music Library. Some of the tangential material, sadly that which is least likely to have survived in Canadian libraries, may possibly have been destroyed or lost.

> Floods of worthless leaflets and labels poured in, and some, bearing the Museum's dated blue copyright stamp, reached the tables of cataloguers, who gazed at them in despair and (official conscience forbidding them to remove and destroy them secretly) slipped them under books and papers where they could be quietly forgotten.[34]

If all the Canadian material received had been shelved in one section of one library the task of locating the material would have been absurdly simple; instead, the collection has been largely ignored because of the difficulty in locating its pieces. Because of the structural changes in the administration of the British Museum and Library, moreover, some items have been traced to the collection of the Museum of Mankind, which formerly was part of the British Museum.

Nevertheless, virtually everything copyrighted in Canada between 1895 and 1924 arrived at the British Library, and since the library is forbidden by law to dispose of any item, we may safely conclude that almost all copyrighted items will be traced and located. Our current plan is to publish a series of checklists of these materials: printed books, monographs, maps, photographs, etc.[35] The National Librarian of Canada observed in his annual report for 1960:

> One of the chief purposes and responsibilities of a national library is to collect systematically and preserve the total output of the nation's publishers.[36]

The British Library has systematically collected items from Commonwealth and colonial countries whenever possible, and from Canada in particular between 1895 and 1924. The editing of its accession lists for Canada should prove beneficial to scholars in all areas of Canadian studies. The lists can, however, only suggest where a "goose" is hiding. Preparing the goose for the oven, analyzing the Canadian copyright deposits on the British Library, will occupy readers of Canadian literature in the years to follow.

NOTES

1 For a history of the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproduction see Ernest B. Ingalls and Robert J. Montague, "Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions," *Canadian Library Journal* (June 1983), pp. 134-40.

2 See R. A. Shields, "Imperial Policy and the Canadian Copyright Act of 1889," *Dalhousie Review*, 60 (Winter 1980-81), 634-58.

3 On 30 March 1839, the Nova Scotia Legislature passed the first provincial act in Canada requiring the deposit of two copies of "any Map, Chart, Book or Print" published in Nova Scotia "with the Clerk of the House of Assembly, to be kept in the Libraries of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly respectively." This requirement was maintained in "Chapter 119" of the *Revised Statutes* of 1851, 1859, and 1864.

4 Lower Canada had passed an act in 1832 before the union of Upper and Lower Canada, which legislation was entitled "An Act for the Protection of Copy Rights in the Province." This Quebec Act, unlike the later acts, did not require the deposit of the publication; it required only that the printed title page be deposited with the Clerk "of the Supreme Court of Original Jurisdiction of the District."

5 This act received assent on 29 April 1861.

6 No record has yet been traced in the British Library to confirm that material was actually sent to London under the provisions of this act. The register of materials copyrighted in Newfoundland between 1888 and 1912 is held by Consumer and Corporate Affairs in Ottawa.

7 As Sir Daniel Wilson, President of the University of Toronto, pointed out in 1892: "It is treated as a mere question between English and Canadian printers and publishers; as though the 'Idylls of the King' ... were the mere work of the type-setters." See "Canadian Copyright," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada for the Year 1892*, Section II (Ottawa, 1893), pp. 3-18.

8 For a history of the legislative libraries of Canada see John Robert Beard, "Canadian Provincial Libraries," *Canadian Librarian*, 22 (May 1966), 422-60, and 23 (July 1966), 19-41.

9 The variety of the holdings of the Nova

Scotia Legislative Library may be examined in the 292 pages of the *Catalogue of the Books in the Legislative Library of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1890).

[10] For individual studies on Ontario and Quebec legislative libraries see A. T. Wilgress, "Ontario's Legislative Library," *Special Libraries,* 18 (May-June 1927), and N. E. Dionne, "Historique de la bibliothèque du parliament à Québec, 1792-1892," *Royal Society of Canada, Transactions,* 2nd Series, VIII, 1902.

[11] "Report of the Joint Librarians of Parliament," in the *Annual Supplement to the Catalogue of the Library of Parliament* (Ottawa, 1917).

[12] For a short history of the Library of Parliament and of Canadian libraries see Encyclopedia Canadiana, 6 (Toronto, 1966), 132-38.

[13] *Report of the National Librarian, 1957* (Ottawa, 1958).

[14] See Dorothy Benson, "Instant Cataloguing," *Canadian Library,* 22 (May 1966), 419-21.

[15] Information supplied by M. Theriot and M. C. Bryce of the National Library in correspondence.

[16] Information supplied by Barbara MacDowell, Administrative Assistant to the Hon. Robert Stanfield, 1975.

[17] Information supplied by Carol White, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Ottawa.

[18] Memorandum in the Canadian copyright deposit lists held by the British Library.

[19] Valerie Broomfield, *Guide to Resources For Canadian Studies in Britain* (Ottawa, 1979).

[20] For a history of Panizzi's policies see Philip John Weimerskirch, "Antonio Panizzi's Acquisitions Policies for the Library of the British Museum," doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1977.

[21] "Officer's Reports," 19 (12 October 1837), 5001-02. Originals held by the British Library.

[22] *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the constitution and government of the British Museum with minutes of evidence* (1850), para. 409.

[23] Under the provisions of the copyright act passed in 1709 during the reign of Queen Anne, a copy of any book registered at Stationer's Hall was reserved for the Museum. Unfortunately, the act required the British Museum to claim the books from Stationer's Hall and not all books were available when collection was attempted. Basically, the act was ineffectual. The 1842 copyright act required that the publisher deliver a copy directly to the British Museum.

[24] See the testimony of George Tate in *Copyright Commission: Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1878), para. 1701.

[25] *Report of the Commissioners*... (1850), para. 8996.

[26] *Report of the Commissioners*... (1850), para. 9004.

[27] *Parliamentary Papers 1895,* pp. lxx, 90.

[28] *Parliamentary Papers 1895,* pp. lxx, 90-91.

[29] Eight unpublished volumes held by the British Library.

[30] Contained in the "Canadian Copyright Lists."

[31] Memorandum dated 15 October 1914 in the "Canadian Copyright Lists."

[32] A grant from SSHRCC is enabling Professors John R. T. Ettlinger, Dalhousie University, and Patrick O'Neill, Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, to locate and record the Canadian material deposited in the British Library between 1895 and 1924.

[33] The earlier philosophy required that all material should be treated equally. Fortesque and Pollard can not be criticized for a particular slight against Canada, for the "dump" contains not only Canadian, but American, English, and other colonial material.

[34] Arundell Esdaile, *The British Museum Library: A Short History and Survey* (London, 1946), 159.

[35] Dalhousie Library School *Occasional Paper Series* has agreed to publish the lists.

[36] *Report of the National Librarian, 1960* (Ottawa, 1961).

PATRICK B. O'NEILL

ON THE VERGE

***** JAMES CRIBB, *Treasures of the Sea: Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest.* Oxford, $24.95. The art book here combines with the scientific illustration. Cribb, an experienced underwater photographer, has assembled 96 electrifying colour plates of marine plants and animals, with neutral descriptive notes for photographers and aquarium-watchers. The

creatures are marvellously named: blood star, sea-squirt, slime star, tubesnout, lumpsucker, nudibranch, warbonnet, and hydroid. The photographs are visually splendid — aesthetically pleasing designs in and of themselves, and also invitations to another world.

W.N.

*** JAN MORRIS, *The Spectacle of Empire.* Doubleday, $39.95. Subtitled "Style, Effect and the Pax Britannica," the book claims to be — and is — about the image that the Empire projected about *style* as a feature of power. Photographs and drawings are taken from a variety of sources to show jubilee celebrations and viceroy parades; image-building on the Zambezi and the Fraser, in Trinidad and Darjeeling; naval stations in Gibraltar and Esquimalt; posters and paintings that evoked an attitude of mind; tennis and hunting, touring and tea. Implicit in the photographs is the world of authority and subjection, the force of arms, economics, and technology; what is tangibly manifested are the products of imperial expansion. Yet what is less explicit is the sheer belief in *worth* which gave the general style to the world of empire in the first place, and which (for all the problems of race and poverty on which we now focus) nonetheless bequeathed many values and benefits to Commonwealth nations, values which we ought not too easily to spurn.

W.N.

*** ERIK BARNOUW, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film,* rev. ed. Oxford, $12.75. First published in 1974, Barnouw's book now takes account of the technological changes of the last decade, and reflects on their implications for film. But his emphasis remains the same: this is more a book about film-makers than about film. Itself a documentary, it recounts the politics of setting film companies into motion — and includes occasional comment on the NFB. And it suggests several documentary stances that films adopt: filmmaker as poet, chronicler, prosecutor, guerilla. But it categorizes developments more than it analyzes accomplishments. It remains for another book to comment on the documentary art.

W.N.

** GILA RAMRAS-RAUCH, *The Protagonist in Transition.* Peter Lang, sFr 44.00. A study of five characters — from Dostoevsky, James, Mann, Kafka, and Lowry — this book attempts to chart a new territory for protagonists: territory neither moral nor psychological, territory without historical precedent, territory amorphous and without consistency, hence apart from the characters themselves. The characters, perforce, find meaning, to the degree they can, in themselves and in style. About Lowry's Consul, the author argues against a symbolic reading; the signs (volcano, ravine, etc.) are to be read as consular parallels, not explanations — parallels that are equally dense, equally without meaning. In the "disjointure" is the character's (and novel's) modernism. Regrettably the book is riddled with misprints.

W.N.

** JULES VERNE, *Family without a Name,* trans. by Edward Baker. NC Press, n.p. We are so used to thinking of Jules Verne as a pioneer science fiction writer that we are inclined to forget he was a hard-working man-of-letters who wrote about the past as well as the future, and among his historical novels produced several about Canada, which are mostly unknown in this country. Deservedly so, if one can judge from *Family without a Name,* a novel about the Lower Canadian rebellion of 1837, which has just appeared in Canada for the first time in a translation by Richard Baxter. It is a badly written mixture of didacticism and swashbuckler romance whose history is arbitrarily inaccurate (the 1837 rebellion is represented as third in a series of uprisings, etc.) and whose sympathies are suspect. For it seems quite evident that Jules Verne, a conservative French nationalist, regarded Québec as still "a part of the mother country" to be considered in the same way as Alsace and Lorraine, recently annexed by Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, and that he wrote *Family without a Name* as irredentist propaganda aimed at the people of the two recently lost provinces beside the Rhine as much as at French Canadians. Modern Québec nationalism would have puzzled and alarmed him. Lacking either literary quality or historical relevance, *Family without a Name* is at best an antiquarian curiosity.

G.W.

** DANIEL FRANCIS, *Battle for the West: Fur-Traders and the Birth of Western Canada.* Hurtig, $18.95; pa. $9.95. Students of the history of the West who are familiar with the available material will find nothing new in this book, since it is drawn entirely from published sources, but for a general reader who wants a concise, well-written introduction to the fur trade it is to be recommended. It is accurate where that is possible and judicious where interpretation of the known facts is needed. Es-

pecially, Francis avoids perpetuating the less plausible myths of the fur trade, offers us no heroes, and presents a more balanced picture than most historians of the respective roles of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwesters and of their impact on Indian society.

G.W.

* RALPH MAUD, *A Guide to B.C. Indian Myth and Legend*. Talonbooks, n.p. There is a misleading contradiction between the title and the sub-title of this book. It is certainly not, as the main title suggests, "a guide to B.C. Indian myth and legend." Anyone reading it in the expectation of finding a real survey of this rich field of oral literature will be disappointed. At most it can be regarded as a guide to sources, for it is in fact no more than, as the sub-title tells us, "A Short History of Myth-Collecting and a Survey of Published Texts." What Maud actually does is to identify the scholars, from Petitot and Hill-Tout onwards, who gathered the oral literature of B.C. Coast Indians, give us a little information on them, and tell us how they got to work. He gives us the titles of their published collections and discussions of myth and legend, and gives a few examples of what they collected. But this is no more than an indication — and a useful one — of the texts one should consult, and anyone who wishes to read *in extenso* will have to go to the original books, to Hill-Tout and Boas and Swanton and the others.

G.W.

* MARGARET B. BLACKMAN, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*. Douglas & McIntyre, $19.95. This is a disappointing jigsaw of a book. It is based on a series of interviews by the American anthropologist Margaret Blackman with Florence Davidson, daughter of the classic Haida Indian carver Charles Edenshaw and grandmother of the contemporary carver Robert Davidson. Unfortunately the meat of the book — the conversations with Florence Davidson — occupies only a little over half an already slim volume, and they are far less rich than that admirable other oral record of a British Columbian Indian woman, the classic *Days of Augusta*. Perhaps it is her own laudable diffidence, or perhaps it is the interviewer's failure to ask the right questions, that makes Nani — Mrs. Davidson — appear as a remembrancer of the more trivial aspects of Haida life. This rather fragile core is surrounded by a tough husk of rather pedantic anthropological self-justification and background information. Perhaps the strongest — and the saddest — impression one gets from reading such a book is that, in their efforts to codify the cultures of the Coast Indian past, the anthropologists have themselves been subtly transforming the Indian memory of it, and that in the last resort they may have been just as harmful an influence as the Indian Agents or the missionaries or the traders, or anyone else who has brought alien values into aboriginal coastal life.

G.W.

* KATHERINE BASTIAN, *Joyce Carol Oates's Short Stories Between Tradition and Innovation*. Peter Lang, sFr 44.00. Unfortunately the style of this book is set on its first page: "Critical interpretation of Oates's short stories has unfortunately remained neglected in the wake of her novels." Bastian proposes that Oates "reimagines" and/or "Americanizes" stories by Kafka, Thoreau, and Joyce. What follows is a series of fairly mechanical readings of stories from eight volumes, generalizing about her handling of fantastic, cyclical, and initiation models. The principle is of interest; both the style and the print job leave much still wanting.

W.N.

JOY PARR, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*. McClelland & Stewart, n.p. Most of these eight articles read more as inventories of research than as the developed arguments about ordinary people and private lives to which the burgeoning subdiscipline of family history aspires. Articles that leaven the quantitative approach with anecdote, such as Alan Brookes on goin' down the road in Nova Scotia, or Veronica Strong-Boag on the Dionne generation, are most memorable. Editor Parr's introduction provides helpful synthesis, but the book as a whole needs more active attention to comparative contexts to refine the tentative insights, and bolder generalizations to give meaning to the diligent demographic analyses.

L.R.

A welcome new paperback series from Formac Publishers — called "Goodread Biographies" — is the brainchild of James Lorimer. Reprints of various Canadian life stories published in recent years, the series promises a "good read" — and delivers its promise in the first 12 volumes. The range is wide, from Elspeth Cameron's scholarly *Hugh MacLennan* to Takeo Hjo Nakano's moving autobiography *Within the Barbed Wire Fence*, from accounts of hockey greats and war aces to the political memoirs of Walter Gordon; we look forward to more.

Among recent reprints are Jack Hodgins' *The Barclay Family Theatre* (Macmillan/ Laurentian Library, $8.95); Hugh Garner's *Storm Below* and *Nice Place to Visit* (Paper Jacks, $3.95 each); Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (M&S, $9.95); *The Collected Poems of F. R. Scott* (M&S, $14.95); two volumes of selected poems in McClelland's Modern Canadian Poets series, Milton Acorn's *Dig Up My Heart* and Ralph Gustafson's *The Moment Is All* ($12.95 each); and an 1865 novel, the first adult fiction with a prairie setting, W. H. G. Kingston's *Rob Nixon, The Old White Trapper* (Univ. of Alberta, $6.95, ed. Dick Harrison).

Rubicon is a new journal, from the Arts & Science Undergraduate Society at McGill University, edited by Peter O'Brien, whose solid, objective reviews — and an interview with Jack Hodgins — grace the first issue. Other contributors of poetry, fiction, commentary, include Erin Mouré and Kenneth Dyba. A second new venture is *True North/Down Under* (Box 55, Lantzville, B.C.), "a journal of Australian and Canadian Literature" edited by Kevin Roberts; among the important writers to contribute to issue number 1 are Leon Rooke, Les Murray, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Jack Hodgins, Tom Shapcott, and Judith Rodriguez. Its awoved aim is to increase awareness of the two literatures in both countries — its first issue is a lively indication that it will do exactly that: we wish it well. Among other journals to arrive here lately are *Index On Censorship*, a monthly from Writers & Scholars International Ltd. in London, which probes the issue of censorship in theatre and publishing (and its relevance to political and cultural life) in all parts of the world (the February 1983 issue reports on everything from Ngugi's banned musical in Kenya to a notice about reporting Canadian *sub judice* cases in American magazines). *Canadian Children's Literature*, no. 27/28, is a special Grove issue, which among important support material prints Grove's own children's book "The Adventure of Leonard Broadus."

Recent reference works include *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, vol. 24 (Gale, $76.00), which excerpts (over 26 pages) commentary on Frye's criticism; the whole volume is devoted to major twentieth-century critical theorists, so constitutes a fragmented but remarkably useful guide to the progress of criticism in our time.

New books on science and its general relation to culture include *In the Beginning* by Chris McGowan (Macmillan, $18.95), which argues for the scientific basis of evolution, and disputes "Creation Science" in a series of provocative essays on such subjects as Noah's Ark, fossils, and continental drift. Harald Fritzsch's *Quarks: The Stuff of Matter* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $25.50), a translation from German, addresses a less-controversial subject, attempting with humour and some literary sensibility (there are telling allusions to Joyce and Updike) to introduce interested readers to the world of particle physics. Part of the impulse of this book is to argue for the importance of future research in the field; but its importance for the general reader lies in its careful effort to explore the seemingly infinite series of substructures within matter — from which we can draw implications about the assumptions we have about the nature of form. Edward T. Hall's *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time* (Doubleday, $21.50) addresses another abstract issue which cultures take for granted. Less mathematical, more reflective in mode, Hall's book tries to account for some of the different assumptions about time that mark one culture off from another, assumptions which affect, Hall asserts, the structures of power within a culture. Like many a physicist recently, Hall reaches towards Zen in order to deal with the implications of the intangible in a tangible universe.

LAST PAGE

The high profile lately acquired by structuralist criticism in search of theoretical paradigms can blind us to the variety of critical enterprise that actually does exist. Not without its structuralist elements, a recent batch of critical books suggests what some of these other directions are: biographical, stylistic, bibliographical, socio-cultural, regional — sometimes in combination. At one extreme stands a regional primary bibliography like Bruce Bennett's *Western Australian Literature* (Longman Cheshire, $45.00), a valuable but introductory guide to a literature that "resists unambiguous definition"; running five items to the page in large print, the book also lists books only, and leaves the reader still without an adequate guide to periodical publication or commentary. At another extreme are the swift surveys of entire writers — J. S. D. Mellick's *Portable Henry Kingsley* (Univ. Queensland, $30.00; pa. $14.95), or the three volumes in the compact New Zealand Writers and Their Work series (Oxford, $6.95 each): Margaret Dalziel's *Janet Frame*, Peter Simpson's *Ronald*

Hugh Morrieson, and Alan Roddick's *Allen Curnow*. The Oxford series (Roddick's Curnow is a particularly helpful enquiry into that poet's work) has its parallel in Canada, but the Portable series has none. Mellick's sound selection shows how useful such a compendium can be: Canadian publishers please note.

In between are works of various kinds, many lurking on the edge of biography, if not openly confronting a writer's life — as in Canada, indicating both a critical shuffle away from texts-in-isolation and an indirect declaration of the indeterminacy (read: "fictionality") of people's lives. *The Letters of A. R. D. Fairburn*, ed. Lauris Edmond (Oxford, $31.95), collects 237 (out of an 800 or so extant) letters by the poet who in New Zealand parallels A. J. M. Smith: the analyst of society and art, the enthusiast for Donne, the serious wit and the rebel-turned-defender-of-civilization. Edmond asserts that a "whole personality" shows itself here; so does much of New Zealand cultural change: by connecting so variously with such a range of literary figures, the letters offer a partial glimpse of a whole society, which no literary historian can afford to ignore. Two books by Charles Brasch, substantial poet and one-time editor of *Landfall*, add to this portrait of literary history-in-the-making. *The Universal Dance*, ed. J. L. Watson (U. Otago, $25.00), collects a number of prose pieces on art, society, and literature, and on what Brasch saw as a *necessary* connection among these endeavours. As his memoir of the years 1909-1947 — *Indirections* (Oxford, $29.95) — also avers, art must have "relevance," and relevance for Brasch is to be found in its commitment to form, to civilization, to the nobility of which humankind is capable. He praised Graves; he despaired of Eliot; he reflected that modern poetry was likely to recover from Yeats. Yeats appears in the autobiography, too, in one of a set of powerfully (poetically) *observed* moments in his life, when his grandmother takes up theosophy. Throughout his life he struggled to balance such European attitudes with his "gardener's enthusiasm" for art in New Zealand. "Living," he writes, "was never . . . to come to me easily." The moments of memory carry throughout this sense of double affiliation — at Oxford, reading Mansfield and Plato; in the 1920's and 1930's, visiting relatives in both Australia and Germany; in the 1940's seeking form in poetry and fighting in what seemed an "amorphous" war. The memoir closes as he is about to establish *Landfall* and commit much of his editorial life to literature in his native land; this elegantly written book is an enquiry into the roots of his endeavour and at the same time a clear demonstration of his own literary skill.

At half the length, Helen Nebeker's biography *Jean Rhys: Woman in Passage* (Eden Press, n.p.) seems twice as long. Rightly acknowledging the feminist centre to the works of the Dominica-born writer, Nebeker labours with plot summary more than is necessary, and laces her text with adjective and metaphor: "This . . . is the entangling seaweed in which Rhys leaves us floating, bound as inextricably as the eternal plankton holds the helpless sailors in currentless tropical seas." Rhys, author of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, deserves better — deserves, indeed, the kind of objective sympathy that Peter Alexander shows for his subject in his impressive *Roy Campbell* (Oxford, $40.75). Campbell, the South African enthusiast for poetic forms, "virility," and Catholic mysticism, was noted most for his satires and his charismatic energy. Dismissed for half a century because of his fascist sympathies and his irascible behaviour (most notably when he socked Spender at a poetry reading), Campbell was befriended later in his life by Marshall McLuhan, and he became "taken" (we are told) with the poetry of Pratt. If he still does not seem endearing on these pages, perhaps it is because charisma is hard to convey secondhand; through this account of his life, nonetheless, we can move past the more objectionable sides of his personality to appreciate the sources of the lyric intensity that sometimes manifested itself more positively in lasting poetry.

Other critical works are more conventional: descriptive, thematic, majesterial, and for reference only. Rotraut Spiegel in *Doris Lessing* and Carol Seiler-Franklin in *Boulder-Pushers* (Peter Lang, 33 Fr. and 42 Fr.) both consider the work of Doris Lessing; one follows the theme of alienation, and the other (more interestingly) reflects on the writer's examination of the roles of women. K. G. Hamilton's *Studies in the Recent Australian Novel* (Univ. Queensland, $25.00) is more interesting still; an anthology of essays on Australia's major prose writers of the last forty years — Boyd, White, Stow, Keneally, Wilding, Johnston, and others — the book reiterates the need so many writers feel to stamp their own particular form on life, so to squeeze meaning from it. What it also (and perhaps incidentally) reveals is the turn Australian writerdom has taken, from thematic summary to formal analysis — but in quest of significance nonetheless.

The contrast could not be clearer than it is among several works on African and Caribbean writing. Robert Wren's *Achebe's World* (Three

Continents, n.p.) explores the "historical and cultural context" the Igbo author draws upon — explores it, that is, for a Western readership. It is an extremely valuable, clear, illustrated handbook to Achebe's world and worldview: an account of the allusions in his novels, a glossary of Igbo and pidgin words, notes on money and naming systems, and critical suggestions concerning the significance of the textual references to religion and historical events. It offers a cultural outsider a *way in.* In another way (a formal structuralist way), so is Martin Bestman's *Le Jeu des Masques* (Nouvelle Optique, $13.95), a set of analyses of books by Soyinka, Beti, and four others. For the cultural insider, works like O. R. Dathorne's *Dark Ancestor* (Louisiana State U.P., n.p.) or Emmanuel Ngara's *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* (Book Society, $13.75) may be ultimately more instructive. Ngara's book is a set of practical analyses of the kinds of language (and linguistic assumptions, linguistic conflict) to be found in novels by Soyinka, Achebe, Okara, Ngugi, and Armah — the critical text seeking to establish the African "field" within which communication takes place. Dathorne observes how the African heritage in the New World transcends both nationality and language, persisting in transcultural attitudes towards land, God, and family. Drawing his evidence from Cuba, Brazil, and Martinique as well as from English-speaking black communities, he traces the historical changes that transformed Yoruba and Angolan gods into voodoo deities, various religious ceremonies into the rituals of carnival, and oral culture generally into the forms of song and tale, the force of political declaration, and the power of linguistic innovation within the new languages.

A final work is called *The Story of the Stories* (Beaverbooks, $15.95). By the Jewish South African novelist Dan Jacobson, it is an account not simply of the Old and New Testaments, but of the making of the two; Jacobson sees them not as divine etchings but as social fictions: that is, as constructed tales and histories, by which an entire culture articulates its own moral code and its consequent expectations of God. It is not just that the Jewish and Christian writers pursued moral stories, but also that the rhythms of the Bible reflect the cyclical historical view of the culture. In method this is a novelist's book, narratively argued. No greater contrast with Frye's formal method could perhaps be imagined, yet there is a surprising overlap in their response to the fact of recurrence itself — which invites further comparison, both of stance and of substance. Both writers take as their subject the shaping interrelation between the Bible and Western culture; one finds that society shapes a myth, the other that the myth shapes a society. For both, the medium is literature, which criticism serves.

W.N.

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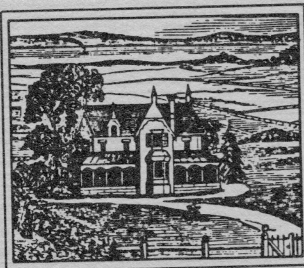

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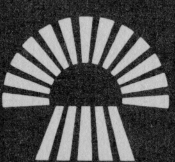

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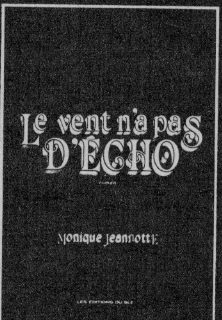

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