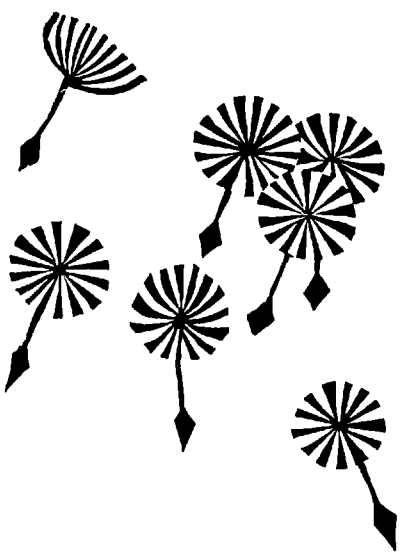
$7.50 per copy

CANADIAN LITERATURE

No. 104

Spring, 1985



PARADIGMS OF DOUBLENESS

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

editorial

PEACE & JOY, LTD.

DEMOCRACY IS WONDERFUL. It's also, I sometimes think, a Protestant invention: a way of giving us all the power of individual choice and then making us don a hairshirt *pro tem.* as we live for awhile with the bird we've chosen to represent us. We're perhaps never satisfied, for all the individual reasons that make us claim democracy in the first place. But every now and then we manage collectively to choose a booby to be our representative, and then, faced with few acceptable options, we wait, and wait, and wait some more, daily suffering him out. Protesting, perhaps; actively. Or passively; awaiting regeneration. Or even undertaking to while away the time by classifying the forms of life about us, as a kind of unaligned education against the future.

A booby, for example, is a kind of beaver with wings: teeth in the air, eyes on the log in front of him, tail flapping furiously, but wings functionless, the imagination not strong enough to carry him far into the future. You can recognize the creature in three ways: by clawmarks, crow, and plumage. He (or she: they hatch in both sexes) seems to learn to walk and strut at the same time, has a permanent poll at the back of the neck, and can regale you with homespun (off the record) when not in dress uniform. He likes to be seen, but does not see; he likes to say, but does not listen; he likes to be quoted, but not for what he's said. He speaks in phrases, till they come to sound like Axioms of Our Time, but seldom finishes sentences except those he passes on others. He likes the camera, but acts in secret; he thinks of himself as gentle, but is quick to adopt a defensive posture, and can hurt. You know where he's been by the scratches. And despite, perhaps, his best intentions, he particularly scratches those with least power (or least apparent power) or no voice (or no apparent effective voice). Women and Children First is his motto. He lives for the moment. He lives for appearance. He likes fudge.

I am, of course, speaking of no one person here. I am speaking of a mindset. And I'm speaking of a mindset that possesses criticism as much as it possesses public policy and the parish auxiliary. It does little credit anywhere it appears, but it is particularly dangerous in society as a whole when it begins to sacrifice

the values of cultural individuality to the perceived efficiencies of a short-term bookkeeping system. Warner Troyer made the point not long ago, on a radio editorial: as a society we do not — and in the name of civilized behaviour cannot — ask that every activity in the country "pay for itself." There are some things that we value as a culture, some things that we value enough, in fact, that we ask our tax monies to help support them. Agriculture; medicine; education; communication. There are only half a dozen people in the country who could afford to finance in real dollars the cost of recuperating from a medical disability, let alone a particularly debilitating accident, a rare disease. And there are not that many more who could pay for everything — *everything*, mind you: the equipment, the space, the people, the time (perhaps the time most of all) — involved in their own education. We must not retreat to a defensive posture, faced with this reality ("pay as you go, that's all we can afford"), but realize that, whatever the conditions, we can't afford *not* to afford health and proper training. Saying we can't afford to school our children properly (or more insidiously, that "we can't provide a Cadillac education when a Ford will do") begs the question: when have we ever offered a public "Cadillac" education? We've always underspent on quality. It is not just that any society willing to sacrifice an entire generation is shortsightedly guaranteeing its own decline — or that one that is willing to sacrifice the general level of health of its citizens is barbaric. It is also a question of simple competitive survival. When we go abroad and try to market our products, we are also marketing ourselves, our image as a people. We are presenting ourselves to Asian and European societies for whom health and education — the availability of access to food and literacy — are the hallmarks of civilization. We may sell raw products as much as we like, but if we sell ourselves short in the process, if we deny training to the talented in the name of some cost-accounting efficiency, we will be heading for mediocrity and cutting off any competitive edge we might ever have in those other things we can do well. We will also show ourselves to be boobies.

As a society we support education, health, and the life of the local culture because they benefit us. It is not altruistic to do so, nor a commercial waste, nor a charity, nor dismissible as a drain on those who apply themselves, or just a conspicuous display of conscience money. It's a way of placing faith in continuity, of trusting in the community's future; it's a simple investment in peace and joy. That's not an ignoble ambition. It expresses a commitment to a way of life in which we can and should take delight. But it's also in recurrent danger of being sacrificed to the gods of the balance sheet. What we must make clear is that it is the life of the spirit, the life of the mind, and the life of the nation that hang in that balance. If we lessen our commitment to the nation's independent quality of life, the cost will be measured in people, not in dollars. The balance we seek is one between dollars and commonsense.

I use the language of the marketplace here because we are living constantly these days with the rhetoric of the marketplace — we hear of "restraint," "cutback," and the location of the "bottom line." (That it's more often the rhetoric of the artificial money market than the language of actual commodity exchange is an irony we have not yet faced up to. "Money talks" these days — perhaps all too literally, and more effectively than it should because we fail to challenge the presumptions of the rhetoric.) While we're all persuaded by the appeal of such phrases as "fiscal responsibility" and all opposed to waste and foolishness, the truth is that none of us can programme people so that every expenditure is commensurately productive. We take chances. And we're at our best when we place faith in possibilities. We may have to identify talent in order to train it, but we have also to provide first the circumstances in which talent — and I mean ability of all kinds: athletic, scientific, artistic, commercial, verbal, manual — will have the chance to show itself and develop. We have also, therefore, to examine the presumptions that are built into the paradigms by which we currently define investment and profit. The cultural industries in Canada — if that's the term we must use to reify the activities of the arts — involve more people and make more profit than many another Canadian industry: the athletics industry, for example. They repay investment, even if sometimes at some remove. They repay by means of the tangible product we call entertainment; they repay it by providing information; they repay it when they make a real profit; and in the long run they also repay it by provoking into existence the kind of environment that encourages creativity and encourages others to strive for quality.

Whatever tax money supports the arts and communications industries, moreover, is in turn reinvested inside the society. Funding that goes directly into the arts, for example, goes almost immediately into the rest of the economy, to other industries, not into a pocket; it goes to the designers, the fabric manufacturers, the sales agencies, the paint-and-paper merchants, the ticket takers, the haberdashers, the cab drivers — and through all of them to the owners of land and the growers of food. Everything connects. The simple involvement of arts people in community activities means that they are contributing to the economy as a whole: no more and no less than day labourers, farmers, doctors, and tycoons who holiday at home. Which leads to the next paradoxical distinction that is lodged in the current rhetoric: we hear of "cutback" at precisely the same time we hear of "job creation." The paradox derives not just from the game with numbers that is obscurely being played here, but more directly from the presumption that "cutbacks" can take place without measurable consequence in the supply of education and health care, but that a "job" is something manual, with a tangible commodity at the end of it (a brick, a board, a lump of coal: at its narrowest this definition even finds a book or the skills of a surgical nurse to be abstract and intangible notions). Yet all the data we have indicates that greater

wealth in North America now derives from the service industries than from those industries that mine and process raw resources. This distinction amply does *not* mean that the services are therefore "topheavy," usurping their place in the "appropriate" scheme of things: the realignment that's going on is simply the reordering that inevitably follows the skills of the people. As long as we're an educated people, we'll be able to offer services to other people that they will want and need — services of advice and talent and training, services that come with expertise, whether legal, medical, verbal, mechanical, economic, technological, or whatever. Services that engender income. If we don't value excellence we can require ourselves to haul water again, as we once did. But that seems a curious shortsightedness, a self-flagellating stubbornness, when we are a society capable of other dimensions of excellence, a society with excellence to cultivate and excellence to share.

Cultivating excellence does not mean that we have to stop dealing in wood and steel. The wealth that derives from raw materials remains necessary to the economy, and the raw materials themselves remain necessary in order to manufacture some of the products that people need, use, buy, and sell. There are several corollaries which follow; unfortunately there are also several illogical conclusions which are too often presumed to follow this observation. The fact that some "products" derive from the mineral and vegetable wealth of this country, for example, does not mean that all do. All wealth does not therefore derive from one kind of "product." Further, investment in the "service industries" — the arts included — does not constitute a failure to be productive, but is rather a recognition of another kind of (marketable) productivity. Hence investment in the service industries also constitutes a way — not the *only* way, but *a* way — of enabling currency to be distributed through the economy as a whole, allowing wealth to serve the people rather than to concentrate in limited hands. In the case of the arts, it happens also to be a way of giving currency to ideas, of allowing the nation to thrive as a culture of its own and not just mechanically (if neatly) to exist as someone else's suburb.

To be a people is to be more than a numerical system. It is to be an embodiment of shared values. We value the public education system because it is a way of providing every generation with equal opportunities, a way of giving universal access to training and knowledge, a way of encouraging the social mobility and the free exchange of perspectives that express our national commitment to humane standards of action. We value public ownership of the CBC because (whatever quarrel we might have with programming) it guarantees for us in our own country the freedom of the airwaves. We value increased support for the Canada Council because it is a worthy institution, an institution by which we commit ourselves to nurturing talent and fostering unfettered enquiry into ideas and experience. These are systems that free us from limitation. They are our

doors out of boobiedom. Celebrate them. Like the space we still enjoy, the water we are trying to preserve, the standards of health we ask for, and the ability to feed ourselves which we too often and too easily take for granted, they are the resources we have in our common command, to claim in the name of intelligence as well as the name of peace and joy.

W.N.

ARABIA DESERTA

Susan Glickman

Bloor Street 10 p.m.
Giving up their search for the lucky
break, cheap apartment, perfect job,
the new bedouins pitch tent for tonight
they sit under stars drinking espresso,
talking about love.
Every café spills onto the street where a few
requisite winos loiter for handouts
or palm cigarettes. It's not
hashish but the rush of tobacco
thrills their lungs, provides a ritual
for nervous hands. The same guy, young,
long hair, greasy lumberjack's shirt,
is there every day: "Got any bus tickets?"
He never goes anywhere, just paces the strip
from Woolworth's to Murray's and back,
north side of Bloor; keeps time
to families trundling groceries, kids on bikes.
At nightfall the families go home.
The kids lick up ice cream and drag their feet,
practising rebellion. The air
is sweet as *tartuffo* but the city's gone tough.
It struts its stuff like a man in black leather,
a man who never meets your eyes.
He stares into the mirror behind you, checking out
his own moves.

STRUCTURING VIOLENCE

"The Ethics of Linguistics" in "The Temptations of Big Bear"

Sherrill E. Grace

> Murder, death, and unchanging society represent precisely the inability to hear and understand *the signifier as such* — as ciphering, as rhythm, as a presence that precedes the signification of object or emotion. The poet is put to death because he wants to turn rhythm into a dominant element; because he wants to make language perceive what it doesn't want to say, provide it with its matter independently of the sign, and free it from denotation. — KRISTEVA, "The Ethics of Linguistics"

> "I have heard your many words, and now you have heard my few. A word is power, it comes from nothing into meaning and a Person takes his name with him when he dies. I have said my last words. Who will say a word for my people? Give my people help! I have spoken." — WIEBE, *The Temptations of Big Bear*

FROM HIS EARLIEST TO HIS MOST RECENT FICTION, Rudy Wiebe has demonstrated a deep concern with the nature of violence. His first two novels, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) and *First and Vital Candle* (1966), depict the conflict that arises within isolated and repressive communities when forces of dissension, lust and racial hostility are unleashed, and both novels climax in claustrophobic scenes of violence.[1] But Wiebe's exploration of violence is by no means limited to matters of theme and story development. In *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), constraints of community, the tension between violence and Christian peace, and the scenes of murder and rape, acquire symbolic importance and moral urgency in several ways: from the striking textual juxtapositions and the unusual serial structure of the narrative, from the variety of narrative voices and, above all, from the violent shifts in style which compel the reader to struggle with a novel that shatters his expectations. With *The Blue Mountains of China*, Wiebe has moved from a portrayal of violent scenes and characters to a formal violence in the deliberate disruption of conventions and, from there, to a manipulation of linguistic violence in order to attack meaning itself and, thereby, assault the reader's ordered sense of an identity which is inseparable from a grammar.[2]

Reading these novels in sequence reveals Wiebe's increased foregrounding of language and of the act of narration. Indeed, it would seem that the necessity to develop his art so that he can explore his subjects more seriously has led him to a conscious and deliberate examination of words and the nature of language. Thus, by the time of *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), themes and scenes of physical violence have receded behind the more urgent, because less tangible, violence of language, and the imposition of one group's language upon the lives of another group becomes the central issue. Even in *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977), where the predominantly dramatic narrative recalls the structure of his first novel, it is the words of the telling, paralleling Riel's tragic obsession with words and the government's deceptive manipulation of words, which continually thrust into the foreground of the text.

But it is in *The Temptations of Big Bear* that Wiebe achieves his most moving and profound articulation of this violence because it is in this novel that he creates his (to date) most stunning synthesis of moral vision and complex artistic expression. In *Temptations* Wiebe portrays the physical annihilation and the degradation of one race by another as, in large part, the direct result of the dominant group's inability to understand the language of the other; for him, what happened in the West between 1876 and 1885 resulted less from White greed or progressive vision than from the underlying attitudes which are inseparable from the language and grammar that express theme. *The Temptations of Big Bear* is more than a novel about violent confrontation between two races, two cultures, two ideologies, which led to the historical defeat of one and victory of the other. It goes much further in order to explore the gap between signifier and signified, and as text it situates the reader in that space between two conflicting discourses, quite literally in the cross-fire where he can be told another history, where he can experience another human being, and where, through structure and language, his secure sense of separate identity and inviolable assumptions will be shattered. Most important, this linguistic violence in *Temptations* is not merely destructive. Wiebe is aware of the connection between speaking (or reading) and living, between the text as novel and the world as text and, therefore, his violence is structured and constructive; it is there to make us learn, sympathize, and understand the power of words and their essential violence.

In order to examine wiebe's achievement I want to use a model for textual analysis drawn from the concepts of Tzvetan Todorov, Roman Jakobson, and Julia Kristeva. The work of these three theorists overlaps in certain respects, and together they provide a critical paradigm which enables me to move from a discussion of the largest units of the narrative down to details of style, while at the same time identifying a crucial homology among the levels

of the discourse. Furthermore, this approach facilitates discussion of Wiebe's treatment of violence, not from the perspective of theme, but from the matrices of structure and language which, in an important sense, *are* the subject of this novel.

In "The Quest of Narrative" from *The Poetics of Prose*, Todorov distinguishes between two types of narrative which can occur together in any text but which appear in their purest form in two distinct types of detective novel, the mystery and the adventure:

> These are two different kinds of interest, and also two kinds of narrative. One unfolds on a horizontal line: we want to know what each event provokes, what it *does*. The other represents a series of variations which stack up along a vertical line: what we look for in each event is what it *is*. The first is a narrative of contiguity, the second of a narrative of substitutions.[3]

These two types of narrative represent distinct "techniques of plot combination, linking and embedding." The "horizontal . . . narrative of contiguity" where events and episodes are linked in the linear construction, relying on causality and succession, typical of traditional prose fiction, gives rise to the adventure story, while the "vertical . . . narrative of substitutions" where the embedding of narrative materials creates a cyclic and spatial order, most frequently found in lyric poetry, gives rise to the mystery story. Although both types of narrative are present in most fiction with one type predominant, it is possible to separate the two according to relations of contiguity or substitution. To do so is useful in examining not only genre, but also the nature and purpose of narrative development in a specific text, and at this point Jakobson's theory of the bipolar structure of language is helpful.

According to Jakobson, a particular style is created through the syntactic and semantic manipulation of two kinds of connection, those of contiguity and similarity. These in turn arise from the predominance of either metonymy or metaphor both as rhetorical figures within a text and as principles of organization across a larger discourse. "One topic may lead to another," Jakobson writes,

> either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively.[4]

Jakobson goes on to suggest the importance of this bipolar structure of language for distinguishing between realist and symbolist modes of writing, with metonymy predominant in the former, metaphor in the latter,[5] and he argues that a tension between these poles is present in any symbolic process (painting, film, dream structure, and so on) "either interpersonal or social." Combining Todorov and Jakobson, then, allows me to predict that an adventure story with a horizontal

narrative will develop metonymically and rely heavily on metonymies while a mystery story with a vertical narrative will follow the principle of similarity and substitution basic to metaphor.

But analysis of these two types of narrative and two styles can be pushed further with Julia Kristeva's concept of language as a dual "symbolic" and "semiotic" process which, through violent interaction, creates what she calls "poetic language." By "symbolic" processes, Kristeva means "language as nomination, sign, and syntax" and by "semiotic" she means the instinctual and preverbal drives manifest in rhythm and intonation, and "anterior to naming."[6] According to Kristeva, language "as social practice necessarily presupposes these two dispositions [semiotic and symbolic], though combined in different ways to constitute *types of discourse*, types of signifying practices."[7] For example, in scientific language the semiotic disposition is repressed, if not destroyed, while in "poetic language" the hegemony of syntax and nomination are undermined in order to retrieve the semiotic process through rhythm, disrupted punctuation, elisions, rhetorical figures, and so on. "Poetic language," as distinct from non-poetic language (or what Kristeva calls "symbolic" or "scientific" language), must retain some minimal degree of grammatical constraint if it is to communicate and avoid lapsing into meaninglessness, but Kristeva stresses the potential of "poetic language" to unsettle, shatter, and destroy not only syntax, but the identity of the transcendental Western subject or ego which is guaranteed in syntax.[8] Her claims for "poetic language" are indeed large; thus, in "From One Identity to An Other" she writes:

> Through the permanent contradiction between these two dispositions (semiotic/symbolic), of which the internal setting off of the sign (signifier/signified) is merely a witness, poetic language, in its most disruptive form (unreadable for meaning, dangerous for the subject), shows the constraints of a civilization dominated by transcendental rationality. Consequently, it is a means of overriding this constraint.[9]

From these two poles of discourse, the one necessary and repressive, the other equally necessary but potentially liberating (and from a wide variety of combinations in between), it is possible to generate a typology of discourse or, as Kristeva does, to identify types of literature according to the language a writer uses. Thus, traditional novels, by which she means realist fiction, use a non-poetic ("symbolic") rationalist language while much poetry, surrealist art, and much modern fiction reveal a strong semiotic bias. Furthermore, these two tendencies can occur within a specific text, and when they do they will dominate the metonymic "narrative of contiguity" and the metaphoric "narrative of substitutions" respectively so that the horizontal narrative will contain, in Kristeva's terms, a highly ordered, repressive, rationalist style and the vertical narrative will be conveyed in "poetic language."

THE SUBJECT OF *The Temptations of Big Bear* is the clash between the plains Indians and the Whites, who represent law, order, and Eastern government, over the vast stretches of prairie in what was to become Saskatchewan and Alberta. As Governor Morris phrases it in his many treaty negotiations, the Queen is not in the West to trade, to buy land, or to wage war:

> "All we want is to protect you and your lands from the white settlers that are coming, who'll build houses in places you want to live yourselves."[10]

Big Bear, Chief of the Plains Cree, resisted this tempting white casuistry and for many years refused to sign or take up fixed residence on a reservation, but he also refused the temptation to fight which led his rebellious young warriors, and with them his entire band, into the 1885 uprising that began with the massacre at Frog Lake and culminated in the hostage-taking at Fort Pitt.

On the surface these materials look familiar enough, as if they would provide just the right ingredients for a rollicking Western. But the literary conventions of the Western do not work in a Canadian story of Indians versus Government for several reasons,[11] not least of which is the fact that actual physical violence was very limited — no one "committed a Custer" — and the women captives were not even raped; the only female fatality detailed by Wiebe is the suicide of an Indian woman who is unable to flee the bumbling soldiers and police and chooses death over White justice. How, then, was Wiebe to write a novel about a situation where so little of the violence was externalized in dramatic action and conventional heroics? Another model for his story was the historical novel, but here again Wiebe encountered difficulties because he was deeply dissatisfied with the official White history and kept hearing other voices telling another history.[12] By necessity he became the archeologist doing violence to official history, uncovering a forgotten past, forcing the unspoken to be heard, and in the process he was forced to do violence to narrative conventions, to the rational causality and linear progression of the realist novel. Wiebe does not, however, altogether abandon linear causal ordering; instead he uses it in tandem with another narrative structure which evolves out of his need to create that *other* story which he must force us to hear.

The reader is caught in the crossfire between these stories and this dangerous position is controlled by the "intertextuality"[13] of the novel and dramatized in the experiences of a minor, yet crucial character, Kitty MacLean. In many ways, Kitty is the reader's surrogate within the text: although White, she learns to understand and sympathize with her Indian captors; although English-speaking, she learns to understand Cree very well and, as is apparent during Big Bear's trial, has some command of Indian sign language. In the amazing scene of her encounter with Big Bear, it is clear that through her ambivalent position between

two worlds she has been captured, paradoxically, into a larger freedom.[14] Through Kitty Wiebe signals his disruption of a third conventional model for his narrative, that of the captivity narrative. Indeed, *The Temptations of Big Bear* is itself an ironic captivity narrative in that the Indians are held captive in their native land by an ordinary group of Whites who are neither evil nor good, stupid nor wise, but who are themselves held captive by a logic, an ideology, and most important a language (both mother tongue and type of discourse) which they cannot escape or successfully adapt. In her intertextual position as heroine of a captivity narrative within the larger ironic captivity narrative of the novel, Kitty MacLean represents that possibility of freedom from the constraints of ideology and language which the text offers the reader.

The intertextuality of Wiebe's novel arises from the double narrative structure that employs two distinct types of discourse. Thematically, the doubling is obvious in the two sides to the conflict and two groups of characters. Although my intertextual model, drawn from Todorov, Jakobson, and Kristeva, oversimplifies a complex text that is never as neatly split as my paradigm suggests, it is nonetheless impossible for the reader to be unaware of the conflicting demands of the split discourse with its unremitting pressure and constant violence. On the one side is the horizontal narrative of contiguity, the story of events in the West from 1876 to 1885. This narrative is fixed in time and place by the dated headings of the chapters, and it is carried forward through the exposition and description of a narrator-chronicler who comes forward at several points to provide connections, facts, names and dates, and general information necessary to an understanding of the historical and public events (for example, pages 151-55, 208-13, 235-67 at Frog Lake, and 294-315). More often this narrator-chronicler of the horizontal narrative disappears behind the dialogue or a narrative voice very close to Big Bear (or in the case of John Delaney, a troubled White). There are, however, five first-person narrators (John McDougall, pages 36-48, Edgar Dewdney, pages 110-23, Robert Jefferson, pages 168-77, Kitty, pages 271-94 — where her voice merges with the narrator's — and "A Canadian Volunteer," pages 315-28) each of whom comments upon events, fills in necessary background, and contributes to both the logical progression of the story and the "linking" (in Todorov's sense) of the plot. Several other narrative components, such as the diary fragments, journal excerpts, newspaper reports, and court documents, have a similar function. In addition to providing this essential linear logic and information, the familiar rational discourse of the horizontal narrative reminds us that we are listening to the White version of the story — not surprisingly, the narrators, including Wiebe as chronicler, and the voices behind court document, diary, or newspaper, are White.

On the other side is the vertical narrative of substitutions which Wiebe generates through at least four distinct techniques. First, there are the many White

documents which contribute to the story of events *semantically*, but *structurally* disrupt the ordering of the story by the random way they are "embedded" in the text without sequential explanation. For example, the sudden shift to three discrete newspaper reports on Big Bear in prison after the eloquence of his final request — " 'I ask the court to print my words and scatter them among White people. That is my defence!' " — functions paratactically instead of sequentially and tosses the reader back into the tragic irony of the Indians' position rather than providing a continuation or explanation of White behaviour. Second, Wiebe creates several brilliant scenes in the Indian camp, scenes of story-telling (another instance of intertextuality) and of hunting and ritual, and these scenes which dominate the first half of the text present, rather than describe, the Indian way of life thereby facilitating the reader's imaginative understanding of the "other's" culture. Third, through the technique of "embedding," as Todorov calls it, Wiebe repeats, with variations, the initial story of encounter between Indian and White and among Indians because of White pressure (scenes of Big Bear's council with other chiefs), with which the novel opens. The most moving example of the "embedding" is the story of Big Bear's trial which is essentially a repetition of the treaty meeting with Governor Morris and of the later treaty signing of Fort Walsh in 1882 because in each case Big Bear is being tried (judged and pressured) by his White oppressors, and each time he fails to have his words heard by them. The full meaning of this encounter between White and Indian and the latter's inability to be heard cannot unfold within the linear progression of the horizontal narrative because, as Todorov explains of the mystery story (or vertical narrative), the crime being committed before us in the opening pages is "incomprehensible" and the

> investigation consists in returning to the same events over and over, checking and correcting the slightest details, until at the end the truth breaks out.[15]

Fourth, Wiebe creates his vertical narrative around the mode of presentation and the voice of Big Bear. He does not develop Big Bear in the traditional realist manner of carefully inter-connected character traits and evolving personality gradually revealed through psychological motivation and causally related experiences. Instead, we experience Big Bear in flashes and from slightly differing angles — Big Bear on the hill above Fort Carleton, Big Bear hunting buffalo, Big Bear crying "Tesqua" at Frog Lake, Big Bear in a Regina court, Big Bear in death — until, through repetition, we come to *know* him.

Big Bear's voice or personal speaking style is perhaps the most important element in the creation of this narrative, but for the moment it is enough to note that Big Bear characteristically speaks through stories rather than factual explanation or discursive argument. For example, he always answers a question or request with a metaphorical remark or a story which shoots off from the horizontal

narrative at a bewildering angle, thereby wrenching the reader's sense of continuity from its customary logical expectations. A representative example of Wiebe's strategy in creating Big Bear comes very early in the novel where it establishes the habit of Big Bear's mind and the difficulties of communicating with Whites in this way. I am referring to Big Bear's apparent *non sequitur* — "There is something that I dread. To feel the rope around my neck." — which Morris and the other Whites completely misunderstand. The reader, too, is at a disadvantage so early in the novel because only much later, after repeated allusions to visions, dreams of death, and the symbolic importance of the neck, will he understand the scope of Big Bear's remark.

Just as the horizontal narrative of contiguity is essential to maintain order and to forward the plot of the novel, so Wiebe's vertical narrative is essential to disrupt that order, to explode it from within so that another type of story can emerge. By confining his White characters within the former narrative and creating his Indians through the latter, he develops an intertextuality that assaults the reader with narrative interruption and temporal and spatial disjunction, and dramatizes the violent, confused encounter between two races, two cultures, and two stories. The first two chapters of the novel plunge the reader into a situation that begins, not simply *in medias res* as that term is commonly used, but in the middle of a double narrative consisting of a babble of tongues where, like Peter Erasmus the translator, he must listen, desperately, to both sides.

The misunderstanding which surrounds Big Bear's remark about the rope is an initial example of what Jakobson describes as the bipolarity of language. Big Bear, of course, is speaking in metaphors: he is not afraid of being hung by the neck until dead but of seeing his own and his People's souls strangled by White demands. Morris and his associates, however, are literal-minded men (suffering from a variety of aphasia which Jakobson would describe as a "similarity disorder") to whom a rope around the neck can only be one thing: a metonymy, more precisely a synecdoche, for capital punishment and, therefore, the logical outcome of an illegal act. What this one remark illustrates right at the outset of the narrative is that Jakobson's bipolar structure is represented in the split narrative and the distinctly White and Indian ways of thinking and speaking. Furthermore, the linguistic duality fundamental to the text is borne out by Wiebe's own reflections on language. In his essay "Bear Spirit in a Strange Land" he remarks *vis-à-vis* Big Bear's fear of the rope:

> And Morris interprets that to mean Big Bear is a criminal and afraid of literal hanging! A logical enough thought, I guess, for a white man to whom language is always only proposition, and never parable.[16]

A language of "proposition" is a language of nomination and denotation relying heavily upon syntactic order, contiguity, relations of cause and effect — in short,

on metonymy. A language of "parable," by contrast, implies something very different, something suggestive, allusive, and alogical, something paradigmatic, arising from analogy and relations of similarity — in short, from metaphor. As might be expected, in *The Temptations of Big Bear* the horizontal narrative of contiguity presenting the White story is heavily metonymic whereas the vertical narrative is highly metaphoric.

This distinction characterizes the entire text. Thus, the style of the White speakers, from Morris down to the Canadian volunteer, is predominantly metonymic, denotative proposition. Even the narrator, when as a chronicler he is explaining background or forwarding plot, speaks in this transparent realist manner:

> Maintain the right to always get your man: by 1884 the North West Mounted Police had been patrolling the prairies, an area of three hundred thousand square miles, for ten years. Their total strength now stood at 518 officers and men and 355 horses; they had already performed most of the unprecedented acts of bravery which would eventually make them almost as useful to adventure romance as the Texas Rangers (never quite, for in ten years they had not yet actually shot and killed a single Indian). Commissioner Macleod began the legend at the fort he named after himself by handling American whisky traders and the Blackfoot Confederacy, and with fine newspaper coverage Superintendent Walsh continued it at the fort he named after himself by handling the refugee Sioux, but the basic method was trained into every green constable. It consisted mainly of nerveless confrontation. As if the Grandmother's law were so impartial and serene above any mere human question or resistance that the very pronouncement of it by one of her polished scarlet-coated officers was power sufficient for any arrest, in any situation.

And over the next three or four paragraphs the realist narrator continues to digress metonymically, as Jakobson explains, "from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time."[17] Just four pages further on, however, there is a surprising shift in the narrator's voice as he begins to speak the other language of the vertical narrative which sustains Big Bear's world:

> Prayers and songs had been completed under the new moon, the vigil kept. Through the clear darkness light *became*, creeping over the land's black shoulders until the river rose on the valley like the serpent that lurks swivelled in the earth, misting upwards, drifting into deeper blue. In the south the bare cones of hills would be forming black above the curl of willows along the creek and before him gradually the naked river shone through its mist, green within moving white; the edge of the sun came levelling the round worn land, discovered Big Bear before his lodge, naked with grey clay stroked over his body. Waiting to pray as the first light touched him (emphasis added).

Although neither passage presents any real difficulty for the reader, the differences between them are important. The first is easy to follow because the language

and syntax call no attention to themselves; the sentences proceed in a simple straightforward manner of predication, co-ordination, and subordination, and imagery is limited to a dead metaphor within synecdochic detail — "her polished scarlet-coated officers." In the second passage, however, syntax is disrupted through ellipsis, parataxis, and strong, unusual metaphors, particularly in the second sentence where the verb "became" arouses expectations which are not met by the ensuing clauses and the reader must go back to "became" in order to grasp its ungrammatical assertion. Despite these disruptions and surprises, this type of discourse does not abandon all syntactic order and constraint, but it does call attention to itself as language through these disruptions and through its rhetorical density. By shattering the repressive language of proposition, breaking the syntax of rationalist and realist discourse, and thereby forcing his language to admit the rhythms, intonations and imagist associations of a semiotic process, Wiebe has created what Kristeva calls "poetic language" — a language which replaces linguistic transparency with the opacity of the word as sign and logical proposition with "instinctual drive."[18] As Kristeva points out, this process is unquestionably violent because when "the most solid guarantee of our identity — syntax — is revealed as a limit, the entire history of the Western subject and his relationship to his enunciation has come to an end."[19] In other words, through "poetic language" the writer can break our ties with the logical, transparent language of proposition which constitutes White identity, and force us to acknowledge "an other" identity — in this case, Big Bear.

THERE ARE SEVERAL STUNNING EXAMPLES of Wiebe's "poetic language" which invite analysis, but I will limit my discussion to two: the narrator's third-person creation of Big Bear's point of view during the Thirst Dance and Big Bear's first-person address to the court at his trial. The first reveals Wiebe creating an inner world of ritual and ecstasy controlled by a narrator; the second illustrates his ability to create a convincing speech and therefore a credible and effective character at a crucial point in the novel where the two types of narrative intersect (and I shall return to this point).

The Thirst Dance passage occurs at the climax of Big Bear's ritual and although it is a long one, it is worth quoting in full:

> Big Bear was dancing. *Sun shafted fire* through the wilted leaves, driving through him. He saw himself seated, almost tipped against, the Tree. His body a brittle husk, as hard transparent as snake-skin discarded on sand. There was no movement anywhere, nor sound, as if the hundreds of People he knew around him were each clamped within themselves upon silence, a vision given everyone *gigantically*, and *abruptly* the light spilled out like a match flame before night wind and above him Thunderbird spoke. His body lay, waiting, and *rain rushed*

> *the valley and camp over white*, sunlight hesitated on a leaf turning there, then rain falling through the ribboned, flaring streamers. He saw his tongue against the Tree, his throat swallowing, water moving a little farther and then a little farther into his mouth, but he saw only Thunderbird's wild colours *smeared broken and flickering* in the cloths of the rain and he ran his last cow, floating through rainbows of pink water chuckling under bluish *ululating* ground and the cow ran above him in the blood and white of her streaming hide through gold and violet sunshine *flaming* to poplar green. He drank; Running Second stood there with a leaf funnelling water into him and smiled, her round face streaming shiny, and she merged and doubled, doubled into not eight but six shapes [A][as indistinguishable blackness hung there distorted in a glazed bulging eye under a black hat rim,] [B][blackness strung aloft like heads and bodies, ahh, hung under a pole bobbing to tear themselves loose and coming away suddenly] [C][in spouts of black words and words where their bloodswollen souls might have smiled from their faces, one giant flowering upward between his clawing fingers now, folded back, chuckling, a horrible spring of clotted black blood laughter.] (emphasis added)

Even on a first reading one is aware of a degree of syntactic order here, especially in the first four sentences, but that order gradually collapses under the weight of various pressures, and it is these pressures, working upon and disrupting the structures of rational discourse, that create "poetic language."

Wiebe achieves his purpose in several ways. The most important feature of the passage is its rhythm; Big Bear is dancing, so the language must dance. Cumulative right-branching clauses and phrases strung together with commas stretch out the sentences, subverting clausal connections and defying predicative logic, at the same time as they emphasize rhythmic movement — "His body lay, waiting, and rain rushed the valley and camp over white, sunlight hesitated on a leaf turning there, then rain falling through like ribboned, flaring streamers." Freed of the normal constraints of punctuation, the rhythm and words draw attention to themselves. Ellipsis combined with strong, frequent verbs, verbals, and adverbs (especially present participles) throughout the paragraph, assist this foregrounding: "Sun shafted fire," "gigantically," "abruptly," "rain rushed the valley and camp over white" (how much more rhythmically effective this is than "Rain rushed over the valley and camp in a white sheet of water," with its logically unified verb phrase and cautious metaphor), "smeared broken and flickering," "streaming," "flaming," and so on. The language is at once sensuous and synthetic, in the sense that it emphasizes the process uniting the man's body, his ritual movement, and the elements — fire, sand, wind, water — in what Kristeva calls "jouissance,"[20] a total joy, simultaneously sexual and spiritual, physical and conceptual.

The second striking aspect of the passage is its flowing imagery located in unusual verbals and adjectives (again, the present participle dominates) and in metaphor. Thus, Big Bear's old body is a discarded snake-skin husk while he prepares for Thunderbird's call to renewed life. The sheer number of present

participles and adjectives in the sentence beginning, "He saw his tongue against the Tree," fills Big Bear's world with an almost unbearable intensity of motion, colour, and sound — "rainbows of pink water chuckling under bluish *ululating* [not undulating, which would approach descriptive cliché] ground." The long final sentence concentrates the energy of increasingly sinister images of blackness until the sentence breaks free from all obvious syntactic constraint into three cumulative metaphors for death (marked A, B, C on the passage), each one less grammatically clear and more imagistic than the one before. The sentence also serves as a reflexive touchstone within the text because images of blackness such as "bloodswollen souls," black "flowering blood," and "clotted black blood laughter" echo preceding images from Big Bear's speeches and visions, and contribute to the dramatic repetition of similar images at subsequent points in the text.

Bearing in mind the strategies of "poetic language" revealed in the Thirst Dance passage, we can consider Big Bear's trial speech with less quotation and detailed analysis. The passage I am interested in begins — "Did anyone stand here" — and ends — "my heart is stretched out on the ground." Compared with the Thirst Dance passage, there is a stronger presence of syntax and punctuation, less imagery and, in general, a more restrained use of "poetic language" necessitated by Wiebe's need to sustain our sense of Big Bear at the same time as he must communicate information about specific events. The language of proposition, however, does not dominate. There are some characteristically non-White expressions such as, "I had been given to see," and temporal and spatial distinctions are vague — "winters and summers and autumns ago I saw beside the Tramping Lakes" — and syntactic subordination and coordination are held to a minimum with "and" or "but." In fact, the relatively simple sentences, the lack of sophisticated paragraph development and division (there are four distinct ideas presented without transitions or paragraph break), together with the closing metaphor, provide just enough rhythm and colour to qualify a rationalist discourse and sustain our sense of Big Bear's identity.

The final image, a combination of ellipsis and metaphor — "my heart is stretched out on the ground" (for, my heart feels like a piece of dried meat stretched out on the ground, which recalls an earlier description of the wind stretching "their hearts on the ground like dried meat") brings a double shock of awareness: the reader suddenly knows that he is able to understand, to *hear*, Big Bear's words at the same moment as he is able to understand how bizarre and irrelevant such words must sound to Justice Richardson.

This scene marks the intertextual climax of the novel and brings the White and Indian stories together for the last time. Indeed, shortly after his sentencing Big Bear ceased to exist at all in the White history which informs Wiebe's horizontal narrative. But it is precisely this juncture in the text that crystallizes the

meaning of Wiebe's structural and linguistic strategy because now the reader (the *White* reader) knows that he has heard something the White courtroom could not hear. Through the violence of "poetic language" he has perceived what Kitty MacLean understood during her captivity as she struggled to translate Big Bear's speech to his warriors for her father:

> I could feel that, like light spiralling back and forth through my hollow head but I could not . . . where did those Cree words come from, I had never heard . . . were they words, they were, sounds . . . as if the high oration had melted into chant, or dirge . . . the old man stood with a wide black hole in the middle of his face and the sound coming out of there.
>
> "What's he saying?" Papa's elbow prodded my knee, "What's that? Kitty!"
>
> But there was only that sound turning in my head. Translate what? And words emerging, spinning over me after a time too, though my mouth could say nothing.

The reader has learned the sound and feeling of otherness which cannot be translated because it cannot exist in the grammar and lexicon of a rationalist, transparent language of proposition. Now, through the shattering of his own syntactic identity, the reader knows what it means to be the victim of White language and law.

Up to and within the trial scene, the double structure, the bipolarity of narrative discourse, and the dual language can be summarized, according to my model, as follows:

	White	*Indian*
Todorov:	horizontal narrative of contiguity; adventure story	vertical narrative of substitutions; mystery story
Jakobson:	metonymically organized discourse; realist and historical fiction about events in the Canadian West, 1876-1885	metaphorically organized discourse; lyric and symbolic fiction portraying otherness of Big Bear and his People
Kristeva:	language as "symbolic" signifying process, rationalist, syntactic, and denotative; the word as transparent signifier of transcendent signified; paternal function of language, repressing maternal "chora," representing law, order, and (as in *TBB*) approaching the metalanguages of journalism and legal jargon, well exemplified in the Indian treaties (see Big Bear's description, p. 144)	language as "semiotic" signifying process, rhythmic, prelinguistic, pre-rational; the word as opaque sign; maternal function of language disregarding syntax, destroying rationalist order, favouring emotion regulated through repetition and rhetorical figure, well exemplified in the oral traditions of Indian culture.

But *The Temptations of Big Bear* does not end with the trial or trail of newspaper summations, and the novel cannot be reduced to a theoretical model. The final chapter is a moving coda to Big Bear's story, to the story of White/Indian conflict and the 1885 rebellion, and it fuses the two narratives and types of discourse outlined above. Wiebe creates Big Bear's dying in a "poetic language" and metaphoric discourse which maintains enough metonymic development (for example, the snatches of dialogue with Horsechild) to inform the reader about where Big Bear is, who is with him, and what is happening. Nevertheless, the horizontal narrative of contiguity is finally overwhelmed by the mystery of Big Bear who turns in the ritual circle before merging with "the Mother Earth" of the Sand Hills and whose life is not an adventure story but a "long prayer to the Only One." That he is not still in prison and not literally struggling up a sand hill are surely crucial points because the story of his dying, like the story of his living, is a metaphor, a parable.

As this conclusion shows, Wiebe is not content to leave us with the structured violence of the court room. Like those Canadian writers whom Robert Kroetsch describes as resisting violent acts of annihilation or perverse assertions of anarchic freedom, Wiebe accepts "the terrors and the obligations and the *necessary* violence of that questing"[21] for the form that will expose our ignorance, free us from our captivity in language, and shatter us with the experience of the other. The point to be made about *The Temptations of Big Bear* is not how well Wiebe has created an Indian, but how well he has exploded the porcupine of language and form to make us see the violence of 1885 and to understand how language, with the ideology it supports, creates the conditions of that violence. At a time when so many writers explore violence for reasons which seem nauseating, destructive, or pornographic (for example, Burroughs, Pynchon, Findley, Hawkes, Kozinsky, recent fiction by Robbe-Grillet, E. B. Thomas, and certainly Aquin's *Neige Noir*), it is important to recognize Wiebe's aesthetic and moral achievement.

This is not a thematic treatment of personal and political violence — as are *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *Blue Mountains* — nor is it a novel of moral realism that shows the unfair treatment of native peoples; it is a novel that creates a linguistic space between the opposed peoples, forces the reader to occupy that ground, and then batters him from both sides with words, some rational and familiar (hence doubly dangerous), others rhythmic and strange. Until, from within this intertextuality, he learns how to hear "the signifier as such" in Big Bear's "few" words.

NOTES

[1] In his first two novels Wiebe heightens the drama of these violent scenes by situating them within confining spaces — a crowded barn in the first and a store filled

with drunken men in the second. He repeats this strategy of enclosure to good effect in *Blue Mountains*.

[2] Many of the essays in *Violence in the Canadian Novel since 1960*, ed. Virginia Harger-Grinling and Terry Goldie, Papers from the 1980 Conference on Violence (St. John's: Memorial University, 1981), address the ways in which literature can be violent.

[3] *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), p. 135. Further references are to this edition.

[4] See "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" in *The Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), pp. 76-82. The passage quoted is from page 76 where Jakobson goes on to say that, in "normal verbal behaviour both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other." This observation further corroborates the linguistic differences between the Indians and Whites and attests to Wiebe's skill. In *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 183-91, Christian Metz is quick to point out that the critic should not conflate the referential and discursive levels of a text when using Jakobson's terms metonymy and metaphor. Metz's point is especially important for film, but I am describing homologies, not identities, in a novel and have retained Jakobson's usage throughout.

[5] In *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Writing* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), David Lodge constructs a typology of realist, modernist, and post-modernist writing based upon Jakobson's theories.

[6] For Kristeva's theories see *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, essays ed., introd., and trans. by Leon S. Roudiez, *et al.* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980). Kristeva's theory of "poetic language" is not easy to summarize because it is a product of her research in several fields. The essay of prime importance to me in this paper is "From One Identity to An Other," *Desire in Language*, in particular pp. 133-40. See also Roudiez's useful "Introduction."

[7] Kristeva, p. 134.

[8] Kristeva claims that " 'poetic language' . . . through the particularity of its signifying operations, is an unsettling process — when not an outright destruction — of the identity of meaning and speaking subject, and consequently, of transcendence or, by derivation, of 'religious sensibility' " (pp. 124-25). This would be an interesting claim to explore further with reference to Wiebe's distinction between the language of proposition and the language of parable (see note 16) and Wiebe's own devout religious faith.

[9] Kristeva, pp. 139-40.

[10] *The Temptations of Big Bear* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), p. 28. All further references are to this edition.

[11] In "Western Myth and Northern History: The Plains Indians of Berger and Wiebe," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 3, no. 3 (1983), 146-56, I have discussed the differences between *Little Big Man*, a Western (albeit a parodic one), and *The Temptations of Big Bear*.

[12] For an account of Wiebe's struggle to detach Big Bear from the record of White history, see his story "Where is the Voice Coming From?" in the volume of col-

lected stories (1974) by the same title and his essay "On the trail of Big Bear" in *A Voice in the Land*, ed. W. J. Keith (Edmonton: NeWest, 1981), pp. 132-41.

[13] In Kristeva's original usage — "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" — "The Bounded Text," *Desire in Language*, p. 36. *The Temptations of Big Bear*, with its double discourse, collage of documents, and combination of history and poetry is a splendid example of such a "permutation of texts."

[14] Wiebe emphasizes her freedom at this moment through the description of her hair: "her hair blonder then and not frizzed as it was later [at the Regina trial] but very long and loosened as though incandescent about her shoulders and down her back" (*TBB*, 315).

[15] Todorov, p. 135.

[16] *A Voice in the Land*, p. 148.

[17] Jakobson, p. 78.

[18] Kristeva, pp. 144-46.

[19] Kristeva, p. 178.

[20] See her description of the violent pleasure of "jouissance" (a term borrowed from Lacan) in "The Novel as Polylogue," *Desire in Language*, pp. 184-88, 201-08.

[21] "The Exploding Porcupine: Violence of Form in English-Canadian Fiction," *Violence in the Canadian Novel*, p. 198, emphasis added.

LINES FOR A FORTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY

Michael O. Nowlan

My daughter tells me
"the mind is first to go"
more recently she added
"maybe it's the hearing"

Others, including my wife,
have said
"he's not always there"
"he lives in a trance"

Could it be that something
truly great and wonderful
has happened to me
and at so young an age

SPEECH ABOUT A BLACKFOOT WOMAN WITH TRAVOIS

Photo by R. H. Trueman, ca. *1890*

John Newlove

Yes, yes, they never developed the wheel.
Or the gun. Cheap sarcasm. Here is the queen
of the prairie, holding a sad white horse
not by the rein (a string, really) in her hand
but by being there. She is taller than the horse
and darker. Even in her foreign clothes
there is regality. Time for a metaphor. She stares.
The land stretches. That's not a metaphor,
that is the truth. The horizon looks like a line
drawn by Brian Fisher, exact and ambiguous.
She's dead now. I love her. I guess.
Don't like the horse much. It's dead too.

READING CARRIER'S "THE NUN WHO RETURNED TO IRELAND"

Michael Darling

ROCH CARRIER'S "The Nun Who Returned to Ireland" ("La Religieuse qui retourna en Irlande") concerns a young French boy learning to read with an English accent. His school learning, signified by his newly-acquired English accent, is opposed to his absorbed knowledge, the speech he shares with his family and friends, and it is these conflicting codes of knowledge that initiate and sustain the discourse of the text. As Jonathan Culler observes, "it is the nature of codes to be always already in existence, to have lost origins."[1] The codes we have absorbed are never recognized *as codes* until we have allowed them to be supplanted by others, until we have been required to unlearn them. It is the fate of the teacher in this story to demand the very process of unlearning, of cultural dissimilation which she herself has undergone in order to become a teacher. And it is the fate of the boy to repeat as an adult the painful awakening he has prompted in his teacher.

The text offers an enigma in its opening lines:

> After my first day of school I ran back to the house, holding out my reader. 'Mama, I learned how to read!' I announced.[2]

We know that boys who have just learned to read are incapable of writing about it, and we therefore infer an older narrator, setting up a familiar antithesis: innocent I/experienced I, the doubling of narrative voice well-known to Canadian readers in the short stories of Clark Blaise, Margaret Laurence, and Alice Munro. And this doubled voice also announces a corresponding theme (innocence/experience) developed through an action or series of actions in which the young narrator takes part. That these actions constitute rites of passage in the life of the narrator is one of the expectations aroused in the mind of the reader by his identification of the generic tradition to which the story belongs. In the course of our analysis, we shall see whether the text does indeed fulfil these expectations.

That this is an important day to both the child and his parents is only mildly undercut by the father's little joke — " 'Pretty soon, son, you'll be able to do like me — read the newspaper upside down in your sleep!' " The image of the father snoring on the couch with a newspaper over his face does not suggest a social milieu in which reading is in itself a particularly valued activity. Furthermore, the rendering of the father's speech, his *parole,* reinforces our view of him as an unsophisticated, uneducated man (" 'Betôt, mon garçon, tu vas pouvoir faire comme moé, lire le journal à l'envers en dormant!' ").

Ignoring the jests of his father, the boy demands to be heard:

> And I read the sentence I'd learned in school that day, from Sister Brigitte. But instead of picking me up and lifting me in his arms, my father looked at my mother and my mother didn't come and kiss her little boy who'd learned to read so quickly.

Wherever the antithesis of young narrator/old narrator, innocence/experience, naiveté/sophistication is manifested, we may expect the presence of irony. Irony presupposes conflicting interpretations and thus conflicting codes for, as Robert Scholes points out, "irony, of all figures, is the one that must always take us out of the text and into codes, contexts, and situations."[3] When the narrator employs the phrase "her little boy who'd learned to read so quickly," referring to himself in the third person, we apprehend directly what we had already inferred from the opening sentence: that is, the separation of actor and narrator, of the boy he was and the adult he has become, and as the "little boy who'd learned to read so quickly," he is mocked by his adult self. The excitement of learning is undermined, for what the boy has learned is perceived by his parents as error. Worse, what he has learned has involved the unlearning of his cultural code, the learning that is osmotic, absorbed from his milieu. His newly-acquired accent is identifiably alien:

> 'You're reading with an English accent!' my mother exclaimed.
> 'I'm reading the way Sister Brigitte taught me.'
> 'Don't tell me he's learning his own mother tongue in English,' my father protested.

The learning process that the reader has expected from his identification of the generic tradition of the story is thus ironically inverted. To paraphrase the father, the boy has learned to read French in English, and this learning can only divide him from his parents, his friends, and his village. Nevertheless, there is something comically extreme in the father's choice of words (" 'Dis-moé pas qu'i' va apprendre sa langue maternelle en anglais' ") that undercuts the seriousness of the situation, just as his previous remark about reading the newspaper upside down in his sleep served to undermine the importance of learning to read in his culture.

The boy has his own explanation of his teacher's strange accent:

> I had noticed that Sister Brigitte didn't speak the way we did, but that was quite natural because we all knew that nuns don't do anything the way other people do. . . .

The phrase "we all knew" ("nous le savions") implies its opposite. What we all know (certainly what children know) about any particular group of people is usually a stereotype or a myth, never more than partially true. Though nuns may not dress like everybody else, may not get married nor have children, and may live in seclusion ("toujours cachées"), no other differences need apply. The ironic humour of the boy's assertion only reinforces his naiveté, and we feel behind this admission the less than covert manipulation of the adult narrator indulging himself in self-mockery. And as the ironic statements of the father revealed his cultural code, here the boy's statement links him to his father in its disclosure of a shared code.

After all, the boy has ample reason not to feel guilty about his adoption of an English accent:

> But as far as knowing whether Sister Brigitte had an English accent, how could I? I'd never heard a single word of English.

The boy's failure to recognize English is an indicator of the isolation of the family from the cosmopolitan world, an isolation emphasized in the paragraph that follows:

> Over the next few days I learned that she hadn't been born in our village; it seemed very strange that someone could live in the village without being born there, because everyone else in the village had been born in the village.

To be a villager then is to be born one and to remain one. The nun will always be an outsider because she was born elsewhere. The importance of birthplace as a qualification for citizenship, for belonging to the community, is confirmed with the mention of Monsieur Cassidy, the undertaker, who is Irish like Sister Brigitte but who has been born in the village and is therefore accepted by the community. The "whispers" ("chuchotements") of the parents on the subject of Sister Brigitte suggest all those unpleasant connotations of the small, isolated, inward-looking community: narrow-mindedness, prejudice, distrust of strangers. This is the dark side of the cultural isolation or deprivation we have identified with the father. It is appropriate then that the boy, desiring knowledge, should turn to the more sympathetic mother:

> 'Where's Ireland?' I asked my mother.
> 'It's a very small, very green little country in the ocean, far, far away.'

In other words, Ireland is very like the community of which she herself is a member: small and isolated, with the implication that distance reinforces aliena-

tion and difference. To be Irish then is strangely to be something like French-Canadian, though the difference between the two is as great as the distance that separates their two worlds, the difference of language.

WHY DOES THE BOY WISH TO LEARN from Sister Brigitte, since to learn from her is to forget his own osmotic knowledge? "I was so impatient to read the books my uncles brought back from their far-off colleges." Not surprisingly, the boy equates the strangeness of his teacher's accent with the exotic splendour of his uncles' books, brought from far-away places. The "far-off colleges" ("des collèges lointains") signify not only knowledge but also sophistication, and yet apparently nothing is lost in the gaining of such knowledge for it is not necessary for the boy to go away, to leave the safety of home. It is enough that the family has been represented in strange places by the uncles, who have safely confined the threat of alien sophistication to the printed page. But we know already that something *is* lost, that the learning of the alien code involves the unlearning of the native one. And the lessening of the native influence is seen in a corresponding lessening of the authority of the home. The boy turns to his teacher with the same question he has posed to his mother:

> 'Sister Brigitte, where's Ireland?'

Why was the mother's answer unsatisfactory? Did the boy suspect that her answer was wrong or merely in need of supplementation? The repetition of the question forces us to compare the two responses. Here is the nun's:

> 'Ireland is the country where my parents were born, and my grandparents and my great-grandparents. And I was born in Ireland too. I was a little girl in Ireland. When I was a child like you I lived in Ireland. We had horses and sheep.'

Is this speech to be representative of the exotic alien sophistication that the boy desires? In style it is childlike, tautological, more primitive than sophisticated in its incantatory repetition. In this initial speech of the nun we are suddenly brought home to the truth of the mother's answer and our identification of village with Ireland. In a sense, the mother, though she has failed to satisfy the boy's curiosity, has given a truer answer than the Irish woman has, for the nun does not attempt to describe *where* Ireland is, but rather *what* it is to *her*. Her mentality is not cosmopolitan at all, and in its unworldliness suggests kinship with the villagers who are so suspicious of her.

When the teacher goes on to say that " 'the Lord asked me to become his servant,' " the boy is especially puzzled:

'What does that mean?'

'The Lord asked me if I wanted to become a nun. I said yes. So then I left my family and I forgot Ireland and my village.'

'Forgot your village?'

I could see in her eyes that she didn't want to answer my question.

In the cultural code that we have identified with the boy and his milieu, it is clear that the sense of belonging to the place one is born in is the key to identity. It is equally clear that the nun herself has at one time adhered to this same code. But she has transgressed this code to follow another. In order to learn Christian obedience and self-denial she has had to unlearn the same fidelity to home, culture, language, family, and place that characterizes the village she lives in. She is doubly exiled then, having voluntarily abandoned one community never to be accepted by the other. " 'Forgot your village?' " It is not necessary to add " 'How could you?' " The nun avoids this question as she avoided the question about Ireland because she knows that a reaffirmation of her loyalty to Ireland would be a denial of her Christian faith. How can these separate codes be reconciled?

The irony of the nun's situation is that in doing her duty to God she must not only reject her own personal ties to home and family but must also force her pupils to do the same. And the irony is deepened by the fact that it is her own pupil who reminds her of this.

The boy relentlessly pursues his inquiry:

Sister Brigitte's face, surrounded by her starched coif, had no age; I learned that she was old, very old, because she had been a teacher to grandparents.

'Have you ever gone back to Ireland?'

'God didn't want to send me back.'

'You must miss your country.'

'God asked me to teach little children to read and write so every child could read the great book of life.'

The nun's attempts to deflect the boy's questions have the quality of responses learned by rote. Our expectations of the fulfillment of the innocence/experience genre are increasingly frustrated by the nun's failure to assume the teaching role we have assigned to her. Now we see the nun playing the role in which we have previously cast the young narrator — the innocent and unquestioning student — a role that the boy has already begun to abandon in his quest for the source and meaning of Ireland.

His knowledge of the nun's age leads the boy to his final question:

'Sister Brigitte, you're older than our grandparents! Will you go back to Ireland before you die?'

The old nun must have known from my expression that death was so remote for me I could speak of it quite innocently, as I would speak of the grass or the sky. She said simply:

> 'Let's go on with our reading. School children in Ireland aren't as disorderly as you.'

The title of the story anticipates the boy's question. The title lies behind and beyond the conflicting codes, promising a resolution that the nun's answer would seem merely to temporarily postpone: " 'Let's go on with our reading.' " But re-reading the story with the ending in mind we can see a far more sinister implication in this indirect reply. We can also see the planting of the seed that will produce a possible resolution of the enigma posed by the boy, the unanswered question: " 'Where's Ireland?' "

In the narrator's comment on death we hear the voice of his mature self, the self that is now conscious of its mortality, and therefore able to reflect ironically on his youthful naiveté. But the nun's response is also interpreted for us by the mature narrator's choice of words: "The old nun *must have known* from my expression that death was so remote for me..." ("La vieille religieuse *dut comprendre* dans mon regard que la mort était pour moi si lointaine..."). From his experienced point of view he allows us to understand what he himself never realized at the time — that Sister Brigitte knows her death is imminent. As Ireland is "loin, loin" for the mother, and the colleges attended by the uncles are "lointains," so for the boy death is "lointaine." But for the nun, whom we know is old — some of her former pupils are now grandparents — death cannot be far away. And though she has made a conscious choice to leave her home, she has not succeeded in forgetting it; she has merely allowed her religious code to suppress her cultural code.

It is this suppressed code that re-emerges with a vengeance as her end approaches:

> All that autumn we applied ourselves to our reading; by December we could read the brief texts Sister Brigitte wrote on the blackboard herself, in a pious script we tried awkwardly to imitate; in every text the word Ireland always appeared. It was by writing the word Ireland that I learned to form a capital I.

Imitation is again the basis of the learning process, but what is being imitated now is not merely an aberration in form (the wrong accent) but a distortion of content (Ireland as subject).[4] The "pious script" ("une calligraphie pieuse") that the class attempts to imitate might properly be associated with the nun's position as a religious teacher, but we should not ignore the suggested cross-linkage of piety with or towards Irishness. Since the conflicting demands of the nun's life are already manifested in the idea of teaching Irishness — an almost oxymoronic concept involving the juxtaposition of Christian duty and that which Christian duty has supplanted — it is not surprising to find that the formal aspect of the nun's behaviour (her piety) can be transferred from one code to the other. But in paying heed to both competing codes at the same time, the nun is

threatened with the loss of the clear Christian path of her life. For the boy, to gain the skills of reading and writing involves a loss of cultural memory; for the nun, a corresponding regaining of cultural memory involves a loss of conscious memory. The boy, however, has a simpler explanation:

> From our parents' whispers we learned that Sister Brigitte had lost her memory. We weren't surprised. We knew that old people always lose their memories and Sister Brigitte was an old person because she had been a teacher to grandparents.

The same kind of clichéd assertion made about Sister Brigitte as *nun* is here applied to her as *old person*: the boy's osmotic learning always leads to *a priori* reasoning. There can be no other explanation than age for the loss of memory. That this is possibly true in no way subtracts from the ironic implications of the statement. All unquestioned assertions of the innocent narrator are subject to ironic exposure. In this, at least, the text fulfills the expectations it arouses.

The story ends with the apparent death of Sister Brigitte, a death which is also, in some ways, a "homecoming":

> Late in January, the nuns in the convent discovered that Sister Brigitte had left her room. They looked everywhere for her, in all the rooms and all the classrooms. Outside, a storm was blowing gusts of snow and wind; you couldn't see Heaven or earth, as they said. Sister Brigitte, who had spent the last few weeks in her bed, had fled into the storm. Some men from the village spotted her black form in the blizzard: beneath her vast mantle she was barefoot. When the men asked her where she was going, Sister Brigitte replied in English that she was going home, to Ireland.

The storm is a symbol of the confusion in the nun's mind. The narrator's colloquialism ("comme l'on disait, on ne voyait ni ciel ni terre") is, like the other ideas and sayings prompted by his cultural code, a true remark couched in a hyperbolic platitude: Sister Brigitte, at least, cannot see Heaven or earth because she knows not whether to heed the code of Heaven or the code of earth or home. In seeking home, she is destroyed by an act of God, perhaps a suitable punishment for having fled the convent. Her "black form" seen against the white blizzard ("la poudrerie") is an appropriate symbolic antithesis, but less suggestive than the contrast of her bare feet with her "vast mantle." To go barefoot in the snow has traditional religious connotations of self-denial, even masochistically saint-like humility, but bare feet and black clothing are also signs of the corpse prepared for burial, the body on its last earthly journey, the journey that immediately precedes the soul's homecoming.

DOES THE NUN RETURN to Ireland? The title implies that she did ("retourna" — past definite); the last sentence suggests only that she was making the attempt ("elle s'en retournait chez elle, en Irlande.") Common sense

dictates that she could never have made it, being old, sick, and barefoot in the storm.

Now one of the goals of any interpretation is the resolution of whatever enigmas are posed by the hermeneutic code of the text. In fact, we expect the text itself to provide answers to the questions it raises. But this text has not always justified the expectations we have had of it. We expected the boy to *learn* something, for why else would the mature narrator have told the story? What has he learnt? We expected the nun to return to Ireland, for the title informed us that she did. Has she returned to Ireland? We might also have expected an answer to the reiterated question, "Where's Ireland?"

Let us examine some possible answers to these interlocking questions. Ireland is a sign both of foreignness and of home, just as the village is. Therefore to ask "Where's Ireland?" is to ask "Where's home?" or "Where is the source of your identity?" But our exploration of the code of home has revealed a web of connotations: home is language, family, superstition, custom, all part of the cultural code absorbed from birth. This code can be suppressed — indeed, all knowledge acquired in school suppresses it — but it can never be destroyed. In the story, the initial action that raises the question of difference is the conflict of English and French pronunciation. The nun has suppressed her language, but she has not been able to assimilate the correct pronunciation of her adopted tongue. Therefore, when she abandons the imposed code of Christian duty to start on her journey home, she begins, once again, to speak in English, her native tongue. This is the triumph of osmotic knowledge over rote learning. In a sense, to speak English is already to be back in Ireland, to be home, and therefore the tense of the verb in the title is finally justifiable.[5] But is this what the narrator learns? That we carry our home with us wherever we go, embodied in the cultural code we have assimilated from birth? Or is it a darker truth that he learns: "You can't go home again"?

To accept one conclusion — that the nun "goes home" in spirit — is also to acknowledge its corollary — that she does not go home in body. Indeed, one might go further and suggest that only by dying can she "go home": the gain is offset by the greatest loss of all. Another factor intrudes at this point: the nun has sacrificed her calling, has abnegated her sworn duty, to make her journey home. Of what use is it to gain the world and lose one's soul in the process? There are no clear choices, no gains without losses. Is this the lesson the narrator has learned? Is this the theme of the story?

Before answering these questions, we might consider another story from the same collection that throws some light on the present text. In *The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories*, the voice is consistently that of the doubled narrator, simultaneously child and adult, except in the last story, "A Secret Lost in the Water," in which an event of the recent past (when the narrator is an adult)

is compared to an event of the distant past (when he was a boy). It is in this story that the narrator is most closely identified with Carrier himself:

> Years passed; I went to other schools, saw other countries, I had children, I wrote some books and my poor father is lying in the earth where so many times he had found fresh water.
>
> One day someone began to make a film about my village and its inhabitants, from whom I've stolen so many of the stories that I tell.

This statement admits the autobiographical while simultaneously denying it, saying in effect, yes, this is the village where I was born, the father described was my father, and the little boy was me, but the stories were not stories about me — they have been appropriated from others and are not to be taken as a record of my life. This story, however, for all its difference from the other stories in the collection, is also the summation of the other narratives, the thread that weaves the disparate pieces of cloth into a recognizable whole. In "A Secret Lost in the Water," we are told that, as a boy, the narrator could, like his father, find water by divination. But, as an adult, he has lost the power to do so. Here is the way the story, and the collection, ends:

> The alder stayed motionless in my hands and the water beneath the earth refused to sing.
>
> Somewhere along the roads I'd taken since the village of my childhood I had forgotten my father's knowledge.
>
> 'Don't feel sorry,' said the man, thinking no doubt of his farm and his childhood; 'nowadays fathers can't pass on anything to the next generation.'
>
> And he took the alder branch from my hands.

The emphasis in the text is on loss, not gain: maturity, education, sophistication are poor replacements for magic and belief. The old man cannot hand anything down to the young; the alder branch is withheld. But even as the text mourns this loss, it also celebrates the worth of what has been lost, in effect immortalizing it. This is the paradigm that we have learned to recognize in the immortalizing convention of the Elizabethan love sonnet, and this is the paradox that informs all stories of innocence and experience, not least the story with which we began. What does the story of innocence and experience suggest? That to gain experience (which is valuable because it is learning) is to lose innocence (which is valuable because it is uncorrupted). But as long as the story can be told, and told in the doubled narrative voice, that innocence is never lost, that experience is not yet gained. To go home to innocence is to abandon adulthood, but wanting to go home is in itself an assertion of adulthood, of experience, since no innocent ever wants to remain in that state. This is the double bind of the doubled narrator, whose story denies what his narration of it would affirm — that his present self co-exists with the child he was. The value of innocence is never perceived until it is gone, is never present until it is absent. The code goes unrecog-

nized until it has been replaced by another. The real value of experience, the replacement code, the gain, the discovery of selfhood, is to remind us of what has been suppressed, lost, undiscovered. But such contrary states of the human psyche cannot co-exist. Thus the paradox of the nun who returned to Ireland can now be reformulated: for her to return home, to innocence, and to unlearn the learned, is to be what she is not, to cease to be. This is the real meaning of "you can't go home again."

We can now see the significance of the author's formulation of his theme in the context of reading. Self-awareness is a recognition not only of one's difference from others but also of one's difference from the self/selves one has abandoned. For the narrator of "The Nun Who Returned to Ireland," this self-awareness begins with reading. For the reader of the story, awareness begins in the same way. It is in this sense that the story is "already read," for we cannot read it without becoming aware that it is our story too.[6]

NOTES

[1] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), p. 103.

[2] Roch Carrier, *The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories*, trans. Sheila Fischman (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1979), p. 9. All English quotations from Carrier's work are from this edition. The French quotations are from *Les Enfants du bonhomme dans la lune* (Montréal: Editions internationales Alain Stanké, 1979).

[3] Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 76-77.

[4] It could be argued that the form of the word "Ireland" (or "Irlande") is itself a sign of its difference. "C'est en traçant le mot Irlande que j'ai appris à tracer le I majuscule." What possible words could "Irlande" replace in the boy's potential written vocabulary? "Il" for one and "île" for another — both suggestive of the very connotations embedded in the idea of Ireland: otherness and isolation, the not-I and the not-here, the unknowable and the unreachable.

[5] I have not commented on the English-French antithesis in its political dimension, though this is surely an important consideration for any Québécois writer. But Carrier's exposition of the colonial theme is never simplistic. We might at least keep in mind the fact that the English-speaking nun comes from Ireland, another conquered nation whose language, more than Québec's, is not its own. It may be that the author is subtly aware that the nun's situation is even more ironic, and more tragic, than we have supposed, for she teaches a language not her own in an accent not her own. Perhaps as an Irish woman she is exiled from her own culture even when she is at home.

[6] I am grateful to Robert Lecker and Stephen Bonnycastle for their helpful suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

INTERRUPTIONS FROM KUBLA KHAN

Lesley Choyce

Khan, at the door again,
looking for another cup of jewels,
thief of the imagination
waiting,
a slim, square-headed Tartar
in a pin-stripe suit,
an exiled beggar in limp flesh and loose tie.

Inside, we share the anodyne
and watch the wires sing blue voltage
into the corners of the night.
My garden greens before the dawn
and dancing gulls slip into black mirrors
for the morning.

Coleridge is on the road,
we see his car across the desert
circling the dome.
He's speeding, hungry for more of the dream
and caught between Porlock and Linton
on the Exmoor confines.
He shoots intrusive neighbors
now and chases vanished phantoms.
Khan sees him coming
from the lips of light.

We can hear him
spinning verse of gravel,
can see his blood-shot, strung-out eyes
peering like thunder
from a cage of metal and glass.

Khan drops the pleasure dome keys
down the throat of my well,
asks which way north.
He leaves in time
to trip the turnstile of ecstasy
and suck the world inside out
while the damsels twitter dulcimers
and poets drink the milk of failed paradise
forever unsuccessful
at undoing the knot of madness.

A CALIBANIC TEMPEST IN ANGLOPHONE & FRANCOPHONE NEW WORLD WRITING

Chantal Zabus

IN ITS NEARLY FOUR CENTURIES of existence Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has originated an analogous literature in the Old World and has provoked extensive criticism within the body of Shakespeare studies. For instance, Caliban alone is the subject of fifty-three articles from 1926 to 1976. However, the subject of this paper is not the Old World but the New World response to *The Tempest*, for the latter is the earliest work in British literature to have a continuing impact on creative and critical New World writing.

Written in a time of colonial expansion, *The Tempest* can, paradoxically, be reread as a manifesto of decolonization and a myth of imperialism. This myth is rooted in the central "colonial" metaphor provided by the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, which is taken to represent the relationship between colonizer and colonized. There resides the power of the play's latency and its appeal to a larger audience than the British-schooled public — a Calibanic audience. Consequently, most New World writers and critics have identified not with the Moor Othello or their Carib ancestor Man Friday but with the "freckled whelp," Caliban. Conversely, writers from the Western competitive cultures with some exposure to the New World have either willingly identified with Prospero or conveniently failed to do so. I will therefore duly examine selected responses to *The Tempest* from two of the greatest Prospero-like colonizing powers, Britain and France, and critical reactions to the above from the Antilles. The rest of the first section will be devoted to West Indian and Antillean writers who have recognized the contemporary relevance of the Prospero/Caliban relationship to their colonial predicament, and have touched on such issues as "language" and "rape," which are the key-notions in Act I, scene ii, lines 331-67 of *The Tempest*. In the second section I will contrast West Indian works with English-Canadian works which privilege Miranda over Caliban and, in the last section, with works from French-Canadian writers who share the Black writer's overt fascination

with Caliban. Furthermore, I will also attempt to advance reasons for the similarities and dissimilarities among the literary ripostes to Shakespeare's text.

For convenience, lines 331-67 from Act I, scene ii, which constitute the core source of most New World adaptations of *The Tempest*, are here quoted in the brilliance of their self-sufficiency:

CALIBAN: ...
This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me; woudst give me
Water with berries in't; ...
... and then I lov'd thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Curs'd be I that did so! ...
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island.
PROSPERO: Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.
CALIBAN: O ho, O ho! would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.
MIRANDA: Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. ...
CALIBAN: You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language![1]

THE FIRST CRITICAL STUDY of colonization to make use of the Prospero/Caliban metaphor is a psychological treatise, *La Psychologie de la colonisation* (1950), by D. O. Mannoni, the French psychologist who witnessed the 1947 uprising in Madagascar. He has the merit of expanding Caliban into a type and a complex figure, traced from the Malagasy, who presumably suffers

from a deeply rooted "dependency complex."[2] This complex, in fact, suitably legitimizes political subjugation and is inimical to the spirit of the 1947 rebellion and the daily increase in nationalistic agitation. Mannoni thus erroneously asserts Caliban's happiness in dependency and misunderstands Caliban's ostensible submissiveness to Prospero and the slave's *empressement* as a readiness to deify the White man.

Among the British responses *à la* Prospero, Philip Mason's *Prospero's Magic* (1962) and D. G. James's *The Dream of Prospero* (1967) best illustrate the ambivalence that imbues contemporary scholarship faced with the aftermath of colonialism. Philip Mason, an English novelist and scholar in race relations, pleads guilty in *Prospero's Magic* of being a Prospero *in esse*. After spending twenty years in India as a magistrate, he seems inclined to atone for the wrongs done to Caliban, or any suppressed race or culture. He urges the Prosperos to lay aside such colonial accoutrements as the magic book and the staff — symbols of White Western magic — in order to facilitate the "search for a new source of authority and for new values," which will ultimately lead to the breaking of "the old chain of dependence."[3] Unlike Mason, D. G. James in his *Dream of Prospero* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) is trapped in his imperialist bias. He deliberately undermines the impact of the colonial experience on Prospero by "erasing" the authenticity of the experience and giving it a dream-like quality. *The Dream of Prospero* can therefore be read as the counterpart to Caliban's dream of independence and freedom disavowed by such unregenerate European scholars as James and Mannoni.

Mannoni's book provoked two immediate irate responses from the Black, i.e., Antillean, literary world: Martiniquan poet-philosopher Aimé Césaire's exuberant response in *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950) and the more organized attack by Césaire's fellow-countryman, Frantz Fanon, in his first book *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952). In his *Discours*, Césaire vehemently denounces Mannoni's over-reliance on psychological interpretation and such bourgeois "hollow notions [as] the *idea* of the dependence complex."[4] Fanon goes further than Césaire and accuses Mannoni in Chapter Four of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) of "leav[ing] the Malagasy no choice safe between inferiority and dependence," for "*it is the racist who creates his inferior.*"[5]

In the first chapter of the same book, "The Negro and Language," Fanon tackles the issue of Caliban's language and concludes: "What I am trying to say is that there is no reason why André Breton should say of Césaire 'Here is a black man who handles the French language as no white man today can'."[6] Indeed, the twin result of the irreversible process of colonization is that the colonized speaks the language of the colonizer and, by the same token, becomes his rival in literary sophistication. This language is considered by most New World writers not only as part of Prospero's legacy to Caliban but also as the latter's means "to

curse" the colonizer, as exemplified in I.ii.355-66 of *The Tempest*. This "gabble" which Miranda denigrates is Caliban's native idiolect. This premise, elaborated upon by Nigerian John Pepper Clark in "The Legacy of Caliban,"[7] is to be posed in order to understand the three stages in Caliban's linguistic history: the first stage is learning his native tongue from Sycorax; the second involves Caliban's appropriation of "your language" (I.ii.367); the third stage is one of complete transcendence that entails Prospero's exclusion from this new language. This new-found lingo has different meanings for West Indian George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and for German Janheinz Jahn in his *History of Neo-African Literature* (1968). For Lamming, this new language obstructs Caliban's future unless there is an "extraordinary departure which explodes all of Prospero's premises,"[8] whereas Jahn has unlimited faith in Caliban and sees Lamming's hypothetical "extraordinary departure" as a future probability.[9] Although Jahn's optimism is characteristic of the sentimentalism of European academics with anti-colonial sympathies, the actualization of the concept of "departure" is a valid strategy of decolonization that signifies the end of the Old World as the only source of culture.

The New World responses to *The Tempest* are not only essentially critical but also creative. In fact, the above criticism, ranging from aesthetic nuance to political anger, is part of a larger body of New World writing that includes creative writing. Of those two natives from Barbados, George Lamming is both a critic and a novelist whereas Edward Brathwaite is a critic and a poet. Whatever the literary medium they chose to express their colonial and personal concerns, they both venture in the domain of language.

Brathwaite's poem "Limbo" from *Islands* is the poetic rendition of Jahn's concept of Caliban's third language, that which he has "minted" from Prospero's. To Brathwaite, this language is rooted in the authenticity of primitive African rituals. Caliban's euphoric song in I.ii.184-85 thus becomes for the poet an incantation initiating the return to the African folk-tradition as a new source of inspiration. After reliving the slaves' trials during the Middle Passage, the limbo dancer is ultimately rescued from the "Limbo [of] silence" by the talking drums, the African equivalent of the "noises,/Sounds and sweet airs" (III.ii.133-34) humming in Caliban's ears. Having released a Caribbean sensibility through the African drum, Caliban's tongue is now "heavy with new language." To the "rich old lady['s]" question in another poem, "The Emigrants" — "Have you no language of your own? — Caliban can at last retort in "Beginning" that, while defending himself with polished English phrases, he is also "making / with [his] / rhythms some- / thing torn and new." Besides affirming Caliban's new language, Brathwaite announces the release from the fetters of the Middle Passage and the metamorphosis of the ithyphallic Caliban, the "fuck / in' negro . . . [with] big you know / what," into a highly sensitive artist.[10]

Besides considering Caliban's linguistic history, some West Indian writers also tackle the issue of rape, which, along with language, is the principal weapon of the colonizer's arsenal. Whereas Brathwaite evokes the Middle Passage and Caliban's putative sexual potency separately, Lamming subordinates both notions to that of "*rapere*," that is, the fact of "taking anything by force" (O.E.D.). The latter definition denotes not only the "taking away by force" of a woman, i.e., Miranda's honour, but also that of the Negro slaves from their native soil to the Caribbean islands. In his creative work, Lamming has the merit of connecting an isolated reference to rape in *The Tempest* (I.ii.351-53) to the dichotomies involved in Black and White sexual ethics. Thus his first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin* (London: Michael Joseph, 1953), contains alleged accusations of rape whereas his later novel *Water With Berries* deals with two actual rapes. The first involves Othello, and the second is based entirely on *The Tempest*, and, as Lamming acknowledges in an interview, on "my old Prospero-Caliban theme."[11] On the occasion of a party in London, foster-Britain offers its West Indian adopted children "water with berries" (I.ii.336) — "champagne" with "strawberries."[12] During the sobering-up, Derek, one of the Caribbean artists in exile, realizes that his theatrical career has declined from successfully acting Othello at Stratford-upon-Avon to acting the part of a corpse at the Circle Theatre in London. Left with only the memory of his past artistic grandeur, Derek broods over his "tragic flaw." During a *première*, he is suddenly seized by a "cannibal rage," and rapes the leading actress. Ironically, the Black man's idiosyncratic act only corroborates the White audience's secret wishes and enhances their vision of the gory apocalyptic end of European civilization.

The second rape in *Water With Berries* is much more complicated in its action and presentation, for it is re-told by the victim herself, Myra, and by the helpless observer of the scene, Fernando. Myra (Miranda) relates to Teeton, another Caribbean writer in exile, how she survived a "storm" far away from her English home and was wrecked with her father on an island at the age of three. After her father's death, fourteen years later, the servant and his men "made a bonfire to celebrate their rape of [her]," "giving the interval over to the animals." Her "Father's partner," Fernando (Ferdinand), is tied to a chair and forced to watch the collective rape. Later in the book, Fernando turns out to be Myra's father and the brother and rival to Prospero whose "experiment in ruling" on the island he regards as a "curse" (I.ii.366) that will "come back to plague my race until one of us dies." In this episode, the situation of *The Tempest* has been extravagantly modified — Ferdinand as both Prospero's brother and Miranda's father — and complicated because Miranda's rape results from Prospero's self-exile. In the former episode, Derek is presented as a highly sensitive Caliban with an artistic temperament whereas, in this episode, the Calibans populating Prospero's island are theroid monsters engaged in orgiastic activities. The second treatment

is obviously based on the myth of Caliban's monstrous sexual and copulatory potency, which Lamming had already discussed in *The Pleasures of Exile*, along with the consequences of rape, and *a fortiori* exogamy and miscegenation. The duplication of the rape motif in *Water With Berries* signals the ambivalence of Lamming's use of Caliban as well as his ambiguous fascination with both Prospero's victims, Derek and Myra, and with Prospero himself with whom Lamming identifies *pro tem* (*Pleasures*, e.g., p. 105). Thus this dual "Way of Seeing" (see Chapter IV of *Pleasures*) is also inherent in Lamming himself as it is in the artistic Caliban.

The artistic Caliban aims at transmuting the search for racial expression into art. This transmutation is legitimized by the inconsequential ending of *The Tempest* which enables such a critic as Lamming to go beyond Shakespeare's text and consider such possibilities as Caliban's journey to Milan and his release from the knotty entrails of Prospero's language and culture. Yet, unlike the Black critic, the Black creative writer operates not outside of Shakespeare's play but from *within* the possibilities of its exposition. Consequently, Miranda is being raped in Lamming's *Water With Berries* and Caliban resumes his former status, i.e., is "[his] own King" again (I.ii.344) in Césaire's play *Une Tempête* (1969), which is the only extant full-scale adaptation of *The Tempest*.

More even than Lamming and Brathwaite, Aimé Césaire feels himself to be the son of uprooted African slaves and firmly believes in Caliban's "extraordinary departure," which for him started with the foundation of the Négritude movement in Paris in 1934. Césaire's purpose in adapting *The Tempest* is to dramatize the nature of colonialism. *Une Tempête* is destined, as the subtitle indicates, for a New World audience.[13] Apart from technical changes, adjuncts, or displacements like the gathering of the five acts of *The Tempest* into three, the major "extraordinary departure" occurs in the characterization and in the ending.

The play clearly rests on the opposition between Prospero and his two slaves, Ariel and Caliban. Césaire makes Caliban into a bellicose Negro slave clamouring his African-ness whereas the sylph-like Ariel is made a Mulatto slave. Like his Shakespearean prototype, Caliban is a creature of earth but unaccompanied by its corollary: the palpable grossness of a lower nature. Although both Ariel and Caliban are slaves and share the same predicament, their methods differ. Ariel, the would-be utopist, dreams of a Land of Cockaigne whereas the rebel Caliban denounces Ariel's obsequious boot-licking and Uncle Tom-like patience. Césaire thereby anticipates the vicissitudes of new-found independence: the post-independent Black man is in effect either an Ariel, i.e., "the good native, the moderate nationalist," or a Caliban, i.e., "the nationalist, the extremist, the man who will be Prime Minister after independence" (*Magic*, 88-89). However, the principal debate in *Une Tempête* is not between Ariel and Caliban but between Caliban and Prospero. Caliban is fundamentally the revolted slave, the insurgent,

the cause of the tempest in Césaire's play. Caliban thus vehemently rejects Prospero's education, language and culture as well as his slave name. Césaire's Prospero ironically suggests to call his slave "Cannibal," thereby de-anagrammatizing Caliban's name, but Caliban asks to be called "X" after the common Afro-American practice to connote Prospero's theft of both his name and identity. He closes his discourse on freedom with the powerful interjection "Uhuru," which means "independence" in Swahili. Thus equipped with this new-found lingo and an identity of his own, Caliban is now ready to confront his old master. Prospero is here radically different from the Shakespearean original, as is best shown near the end of the play. After ten years of propinquity, Prospero offers peace to Caliban. In a tirade, the latter denounces Prospero's intoxication and his addictive need for the colonized, and envisions the collapse of the Old World at the hands of his own tempestuous violence. Unlike Shakespeare's Prospero, Césaire's does not go back to the mother-country, for, he deems, "sans moi cette île est muette" (*Une Tempête*, 90). By the end of the play, vermin, insects, and reptiles have infested the grotto. The once despotic and omnipotent Prospero looks old and wearied; his magical powers have eroded and he is left alone to suffer the effects of mental decrepitude and to ponder the sordidness of colonialism. The play concludes with Caliban proclaiming his new-found freedom: "La liberté ohé, la liberté!" Césaire's Caliban thus embraces not the illusion of a drunkard, as in Shakespeare's play (II.ii.8), but the lucid hope of a slave determined to break the bond of dependence.

Caliban is both Césaire's mouthpiece and the embodiment of the concept of "Négritude." His medium is the "Uhuru" language, the independence language of the oppressed Negro slave. That Caliban may be thought of as African has been corroborated by Nigerian Nkem Nwankwo in his poem "Caliban to Miranda." Like Césaire's Caliban, Nwankwo's Caliban affirms the hatred of the colonized and denounces Prospero's usurpation "by magic fraud." The poem ends on an apocalyptic note. The poet announces the collapse of the West, the wearing off "of your ingenuities / [which] Have toppled you back again to rubble / We Calibans will inherit the earth."[14] Similarly, Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his collection of essays, *Homecoming*, asserts the resilience of the African Caliban, for "it is difficult, as Prospero found out, for colonial domination to completely crush the human spirit."[15] Various Black writers and critics like Césaire, Lamming, and C. L. R. James have also identified Caliban with Toussaint l'Ouverture, the Negro leader of the slaves' revolt in Haiti in 1791.[16] Yet Caliban is not necessarily Black. For Brathwaite in "Limbo" the rebellion ensuing on Fidel Castro's landing in Cuba in 1956 and the overthrowing of Batista are reminiscent of Caliban's revolt in *The Tempest*. Similarly, Roberto Fernandez Retamar proposes Caliban as the symbol of the "mestizos" in his essay on Latin American culture: "What is our history, what is our culture but the

history, but the culture of Caliban?"[17] One could go on multiplying the examples. Caliban is not only African, West Indian or Latin American; he has become the inexhaustible symbol of the colonized insurgent.

IN THE FOREGOING WEST INDIAN TEXTS there is a notable recurrence of ripostes to *The Tempest* and to the Prospero/Caliban relationship. Such a recurrence is also verifiable in Canadian works as it is nowhere else in New World writing. Given that both Canada and the Antilles are still culturally bound by the shackles of colonialism, it is interesting to compare the response of an English-Canadian writer who has had a certain exposure to Africa such as Margaret Laurence with that of Martiniquan Frantz Fanon who worked in Algeria. Both have a strong anti-imperialist outlook; yet they respond differently to the "dependency complex" theory expounded by Mannoni in *The Psychology of Colonization*, which we mentioned at the beginning of this paper. As noted above, Fanon attacks Mannoni's Freudian dissection of the Malagasy's psyche and unmasks Prospero not only as an imperialist but also as a racist. On the other hand, in *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963), Margaret Laurence recounts her experience in Somaliland and her grappling with imperialism. Her simultaneous recognition of the Caliban and Prospero complexes in herself does her credit but her then mawkish understanding of Caliban, i.e., the Somali, leaves too much room for irony. In her attempt to understand the inscrutable Abdi and his unabated resentment against the English, Laurence ventures:

> A possible clue to the puzzle was provided not long ago by Mannoni's description of the dependence complex in *The Psychology of Colonization*, a book which I read with the shock of recognition one sometimes feels when another's words have a specific significance in terms of one's own experiences.[18]

Thus Fanon rejects Mannoni's theory whereas Laurence subscribes to it. This difference in attitudes towards colonialism mirrors the difference between English Canadian and West Indian attitudes to the relevance of *The Tempest* to their "colonial" predicament.

In English Canada, Caliban is artfully relegated to the wings of the literary scene and such topics as language and rape receive no attention. Unlike the Black writer, the English-Canadian writer privileges Miranda over Caliban and appears to dwell more on the Prospero/Miranda or Miranda/Ferdinand relationships as conventional metaphors of parental and romantic relations. In Shakespeare's text, Miranda is under Prospero's despotic tutelage and the victim of his capricious will. Although English Canadian literature now experiences no such victimization at the hands of British letters, the choice of Miranda as a national symbol makes the search for an English Canadian literary identity an ironic

enterprise, for Miranda is and will always be Prospero's progeny and may never rebel against Prospero's authority.

The Tempest is used in the following English-Canadian works: Charles G. D. Roberts's *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900); Robertson Davies's *Tempest-Tost* (1951); Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974), and Audrey Thomas's *Prospero on the Island* (1971). The span of time between the publication dates of Roberts's and Laurence's novels probably accounts for the difference in concluding the story of the Canadian Miranda. Roberts brings the nubile "peerless" youth and "the patient log-man" together whereas Laurence's Miranda rejects her Ferdinand in favour of the "earthy" Jules. Roberts, Davies, and Laurence all use aspects of *The Tempest* to make a statement about the Canadian situation: Roberts is concerned with the building of Canadian society; Davies with the development of Canadian culture; and Laurence with the making of the Canadian artist. This growing refinement of concern is also illustrated by the progressive development of the Caliban figure in all three novels. The bear in Roberts's novel is Caliban on all fours; the cantankerous actor with his "monkey-like physique" in Davies's novel is a degenerate rendition of the drunken Caliban of *The Tempest*; and the Calibanesque Jules in Laurence's novel is given the Ariel-like property of the singer.

If we except the anonymous *Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland* (1847), which contrives a situation analogous to that of *The Tempest*, *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* is the earliest Canadian creative commentary on *The Tempest*. The action takes place in a settlement in eastern New Brunswick. Roberts's heroine, Kirstie, seeks exile, not because of adultery like her counterpart Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, but because she is unable to cope with the gossip that ensues on the sudden and unexpected departure of her restless husband. The persecuted Kirstie and her daughter Miranda seek seclusion in a deserted cabin in the clearing of the "Ancient Wood." Roberts here answers Lamming's question in the *salon* digressions of *Pleasures* — "Who was Miranda's mother?" Kirstie is also the Prospero of the novel in so far as she is responsible for Miranda's upbringing in the civilized arts. Roberts's most remarkable adaptation is to convert the Shakespearean Caliban into Kroof, the female bear, and to invest "wonderful Mirandy" with Ariel's elemental disposition as well as Caliban's fabulous insight into the workings of untamed nature. The Ferdinand of the novel, young Dave, is an unadorned trapper and the "patient logman" of *The Tempest* (III.i.67). With the termination of Dave's "logbearing" activity, the traditional *ascesis* prior to marriage and sexual consummation, and with Miranda's sacrificial slaughter of the jealous Kroof ends an era of primitive innocence. Dave rescinds the "Pax Mirandae," thereby forcing Miranda to renounce both her elfish nature and her Calibanesque sensibility.

As the two lovers in *The Tempest* bring together two formerly antagonistic families, Dave and Miranda successfully synthesize two apparently irreconcilable modes: that of the Settlement and that of the Wilderness. Their marriage thus serves as a stepping stone to the building of the Canadian Brave New World.

Of Roberts's focus on the exile of parent and child in a pastoral setting, Robertson Davies retains only the pastoral element. In his first novel, *Tempest-Tost*, the amateurs of the Salterton Little Theatre are producing *The Tempest*. Unlike any character so far considered, Gonzalo, the "honest old counsellor," is made the central figure. Hector Mackilwraith, an inveterate bachelor and teacher of mathematics, identifies with Gonzalo on his first reading of *The Tempest*, for he ascribes to him wisdom and respectability, and he cherishes the idea of wearing an impressive costume and false whiskers. In his naiveté he falls passionately in love with the Ariel of the play, nineteen-year-old Griselda Webster. Convinced that Griselda has rejected him, he attempts to commit suicide but fails, and subsequently recovers his emotional balance in the Ontario Department of Education. Among this ludicrous and ineffectual cast figure the pompous Salterton Prospero, Professor Vambrace from the Department of Classics at Waverley University; his timid fifteen-year-old daughter in life and on stage, who is secretly in love with the "beauteous" Salterton Ferdinand, an egocentric libertine; and the jovial and loquacious Salterton Caliban, one of the stewards in the liquor store.

Structural irony controls the action in *Tempest-Tost*. It is based on the discrepancy, as *eirōn* connotes, between Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the Little Theatre production of it. The Salterton group lacks the spirit to convey the essence of *The Tempest* and its futile attempt to pioneer the pastoral "in this part of the world" merely demonstrates its mediocrity all the more. Yet Davies's purpose is not to deride Salterton's parochialism and second-ratedness but to correct its artistic foibles. Davies's larger aim is to demonstrate that Canadian culture, at least at the time of the novel's publication, is still in the cradle, and that, like the bark the *Macbeth* witches have doomed, "[it] cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tost." In spite of their apparent belittlement, the characters represent what Canadian art could possibly articulate, had it determined to delve in its own potential. Instead, the Salterton Miranda requires the "proper guidance" of the efficient American-trained theatrical director. The Little Theatre means to produce *The Tempest* are amateurish and this amateurism Davies sees as endemic to Canadian culture.

In Robertson Davies's novel *The Tempest* serves as a source of characters who are involved in a plot that bears no resemblance to the action of the play. Conversely, in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974), there is only one reference to *The Tempest* but the action of the novel is based on Shakespeare's play. The

protagonist Morag Gunn explains in a letter to a friend that she herself is writing a novel — a novel within a novel — which is also based on Shakespeare's play:

> It's called *Prospero's Child* she being the young woman who marries His Excellency, the Governor of some island in some ocean very far south, and who virtually worships him and then who has to go to the opposite extreme and reject nearly everything about him, at least for a time, in order to become her own person.[19]

On the generally accepted critical assumption that author and protagonist fuse in *The Diviners*, one may deal with the latter as if it were subtitled "Prospero's Child." Prospero's child is undoubtedly Miranda/Morag and His Excellency (H.E.) or "He," the paragon of the male gender, is both Ferdinand and Prospero. At a Winnipeg university Morag meets her Prospero in the person of Professor Skelton who at first acts as the promoter of her artistic talent and her "schoolmaster" (I.ii.172) but who keeps on assuming that role in their subsequent marital relationship. "In order to become her own person," Morag therefore breaks her marriage and enters a second phase marked by "the opposite extreme," through getting involved with Jules Tonnerre, the Métis who first seduced her. This painful encounter, which corresponds to Caliban's supposed rape of Miranda in *The Tempest*, establishes Jules' Calibanesque stature. By positing an independent life for Morag, the woman-writer, Laurence presents an allegory of the making of the Canadian artist, who has to abandon the sterility of British letters (here represented by Skelton) and embrace the fertility of the native land (here represented by Jules) as the only source of identity. Like the Black writer, both Laurence and Davies are concerned with the artist but, unlike him, they fail to place the artist in a recognizably colonial setting.

Prospero's literary progeny has the potential to raise a tempest of revolt and nationalistic assertion. But, whereas artists like Laurence make discriminate use of *The Tempest*, others use it only because it is part of their schooling. The result is one of utter trivialization. In Audrey Thomas's *Prospero on the Island* (1971), the protagonist, Miranda Archer, recounts in a diary-like fashion her one-year holiday on Magdalena, one of the "outer islands" in the gulf of Georgia. The highlight of her sojourn is her acquaintance with the intriguing artist-magician, Prospero Mackenzie, whom she views as both a potential lover and a father-figure. After spending one year in the Brave New World of Magdalena, enjoying the acquaintance of Ferdinand/Prospero, Miranda returns to the drudgery of her Vancouver life. The situation in Shakespeare's play has been radically simplified, apart from two inchoate extrapolations which consist in endowing Prospero with the youth and qualities of Ferdinand and in having Shakespeare's Miranda suffer from the Electra complex. Audrey Thomas's use of *The Tempest* is casual and pointless: "It'll just have to be Prospero and Miranda."[20]

THE ENGLISH CANADIAN WRITER'S failure to recognize the relevance of the Caliban/Prospero relationship to the Canadian situation operates as a foil to the French-Canadian writer's identification with Caliban, a cultural mulatto caught between two cultures but moving towards a transcendence of rather than a rebellion against the colonial situation. The novel *Caliban* (1977) by the French-Canadian novelist Pierre Seguin is more complex than any of the English-Canadian works considered so far and vies in complexity with Lamming's *Water With Berries*. Seguin's Caliban here emerges as the *bête noire* in the Canadian cast of Mirandas, Prosperos, and Ferdinands. Seguin presents two Calibans: one of them is Jérôme Bassompierre, a Montreal avant-garde puppet-master enamoured of perfection and solitude; the second Caliban is Jérôme's puppet whose histrionic flight with the puppet Ariel constitutes the core of esoteric shows. Seguin's purpose in using *The Tempest* is identical with Jérôme's purpose in choosing *The Tempest* as a contextual device for his show. He does not aim at either "illustrating a scene from *The Tempest*, or giving a personal interpretation of it, or a parody or an allegory of it. He uses his characters only because they are convenient and recognized symbols whose universal impact exempts him from providing a long and fallacious speech."[21] "Borrowing" is legitimate, for Jérôme/Seguin does not believe in "ideas as personal property." The conventional critic is then ridiculed for his unwillingness to explore the unspoken or the "latent" in Shakespeare's play, that which justifies the existence of all the adaptations so far considered.

Seguin conventionally uses two attributes of Caliban: his appearance and his speech. Seguin's intimation that Jérôme *alias* Caliban is a "savage" (I.ii.357); establishes from the start his kinship with Shakespeare's Caliban. So does his language; Jérôme's speech is either inarticulate or replete with platitudes. His spokesman, Gilles, acts as an interpreter and decoder; he deftly converts Jérôme's prosaic speech into a highly intellectualized language by means of which Gilles hopes to retain the capricious attention of the Saturday night audience of intellectual snobs. By stressing the discrepancy between the audience's thirst for linguistic sophistication and Jérôme's lingo, Seguin shares the Black writer's preoccupation with the "minting" of a language other than Prospero's. One recalls that, from Prospero's vantage point, language is the "profit" (I.ii.365) the colonized supposedly gains from colonization. Here Prospero's language is a "source of misapprehension" whereas rape or its possibility is far from providing the excuse for subjugation, as it does in Shakespeare's play. Jérôme painfully recalls that his first seduction of an English girl called Mira (Miranda) was a failure and mourns what might have been, had she been more lenient and he more experienced: "*O oh, O ho! Would't had been done! Thou didst prevent*

me; I had peopled else This isle with Calibans." Seguin maliciously pursues the question: What would Caliban have done after the failure of his attempted rape of Miranda? Jérôme temporarily becomes "Onân" (in the two "Onân" episodes) before having a stormy affair with Ginette, the Ariel-like Montreal minx (in the "Ariel and Caliban" episode). After this unwarrantable interference in his life, Jérôme deliberately curtails his sexual activities in order to recapture the forlorn solitude so indispensable to his art.

Jérôme's dismissal of the Ariel-like Ginette results in one of the two altercations between Ariel and Caliban in the novel. The second one takes place in his puppet-theatre. The key-scene in Jérôme's show is the single combat between Ariel and Caliban, which is stretched to almost one hour. The spectacle of Caliban savagely trampling Ariel to death is followed by Caliban's subservient prostration at Prospero's feet. This curious juxtaposition of scenes causes one of the initiates in the audience to ask whether, by making Caliban a boot-licker, Jérôme is implying that "all revolt is impossible, even illegitimate." Gilles, with his customary fluency, replies that Caliban's subservience is the only safe attitude the colonized can assume when confronted with the colonizer, "even if it entails working in the shadow towards his freedom." Finally, Gilles predicts that, if Caliban persists in his unlimited wicked determination, one day Jérôme will have Caliban kill Prospero. In the next scene, the enraged puppet Prospero refrains from killing the culprit, for, he ponders, like Césaire's Prospero: "On whom will [I] exert [my] unlimited powers?" Caliban is thus spared but, unlike Césaire's Caliban, converted into a kind of cultural mulatto:

> After Prospero has assumed power, he is no more than a *hybrid*, too "educated" to be still able to hear the song of nature, too simple-minded to taste that of culture. . . . (my emphasis)

After the arrival of culture bearers, the puppet Caliban becomes the victim of an irreversible process of cultural contamination. He becomes a "hybrid" partaking of both Nature and Culture but unable to "taste" fully either of them. Yet this stage of helplessness can be modified not by "passive resistance," as Jérôme once advocated, but by radical and murderous insurrection.

Throughout the novel, whether it concerns the eviction of Jérôme's boisterous friend Frédéric by the Saturday night audience or the murder of his childhood friend, Dominique Verger, by the clergy, the artful controlling force has Prospero-like dimensions. In the second half of the novel, the manipulator/victim relationship becomes defined in metaphysical terms and "the champion of passive resistance" becomes Man, that puppet held by the strings of Fate and crippled by Life itself. In an attempt to affirm active resistance, Jérôme-Caliban throttles his spokesman after being reborn as "the Being, the One, the Androgyne" in his studio, the now eviscerated "womb of Sycorax." This marks the beginning of

Jérôme's fight against the Establishment, the "NORM," and ironically fulfils Gilles's prophecy that Caliban will eventually kill Prospero. This also takes the Black writer's most vehement radicalism a step further.

The explanation for the germination of Seguin's novel in the soil of Québec may lie in Haitian-born Max Dorsinville's *Caliban Without Prospero: Essay in Québec and Black Literature* (1974). Seguin's theory of hybridity and of Caliban's "active resistance" is an *ex post facto* creative rendition of Dorsinville's critical conjectures in Chapters four and nine of *Caliban Without Prospero* — "The Hybrid Québecer" and "Québec self-articulation." Dorinsville argues that the Québécois Caliban partakes of two cultures: "Abandoned by France and/ or conquered by Britain in 1760, the French Canadians therefore suffered a scission in their collective self."[22] Unlike Dorsinville, Seguin does not envisage a "possible synthetical stage of reconciliation between Caliban and a re-educated Prospero" but a complete eradication of Caliban's relationship with Prospero and therefore more aptly renders the "extended metaphor" of Caliban *without* Prospero. The fact that Dorsinville used the Prospero/Caliban metaphor as the basis for the similarity between Black-American and French-Canadian literature shows two things: first, that by the time he undertook his study, the metaphor had become common currency among Black writers and critics, and, second, that Seguin's novel can be inscribed within the context of the emergence in the early sixties of "the figure of the Black man, as symbol, image, and myth . . . in the French-Canadian consciousness."

On the subject of language, Dorsinville seems to concur with Black critics and European scholars like Jahn: "Caliban has subverted the metropolitan man's language, subordinating it as a medium for the end expression of *his* sensitivity." The only distinctive Calibanic language in use for the making of a "Calibanic literature" in Québec is "joual." It is a socio-linguistic form of protest akin to Caliban's interjectory "Uhuru" in Césaire's *Une Tempête* and Jérôme's idiosyncratic, fractured language in Seguin's *Caliban*. When Seguin comments on language and insurrection, he shares the preoccupation of a Lamming or a Césaire, although his preoccupations are more metaphysical than those of the two West Indian writers. He is less concerned with his colonial predicament than he is with colonization in its largest sense: the manipulation of puppet-like Man, and the crushing of the "Mozart" part in him, as his choice of an epigraph from Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des hommes* indicates.

Seguin and the Black writer share a preoccupation with Caliban because they are both acutely aware of their "hybridity" and their linguistic and cultural subjugation. It then appears that, as the liberated Caliban they portray represents the autonomous ex-colony, Miranda represents the culturally dependent colony in English-Canadian letters. Miranda is thus bound to clash again with the Québécois Caliban, for she has clashed with him before, as Canada's painful

history of internal strife testifies. The English-Canadian writer comparatively lacks liberationist engagement, for, in his view, Canada is still "Prospero's Child." However, Davies and Laurence intimate that Canada *qua* Miranda needs to mature and stop "attend[ing]" Britain "most heedfully" (I.ii.78), and that English-Canadian literature is an outgrowth rather than an offspring of the British-literary tradition.

The degree of adaptation is, as we have seen, strongly related to the degree of engagement and the awareness of "hybridity." The degree of adaptation of Shakespeare's play fluctuates in both the Black and White literary worlds between casual derivativeness and radical transcendence. It reaches its peak in Québécois and Antillean adaptations that deal with the rape of Caliban's identity and language. In these works, "hybridity" is used to refer to Caliban's entrapment between Nature and Culture, or any opposing forces, but it also encompasses such forms as mulattism and bilingualism. More specifically, it refers to the predicament of the writing Caliban whose subject is the liberated Caliban but whose medium is Prospero's language; this is his residual enslavement but also his "curse" (I.ii.366) on Prospero. The third-level Calibanic language synthesized from the theories of Jahn, Clark, and Lamming is struggling to be born in most of the adaptations I have examined. Suffice it to say at this point that such a language is currently used in numerous West Indian and African works in its vernacular or indigenized form.[28]

Transcendence in form and language will presumably engender the ultimate severance of the umbilical cord linking the progeny to the mother-country and of the "colonial" or even "neo-colonial" bond between oppressor and oppressed. The adaptation and re-interpretation of the earlier Old World literature of colonization, i.e., *The Tempest*, as literature of decolonization is, at its worst, sheer parasitism but, at its best, superior in effectiveness to an anti-colonial polemic. As an articulate literary riposte, it constitutes one of the most cogent strategies of decolonization in literature.

NOTES

[1] Frank Kermode, ed., *The Tempest* in *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 31-33. Some critics have given I.ii.355-60 to Prospero because it makes Miranda sound unduly obstreperous. All further references are to this edition.

[2] D. O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), p. 107. First published in French as *Psychologie de la colonisation* (Paris: Seuil, 1950).

[3] Philip Mason, *Prospero's Magic* (London: O.U.P., 1962), pp. 124, 118.

[4] Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on colonialism" in *Carifesta Forum 76, An Anthology of 20 Caribbean Voices*, ed. with an intro. by J. Hearne, p. 31. First published in French as *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), pp. 39-40.

[5] Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952). Trans. by Ch. Lam Markmann as *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 93.

[6] Fanon, p. 39. See André Breton's encomiastic introduction to Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*: "Et c'est un Noir qui manie la langue française comme il n'est pas aujourd'hui un Blanc pour la manier" (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), p. 15.

[7] John Pepper Clark, "The Legacy of Caliban," in *The Example of Shakespeare* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970). In "The Muse of History," West Indian Derek Walcott dwells on "language as enslavement" in *Carifesta Forum 76*, p. 112.

[8] George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960), pp. 109-10.

[9] Janheinz Jahn, "Caliban and Prospero," *A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 242.

[10] Edward Brathwaite, "Caliban," from "Limbo" in *Islands* (London: Oxford, 1969), p. 35; "Eating the Dead" from "Rebellion" in *Islands*, p. 64 "The Emigrants" from "Islands and Exiles" in *Rights of Passage*, p. 54; "Beginning" in *Islands*, p. 113; and "Folkway" from "The Spades" in *Rights of Passage*, p. 29.

[11] Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander, eds, *Interviews with Three Caribbean Writers in Texas* (Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, 1972), p. 18.

[12] George Lamming, *Water With Berries* (Trinidad: Longman Caribbean, 1973), p. 76.

[13] Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête; d'après "La tempête" de Shakespeare: une adaptation pour un théâtre nègre* (Paris: Seuil, 1960).

[14] Nkem Nwankwo, "Caliban to Miranda," from O. R. Dathorne, ed., *African Poetry for Schools and Colleges* (London: MacMillan, 1969), pp. 44-45.

[15] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, "Towards a National Culture," in *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1972), p. 10.

[16] See e.g., Césaire, *Cahier*, p. 69; Lamming, *Pleasures*, pp. 118, 151; C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1963).

[17] Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "Caliban," *Carifesta Forum 76*, p. 99.

[18] Margaret Laurence, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), p. 228.

[19] Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 329.

[20] Audrey Thomas, *Munchmeyer* and *Prospero on the Island* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 139.

[21] Pierre Seguin, *Caliban* (Montréal: L'arbre HMH, 1977), p. 15. All translations are my own.

[22] Max Dorsinville, *Caliban Without Prospero: Essay in Québec and Black Literature* (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcépic, 1974), p. 59. "Black" is here to be understood as "Black American."

[23] See, for instance, for Black Africa, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's statement in Wendy Davies, "1,000 African Books: Few in the Vernacular," *Africa Now* (August 1982), p. 87, and, for the West Indies, Edward Baugh, ed., "A Language of One's Own," *Critics on Caribbean Literature: Readings in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 121-62.

TUBIFEX WORMS

Kevin Irie

By the cat-tails
bound into upright sheaves,
there were red worms
swirling the shallow water —

red hairs, rootlets;
fine threads tugged by
invisible needles stitching
the pond; tiny whips
flagellating themselves.

They wrote their frantic
names over and over
each time the current
erased their signatures,

retracted into mud
at the slightest touch, then
sprouted again, wobbly
as elastics snapped in two.

You couldn't tell what
they wrote or implied,
so small their lives in the
tenuous shallows, all

dead by the first dry spell
of summer, so that no one
could translate their words.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SOLITUDE

Geert Lernout

THIS ESSAY WILL STUDY Robert Kroetsch's novel *What the Crow Said* as an example of a new novelistic form that follows the post-modernist "novel of exhaustion" and that seems to be, at least partly, a reaction to it. Two of its most famous representative works have been international bestsellers: *Cien años de Soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez and *The World According to Garp* by John Irving. Márquez's decisive influence on this new form in the context of recent Canadian literature seems to be beyond doubt: Kroetsch and Jack Hodgins read *Cien años* while they were working on *What the Crow Said* and *The Invention of the World*, respectively. It is probably also not a coincidence that these three novels have their roots in explicitly oral cultures: Márquez's South America, Kroetsch's prairies with its indigenous tall tales, and Hodgins's Vancouver Island (in Hodgins's case there is also the influence of the Gaelic oral tradition).

The difference between this new type and the "old" post-modern novel becomes clearer when we compare the narrative aridity of the *nouveau roman* and the *nouveau nouveau roman* with the abundance of life in *Cien años*. In the earlier novels following Kafka, Camus, and other writers of the "degré zéro de l'écriture," the plot has all but disappeared, covered up by descriptions or generated by word-play. Márquez, Irving, and others like John Barth do the opposite: they fill every nook with plots, subplots, stories, bits of gossip. Their navels carry the seeds for a hundred potential novels and this makes them narcissistic: just as overt linguistic self-consciousness is thematized by introducing either the inadequacy of language or its overwhelming power, overt narrative self-consciousness can be conveyed by the absence or the over-abundance of plot. The consequences of this characteristic for the theory of the novel have (as far as I know) not yet been critically analyzed.

The second major difference from "traditional" post-modernism is the domain of another science: folklore. Since modernism, the novel has concerned itself mainly with subjective, urban experience: from *Ulysses* and *Der Prozess* to *La Nausée*, *Les Gommes* and *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, the novel's

scope was restricted to the description of an alienated and alienating existence in the city, separated from nature and other people. The new novels seem to have answered Kurt Vonnegut's plea for the reintroduction of the extended family by describing communities such as Macondo and families such as Garp's. At the same time, the action moves out of the city and into the village or smaller rural community (Irving and Barth have used the campus as a neutral ground between the two).

A third difference is one of tone: while the earlier post-modern novel was predominantly intellectual, this new form describes the earthy and bodily life; while the former is self-conscious about its written quality, the latter is often explicitly rooted in oral narration. This last element is the most difficult to define: all these novels have in common that they are written from the point of view of a third-person narrator. This new narrator differs from the earlier post-modernist one in that he does not personalize himself either as writer of the fiction (as in some of the early works of Barth and the *nouveau roman*) or as first-person participant in the narrative; he differs also from the nineteenth-century realist or naturalist narrator who, tacitly or not, presupposes in his readers a shared set of beliefs and a moral value system, and who governs his fiction from beginning to end without accepting alternative points of view.[1] The most importance difference from earlier third-person narratives is the self-contained nature of the novel which becomes clear in its apocalyptic ending: in one self-conscious, magisterial gesture, the author closes his story and dissolves the world he has created: in *Cien años* the end of the reading of Melquiades's manuscripts coincides with the end of Macondo:

> Before reaching the final line, however, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth.[2]

At the end of *The World According to Garp* the narrator connects all the loose ends and finishes the novel with: "But, in the world according to Garp, we are all terminal cases."

It is possible to apply the typology proposed by Linda Hutcheon to these oral aspects of the novel.[3] Overt auto-representation can work on the narrative and the linguistic level, in the former case the act and the conventions of oral narration are thematized and in the latter the novel incorporates references to speaking, telling, listening. In narrative narcissism the text shows that it is the result of oral telling; in linguistic narcissism it displays the materiality of the oral narrative. It should be stressed here that this does not entail a revisionist

move back towards the myths of the authenticity of the spoken word that have been explored by Derrida. These novelists are well aware of the written nature of their fiction, but they reintroduce into their works the dialectic relation between the two.

Covert narcissism also works on two levels: on the level of the story it internalizes a number of structural models that are essentially oral: legend, myth and fairy tale. One example of this is John Barth's "Dunyazadiad" in *Chimera* which uses the frame-story as its model and thereby partakes both of the plenitude of stories and of the explicit link between Eros/Thanatos and the narrative. The frame-story is by its very nature self-conscious: the actual situation of storyteller and listener is built into the different frames. The last category (covert linguistic narcissism) is the most difficult to describe: I include here all non-thematized references to spoken language, to sounds, etc., and to oral/aural equivalents of the pun and the anagram: misunderstanding, double entendre, and specifically oral phenomena such as curses and litanies.

It seems clear then, that we can really talk about a new post-modernism when we deal with the works of some very recent writers. They share with "traditional" post-modernism the narcissistic quality; they differ from it by thematizing or actualizing the oral origins of the narrative.

I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY STUDIES linking *Cien años de Soledad* with *What the Crow Said*, although Kroetsch himself has made it clear in *The Crow Journals* that he was aware of García Márquez's importance for his book from the first months of its genesis. The entry for May 3, 1974 has:

> John Barth visiting campus today. His saying about Márquez what I recognized, felt in my blood — that he, Márquez, is at the centre of postmodern in this last half of the 20th century. The coming down from high art while including it.

The journal also makes it clear that the oral element of Kroetsch's experience was and remained central to his project. This is already apparent in the first mention of the book:

> novel: HOME/PARKLANDS/COUSINS — dishonest, idealistic, drinking (Bob Edwards?) printer — itinerant prairie printer, as center, as ultimate story center/teller: my own (rural) experience, basically, expanded towards the tall tale, the mythological; but always the hard core of detail.[4]

When we compare this note with the finished form of the book we can immediately see a shift: Liebhaber is no longer "ultimate story center/teller" and this leads us to a consideration of the role of the narrator. Again Kroetsch is candid about where the influence comes from:

> Márquez — has cracked the problem of how to tell a story in third person again. Voice: a calm distancing that enables him to forget the conventions of realism.

The opening lines of the book illustrate this point: "People, years later, blamed everything on the bees; it was the bees, they said, seducing Vera Lang, that started everything."[5] The anonymous narrator does not give his own evaluation of the events and their relative importance: he offers the explanation that "people" gave retrospectively. This becomes the basic perspective of the book. The novel is punctuated with these theories: "perhaps" is a very common word. Other constructions are "why she took off her clothes, no one explained that either; nor why she..."; "For how long she lay transfixed there was never a way to tell"; "Years later, they would claim...." The narrator, then, is not so much an autonomous individual as the mouthpiece of an entire community: he writes down, years after the events, his version of a story, basing himself on the gossip, the memory, and the fantasy of the people. The stylistic form of the first sentence is also interesting because it comes so close to the repetition that is typical of oral narration and oral discourse in general.

The difference between memory and fantasy, between logical cause-result relationships and fanciful theories, is thematized both in this book and in *Cien años*. Liebhaber's loss of memory and the amnesia epidemic in Macondo are symptomatic of that. Fantasy and imagination enable the people to cope with reality: the inhabitants of Macondo fight the loss of memory by placing signs all over the village:

> But the system demanded so much vigilance and moral strength that many succumbed to the spell of an imaginary reality, one invented by themselves, which was less practical for them but more comforting.[6]

This, and José Arcadio Buendia's inventions, have an equivalent in *What the Crow Said* in Father Basil's cosmological speculations and Isador Heck's radical philosophy. Both books are also circular: in *Cien años* time is limited to one hundred years and when these are over, the town and its inhabitants return to dust. In Kroetsch's Big Indian, it is twenty-five years that have gone by; Old Lady Lang is again in the cellar breaking the sprouts off the potatoes as she did 25 years earlier, and even the bees have come back. Liebhaber has just repeated his trip with Martin Lang by bringing back the drunken Darryl Dish. The daughters all remember their husbands; Liebhaber "cannot remember anything" and is dying, Tiddy dreams. The two lovers, united at last, "lay... together, in the naked circle of everything." If the circle is closed, it is not as clear as in *Cien años* who accomplished it: the narrator is still there. Liebhaber does not qualify, if only because his moment of understanding coincides with his death. Kroetsch has clearly abandoned his original plan and only made Liebhaber into the axis around which the story turns. At the end of the novel different possibilities are

offered: Tiddy could be the narrator, although "She'd meant to make a few notes, but hadn't." (On p. 216, the narrative voice shifts: "And people, years later; years later they will say: against all knowledge, he fired the cannon." The normal narrative pattern is evoked and foregrounded by repetition and deviation: "would" becomes "will," which actualizes for the first time the moment of narration. This paragraph is, not unambiguously, presented as Tiddy's thoughts before falling asleep and dreaming the world.) Another pretender is Rita, who has been writing all through the book and now writes again: "She flings the words across the page: he is dying, she writes. He is dying in the next room. He is always dying in the next room." Even the crow could be the narrator; after all the book is called *What the Crow Said* and this hypothesis would give an ironic dimension to the formula "*people* years later" (as opposed to birds). But a formal identification of the narrator is ultimately not relevant: he transcends personal experience and should be seen in collective terms, much like the traditional story-teller, who interprets and preserves local history and legend. His performance is limited by the presence of an audience that has a first-hand knowledge of some of the history and that has internalized the traditional legends and myths. This controlling function of the audience makes it possible to preserve myths and stories virtually unchanged over many centuries, even when the reality or the ideology in which they originated has disappeared.

In oral narrative the difference between overt and covert linguistic narcissism is not always easy to discern, especially in a rich book like *What the Crow Said*. Thematized or overt instances can be found in the characters of the Ellen Jamesians in *The World According to Garp*, in Garp's lost ear, and his mouth injury. Actualized or covert narcissism should start from the — admittedly vague — qualification by Vargas Llosa about the "incantational value" of *Cien años*.

In *What the Crow Said* the overt instances can be divided into three groups. The first one brings together all the moments in the book where talking or story-telling is described: from Old Lady Lang's story, through the pig-Latin of Vera's boy, to the master of language in the story, Father Basil, and his hour-long sermons in which he tries to come to grips with the world. The central instance is the moment when every man in the Big Indian beer parlours "spoke continually for two hours and fourteen minutes, not once pausing to hear what another had to say." This is an exaggerated example of a collective instance of immediate individual history, the raw material for the story-teller. A second group deals with hearing, speaking, and breathing: Alfonse Martz claims he is "deef in one ear . . . and I can't hear out the other." Skandl's ears have been eaten, and again and again people have difficulty hearing one another — Liebhaber and Lang in the snowstorm, Liebhaber and Tiddy in bed. The opposite condition is also frequent in Big Indian: Liebhaber calls Lang "a dumb bugger" and Darryl "dumb little bugger"; JG does not speak at all, the crow calls Heck "dummy"

and Straw all but loses his voice when he meets Vera. A large number of people die of suffocation: although Jerry Lapanne's hanging is postponed, O'Holleran drowns in the dust, Joe Lightning in the ladies' outhouse, the Adams boy under the ice, and Liebhaber, almost, under his boat. The third and probably most important overt linguistic thematization of the oral element consists of the three cries that frame the novel: Vera's love cry, the men's roar, and Joe's laugh. These are carefully juxtaposed: Vera's represents a female orgasm; the card players' is a reaction to death; Joe's is a male orgasm "of . . . absolute obscenity." Vera's happens on the earth among the flowers, the men's under the earth in the church cellar, and Joe's in the sky. The three cries also have in common that they are extremely unsettling and that they are repressed immediately by the people who hear them, because they cannot face their pure animality. This, in its turn, leads to mythification or denegation. These cries are also important because they qualify the circular structure I posited earlier. In reality the book is divided into two parts of almost equal length and thus it forms a figure eight or lemniscate (like JG's walk). This structure also functions in *Cien años* where chapter ten begins with the phrase:

> "Years later on his deathbed Aureliano Segunda would remember the rainy afternoon when he went into the bedroom to meet his son."

This echoes the first sentence of chapter one and introduces the second cycle. In *What the Crow Said*, the story begins with Vera's cry and reaches its deepest point in the horror of the discovery of Lang's body. The fall of Joe Lightning brings on the final stage of the book, which ends with Cathy looking up at the sky "hoping that Joe Lightning will fall into her arms." The three cries are also connected to Liebhaber's three memories of the future: his first premonition predicts Martin Lang's death; Joe's marriage breaks up the schmier game temporarily but in the end leads to the discovery of Lang's body. The game ends with Liebhaber's prediction that Skandl will return. The scenes in the church are also central because of the reference to the Last Supper, the three days, the thirteen players, the food and the wine.

The non-thematized self-consciousness consists in the greater part of the book in Liebhaber's litanies where only the sound of the words seems to be important: for example, "The world is a double hernia . . . A cracked pot. A boiled lemon. A scab and a carbuncle. A mole on a mole's ear. A mouthful of maggots." These litanies have in common that they occur at moments of extreme exasperation and that all of them have the form of definitions, with in most cases "the world" as subject and once "the crow." One way to approach this phenomenon is in terms of "D'une identité l'autre" by Julia Kristeva.[7] In this seminal article Kristeva analyses the role a conception of subject plays in the philosophy of language, and she applies her findings to poetic discourse and in particular to the work of

Céline. In the process, she distinguishes between the semiotic and the symbolic. The symbolic belongs to the homogenous forces of language, the semiotic to "un *hétérogène* au sens et à la signification": it shows itself genetically in the first echolalias of infants, is reactivated in the rhythms, intonations, and glossolalias of psychotic discourse, and finally in poetic discourse in:

> les effets dits musicaux mais aussi de non-sens qui détruisent non seulement les croyances et les significations reçues mais, dans les expériences radicales, la syntaxe elle-même, garante de la conscience thétique.

Further on she links this to the period before the mirror-stage, which makes these semiotic processes both instinctual and maternal. This makes JG a good example of the semiotic: although he sang in the womb (according to Tiddy), he never reaches the symbolic stage but remains tied to the semiotic practice of farts and excrement. This also explains Martin Straw's madness: it is made very clear that he could have been saved from the devastating influence of seeing Vera's face. He is confronted with the absolute Other, who annihilates his own individuality and it is interesting to note that this process is described in terms of reading ("In the glacial blue of her scornful eyes, he read a summons . . . ") and writing ("She wrote her face upon his sorrow," while the antidote is aural:

> had he heard the call, had he been told the story, he might have saved himself. One telling of the story might have saved him.

It is only natural that he all but loses the ability to speak. Kristeva selects two phenomena in Celine's writing that are functions of the semiotic: sentential rhythms and obscene words. Both can be seen to be at work in *What the Crow Said* as markers of covert linguistic narcissism: they make us aware, when we read some of Liebhaber's litanies, of the heterogenous nature of language. This aspect of the book can be related to the "pantogruelismo" of Márquez[8] and the carnivalesque in Bakhtin's book on Rabelais. These observations make it necessary to challenge Peter Thomas's conclusions about this novel.

> Liebhaber's humiliation and the abundance of shit in the novel are reductive in a way that is new in Kroetsch's fiction: compounded of terror and contempt for humanity they exceed any misgivings about the validity of tragedy. It is not that human dignity need stand very high. But to bring the quest for love down to a pitiful crawl back to the womb and a matter of shit and silence makes enormous demands upon the aesthetic virtues of the novel.[9]

Thomas fails to see the enormous importance of the last chapter and of the link that is established between language and excrement. The rhythms of the sexual act coincide with the rhythms of the environment, of the past; the black horse on the bridge, the thump of the cards on the table, the thumps of the ball against the wall, the memories of JG, Joe Lightning. Only at this point do the instinctual and maternal drives become integrated. (I will deal with sexual difference later.)

What the Crow Said borrows a lot of elements of the fairytale and this is already apparent in the insistence on moments of transition: wakes, marriages, courting, burial. This is also the case in *Cien años*. In this context, first of all, we see the importance of nature: in Márquez, the sudden fertility of the animals and the plague of the birds; in Kroetsch, the salamanders. Secondly, there are the rains, the flood and the wind in both books, and the complete dependency of the people on nature. And thirdly, we find the talking crow and the fact that all things come in threes: the premonitions, the cries, Vera's husbands, etc. The most important fairy-tale characteristic the books have in common is the treatment of time. Although they both describe a definite time-span (100 or 25 years), this is only rarely apparent: first, because the novels seem to exist outside of time and, except for casual references to trains, telephones and television, could have happened at any moment of history. A second reason is the day-to-day existence which, in a rural community, is more obviously punctuated by such events as marriages and deaths. Another reason is the age of people: the cyclical structure of the book and the repetition of narrative occurrences obscure the fact that only children seem to grow older in Big Indian: none of the adults age, not even Old Lady Lang. At the same time, and just as in *Cien años*, the passage of time is well documented: the exact number of days or years it rains or snows, even the thirty-three minutes of Liebhaber's love-making. Also, sometimes time accelerates: when the salamander "plague" only lasts one afternoon, for example.

I HAVE DESCRIBED HOW *What the Crow Said* is narcissistic on three levels. Covertly, it adopts fairy-tale elements (one could also point to the mythic dimensions and the legendary quality of some of the scenes: the fact that Vera's boy is raised by wolves, for example). On the linguistic level, the curses and litanies seem to make us aware of the semiotic nature of language. On the overt level we saw how Kroetsch thematizes oral language by stressing the importance of the ear and mouth and by the references to breath and suffocation. The last paradigm of this typology concerns overt narrative narcissism: this book thematizes the basic dialectic that supports it.

Even a cursory reading of *The Crow Journals* reveals how much Kroetsch was aware of recent critical discussions about the nature of writing and language: his involvement with deconstruction as editor of *Boundary 2*, the influence of McLuhan, the actual editing work for the journal and his despair at the limitations of the form, and a general philosophical concern with Heidegger, shared by his co-editor William Spanos. *What the Crow Said* can be read on one level as a Heideggerian parable: as a note in *The Crow Journals* suggests, Tiddy is *Dasein*, Being-in-the-world; Vera, with her interest in bees, is Being (another note on p.

55 suggests that she is immortal). Vera's rape is a radical experience that suggests Hölderlin's fate and it makes her the keeper of bees (if not of Being). This reading would also explain the book's concern with origins, with time, with language. On the first page of Hölderlin's only novel, Hyperion compares his soul to bees and in "What Are Poets For?" Heidegger quotes one of Rilke's letters: "*We are the bees of the invisible.* Nous butinons éperdument le miel du visible, pour l'accumuler dans la grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible."[10]

The traditional attitude of students of the oral epic tradition is expressed in *Studies in Oral Epic Tradition* by Janos Honti in a comparison of folktale and literature where he opposes the oral form, the peasant origin and the conservatism of the first to the written form, the urban situation and the progressiveness of the latter.[11] Only recently have anthropologists (not accidentally working in Africa) challenged the self-evident nature of this juxtaposition and stressed the problems inherent in writing down an oral tradition: Jacques Fedry stresses the importance of the collection of stories for the preservation of a vanishing tradition: "Mais la question est de savoir si nous recueillons autre chose que les cendres, disséminées sur le papier blanc."[12]

This dialectic of the oral and the written is central to *What the Crow Said*, although not in the way suggested by the schematic reading that Peter Thomas imposes on it. According to Thomas, Kroetsch sees external space as male, inner space as female, and therefore the spoken word as male and the (closed) book as female. This may be true in the unpublished essay he quotes from, but it is an over-simplification of this novel's complex dialectic. Before discussing the attitude of individual characters, I must deal with a general characteristic of the oral tale and of language in general that involves a dichotomy related to one I touched upon earlier: that between, on the one hand, memory, and on the other, fantasy, imagination, creation. Since the studies of Milman Parry and Albert Lord,[13] folklorists have been obliged to abandon the idea that the rendering of the oral epic is based entirely on the phenomenal memory of the teller. Lord and Parry discovered that the storyteller creates his epic on the spot by means of recurring epithets, phrases, sentences, which constitute up to 90 per cent of the whole work. At the same time the memory of the members of his audience, who share the knowledge of the epic, regulates and controls his fancy and makes sudden changes impossible.[14] Kroetsch was aware of this problem since he quotes in his *The Crow Journals* from *Folktale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epic* by Rhys Carpenter who takes Parry's work as a starting point.[15] In a further comment it becomes clear that Kroetsch has made the link between this and the proverbial and formulaic discourse of rural people, following a revision of the formulaic theory that was initiated by Ruth Finnegan.[16] When somebody doubts the presence of a tradition in Alberta, he writes:

> My asserting against his statement a belief in the text beneath the text, an everlasting grope into the shape of that darkness. As with rural people, the complexities and patterns beneath the formulaic speech. Almost the opposite of urban, where the surface is sometimes more complicated than what lies beneath it.

This refers to the well-documented function of language to protect the subject from outside influences: the "other" is appropriated by a proverb or a familiar phrase that divests it of its otherness. Julia Kristeva observes, in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, an elaboration of some of the ideas in "D'une identité l'autre," that the phobic child is always verbally very active:

> Mais justement le langage n'est-il pas notre ultime et inséparable fétiche? Lui qui précisément repose sur le déni fétichiste ("je sais bien mais quand même", "le signe n'est pas la chose mais quand même", "la mère est innommable mais quand même je parle", etc.) nous définit dans notre essence d'être parlant.[17]

Old Lady Lang is the prototype of this formulaic element in language. She represents the conservative memory-element," in her endless mourning not at any particular death but at the inevitable absence," which makes her the opposite of her Shakespearian name-sake: Gertrude. She also reacts to everything with the same protective formula: "It's too sad. I don't want to think about it," thereby dismissing reality in the same way as she breaks off the phallic sprouts of the potatoes. All this seems to confirm Thomas's rigidly dualistic vision — the town is divided into two groups: the conservative, earthbound women, concerned with mourning (Tiddy, Rose) and memory; the progressive and creative men who have impossible dreams of conquering the sky and who die or get wounded. (Except for Vera, not a single woman dies or suffers any physical pain, while all men are maimed.) This dualism also exists on the level of language: the men tell stories, jokes, and tall tales, while the women speak in formulas: "It is snowing," "Somebody must take a wife." But the reality of the book is more complicated than that: Martin Lang expresses himself almost exclusively in formulaic language: "Even the gophers can't make a living," "This weather. Freeze the nuts off an iron bridge," a fact which causes one of Liebhaber's outbreaks. Also, the most radical experience happens to a woman, Vera (in Latin, at least, the true heroine of the book). Her rape results in the first "semiotic" outburst in the novel ("lament and song in one," "her body singing"). Although the town survives this radical experience because of different defence mechanisms (the stories, the drink), Vera herself changes dramatically: she dismisses both men and their language (based on the two meanings of "drone," her son has a "buzz" in his voice). She actively combines the male and the female worlds: she drives a car and leaves the house but remains the "Final Virgin," insisting on cleanliness, a whiteness that covers the whole region "like myriad white bees." She is the only woman who has any dealings with the sky, and her spectacular death combines

sky, water, and earth. At the same time, she has the power to silence men (a power her mother lacks: see the scene in the bar): Straw, Ebbie Else, who, after the elopement, "listened as if every rustle of leaf, every drip of a tap, contained a message." The missing term between the oral tale and the bees is "mellifluous," denoting both honey or the (semiotic) quality of a voice.

But the two central characters are Tiddy and Liebhaber. (Their relationship resembles the one between Ursula and the different male characters in *Cien años.*) Liebhaber is confronted with the problems facing the community when he remembers the future and is unable to adapt what he wants to say to the stylistics of journalese. Instead he acts, tries to *talk* Lang into spending a more meaningful last day, and helps to get him home. As a result the newspaper is printed with a blank, just as the village is covered with snow. After his recovery the rivalry with Skandl brings him to tamper with truth in order to influence the future. Skandl builds a beacon, a tower of Babel, and Liebhaber, as usual, gets drunk and fights with the signifying power of letters, trying to un-write a word, and fails. When he tries to form a word with the letters of his initials, he finds GLOT, which should have given him the clue for a way out of his dilemma (glottis). When Skandl has been defeated and flees, Liebhaber takes his place and assumes the role of patriarch. He now hits upon the notion that he can evade death by telling the truth and he starts his autobiography and begins to breed cattle. All of these activities can be explained by referring to Lacan's *nom-du-père*: the locus of the law (Liebhaber as hockey-referee), which at the same time regulates procreation and controls the signifying function of language. He breaks down and gets drunk again when somebody has disturbed his arbitrary rule by ordering his letters alphabetically. When somebody (or everybody) betrays him by challenging his authority over the distribution of women, at the hockey game, the result is the lowest point in the whole book: the schmier game. Here, the men act out the insults of Vera as spokesperson of the women and they behave as "useless bastards." The game invites a Freudian interpretation: during it, they drink and become filthy and regress to a very early stage of child development. The maternal Tiddy first chases them out of the house, her own territory in which she is the master of language ("watch your language in this house"), but in the end she convinces them to give it up. The men have reached their lowest point when they give up language and start to caw. After the end of the game Liebhaber repeats a number of the actions in the first part of the book: the fire built to dig the Adams boy's grave "became a kind of beacon"; his rivalry with Vera's boy parallels his earlier one with Skandl. In the end he is the one who wins the war by giving back to the sky what had been the cause of all the trouble: the bees. At that moment Liebhaber and Tiddy meet because they finally live in the same time: before, Tiddy with her insistence on mourning lived in the past, and Liebhaber, with his preoccupation with immortality, in the future. Now both live for

the moment: Tiddy still remembering everything, but with a growing confusion between memory and the present, and Liebhaber dying and in this way gaining the immortality he looked for by being included in the tales of the people of the municipality of Bigknife.

NOTES

[1] When I write "earlier post-modern" I do not mean this in a strict historical sense: some writers such as Nabokov have used a similar voice before.

[2] Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 422.

[3] The typology was first developed in an article in *Poetique*, 29 (February 1977), 90-106, and then published as the first chapter of *Narcissistic Narrative. The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 17-35.

[4] *The Crow Journals* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1980), pp. 18, 11.

[5] Robert Kroetsch, *What the Crow Said* (Don Mills: General, 1978), p. 7. Further references are to this edition.

[6] García Márquez, p. 49.

[7] Julia Kristeva, "D'une identité l'autre," *Tel Quel*, 62 (Summer 1976), 10-27.

[8] Olga C. Gonzalez, *El Mundo de Macondo* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1974), pp. 109-13.

[9] P. Thomas, *Robert Kroetsch* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1980), p. 115.

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 130.

[11] *Studies in Oral Epic Tradition* (Budapest: Akademiaukiado, 1975).

[12] "L'Afrique entre l'écriture et l'oralité," in *Herméneutique de la littérature orale* (Donala: College Libermann, 1976), p. 93.

[13] Parry was a classical scholar who discovered in his study of the formulaic phrases in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* that they were orally composed. In the 1930's he and a student, Albert Lord, collected oral epics in Yugoslavia where they found the same principles at work. Their findings were collected and published by Lord in *The Singer of Tales* (1960).

[14] "This involvement of the audience — even when the audience is primarily separate rather than participatory — sometimes extends to verbal prompting or objections by individual listeners. In Yoruba hunters' songs (*ijala*) for instance, other expert *ijala* performers are often present. If they think the performer is not singing properly, they will cut in with a correction, beginning with a formula like:

> You have told a lie, you are a hawking loaves of lies.
> You have mistaken a seller of *abari* for a seller of *egbo*.
> Listen to the correct version now.
> Your version is wrong.
> For the sake of the future, that it may be good."

Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), p. 232.

[15] *Folktale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1946), p. 6 ff.

[16] Parry and Lord's discovery that memory was not very important resulted in the idea that it never was. Lord even defined oral poetry in a way that actively excluded texts that are preserved word-for-word. Ruth Finnegan shows how this goes too far and suggests a revaluation of its relative importance. Similar conclusions are drawn by G. S. Kirk in relation to the Homeric question in *Homer and the Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976).

[17] Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 49.

WHAT TO SAY TO A DYING MAN

Richard Hornsey

I told him it was May
and the lakes had all turned over.
Asparagus was growing up along the roadside;
that the black families and snowy egrets
were fishing the marshes together again.

I told him no windows in his house were broken
and the pepper field in front was planted;
that I had seen his neighbor on the beach
searching for water-sculpture washed ashore
down where the old blue sailboat waited.

I told him that someone had cut his lawn
and the swallows had returned to the eaves;
that friends at the roadhouse still drank cold beer
in the shade of the awning on Friday afternoon
but spoke of him less and less often.

I told him that it was time for me to leave
and that I would walk out along the pier
to watch the graceful gulls respond,
allies with me,
soaring flakes of light.

(I told him it was May.
No windows in his house were broken.
Someone had cut his lawn.
It was time for me to leave.)

THE NAKED NARRATOR

"The Studhorse Man" & the Structuralist Imagination

Brian L. Ross

DEMETER PROUDFOOT'S NAKEDNESS describes not only his physical condition as he sits writing in his bathtub, but also his role as the narrator of Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man.* Throughout the novel, Demeter so distracts himself with laying bare literary devices and conventional techniques of narration, with taking the dressing of the narrator and his relation to his narrative, that he turns what starts out to be a "biography of Hazard Lepage" into a book about the man trying to write the "biography."

His nakedness is neither fortuitous nor careless, but studied and deliberate. "In a chapter that was seized by one of my doctors," writes Demeter,

> I discussed at some length my theory of nakedness. If we are ever to achieve the ideals to which the more enlightened among us pay lip service, it strikes me we must first rid ourselves of an impulse toward hypocrisy and deceit and vanity and pretension and false pride. To achieve this end we must begin by freeing ourselves from clothing. I have surely done my bit, and yet I wish to avoid the kind of vanity that comes of being freed from vanity.[1]

Applied to his role as narrator, this is the self-conscious nakedness of the structuralist imagination, an imagination that has so stripped itself down to the knowledge of its possible functions that it cannot escape awareness of their exercise. Ironically, Demeter does anything but avoid vanity; the biographical moves toward the autobiographical and, as Louis K. MacKendrick has shown, *The Studhorse Man* moves toward the narcissistic indulgence characteristic of the literature of exhaustion, of "fiction whose subject is fiction in the making, the creative process in action."[2] In this paper I wish to show how Demeter's narrative of Hazard Lepage's quest to breed the "perfect horse" can be seen as an allegory of the search of the structuralist imagination for the future of its literature. Before considering *The Studhorse Man*, however, it is instructive to look briefly at the effect which structuralist criticism has had on the movement of contemporary fiction.

IN THE LIGHT OF FORMALIST and structuralist poetics, the creative writer has been shown the dissociation between the world of language and that of experience, and as he has become increasingly aware of such separation, the more difficult he has found the task of reassociation. "Structuralism," writes Robert Scholes,

> is giving to literature with one hand and taking away from it with the other. . . . Every aspect of literature that can be reduced to rules threatens to sink, as Coleridge said, "into a mechanical art." It follows from this that to the extent that criticism, especially general literary theory or poetics, is successful, it diminishes certain poetic possibilities precisely by making them mechanically available. As long as poetics merely codifies the prejudices of a certain age, it feeds creative art by providing rules to break, occasions for originality. But to the extent that poetics can reach and explain the true and permanent features of literary construction, it removes territory from the creative writer though leaving it for the hack . . . [S]ome of the most aware and intelligent writers of our time see the problem of exhaustion of fictional possibilities as a real problem — and it is certainly a problem to which the poetics of structuralism contributes.[3]

The response of fiction has been to write this problem into itself — to make awareness of the construction of literary convention an integral part of its narrative consciousness — in search of new possibilities and forms; to create, as it is called, a literature of exhaustion. Such fictions have as their subject primarily fictional technique and, as such, they become critical statements of sorts, pondering the present state of the art while exemplifying it. Robert Coover, an American writer in this (young) tradition, writes, for example, in an address to Miguel de Cervantes:

> But, *don* Miguel, the optimism, the innocence, the aura of possibility you experienced have been largely drained away, and the universe is closing in on us again. Like you, we, too, seem to be standing at the end of one age and on the threshold of another. We, too, have been brought into a blind alley by the critics and analysts; we, too, suffer from a "literature of exhaustion." . . . The return to Being has returned us to Design, to microcosmic images of the macrocosm, to the creation of Beauty within the confines of cosmic or human necessity, to the use of the fabulous to probe beyond the phenomenological, beyond appearances, beyond randomly perceived events, beyond mere history.[4]

The emphasis on design, the creation of beauty and the use of the fabulous which Coover mentions are characteristic of the whole movement of the literature of exhaustion, and the term "fabulation" has been introduced to describe the "delight in design and . . . concurrent emphasis on the art of the designer"[5] which distinguishes fiction of this approach from the conventional novel or satire. The tales being told are usually simple stories reminiscent of fables, but they tend to become caught in arabesques of the possibilities of how they are to be told. Such

designs use language not so much as a vehicle for communication but more for its own sake, for the simple beauty possible in its very use.

What of the tales, though? Are they tales for the sake of tales, there simply because there must be something to be designed? Or do they have, like the fable, possibilities of allegorical meaning?

Scholes has suggested that "the state of fiction as practiced by our best writers from Joyce and Faulkner to Barth and Hawkes" can be described as allegorical,[6] and it is within just this state that the fiction of Robert Kroetsch has been repeatedly located.[7] Here I wish to suggest that it takes only gentle prodding to find in Hazard Lepage's quest an allegory of the writer's search for the future of his art and that *The Studhorse Man* can be ranked with other works of similar enterprise which Scholes has characterized as "almost textbook illustrations of the writer as formalist/structuralist surveying with excessively acute awareness his shrinking sphere of activity."[8]

BEFORE TREATING THE SUBJECT of allegory directly, we need to establish the evidence of structuralist thinking that exists in *The Studhorse Man*. I believe that Demeter Proudfoot's sensibility can be seen as fundamentally structuralist. While he yearns to present a "biography" of Hazard Lepage, a "reliable account" which won't stray "from the mere facts," he constantly struggles with the incommensurability of language and experience. Looking over his notes, he asks despairingly, "What have we captured? what saved?" and later, in an attempt to give a "true to life" description of Hazard's horse, Poseidon, "Why is truth never where it should be? Is the truth of the man in the man or in his biography? Is the truth of the beast in the flesh and confusion or in the few skillfully arranged lines?"

His concern in his narrative, he says, is to pursue "naked truth," but he soon realizes that truth, to be comprehensible and to be "its own reward," must be ordered. He realizes, too, as he sits, "pencil in hand, notebook on my lap," that to make Hazard's "present into history," to have a biography "inscribed on the insufferable blank pages of time," he, as a writer, must be the one to provide this order. He explains as he looks over his notecards, "I have arranged the next three cards so as to suggest an order that was not necessarily present in Hazard's rambling conversation." His realization is precisely that upon which structuralism is based; that man has ordered, according to certain conventions of consciousness, the world around him which, in truth, is random and chaotic, and that he has expressed this order through conventional arrangements of the units of his language. Demeter sees little order in Hazard's life, the future of which, he says, rests upon "the white and black dink of that stallion." Hazard is guided, he believes, by

> A treacherous fate, a treacherous fate indeed. . . . A preposterous fate to be at the mercy of something so rash, so reckless and fickle, so willful, unpredictable, stubborn — and so without morality.

and he sees Hazard's life as being directionless: "Hazard was on the road again; the road leads to those long straight parallel tracks that go, it would appear, from nowhere to the blank horizon." He contrasts such a life with his own preference for order. "I myself prefer an ordered world," he says, "even if I must order it through a posture of madness. It is the only sane answer to prevailing circumstances."

As a writer, he sees himself as a person "afflicted with sanity," a harbinger of order. The biographer, he says,

> is a man who must first of all be sound of mind, and in the clarity of his own vision he must ride out the dark night, ride on while all about him falls into chaos. The man of the cold eye and the steady hand, he faces for all of humanity the ravishments and the terrors of existence.

His own clarity of vision is based on a notion about consciousness which is analogous to that which underlies formalist and structuralist poetics, the identification of recurrent patterns in life and literature. Says Demeter:

> The very process of recurrence is what enables us to learn, to improve, to correct past errors, to understand the present, to guide the generations that are to come. Yet it is precisely this same characteristic of life that makes life unendurable. Men of more experience than I have lamented at the repetitious nature of the ultimate creative act itself. It is only by a mastery of the process of repetition . . . that we can learn to endure; yet we can only master the process by a lifetime of repetition. Many, I suspect, are tempted to despair. But I have sought other solutions and, I might add, with no little success. The path that would appear to lead to madness is surely the highroad to art. If someone chooses to do a study of my life, he will proffer an exemplum to mankind.

Such a highroad has indeed led to the sort of art that *The Studhorse Man* is. Fiction has not despaired in the face of structuralist baring of repeated patterns. By the very act of incorporating the knowledge of recurrence and convention into their fictions, writers of the literature of exhaustion are making, as Coover puts it, "challenges to the assumptions of a dying age" and taking "exemplary adventures of the Poetic Imagination, high-minded journeys toward the New World and never mind that the nag's a pile of bones."[9]

In the final analysis, however, it is not Demeter but Kroetsch who is taking the "high-minded journey" here, and much of the humour in *The Studhorse Man* is a result of Demeter's seeming ignorance of what it is he is doing with his narrative. As MacKendrick has suggested, "Kroetsch recognizes that in postmodern practice literature becomes its own metaphor; in effect, Demeter is both the butt and the articulator of Kroetsch's technique."[10] Demeter tells us, for instance, that

> I made no secret of the fact that I had just recently conceived the notion that I would write a few years hence a novel; Hazard was, I believe, flattered at the prospect of becoming a fictitious character. I at the time imagined I would write a wonderfully eloquent love story; indeed, anything but a biography.

The irony is, of course, that *The Studhorse Man*, Demeter's "portentous volume" of "naked truth," *is* anything but a biography. It *is* a novel and, while perhaps not a love story, it is, in places, wonderfully eloquent pornography. Moreover, with Demeter to spell out how he reconstructs "truth," we see all too clearly just how fictitious Hazard really is.

At the end of Chapter 7, Demeter asks, "We who assemble fragments long for a whole image of the vanished past. We seekers after truth, what do we find?" and he answers this for us (and himself) in Chapter 9. He presents a set of these "fragments" recorded on notecards, and then proceeds to "reconstruct the event." The result *is* a whole image, but one which bears only spinal correspondence to what is recorded on the cards, notes from "the vanished past." The detail of the reconstruction, such as the colourful exchange of phallic crudities on Edmonton's High Level Bridge, is all supplied by Demeter's imagination. Any certainty which he establishes through "extensive investigations," such as the fact that it was "exactly 8:44 a.m.," contributes negligibly to the whole image this "seeker after truth" ends up producing. The reconstruction stands by itself with only cursory reference to Demeter's notes, and the only real truth produced in the reconstruction process is an overstated reassertion of the impossibility of capturing experience in language. Language, we are shown in no uncertain terms, creates its own experience.

The poetics of formalism and structuralism insists that the way in which language creates the effects of an experience is through various arrangements of literary conventions, and much of the energy of this poetics has been directed at identifying these conventions and the rules which govern their construction. However, as literary conventions become identified as such and not as imitations of experience, they become ineffective means of communication. What is attended to and reacted to is the convention and not what it seeks to describe; the mould and not the jelly, colourful as it may be, that is poured into it. When such conventions are revealed, they are usually applied to material which is opposite in nature to that with which the convention is usually associated, and parody is produced. The danger of structuralism is that it threatens to reduce all of literature to a matter of convention and, by doing so, lay our whole literary tradition open to parody. Thus, as Scholes points out, the writer writing in the shadow of structuralism has become acutely aware of "his shrinking sphere of activity."

Whether Demeter is fully aware of his structuralist consciousness or not, he seems to be aware of rules and conventions to follow in the construction of a biographical narrative. His too ardent attempts at strict adherence to these con-

ventions, however, backfire, producing parody and laying bare the various conventions, devices, and techniques which he is trying to employ. His structuralist consciousness has discerned in the events of Hazard's life the archetypal pattern of the quest, and in his attempts to give expression to this "true story," Demeter experiments with a microcosm of narrative history. Hazard's episodic search for a mare to breed "the perfect horse" rings of the Homeric epic and the picaresque tale, and Demeter's self-proclaimed stance as "biographer" wanting to produce a "history," his insistence upon the "certainty" of the tale which he presents, and his desire to reconstruct events exactly how and where they happened and to adhere to Hazard's vulgar dialogue (with which Demeter is somewhat "enthralled") all ally him with mimetic realism and naturalism, the conventional styles of creating the illusion of truth.

Demeter's attempt to produce the Great Albertan Epic is, however, ill-fated. His application of epic conventions to Hazard's quest leads only to mock-epic.[11] "Our hero" is a morally dubious "man of inordinate lust" whose wanderings around Alberta lead him not to overcoming insurmountable odds with superhuman deed, but rather to fighting a war of bones beneath a sign reading "BONES FOR WAR," to volleying penile vernaculars with a trucker on a bridge in Edmonton and to getting wounded in such a fashion that, in Hazard's own words, his "arse looked like a colander." Here the epic degenerates into the picaresque which, parodic itself, is parodied by its exploitation *in extremis*.

Demeter's notions of literary realism and naturalism seem to have come from textbook descriptions of the trends. He believes, evidently, that to be realistic is to have an exaggerated obsession with minute detail. The narrative is densely punctuated with the results of this belief. He painstakingly measures railway ties, checks timetables, locates places on the map of Alberta, and through "extensive investigations," "many years' study" and "fruitful research" he adds documentation of ludicrously irrelevant fact to his narrative. We learn, for example, not only that Hazard urinated beside the skating rink, but that three witnesses agreed upon how he did so. Here, as with Demeter's overplayed enthrallment with Hazard's crude language and the descriptions of various exploits of human and equine sexual endeavour, naturalistic detail is so obtrusively and regularly introduced into the narrative that the whole enterprise of naturalism is mocked, and we are left only with Demeter's often hilarious obsession with bodily function.

Encapsulating this detail is always Demeter's self-conscious prose. He evidently believes that the written word is of a different nature than the spoken one and, try as he might, he cannot control his "certain penchant for gentleness and beauty"; however, he confuses "wonderful eloquence" with distracting elevation. He describes, for example, the "night of Martha's debauchery":

> Martha was champion against our promised end. Death was a nightmare presence bent on snuffling Hazard into a longer darkness; it was the crone and the suc-

> cubus, the ancient fiend turned female that in the night of dream has intercourse with men. Yes, and the moon was a cold bright disc on the sky: Mare Frigoris, Mare Hiemis, Mare Incognito. But Martha strove against those seas of dust like Heracles against the hate of Diomedes and his man-eating mares.

and we see the playful, high-spirited delight in language for its own sake which is characteristic of fabulation.

The description of Martha's resurrection of Hazard also illustrates Demeter's cockeyed notions about chapter division. While Demeter believes that chapters should contain only what is "both relevant and accurate," he is also aware that the episodic conventions of chapter division are used to create tension and suspense leading to climax and realization. The string of short chapters 33-36, which MacKendrick has called a "studied alternation of rhapsody and plain style,"[12] shows Demeter at work. He attempts suspense by interrupting the flow of events with Chapters 34 and 36 which are nothing more than his own lyrical musings on what might be going on in the icehouse. Demeter is trying to create, it seems, a crescendo effect which leads not so much to Hazard's resurrection, but to Demeter's realization that "It was decreed there that I, in the final analysis, through my devotion and concern, should save the Lepage horse from extinction." Again he is foiled, however, for what we attend to is not a climactic crescendo, but rather an intrusive staccato of tiny chapters. In an even more ill-fated attempt at creating tension through chapter division, he interrupts the heated dialogue between Martha and himself at the end of Chapter 40 with the sudden appearance of Chapter 41:

> "Kill him!" she cried, "Please, please, for God's sake, kill him!"
>
> 41
>
> "No," I said.
> But I took the gun.
> "No," I said, "No."

In Demeter's search for effective means to capture Hazard's experience in language, Kroetsch creates an insightful parody of how the structuralist writer's awareness of the conventions of literary construction and their applications interferes with his creative output. Demeter's "portentous volume" ends up being more about himself and his problems of writing, his quest for an ideal mode of expression, than about Hazard Lepage's quest to breed the perfect horse. These quests, however, are quite similar in nature and, primarily through naming, an allegorical relationship is suggested throughout the novel.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF *The Studhorse Man* the horse is overtly associated with literature. That *The General Stud Book* is Hazard's "poetry and his philosophy" his "history of man and his theology" labels the book

as a mythology and, indeed, its opening chapters parody those of our own mythology, the Bible. The lengthy lists of "begats" in Genesis 5-11 are transformed into horse genealogy: "got by Regulus . . . dam by Allworthy . . . great grandam, Dairy Maid, by Bloody Buttocks. . . . " We learn, too, that Hazard "dearly loved to read"; but *The General Stud Book* is surrounded not by any other books but rather by a "chaos" of horse paraphernalia on his bookshelves. The atmosphere in Hazard's "library" is decidedly equine.

We learn next that the horse with which the narrative is to be concerned is nicknamed "Poesy." Symbolically, then, the quest in the novel becomes one to save Poesy, literature, from extinction; to breed it, to give it a future to revitalize it. Indeed, while we follow Hazard's roamings around Alberta after World War II and his problems of finding a future for his line of horse, we are taken with Demeter on a journey through the problems of finding an ideal mode of literary expression. The landscape of this journey is that of narrative history in the aftermath of its own twentieth-century tumultuous upheaval under the onslaught of structuralism. As we have seen, Demeter's essays in epic, picaresque, realistic and naturalistic techniques are all ill-fated, as are Hazard's attempts to find the appropriate mare for Poesy.

The two quests are eventually brought tightly together when Demeter sees that he, himself, must "save the Lepage horse from extinction." He takes over Hazard's quest and becomes the "Studhorse Man"; it is now Demeter, the writer, seeking the means of Poesy's survival.

What of the end of the quest, then? Kroetsch, through Demeter, has "surveyed his shrinking sphere of activity" and what is his final vision of the future of his art? The horse is saved and does become "the busiest creature in all of Alberta," but he is busy for reasons of anti-fertility; the pregnant mare's urine which he readily makes available is used as birth control for man. "Scurrilous, barbarous, stinking man," says Demeter, "would soon be able, in the sterility of his own lust, to screw himself into oblivion, to erase himself like a rotting pestilence from the face of God's creation."

Is this the future of literature, too, the large-scale production of sterility followed by self-annihilation? With formalist and structuralist poetics busy sterilizing the writer's imagination, will there truly be an exhaustion of fictional possibilities, an end of literature?

Kroetsch's vision looks somewhat bleak at first: Hazard is left "crushed and flayed and formless," literally trampled to death by Poesy in the library where *The General Stud Book* was found ominously opened at the obituaries. But Demeter's volume is not quite as "portentous" as it might seem. As with Coover's vision of the literature of exhaustion taking "high-minded journeys toward the New World," and as with Scholes' belief that "New forms will arise, must arise,

if man is to continue,"[13] there is a glimmer of hope at the end of *The Studhorse Man.*

While on the brink of death in the icehouse, Hazard, it seems, impregnated Martha during her "debauchery." After his later demise, then, his name survives him in the form of a "beautiful daughter" christened Demeter. Beyond any gluey, anti-equine connotations, the name Lepage, as Eli Mandel has pointed out, can be taken to mean "the page that is written upon."[14] *The Studhorse Man* closes with the information that his name has been passed from Hazard, which denotes chance and arbitrary rules (OED), to Demeter, the goddess of fertility and fruitfulness.

NOTES

[1] Robert Kroetsch, *The Studhorse Man* (Richmond Hill, Ont.: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 98. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Louis K. MacKendrick, "Robert Kroetsch and the Modern Canadian Novel of Exhaustion," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 11 (1978), p. 10.

[3] Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven & London: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 168-69.

[4] Robert Coover, *Pricksongs and Descants* (New York: 1969), p. 78. Quoted in Scholes, p. 191.

[5] Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 3.

[6] Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature*, p. 138.

[7] MacKendrick finds for Kroetsch's work a "meaningful perspective" in which he cites both Joyce and Barth. Similarly, Eli Mandel locates Kroetsch in a tradition which includes Faulkner, Barth, Borges and Nabokov. See "Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction" in A. W. Rasporich and H. C. Klassen, eds., *Prairie Perspectives 2* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1973), p. 210. See also P. L. Surette, "The Fabular Fiction of Robert Kroetsch," *Canadian Literature*, no. 77 (Summer 1978), pp. 6-19.

[8] Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature*, p. 169.

[9] Coover, p. 78, in Scholes, p. 193.

[10] MacKendrick, p. 21.

[11] For an interesting analysis, see W. H. New, "The Studhorse Quests" in his *Articulating West* (Toronto: New Press, 1972), p. 180. With little procrustean manipulation he finds in *The Studhorse Man* a "freewheeling adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*."

[12] MacKendrick, p. 19.

[13] Scholes, p. 200.

[14] Mandel, p. 208.

INCESTE, ONIRISME ET INVERSION

"Neige Noir" et l'identite apocryphe

Françoise Maccabée Iqbal

DANS L'OEUVRE ROMANESQUE d'Aquin, une présence obsédante ne cesse de s'inscrire sourdement, celle de l'emprise maternelle. Présence qui demeure cellée dans les romans et ne se décèle qu'à l'investigation, cette emprise de la mère s'est par contre exposée à ciel ouvert dans un texte de jeunesse au titre éloquent, "La Toile d'araignée,"[1] première fiction aquinienne d'importance. Comme le démontre cette fiction et comme l'infère l'étymologie, cette emprise est liée à l'emprisonnement, emprisonnement qui inaugure d'ailleurs *Prochain Episode*,[2] donc qui inaugure l'oeuvre romanesque. Il va de soi qu'une telle domination est fondamentale dans la problématique de l'identité, problématique que cette étude sur *Neige noire* s'emploiera à saisir dans ses "significations souterraines."[3] Cette optique des profondeurs commande l'attention minutieuse, aussi les prochaines pages s'attarderont à la mise en relief de certaines images, notations et séquences du récit, puis, à l'interprétation des trois rêves du protagoniste que le récit enregistre.

Le spectre de la mère hante *Neige noire* à la manière dont le spectre du père hante *Hamlet*. En effet, travestie, occultée à l'image de la mère-patrie, ce Québec dont l' "éclipse récurrente fait penser à l'absence d'une présence, à un mystère inachevé," la mère se profile néanmoins derrière l'héroïne Sylvie et derrière ses doubles, Eva et Linda. Sylvie n'est-elle pas fille qui s'est substituée à la mère internée, ce, tant par son nom Dubuque que par sa place dans le lit du père?[4] Il est significatif que cet internement renvoie à la réclusion et à la déportation de Madame Dubuque Lewandowski dans un institut psychiatrique de Winnipeg, éloignement non justifié si l'on considère que ses proches habitent Montréal ou la région. Ainsi, cet internement recélerait un désir à la fois d'incarcération, de distanciation et de domination de la mère. Ce désir multiple s'avoue dans les séquences et fantasmes qui montrent le protagoniste ligotant et bâillonnant Sylvie ou Linda. Il se dévoile aussi dans le refus de Nicolas de faire un enfant à Sylvie, comme s'il lui fallait éviter toute proximité avec la mère. Il se manifeste encore dans le meurtre en pays lointain et perdu. En effet, comme si liens, bâillons et

stérilité n'allaient pas suffire pour subjuger, séquestrer et réduire au silence femme si puissante, Nicolas commettra un meurtre susceptible d'effacer toute trace de l'être et du corps gigantesques de la déesse lieuse et inaccessible: choix entre engloutir ou être englouti.

Meurtre démesuré ou meurtre à la mesure d'une inoubliable blessure? Je répondrai à cette question en m'attardant au départ au contexte de l'insistante interrogation de Nicolas/Fortinbras: "Où donc est ce spectacle?"

Cette interrogation se fait pénétrante dès le début du récit où elle se révèle être pour Nicolas, d'abord, source de pénible malaise car motif d'un affrontement silencieux avec le réalisateur Stan Parisé, ensuite, source de plaisir ludique lorsqu'il susurre cette réplique face au miroir de la salle de bain. Dans ce dernier cas, il frappe que les instructions de tournage notent une répétition à l'infini de la question: "Il continue ses vocalises," répétition qui en conséquence dénote une fixation. A ce point, la caméra, "comme si elle se trouvait derrière son épaule," capte ce faisant l'insinuante image de Nicolas voyeur. Or, cette image de voyeur est image qui se fixe dès les premières lignes du récit et s'incruste dès les premières pages, ce, dans une ouverture qui est description de la ville lascive sous la canicule, puis, dans l'assimilation du lecteur à un spectateur de film, ensuite, dans l'évocation de Nicolas contemplant son pénis dans la douche, se contemplant dans le miroir ou contemplant le corps nu de Sylvie. Ainsi, à travers l'image du voyeur s'insinue déjà une obsession du spectacle qui ne fera que cumuler dans la réplique "Où donc est ce spectacle?" Il vient alors à l'esprit d'une critique psychanalytique de se demander s'il n'y aurait pas dans *Neige noire* un spectacle auquel Nicolas assiste invariablement en position de voyeur. Et ne va-t-il pas de soi que pareille interrogation sollicite dès lors le spectacle fondamental de la scène primitive, en l'occurrence les images de Sylvie et de Michel enlacés dans la grande chambre à coucher.

La récurrence de ces images souligne l'importance de cette scène aux yeux de Nicolas, importance que les directives techniques du passage discuté confirment en faisant appel à des images qui en illustrent symboliquement les profondes répercussions, soit les images des *crevasses* du Cap Mitra qui suivent immédiatement celle de Nicolas voyeur, soit la création d'"une défocalisation psychologique" grâce à la succession des plans d'un Nicolas figé comme une statue de sel à ceux de son reflet cinétique dans la glace. Si ces images de crevasses sous-entendent la cassure, le concept de défocalisation psychologique invoque le stade du miroir de Lacan,[5] d'autant qu'il s'inscrit dans un contexte de miroir et que le miroir constitue sans doute le principal leitmotiv du récit. Afin de mieux éclairer cassure et miroir, je dépouillerai au préalable le contenu explicite et implicite de la première des versions élaborées de la scène primitive, version qui se glisse presque en début de narration:

(Nicolas) s'enferme dans une cabine téléphonique et compose un numéro. Coupure (. . .)
Plans d'une autre chambre: la sonnerie du téléphone se fait entendre une fois, deux fois, trois fois (. . .) les séquences intercalaires dans la cabine téléphonique doivent être de plus en plus brèves, un peu comme si Nicolas Vanesse faisait naufrage dans une glu cianhydrique (. . .)
La grande chambre (. . .) Sylvie secouée par une suite de saccades spasmodiques pendant que son partenaire, vu de dos, la pénètre de façon régulière et l'embrasse (. . .) Sylvie émet une plainte (. . .)
La grande chambre (. . .) Sylvie (. . .) s'agite avec frénésie jusqu'à ce que l'autre atteigne son orgasme. Mais elle semble jouir autant que lui (. . .) Sur ces images, la voix de Nicolas résonne dans une chambre d'écho.

NICOLAS

Malheur à moi d'avoir vu, de voir, ce que j'ai vu, ce que je vois! (p. 20-22. Voir aussi p. 206, p. 212-19).

Les composantes qui ici émanent d'emblée ressortissent à ce qui est vu par le fils voyeur, rôle que s'attribue Nicolas en s'enfermant dans une cabine téléphonique à la façon dont l'enfant curieux se tapit dans le placard de la chambre conjugale.[6] Elles se résument à la prépondérance de la mère (alias Sylvie), à l'accouplement parental fougueux et tumultueux, à l'orgasme triomphant. Les composantes qui n'émergent qu'à l'examen dans ce "spectacle d'ombres" touchent, elles, à l'investissement du vu par le protagoniste. Parmi celles-ci, il y a le coït du voyeur vécu par le truchement de l'autre, mais, surtout, l'anxiété du fils Nicolas face à sa triple impuissance, impuissance tant à interrompre la relation sexuelle en cours et à rejoindre la mère (sonnerie à vide du téléphone) qu'à faire taire ses langoureux gémissements (il croit les entendre au téléphone). Eloquemment, l'impuissance à rejoindre l'Autre/mère sera mise en relief dans le commentaire qui succède à la scène et qui se rapporte à Linda-personnage écran. Parmi les composantes implicites, il y a aussi la non-reconnaissance du père[7] réduit à n'être dans cette scène qu'"un partenaire sans identité." Il y a encore la position renversée de Sylvie, position corporelle clef dans laquelle se retrouvera souvent la trinité féminine et maternelle, Sylvie/Linda/Eva, d'où cette position, fût-elle dans une relation sexuelle le propre de Nicolas ou de sa partenaire, demeure indissociable de la féminité et d'une identification à la mère. Il y a enfin la tragique conclusion de Nicolas à la clôture de spectacle, laquelle reprend une réplique d'Ophélie (*Hamlet*, III, 1): "Malheur à moi d'avoir vu, de voir, ce que j'ai vu, ce que je vois!"

Parce qu'elle en appelle à la projection de Nicolas en une amoureuse blessée, trahie et vouée à la dérive, cette réplique recoupe l'identification au féminin et rejoint, par son contenu, la cassure inhérente à l'image des crevasses. Il est intéressant que la profondeur, la violence et l'enracinement de la cassure s'énoncent dans une image insérée dans les directives de cette première version de la scène

primitive, frappante image de Nicolas spectateur faisant "naufrage dans une glu cyanhydrique [*sic*]." En plus de cela, l'allusion à Ophélie est allusion à un personnage irréel, à un drame fictif et au rôle de Fortinbras joué par Nicolas, d'où elle suggère l'être rivé au registre imaginaire, propre du mode d'existence initial de l'être humain. Dans cette éventualité, dit Lacan, l'être refuse l'interdit de l'inceste, la loi du père, le triangle familial, bref, il est celui qui n'a pas accédé au Nom-du-Père, signifiant qui a pour signifié l'entrée du sujet dans l'ordre du symbolique social et culturel.[8] De même, la convergence de Sylvie, Linda et Eva vers Ophélie infère que la communication entre Nicolas et la femme s'établit sur l'axe imaginaire, ce dont les paroles de Sylvie rendent compte: "Je ne ressemble pas à l'image que tu t'étais faite de moi (. . .) tu voudrais que je ressemble à la femme de ta vie." Or, le règne de l'imaginaire caractérise le stade du miroir, stade de l'identification narcissique aliénante, stade de la relation duelle qui est relation immédiate où "la distinction du soi et de l'autre n'est pas nette."[9]

Il est expressif que maints éléments du récit réfléchissent l'absence d'identification au père, ce qui entraîne une identité fragile par suite de l'absence de place du sujet dans la constellation familiale. Ainsi, c'est à elle que se rattache l'anonymat du narrateur à l'ouverture du roman, ou encore la personne nébuleuse d'un Nicolas voué à jouer plusieurs rôles à titre de comédien ou d'homme de cinéma, ce que confirme sa cumulation des fonctions de scénariste, acteur, spectateur, commentateur-philosophe, cameraman, producteur. C'est aussi à elle que se rapporte l'investigation du commentateur sur l'évolution phonétique et étymologique du nom "Amlethus, Ammelhede, Amlaidhe, Amlodi . . . " ou celui d'Undensacre, présumé site du tombeau de Fortinbras, noms auxquels s'ajoute celui de Vanesse. Se modelant sur les composés du verbe latin *esse*, le patronyme[10] évoque l'idée d'être vide, irréel, sans valeur, ou celle d'être vain, faux, imposteur. C'est de cette même recherche d'une place au sein de la famille et de la collectivité que relèvent, d'une part, les considérations généalogiques sur Fortinbras et la revendication de ses droits royaux sur le Danemark, d'autre part, la kyrielle de noms et de lieux *étrangers* ainsi que la prolifération d'images familiales relatives aux parents et enfants (Michel/ses filles et gendres, Fortinbras, père et fils adoptif, Gertrude/Claudius/Hamlet/Fortinbras . . .). Enfin, Eva ne souligne-t-elle pas à Nicolas l'absence dans son scénario de Michel Lewandowski? Et le nom étranger de ce père, coïncidence ou conspiration? En somme, Nicolas fait écho aux paroles de Hamlet: "Je suis semblable à l'ombre."

LES RÉFLEXIONS SUR L'IMPACT de la scène primitive et la quête d'identité invitent à poursuivre l'enquête sur ces lieux où s'opèrent jonctions et disjonctions du réel et de l'imaginaire, du réel et du fantasme, en l'occurrence l'espace des trois cauchemars de Nicolas.

Le premier de ces trois cauchemars a trait à la représentation non terminée de *Hamlet* dans un théâtre illuminé. Le théâtre se situe dans une enclave italienne de plan concentrique, mystérieusement isolée sur les bords de la mer de Barents. Dans ce rêve, le théâtre interpelle, en tant que lieu de spectacle illuminé, le "déjà vu" et le "déjà vécu" de la scène primitive, triste scène confie Nicolas. Certes triste la blessure narcissique infligée puisqu'elle résulte en la perte des moyens du fils (panique de Nicolas) et en la perte, au profit du père, du rôle héroïque (Hamlet) que le fils croyait jusque-là tenir auprès de la mère. Il en découle une sensation de distance et d'aliénation qui s'exprime ici par le biais de la ville italienne égarée en territoire lapon, la conjonction d'une terre chaude et d'une terre froide réalisant simultanément la conciliation des contraires implicite dans l'oxymore du titre, *Neige noire*, et l'exergue de Kierkegaard, "Je dois maintenant à la fois être et ne pas être." L'architecture concentrique de cette enclave invoque étrangement la description du pendentif de Sylvie:

> La ville a été construite selon un plan concentrique. Les avenues partent du centre comme des rayons, les rues sont circulaires et recoupent les avenues.
>
> Très gros plan du pendentif. L'objet est circulaire et ne figure rien, sinon la contre-image d'un plexus bombé aux nombreuses tiges qui relient ce noyau éruptif et ambigu à sa couronne.

Cette description du pendentif invoque elle-même celle des seins féminins, ceux-ci correspondant du reste à la place habituelle d'un pendentif. Il est intéressant que le texte effectue la substitution seins/pendentif: "En remontant sa main droite pour la placer juste sous les seins de Sylvie, celle-ce se déplace un peu et son pendentif en argent retombe sur la main de Nicolas." La référence aux seins d*ébouche* sur leur omniprésence dans le récit, donc, sur l'omniprésence de l'oralité, une oralité inassouvie qui emprunte tantôt le visage de la fellation et de la manducation, tantôt celui de caresses amoureuses analogues à la tétée, tantôt le visage de repas au restaurant ou celui de l'alcool, qui coule à flots dans *Neige noire*, tantôt le visage de la surenchère verbale qui se professe dans maints commentaires.

Le ravissement que suscite chez Nicolas le "décor Renaissance," évocateur du sein nourricier par sa description et du sein maternel par son association à l'enclave, coïncide avec la béatitude confondue de l'assouvissement et de l'inceste. Temps de prédilection qui est temps de l'Objet bon satisfaisant la pulsion libidinale dirait Mélanie Klein. Il s'ensuit une idéalisation de l'Objet qui ressort dans le surcroît de beauté de chacune des femmes mises en scène, l'investissement dans la beauté féminine paraissant suppléer chez Nicolas à celui de la féminité en l'homme, d'où il réfléchit un manque d'intégration des pulsions homosexuelles. Ces dernières se couvrent sous le masque de Fortinbras et se découvrent sous celui de Hamlet, le prince norvégien étant fort, viril, actif, le prince danois, tourmenté,

féminin, méditatif. Dès lors, combien significatives l'envie de Nicolas à l'endroit de Jean-Louis Roux, détenteur du rôle de Hamlet, et son élection de la Norvège pour le voyage de noces avec Sylvie! A la suite de Nelligan dans "Soir d'hiver," le texte inscrit "Je suis la nouvelle Norvège . . . ," Norvège que se voit enrichie dans *Neige noire* d'un lieu onirique symbolique de l'inceste: la zone *interdite* de Pyramiden, "contrée irréelle," "vallée magique et bienheureuse," "Djebel Amour inconnu et inconnaissable."

Il saisit que les noms des princes donnent à entendre, d'un point de vue phono-sémantique, les filiations ci-haut discernées, Fortinbras dénotant *bras forts*, Hamlet dénotant *hommelette* (pertinent substitut du sexiste *femmelette*!). L'homosexualité se couvre encore sous la gémellité inventée des deux princes et sous leurs affinités incestueuses; elle couve sous les délires charnels hétérosexuels, masque d'un comédien qui sert à la fois de défense, réalisation et renversement. Elle se découvre dans les multiples scènes autoérotiques du roman, dans les propos sur la passivité et le viol du lecteur-spectateur et dans l'union érotico-mystique d'Eva et de Linda, version autre de la relation duelle comme l'exprime leur assimilation au Christ et à sa *vierge* mère.[11]

La narration du deuxième cauchemar suit de près celle du premier. Le rêve se déroule dans une auto-taxi à l'arrivée de Nicolas à Montréal. Il se revoit en hélicoptère survolent le Magdalenefjorden à la recherche de Sylvie. Il revoit les dangereuses manoeuvres d'un appareil lancé dans une vertigineuse course en montagne. Un accident du taxi le réveille, accident qui déclenche explosion, bousculade, panique et dont Nicolas se tire avec une fracture de la main gauche. Dans ce rêve s'affrontent les mondes contraires du haut et du bas, de l'esprit et du corps, de la réalité et de l'imaginaire sous le couvert de deux courses parallèles. L'une des courses est réelle et terrestre (auto-taxi), l'autre, fictive et céleste, (hélicoptère). La fictive et céleste est éblouissante et périlleuse (arêtes rocheuses, éperons, tourelles . . .). Cependant, Nicolas la subit plus qu'il n'y participe, ce qui émane de son désarroi, de son silence et de son isolement face aux demandes pressantes de l'équipe de sauvetage. Course à rebours ou non, son tracé fabuleux parvient à éclipser la morne trajectoire réelle et terrestre. Mais voici que la réalité s'impose brusquement à un détour de chemin, réalité dure, brutale et angoissante qui ouvre sur le corps blessé, cette fracture de la main gauche.

Si la main mutilée symbolise la castration, c'est son aspect séparation-division que le cauchemar articule. Cet aspect du sujet qui se vit comme séparé de l'autre se traduit, d'une part, dans la disparition de la femme, sous forme du corps perdu de Sylvie, d'autre part, dans l'isolement de Nicolas du reste de la société, présente sous les traits de l'équipe de secours:

> Dans l'appareil, tout le monde demande à Nicolas un signe, une indication, mais il est désemparé (. . .) Nicolas, isolé dans son silence, donne l'impression d'être absent.

Il est à remarquer que le rêve en appelle à l'aliénation qui a suivi la perte de l'objet initial (mère), ce, par le biais d'espaces clos qui reflètent la nostalgie du sein maternel: voiture et hélicoptère. Outre de traduire chez Nicolas l'expérience de soi comme séparé de l'autre et aliéné, le rêve traduit encore son expérience de soi comme scission de l'être, absence d'unité, tension irréconciliable du corps et de l'esprit. En effet, l'accent mis ici sur le trajet céleste, l'abrupte irruption du terrestre et le sacrifice du corps, présent dans le corps perdu de Sylvie, dévoilent la tentative ratée de sublimation des instincts. Et la main blessée de Nicolas dénonce l'automutilation inhérente à la sublimation.

Il est expressif que les espaces blancs, les hauteurs éthérées, l'absolu de l'amour et l'idéalisation de la femme côtoient dans le roman les espaces clos, les actes sadiques, la souillure sexuelle et la perversité de la femme. Dans la version de la scène primitive qui a pour cadre la maison de Michel Lewandowski à l'Ile des Soeurs, la tension conflictuelle entre le noir et le blanc émerge, d'une part, du sentiment de culpabilité d'une Sylvie tourmentée par sa liaison incestueuse et anxieuse d'y mettre fin — "Cela ne peut plus durer, papa. Cela ne peut plus durer"; "Papa, c'est terrible" — d'autre part, de sa nostalgie de la pureté reflétée dans ses souvenirs de la neige et du père de l'enfance — "Il y a de la neige partout dans mon enfance. Cela n'arrêtait pas. Et je trouvais tellement merveilleux quand tu avançais dans la neige (. . .) Tu te souviens papa?" Il est également expressif que la mort se montre envahissante dans *Neige noire*, à savoir dans le dépérissement physique de Nicolas, dans le mal d'être et de vivre de Sylvie, Eva et Nicolas, dans le suicide raté de Sylvie, dans celui réussi de Michel, dans le meurtre de Sylvie, dans la répression du féminin, dans les extraits de *Hamlet* . . . : jonction de l'impossibilité d'atteindre et de l'impossibilité d'être.

Le troisième cauchemar de Nicolas débute sur une alternance de plans, les uns montrant Charlotte en pleurs, les autres, la jouissance orgastique de Sylvie et Nicolas, jouissance précipitée dans le noir par suite de la pétrification du décor de neige en verrière noire. Trois coups spectaculaires du pendentif de Sylvie font éclater la verrière et le rideau se lève sur la jeune femme dans la chambre à coucher. Pendentif en main, regard furieux, elle cherche à frapper Nicolas à la verge. Terrorisé, celui-ci essaie en vain d'esquiver le coup. Il se met à crier, trébuche, fait une chute et ainsi s'achève son rêve somnambulique.

Relativement au rêve et l'inaugurant en somme, une indication essentielle dans le texte, ce cauchemar baigne dans la culpabilité, ce que confesse en guise de préambule le "je me sens coupable" de Charlotte. L'interruption de la jouissance du couple à son début corrobore la présence de pareil sentiment et en projette la force. Que l'homosexualité en soit l'enjeu, deux détails initiaux le suggèrent: la position *inversée* de Nicolas, Sylvie le chevauchant, et l'*inversion* du blanc au noir. Le noir est couleur qui réfléchit avec éloquence l'interdit qui frappe l'homosexualité. Au sujet du langage des couleurs, celles du titre *Neige noire* sur la page

couverture du roman ne sauraient passer inaperçues. Le blanc (neige) y est imprimé en noir et le mot *noire* en rouge, ce qui donne à entendre que les pulsions sexuelles sont noirceur de la blancheur,[12] sous-entendus qui n'épargnent d'ailleurs pas le féminin, tant la femme que la féminité de l'homme, ce qui jaillit concurremment de l'étymologie du nom Sylvie, de l'initiale serpent (S) de ce nom et de l'habituelle couleur rouge des vêtements de l'épouse.

AINSI, LE TABOU de l'homosexualité s'allie au tabou de l'inceste, l'un et l'autre se ralliant à la mère, mère attirante comme l'indique la quasi nudité de Sylvie, mère menaçante, spectre du Surmoi, comme l'indiquent la présence de Sylvie au second plan et sa prise en contre-plongée au moment de son apparition sur l'écran: "Au second plan, Sylvie apparaît. Elle est prise en contre-plongée. Sylvie ne porte qu'un slip et un soutien-gorge." La fureur de son regard, les gros plans du pendentif et sa métamorphose en fouet, fouet qui brise la verrière protectrice et s'attaque à la verge de Nicolas, témoignent de la violence de la persécution d'un Surmoi commandant le retrait pulsionnel. Cette violence participe du viol et de la castration, filiations qui percent dans le geste de fruite de Nicolas, dans sa terreur, dans son sang qui coule, dans ses cris:

> Nicolas se jette sur le côté pour éviter le coup dirigé sur sa verge. Il est effrayé; le sang coule déjà sur ses deux mains et ses cuisses.
>
> NICOLAS
>
> Je t'en supplie, Sylvie, arrête! Sylvie, non,non,non!!!

Que la violence engendre la violence, le meurtre de Sylvie le prouvera, meurtre démesuré que cette pensée de Hamlet éclaire: "Je dois être cruel pour être juste." Ce meurtre est inversion de situation puisque le possédé y devient le possesseur de l'objet, l'inassouvi, l'assouvi de chair et de sang, le persécuté, le persécuteur sadique qui viole, châtre, saigne la femme et, du coup, sa propre féminité. Bref, l'impuissance s'y change en puissance.

Il frappe que le cauchemar soit celui d'un somnambule. L'idée de mouvement accentuerait en somme l'importance de l'enjeu et de la dynamique des pulsions mises en scène. A cette impression concourent encore la chute de Nicolas, ses sueurs, sa respiration difficile et les réflexions sur son rêve qu'il rèdige d'une trêve. Le commentaire subséquent à son tour renforce l'impression en reprenant les thèmes du viol, de l'agression et de l'homosexualité. En outre, ce commentaire découvre que le spectateur-lecteur est l'objet du désir du cinéaste-auteur, celui-ci projetant de violer celui-là après l'avoir convié à la "passivité dévorante," celui-ci recommandant à celui-là de se masquer pour s'habituer "à l'intensité grisante de ses propres vécus." Et elle appartient à la relation duelle "la trouble complémentarité" ainsi instaurée:

> Le spectateur hésite à se percevoir comme succube quand il est plongé dans l'obscurité d'une salle de cinéma et à admettre la trouble complémentarité du film et de celui qui le regarde jusqu'au bout. Quelque chose de difficile à avouer est lié à toute obscurité librement consentie.

A l'encontre de ces trois cauchemars vont les séquences incluant le spectacle télévisé de *Hamlet* auquel Nicolas, du reste, se réfère dans les réflexions sur son troisième cauchemar, à l'encontre car si les cauchemars avouent, à titre de mauvais rêves, leur censure du désir incestueux et de la relation duelle, les séquences professent une levée de censure en tant que transgression de l'interdit. En effet, l'orgasme terminal du couple, extase de l'inceste, y correspond à un retour au sein maternel, ce qu'allèguent la position renversée et les paroles de Nicolas en ce moment d'apothéose:

> Eva, je ne sais pas si c'est d'avoir la tête renversée qui me procure ça, mais je n'ai jamais été aussi heureux
>
> (. . .)
>
> C'est une sensation bouleversante . . . comme si j'étais maintenant lié à toi par une transplantation totale et qui ne peut s'arrêter; même ma tête se gonfle de sang et mes cheveux laissent échapper des étoiles floconneuses. . . .

Il est frappant que les constituantes de ces séquences — dialogue, texte shakespearien, directives filmiques et positions corporelles — élaborent ce qui s'avère être un montage *révisé* de la scène primitive, la différence essentielle résidant dans l'attribution au fils du rôle titre. Avant de procéder à la mise en relief des traits saillants de ce double spectacle, deux brefs rappels: le symbolisme du nom Eva (première femme = mère) et l'intention initiale des partenaires de former un couple fraternel (inceste). Quant au contenu lui-même des séquences, il incorpore l'envahissante oralité de Nicolas et le refus de la génitalité qu'elle suppose, refus qui se traduit dans les amers propos de Hamlet quand vient "l'heure ensorceleuse de la nuit" — "je veux maintenant boire du sang chaud et faire oeuvre si amère que le jour frissonnerait de la voir!" — et dans la malédiction contre le mariage qu'il profère en présence d'Ophélie: "Qu'il n'y ait plus de mariages, voilà ce que je dis!" Le désir de la femme vierge, immanent au dialogue entre Ophélie et Hamlet transparaît de nouveau lorsque Nicolas, comme s'il rompait l'hymen d'Eva, a le sentiment de la trouer.

Le contenu de ces séquences invoque aussi, d'une part, l'élimination du père, sous-jacente à la position corporelle initiale sur Eva [position du couple Michel/Sylvie dans la scène primitive] et, d'autre part, le retour à la terre maternelle, sous-jacent au projet de tournage à Repulse Bay. Il s'y déploie également la confusion mère/fils (non-différenciation avec l'objet) consécutive au renversement des rôles et positions des corps d'Eva et de Nicolas, de sorte que c'est maintenant la femme qui "applique sa bouche sur la peau de Nicolas et lui suce un

sein." Le contenu assure encore la restitution du fils héros de la mère, grâce à l'apparition sur l'écran de l'image glorieuse d'un double de Nicolas, Fortinbras le conquérant. Il transmet aussi le désir de la fusion éternelle, grâce à la métamorphose en "statues de sel" des "corps enlacés d'Eva et de Nicolas, l'un planté dans l'autre et l'un enveloppant l'autre." Enfin, d'un point de vue lacanien, l'image la plus révélatrice de l'aliénation du sujet (refente) dans ses séquences demeure celle de Nicolas renversé, se regardant interpréter Fortinbras, alors qu'il est au sommet de sa jouissance:

> Le moi, c'est l'image du miroir en sa structure inversée, extérieure au sujet, objectivisée. *L'entité du corps est constituée mais elle est extérieure à soi et inversée.* Le sujet se confond avec son image et dans ses rapports à ses semblables se manifeste la même captation imaginaire du double.[13]

"Miroir du miroir du miroir" conclurait le narrateur masculin d'"Obombre,"[14] ce, après avoir écrit: "et moi je ne suis qu'une vierge écrivante."[15]

Le rapport érotique avec son image et la captation imaginaire du double qui traversent le roman se poursuivront jusqu'à sa clôture qui est envolée vers la fusion lesbienne et cosmique, fusion qui se révèle fallacieuse récupération de la féminité ensevelie dans les neiges avec Sylvie, fusion qui se révèle illusoire pénétration dans la blanche et bleue vallée de Pyramiden. Aussi, avec "Obombre," de nouveau la neige sera noire.

NOTES

[1] Pièce radiophonique écrite en 1954. Parue dans *Blocs erratiques* (Montréal, Quinze, Collection "Prose entière," 1977), p. 185-217.

[2] Hubert Aquin, *Prochain Episode* (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1965).

[3] Hubert Aquin, *Neige noire* (Montréal: La Presse, Collection Ecrivains des deux Mondes, 1974), p. 56.

[4] Au sujet de l'identité de Sylvie et de la mère, voir mon article "L'Appel du Nord dans *Neige noire*: la quête de Narcisse," *Voix et Images*, 5, n° 2 (hiver 1980), p. 369-71. De plus, du point de vue psychanalytique, c'est taire, celer qui est dire ce qui est.

[5] Jacques Lacan, "Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," *Ecrits I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 89-97.

[6] Dans une seconde version, c'est le rappel du trou de la serrure puisque Nicolas "se place l'oeil dans le viseur" (p. 214) de son appareil de photo.

[7] Voir à ce sujet "L'Appel du Nord," p. 367-68.

[8] D'après Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga, 1977), p. 140-42.

[9] *Jacques Lacan*, p. 38. Voir aussi p. 139 et "Le Stade du miroir," p. 90-91, p. 93-95.

[10] Je crois ce nom inventé. Du moins, il ne figure pas dans le bottin téléphonique de

Montréal. Inventé ou pas, son choix demeure significatif dans un contexte psychanalytique.

[11] A remarquer qu'oralité et homosexualité se glissent ingénument dans une anodine description de rue insérée en début de récit: "Les refileurs de drogues croisent sur le trottoir avec les tapettes" (p. 13).

[12] Il s'agit ici de la page couverture de l'édition originale parue à *La Presse*. Il est connu que Hubert Aquin attachait une grande importance aux pages couvertures de ses romans.

[13] *Jacques Lacan*, p. 272. C'est moi qui souligne.

[14] Hubert Aquin, "Obombre," *Liberté*, 135 (mai-juin 1981), p. 21. Les quelques pages de ce texte sont les vestiges du cinquième roman que l'auteur se proposait d'écrire sans y parvenir. Le thème de la "main mutilée," ci-haut discuté, en constitue le principal thème.

[15] "Obombre," p. 16.

THE OTHER

John Ditsky

The second would've been a boy.
(One knows these things.)
Not much could've been handed
Down, no more than
To his sister, who survived and thrived:
Love and abuse, full
Shares; the obligatory baseball
Sessions, just a few
(Maybe the kind, wrong-headed,
Given me by my father:
The hardball wrapped in tape
So heavy I could hardly
Heave it; batting it was like hitting
Iron. So I grew stronger
While I had no fun.) We shape
Them in our heads before
They come to be; but this one slipped
Around my tag, escaped.
Spontaneous he, and limbo's star,
He's all I do not know.

THE USE OF THE FANTASTIC IN DENYS CHABOT'S "L'ELDORADO DANS LES GLACES"

André J. Senécal

FEW QUÉBEC NOVELS are truly fantastic works and among these, Denys Chabot's *Eldorado on Ice* is one of the most accomplished.[1] Published in 1978, it won the author the Gibson Prize (awarded to the best first novel of the year). *L'Eldorado dans les glaces* is a search for the real identity of the mysterious Oberlin, a latter-day *desdichado*, an intellectual nomad like Cendrars or Sengalen. In the initial narration (ascribed to Oberlin) we are guided through the eerie, snow-shrouded desolation of Québec's Abitibi region: a land of decaying mine encampments and ghostly settlements once inhabited by credulous colonists and gold-hungry adventurers. In this environment, where the landscape and the human landmarks conspire to distort reality. Oberlin confronts his double. The intentional use of a *doppelgänger* motif predominates in this episode. Victim of illusions or hallucinations, the hero attempts to integrate his self through hyperdefinitions. We are witnessing the last stages of the character's disintegration (or perhaps, the beginning of his reintegration). The key to Oberlin's identity, we are led to assume, resides in five names: Lorna, Blake, Faustin, Béate and Julie the half-breed. Do these names hide discrete entities or new manifestations of the hero's double? As each of the five voices becomes the narrator of a chapter of the novel, the reader and Oberlin search for the answer.

The monologues of Lorna Béthencourt and of Blake Dauthendey transport us to the Combat Zone, a neighbourhood of Boston, peopled (like Abitibi) with singular transients, sensitive whores, and tenebrous melancholiacs. In a setting reminiscent of *Naked Lunch* or *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Oberlin spends a night with Lorna, a hideous Cuban prostitute whose dark power of attraction evokes the sacramental eroticism of Baudelairean fauna. In a ritual of sorrow and sadism, Oberlin ravishes the grotesque *fille de joie* whom he mistakes for Julie, a Beatrix who haunts his days and nights. In the following chapter, the narrative of Blake the antiquarian deepens the enigmatic aura that surrounds Oberlin. Dauthendey

remembers the hero as a seer and a savant whose mind and baggage hide all of history, including its necromantic mysteries.

The last three narratives, those of Faustin, his wife Béate, and Julie the half-breed are complementary. Using a multiple point of view technique, Chabot gives us glimpses of the Stone Castle and the strange beings who inhabit it. Situated on an island in the middle of an Abitibi river, the Stone Castle is a phantasmagoric *tableau vivant* where reality meets fiction. Faustin becomes the overlord of the Castle and transforms it into a sylvan *lupanar*. Rafts full of sirens sail from castle to sow licentiousness and to intoxicate villagers and woodsmen with protean *démesure*. But the Stone Castle is far from being a *Thélème*. Its shadows of putrefaction breed sadistic instincts. The rape-rut of Julie confronts us with taboos and the cruelest of subconscious phantasmas. The sequence ends with an apocalyptic cleansing by fire and the escape of Julie and Oberlin from the nightmares of Faustin.

Chabot's original invention resists cause-and-effect analysis. The novel is made up of loosely connected, dream-like episodes punctuated by enigmatic grotesqueries and catacylsmic images that could be interpreted as an exploration of the subconscious. The reader is enticed to suspend morality and to listen to dark instincts. In scenes of strong evocative power such as the sexual debacle of Julie, the undisguised libido confronts morbid fears through aggressiveness. Read as a pantomine of our repressed selves, Chabot's creation can be compared with the sado-erotic cryptographs of *nouveau romanciers* such as Robbe-Grillet.

In *L'Eldorado dans les glaces*, the theme of the fragmentation of the self predominates. Despite the inherent interest of the topic, my aim in this study is not to analyze the novelist's contribution to the literature of the double as psychological evidence.[2] Rather, it is to explore how Chabot exploits the fantastic and manipulates narrative techniques to create a universe where the double can come to life. In this novel, the art of narration and the creation of the fantastic interact. My definition of the fantastic genre is based on the work of Franz Hellens and especially Tzvetan Todorov whose explanations are the most precise and useful.[3] The fantastic can be identified as the presentation of the unexplainable so as to induce uncertainty and disquietude in the reader:

> In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination — and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality — but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. . . . The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre: the uncanny or the mar-

velous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.[4]

In *L'Eldorado*, the uncertainty of the reader is awakened in the introduction; as we close the book, it remains unresolved. All through the narration, the art of the storyteller seduces us and creates a state of pseudo belief, that precarious dimension of the fantastic.

In CHABOT'S NOVEL, the theme of the double is grounded in the narrative technique. The uncertain authorship of the narration is evidence of the multiplication of consciousness and a source of enigma for the reader. We are constantly asking ourselves: "Who is speaking?" The delicate balance between the uncanny and the marvellous depends on the postponement of an answer. The six narratives that make up the novel are preceded by a foreword that is announced as a commentary outside the text. The author of this foreword casts himself as the editor ("The contents of this book were dictated to me")[5] and ascribes the six narratives to Oberlin whom he tells us "was a capricious lunatic; or perhaps I should say he was a trifle mad." The editor presents the personage as a case study of the double or of the paradox of the comedian: "It was a question of suppressing his own personality (Oberlin's), of allowing himself to be absorbed by one or more of his characters: he spread himself out amongst them, he extended himself through them. . . ." Oberlin himself plays the role of editor. At the end of the narration which the original editor ascribes to Oberlin, the latter announces that the forthcoming five monologues are transcriptions of his conversations with Lorna, Blake, Faustin, Béate, and Julie. But it is obvious from the style that all these narratives are identical to Oberlin's opening confidences. Did these characters exist? Are they the figment of the hero's deranged mind? (There are several allusions to his precarious mental state.) Are we witnessing multiple manifestations of the double? Or are these voices discrete personalities whose words and thoughts Oberlin reduces to make his own? If the reader listens to the original voice (the author of the foreword with whom one identifies), the condition for the fantastic quickly disappears: "He spread himself out amongst them, he extended himself through them." But what if the editor himself is Oberlin and the foreword is one more manifestation of the double? This is entirely possible, even probable. We can find no difference between the stylistic mannerisms and precautions of the editor and those of Oberlin. The reader is not allowed to decide among any of the above possibilities. He must deal with total uncertainty.

When we read (listen to) a narration like *L'Eldorado*, it is not enough to ask, "Who is speaking?" We must also pay close attention to the psychological state of the narrative voice. The monologues presented as eyewitness accounts and the

artfulness of the narrator(s) exemplify well the axiom that "the more fantastic the story, the more the empirical aura which surrounds the eyewitness becomes desirable."[6] In this novel, plausibility is reinforced in many ways. Most of the time, the reader is listening to a voice that convinces him incrementally of its eminent rationality. The speaker conveys a reassuring coherence that anticipates or blunts our logical instincts. For example, several stylistic devices contribute to the web of logical reassurances dispensed for the benefit of the reader. In each narration, the speaker continually interjects adverbs of hypothesis (maybe; perhaps; probably; possibly; etc.) and expressions that display all the precautions of the credible witness (It seemed that; One would have believed that; As though; As if; I even think that; I could hardly believe that; I asked myself if; I must have). In some of the narratives, these interjections of doubt and hypothesis appear in almost every page and they are often accompanied by the conditional mood and/or interrogative formulae: "Was it possible that I had listened to them (guests at the hotel) without actually intending to?"[7] Paradoxically, this conjectural perception grounded in the tradition of the limited-point-of-view story reinforces the rational tenor of the narration as it undermines it.

The empirical stance does not always predominate in *L'Eldorado dans les glaces*. The fixity of chronology and the cause-and-effect thread of the story is undermined by the minimal credibility of the source of the tale. We are told that Oberlin is a charlatan and we are allowed to believe that he once was a victim of dementia. As Oberlin reflects on the enigmatic testimony of his five witnesses, he muses:

> I do not exaggerate when I say that the elaboration of their ideas and the fixation of their visions filled me at times with a sense of euphoria, causing me to shudder in the grip of what was at once illumination and — I won't hesitate to use the word — dementia. And I won't retract the word either, for there was certainly something very demented in my behaviour. But to what extent had it gained control over me? And, having succumbed to it, how far did I manage to extricate myself from it? Ridiculous questions. I won't pursue that line of thought further; there is nothing to be gained from such empty speculation. It would be all too easy to try to explain things away in that manner. The real answers lie elsewhere. Mental strain and a sudden rise in blood pressure were merely the symptoms of my ailments.

In the foreword, the editor-narrator warns us that when Oberlin speaks, "it is as much for his own enlightenment as that of his listener despite the fact that one can never be sure whether these things (Oberlin's tales) are the visions of death, fever, or incurable madness, or merely the objects that lie beyond the window through which he is calmly gazing." Our guide adds, "He no longer needs to see things as they are, for he has known them all such a very long time, as if his vision of them had preceded their existence and given them life." When Oberlin assumes the role of editor, he also forewarns the reader that his five witnesses will

be apt to doctor their memories when they speak of the encounters with his double:

> As it happened, each of my interlocutors was endowed with a gift of recall that seemed at times suspiciously inspired. Whenever their recollections became vague, faulty or inconsistent, whenever they seemed in danger of losing themselves in the dark labyrinth of the past, rather than tugging at the mildewed threads and rusty springs of their memories, or hurling themselves fearlessly down the dark slopes that stretched menacingly before them, they would return at once to the present and, they would begin to invent, to fabricate, with all the imaginative ardour at their command, raising intoxication at times to the level of exultation and taking infinite delight in the often surrealistic results.

Each character does become intoxicated with words at times and suddenly adopts the tone and the mannerism of the comedian who hides the seer or the sage. As he concludes his own narration, Oberlin warns us prophetically that "To be resolved at all costs to find an explanation for things is to show contempt for life, for it means exalting curiosity above all else." We find similar inspired pronouncements in the other narratives. In the Stone Castle sequence, for example, the references to the words of Simon the Blind and those of Béate (Beata: the blessed?; Béate: the mesmerized?) are similar in style to the incantations of the diviners and the prophetic amplifications of the possessed. The motto of Béate, "Raving madmen come on the scene when wise men have taken their leave," echoes the mystical rapture of the comic imposture of Oberlin, Faustin, and Julie. The intrusions of the voice of a supra- or a sub-reality into the narratives subvert our world of appearances by questioning its empirical foundations and by asserting the primacy of invention over the fragile illusions of logic and the evidence of the physical senses.

The structure and the function of the narrative successfully mirror the content in *L'Eldorado dans les glaces*. The author establishes a meaningful correspondence between the problem of identity and the form elected to portray it. By leaving the identity of the narrative voice constantly in doubt and by undermining its authority, Chabot is able to sustain until the end the uncertainty and the ambiguity already sown in the foreword. It is this pervasive ambiguity that prevents the reader from ascribing the words of the narrator(s) to the hallucinations of a frenzied madman or the suprarationality of a visionary wiseman.

The fantastic also functions as a trope in *L'Eldorado*. As such, it contributes to the dramatic context of the narration. The novel is a tale that seduces our curiosity and awakens our emotions of disquietude and horror. Mystery and surprise supplant the logic of plausibility. Revulsion and anticipation become substitutes for a deficient causality. Each narration anticipates a darkly intimated development, implies an enigma to be solved, an uncertainty to be dissipated. Are the destruction of the former Galician monastery and the passage of Oberlin (a

Galician?) purely coincidental? Who attacked Julie in the dark tower? What is the scratching noise that drowns her in terror? The reader will never know but it is enough that curiosity and emotion entice him to the next paragraph, the next chapter, the last page. The fantastic plays a large role at this level of the narration where it functions as a mechanical device to fuel the interest and the emotions of the reader. For example, in Julie's narration, a canoe of Indians emerges dramatically from the haze as the flames of the burning Stone Castle mingle with the morning fog to form an eerie ether of fire and mist (the mise-en-scène itself is fantastic). The intrusion surprises the reader. It also disorients him since the Indians are identified as Algonquians. Our mind instinctively associates the scene and the historical name of the actors with another time dimension, with the days of New France or the Hudson's Bay Company. As soon as the stunning effect of this chronological scramble is achieved, the fantastic quality of the scene is explained away. We are told that the Indians were "on their way to carouse with the girls of the Châteaupierre, to beat the earth with the soles of their naked feet."

Just as often, the fantastic is not dissipated and we must ascribe it to the deranged or inspired state of mind of the narrator. For example, during a stop-over at an isolated train station, Oberlin meets an old man who writes the scientific name of a rare regional plant on his arm (Oberlin's). Interrupting his recollections, the narrator remarks that he never did see the strange plant and that the old man who accosted him was probably a myopic soul who mistook common shrubs for rare flora. Yet, two pages later, we are told that the plant does indeed exist in the vicinity. The truly unsettling element of the event (the old man writing the botanical name of an obscure plant on the arm of a total stranger) is not explained away. Rather, its startling intrusion in the narration is blunted by the elucidation of a pseudo-mystery (whether or not the plant exists in the region). In Béate's description of a forest fire, the point of view of factual documentation is abandoned. Using modes of description that are similar to cinematographic techniques of montage, Chabot freezes time and multiplies it. The village priest is first shown engulfed in a column of fire that swallows him and his spiraling pulpit. Incredibly, he reappears to admonish his flock, to sing a *Te Deum*, to put out the raging inferno. This scene is a vision; time and causality are suspended.

The settings of the story are also constructed from fantastic tropes. Chabot exploits regional geography and history as well as the literary heritage of the fantastic to produce a decor that lends itself to the uncanny and the horrifying. The novelist plants his characters in two real sites whose remoteness from the reader's everyday world provides a fertile ground for historical yet bizarre settings. What better place to situate a fantastic tale than in Abitibi, the region of Québec that lends one of its names to the novel? This isolated expanse of loam and rocks

deep in the Canadian Shield is an Eldorado on ice. At the beginning of this century, myopic politicians and priests promoted the region as "The Golden Land" for the destitute farmers of the province who were searching for a rural paradise. In the 1920's and 1930's, the mineral-rich rocks of the region made it the Klondike of eastern America. In local histories, we could find all the real-life details that inspired Chabot's phantasmagoria: the frontier settlements of Hollywood, Paris-la-nuit (Stone Castle, meccas for squatters, hoboes, Indians, prostitutes, Faustins, Simons the Blind, Julies, . . .); the romantic figure of Père Jean and his mysterious stone monastery; the Galician detention camp of World War I; the Bulgarian movie house manager who brought celluloid adventures to Val d'Or and became its mayor. Likewise, the place names of Massachusetts are remote and exotic for the common reader. The forbidden enclave of Boston's Combat Zone already belongs to the fantastic and the allusion to Lowell refers us to the subterranean imagery world of Kerouac's *Doctor Sax*. Duparquet, Abitibi; Washington Street, Boston; modern courts of miracles for the deviants and the pure of heart who can see. To construct his settings, Chabot also exploits a fantastic mise-en-scène tradition that harks back to the frenetic repertory of the early Romantics. Blake's antiquarian shop, a dark tunnel of dust and rot where the fantastic is almost palpable, echoes descriptions from Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin*. The Stone Castle and Julie's Lantern Tower could be transpositions of the house of Usher's decor or of the Piranesian staging of *The Monk*.

Chabot has absorbed the techniques of the masters of the fantastic genre. He cites Balzac and Hoffman and it is evident that he learned a great deal from Poe, Lewis, Radcliffe, Mérimée, and Potocki. Interesting comparisons could be made between the narrative structures of *L'Eldorado* and *Absalom, Absalom!* or *Aurelia*. Despite a clever allusion to the town of Oberlin, Louisiana, as an explanation of the hero's name, the *doppelgänger* motif sends us back to *Lenz*, Georg Büchner's dramatization of Oberlin's journal on the descent into madness of Lenz, the poet who became convinced that he was Goethe's double.[8]

ABOVE ALL, WE CAN ASSUME, given his deep interest in the lore of rural Abitibi, that Chabot exploits the dynamic tradition of Québec's oral literature. Themes and narrative techniques of *L'Eldorado* that can be linked with the fantastic repertory of formal literature can also be traced back to the popular culture of the Saint Lawrence Valley. The thematic inventory of *L'Eldorado dans les glaces* and the author's vision of things have a great deal in common with this native tradition. The main function of this novel and of the Québec oral repertory is to convey subconscious force and to make manifest their supra-rational values. We can also discover the ascendancy of the native literary

corpus in the narrative technique of *L'Eldorado*, particularly in the point of view of the narrative voice. The Québec oral tale is invariably told by a voice that fulfils several functions simultaneously. The narrator speaks with the authority of the historian but also with the imaginative freedom of the prestidigitator. Despite its fancifulness, the story is presented as the true account of an eyewitness. The authority of the eyewitness is rarely assumed by the actual narrator. It is invested in a second or even a third source and the oral transmission of the story is the basis of its authority and the competence of the narrator. In tales like Aubert de Gaspé (*fils*)' *L'Etranger*,[9] the author-narrator protests that he holds his facts from *x* who heard them from *y*, the source and the eyewitness who becomes the prime narrator. But it will be seen that this "I" is really the disguised author-narrator. We recognize in this telescopic structure the point of view of *L'Eldorado* and all its opportunities for subterfuge. Also, in the traditional tale, the narrator can present the facts as he establishes them, comment on them, insert self-apologies and other digressions (moral *a parte*, omniscient interventions, inspired visions, etc.) that undermine causality and circumstantiality. We can see at once that the narrator(s) of *L'Eldorado* enjoy(s) the same imaginative freedom as the traditional storyteller.

Chabot's use of the fantastic as a trope can also be traced back to the traditional oral tale of Québec, in particular to the *histoire à faire peur* (spooky story) type. As early as 1840, with Pierre Petitclair's *Une Aventure au Labrador*,[10] we find a transposition of this type of oral tale. Under the guise of a true account (told with the authority of the eyewitness point of view), the narrator retells a story of horror and anticipation punctuated with much dramatic colouring. The details of the mise en scène of this story are very similar to the staging of parts of *The Saragossa Manuscript* or similar works but here the fantastic is not functional. At the end of the tale, it is dissipated with much buffoonery. Once again, it is difficult to ignore the similarity in point of view in this type of oral tale and *L'Eldorado* and its author.

Chabot's successful graft of a cosmopolitan literary strain on the dynamic oral tradition of Québec provides a convincing illustration of the theory of Herder on the creation and evolution of national literatures.[11] In *L'Eldorado*, the inborn literary stock is not exploited as local colour. Rather, it is intermingled with the cosmopolitan richness of the formal literatures of Europe and the United States. Through this process of cross-fertilization, both strains are invigorated. The very fact that we can attribute the narrative technique, the mise en scène and the predominant themes of *L'Eldorado* to an indigenous tradition as well as to a cosmopolitan heritage should be ample proof that Québec literature has evolved enough so that its writers can translate the *volkgeist* of the Saint Lawrence Valley as the distinctive characteristic of a formal literary work.

NOTES

[1] Denys Chabot, *L'Eldorado dans les glaces* (Montréal: L'Arbre HMH, 1978). Chabot has published a second novel, *La Province lunaire* (Montréal: L'Arbre HMH, 1981).

[2] See Otto Rank, "The Double as Immortal Self," *Beyond Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1958), 62-121 and Claire Rosenfield, "The Shadow Within: The Conscious and the Unconscious Use of the Double," *Daedalus* (Spring 1963), pp. 326-44.

[3] Franz Hellens, *Le Fantastique réel* (Bruxelles: Société générale d'éditions, 1967), esp. pp. 47-84; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), esp. pp. 24-40.

[4] Todorov, 25.

[5] The pagination in parentheses refers the reader to Denys Chabot, *Eldorado on Ice*, trans. David Lobdell (Ottawa: Oberon, 1981).

[6] Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (London: Oxford, 1968), p. 258.

[7] "Je les aurais écoutés sans les entendre?" *L'Eldorado . . .*, p. 20.

[8] See Georg Büchner, *Leonce and Lena*; *Lenz*; *Woyzeck*, trans. Michael Hamburger (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972) and Maurice Benn, *The Drama of Revolt: A Critical Study of Georg Büchner* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), esp. pp. 194-266.

[9] Philippe Aubert de Gaspé *fils*, "L'Etranger," *L'Influence d'un livre* (Québec: William Cowan et fils, 1837), pp. 36-47.

[10] Pierre Petitclair, "Une Aventure au Labrador," *Le Fantasque*, 2 (2 and 9 novembre 1840) or in James Huston, comp., *Le Répertoire national*, II (Montréal: Lovell, 1848), pp. 150-62.

[11] For an accurate presentation of Herder's theory, see Gene Bluestein, "Folklore and Ideology," *The Voice of the Folk: Folklore and American Literary Theory* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1972), pp. 1-15.

THE CALYPSONIAN

Cyril Dabydeen

Say something political for him to hear;
he will be *kaiso* at once, a *coonoomoonoo* man
    ready to blare out into your ears
like the gaffing poet with his dialect.

He will next put two and two together
and come up with verse, and the rhymes from under
palm tree, with waves singing in the background,

will fashion rhythms in your heart —
  he, once a Bad-John gritting his teeth in the gutter.
now imagines love and fame.

He will stand up, and strum: and play on!
  Watch his feet stamp, his body swaying —
he is a man for all seasons, the crowd will sway
with him in a real carnival; but don't put him
    in a corner to breathe slowly by himself

Or else another lyric will come to his lips —
  and he will quickly put you into rhyme, immortalize
  you better than the gloomy poet would —
his style is all that counts, his laughter
greater than waves, wider than the expanse of an ocean,
  will be like a vacation writer's, filling you up with sun
    — and sparkling surprise.

MY SONG

John V. Hicks

(during Mahler)

On the brown heath I sing,
willing you to come no nearer;
I pray no syllable fall upon
your distant ear where you walk in
wind and shivering grass and memory.

You are my song; no syllable
conspires to charm or draw;
I sing you over and over in
the fall of light, sun's rising,
clouds' tread, night's radiance,

praying that you do not turn
your footstep to these shapes
of phrase, to lyric cadence
calling. I do not sing of you;
you are my song.

FOLKLORE, POPULAR CULTURE & INDIVIDUATION IN "SURFACING" AND "THE DIVINERS"

Terry Goldie

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN FICTION includes a number of works which reject modern technology and turn to some form of knowledge which might be described as traditional or primitive. In a review of a prime example, *Surfacing*, Bruce King states, "The search for roots in the past and some better life in contrast to modern urban civilization is widespread at present and the novel may be said to record an extreme representation of the new romanticism and a critique of it."[1] Clara Thomas suggests something similar in an article on a comparable work, *The Diviners*: "The passing on of an authentic heritage of their people is a central preoccupation of writers of today, particularly of writers of the post-colonial nations."[2]

This similarity between the two novels, however, hides certain important, although perhaps subtle, distinctions. In each novel, the central character, the narrator, is a woman going through a search for identity, what Jung referred to as individuation, "becoming one's own self."[3] Each is inspired by a mystical, non- or even pre-rational knowledge, removed from contemporary technology. In *Surfacing*, however, the only such knowledge is found in a distant past and in isolation. In *The Diviners*, there is a feeling that while the quest for identity requires an exploration of the past it must also be shaped by the present and by those a sociologist would call the "significant others," parents, children, lovers, and friends.

Elsewhere I have observed that the search for self often takes the form of an interest in folklore,[4] a diffuse assemblage of what could be defined as "The traditional beliefs, legends, and customs, current among the common people."[5] Contemporary folklorists would see this definition as far too limiting but it fits common usage. Thus Folklore is the knowledge of pre-industrial people regardless of ethnic group.[6]

This interpretation leaves a rather large part of culture which is neither elite nor folk. In "A Theory of Mass Culture," Dwight Macdonald gives this a name:

"It is sometimes called 'Popular Culture,' but I think 'Mass Culture' a more accurate term, since its distinctive mark is that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like chewing gum."[7] Macdonald suggests that this mass culture is produced either through debasing and bowdlerizing "High Culture" or through bleeding the life out of folk art: "Folk Art was the people's own institution, their private little garden walled off from the great formal park of their masters' High Culture. But Mass Culture breaks down the wall, integrating the masses into a debased form of High Culture and thus becoming an instrument of political domination."[8]

One need not assess the accuracy of Macdonald's comment on the political value of mass culture to observe that he is clearly wrong in asserting that it provided the first crack in the masonry. A glance at Bartok or Brontë reveals how the private little garden could get into the park. A number of folklorists have found large areas of park in the garden. Macdonald does an important job in attempting to define mass culture but the result is oversimplified.

The best assessment of folk and mass culture which I have seen is provided by Peter Narvaez in his "Country Music in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland." He states, "If folklore is understood as 'artistic communication in small groups,' I submit that popular culture might well be considered artistic communication in mass society, and that both of these concepts may be comprehended as polar types spanned by a lengthy and complex continuum."[9]

Of course, this continuum is undefinable. Throughout it there are anomalies, as when a famous recording star appears at a house party and performs a song which would appear to be identical to that heard in mass media. The text is the same, the performer is the same, the context is different.

Perhaps a further distinction might be of value. Ray B. Browne sees four types of culture: elite, mass, folk, and popular. He says of the last of these, "Popular Culture is all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elitist and which are generally though not necessarily disseminated through the mass media."[10] The problem with this definition, as with Browne's article as a whole, is that the line between mass and popular remains vague.

For this reason I would suggest a simple division between popular and mass culture, by providing some definitions which keep to the spirit of that given by Narvaez but with a few more discriminations. Thus what Narvaez terms popular culture I would return to Macdonald's term, mass culture. Mass culture is that disseminated through the mass media. Popular culture, then, is that which, while not disseminated through the mass media, is shaped by it and by contemporary life in general. It sits on the continuum between the traditional material usually considered to be folklore and mass culture. Thus, to return to the hypothetical singer at the house party, if he is singing Mahler, it is elite culture. If he is singing

"Barbara Allen," it is folk culture, part of a long-standing oral tradition. If he is singing "Hey Jude," it is popular culture. One could of course argue that his recordings of "Barbara Allen" and Mahler are mass culture in context but that would muddy waters which are at present as clear as they are likely to become.

THIS PLETHORA OF DEFINITIONS has led away from *Surfacing* and *The Diviners* but it can be of direct value in exploring the attitudes of the narrators and, by implication, of the authors. For example, photography might be seen as mass culture but it is also, in some contexts, popular culture. The latter can be seen in both *Surfacing* and *The Diviners*, where Atwood's narrator and Morag Gunn seek definitions of themselves through photographs kept over the years. Their actions suit recent studies by folklorists and anthropologists who have looked at how the family album fits into small group culture. Pauline Greenhill states, "Family photographs derive meaning from the context in which they are found. They are icons of family members and symbolic of the family as a continuing unit with a past and with connections to the community. They are an ethnography, created by the family for presentation to others, but also for the confirmation of the family's personal identity."[11]

Both Atwood and Laurence recognize the necessity of viewer participation in the creation of those icons in the photographs. In *The Diviners*, Morag writes of the various resonances she receives from her family snapshots and her own creative interpretation: "I keep the snapshots not for what they show but for what is hidden in them."[12] In *Surfacing*, the narrator states, "I was in most of the pictures, shut in behind the paper; or not me but the missing part of me."[13]

For both characters, thus, the concern is not for the artefact but for the identity hidden behind the artefact. Paul Byers observes, "The most important characteristic of still photography is its susceptibility to individual control; each person involved with the still photograph has his own hand on his own semantic tuning-knob."[14] From this Byers deduces that "the photograph contains information but no meaning."[15]

Both novels seem to understand the need to impose a meaning but they also recognize the danger in the process and the danger in photography in general. The narrator of *Surfacing* reacts to the strange stiffness of the photos of her ancestors: "maybe they thought their souls were being stolen, as the Indians did." In *The Diviners*, Jules is similarly uncomfortable about being photographed: "Maybe I'm superstitious. Or maybe it's the same as I can't make up songs about myself. Maybe I don't want to see what I look like. I'm going on okay this way. Let's not get fancy about it."

It is tempting to believe that Jules is just reflecting the familiar anecdote about the primitive who won't have his picture taken. This interpretation seems facile

and even racist but other parts of the novel support it. At the beginning, Morag asserts how often she has attempted to rid herself of the old photos: "I've kept them, of course, because something in me doesn't want to lose them, or perhaps doesn't dare. Perhaps they're my totems, or contain a portion of my spirit." One of the reasons why Jules's process of individuation seems much less complete than that of Morag is that he recognizes his heritage yet is unable to recognize himself, as in his refusal to write his own song. Here he again rejects introspection although a few pages before he has shown how his copy of a five-year-old photograph of his daughter, Pique, has provided an essential connection for him. An interesting comment on Jules is made in the infant Pique's reaction to having her picture taken: "Her large dark eyes look openly and with trust at the person behind the camera, namely her mother."

In *Surfacing*, the central photograph is one of the narrator's mother, feeding the blue jays. The image proves to be, like Morag's, a totem, but it is far from the trusting Pique in Morag's snap: "Sun sifting around her through the pines, her eyes looking straight at the camera, frightened, receding into the shadows of her head like a skull's, a trick of the light." One is reminded of the narrator's own experience: "I used to hate standing still, waiting for the click," and the fearful reaction of Marian in *The Edible Woman* when she is being shot by the devouring Peter: "What's the matter with me?" she said to herself. "It's only a camera."[16]

In *Surfacing*, the photograph is useful to the narrator as an aide memoire for an image of her mother, which later turns into an essential vision, but photography is always something to be feared. On the other hand, in *The Diviners*, the photograph is a minor yet worthy part of the structure of self. It is important to use the photographs as part of the process of self-discovering and of socialization, to remind Morag and, in connection with Pique, Jules, of who the group is, a central purpose in family photos, as noted above by Greenhill.[17] This distinction between the two novels may appear subtle but it is maintained throughout them in the presentation of popular culture.

The photographs in *The Diviners* are thematically suitable but unrepresentative as, regardless of the filmic techniques which have often been noted, *The Diviners* is much more concerned with narrative than with image. This is as it should be, given that Morag is a novelist.[18] Thus whereas there is a significant folklore-like visual image in Dan McRaith's painting, the central references are to Christie's tales and Jules's songs.

In analyzing Christie's tales, Clara Thomas comes to the following conclusion: "Like all folk-literature, these stories, in the beginning, are orally transmitted; only *some* folk-literature, however, moves into the category of myth, and this depends on the need and belief of the listener."[19] In this context, Thomas seems to be using the word myth in a sense similar to that found in Northrop Frye: "In

every age there is a structure of ideas, images, beliefs, assumptions, anxieties, and hopes which express the view of man's situation and destiny generally held at that time. I call this structure a mythology, and its units myths."[20]

For Morag, however, Thomas's distinction doesn't seem to work. Perhaps it is simply because her "need and belief" are wide-ranging but much of the folk, popular, and even mass culture which she contacts becomes a part of the myth of identity to which she refers when she states, "The myths are my reality." The apparently folkloric material given her by Jules and Christie[21] is incorporated but so, too, is the very individual creation by Pique.

At a very early age Morag had accepted some myths of mass and popular culture. She recalls "the invisible creatures who inhabited the place with her." At this point they had the same value in her imagination that later Christie's character of Piper Gunn and still later her own novelistic creations come to have. Yet they are neither figures of ancient oral tradition nor products of her own imagination. They are presentations from the mass media, the radio, which were taken and reshaped by Morag.[22]

The process of adaptation continues in all the songs which appear in the novel. Morag and her friend, Ella, use "There'll be a change in the weather" as a theme song, something which somehow speaks directly to them: "They know it from one another's writing." At Prin's funeral, "Jerusalem the golden" has a similar resonance, as a comment on Prin, and on Morag's own life.

Thus it would seem that various aspects of popular narrative have value in Morag's "myths." There is no essential distinction between a major aspect of oral tradition, such as the ancestral story of Piper Gunn, and a popular song. The difference is rather one of degree. The radio songs and Christie's tales act in the same way but the tales are much more important.

Pique also finds some answers in the songs around her but in her case they are the works of contemporary singer-songwriters: "the records of Baez and Dylan and Cohen and Joni Mitchell and Buffy Sainte-Marie and James Taylor and Bruce Cockburn. . . ." There seems the same value for her in these songs that Morag has found in Jules's songs and Christie's tales, but they have no pretense to represent oral tradition: "it is the solitary singers, singing their own songs, who really absorb her."

PIQUE IS A VERY POSITIVE FIGURE, the heir to Christie's oral tradition, Jules's oral tradition, and Morag's writing. In *Surfacing* the one character who demonstrates an interest in music is Anna, who is completely negative, only of value as an example of how a woman can be completely destroyed by contemporary society: "a seamed and folded imitation of a maga-

zine picture that is itself an imitation of a woman who is also an imitation, the original nowhere. . . ." Her reading is limited to pulp detective novels, distinguishable only by quantity: "she was on her fourth or fifth paperback." Her music is similarly without substance: "Earlier she was singing, House of the Rising Sun and Lili Marlene, both of them several times, trying to make her voice go throaty and deep, but it came out like a hoarse child's." "When she was in the middle of St. Louis Blues he began to whistle and she stopped." "She combs her hair in front of the mirror, light ends, dark roots, humming to herself, You Are My Sunshine. . . ." Later in the novel she sings "The White Cliffs of Dover." There is little point to her choices other than obvious irony as in such an unhappy person singing "You Are My Sunshine." Instead, she presents popular song as something homogenized, all pablum for the mass mind, with no distinction between urban blues, folk song, cabaret, and Vera Lynn.

To emphasize narrative items in *Surfacing*, however, is as unrepresentative as to emphasize the photographs in *The Diviners*. Just as *The Diviners* is a story about a writer which is structured around various narratives, so *Surfacing* is a story about an artist which is structured around various visual images. The novel begins with a series of pictures that she encounters as she drives to her father's cabin. All of them present a culture decayed by the effect of North American mass development.

There is little to distinguish between the images which are part of the individual expression of the local populace and those which represent only mass culture. The narrator clearly rejects the Niagara Falls cushion and the sunday school religious pictures and romance comic books. But there is a similarly negative reaction to Bottle Villa, "a preposterous monument," the paintings on the rocks: "THÉ SALADA, BLUE MOON COTTAGES ½ MILE, QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU, BUVEZ COCA COLA GLACÉ, JESUS SAVES" and to the anthropomorphized moose: "the three stuffed moose on a platform near the pumps: they're dressed in human clothes and wired standing up on their hind legs, a father moose with a trench coat and a pipe in his mouth, a mother moose in a print dress and flowered hat and a little boy moose in short pants, a striped jersey and a baseball cap, waving an American flag."

Given the novel's anti-Americanism and pro-wildlife stance the abhorrence of the moose doesn't seem surprising but folklorists or anthropologists would tend to make a clear distinction between the mass-manufactured "store cushion," which represents simply the acquisition of an object, and the popular culture moose which, bizarre as they may be, show a significant artistic involvement by the person presenting the display. To the narrator they are much the same, a part of the pernicious situation reflected in the following assessment of the local people: "I'm annoyed with them for looking so much like carvings, the habitant kind they sell in tourist handcraft shops; but of course it's the other way around, it's

the carvings that look like them." Mass culture perverts the perceptions of both the narrator and the local inhabitants. The result is a local culture in which individual expression is no better than the mass culture which is seeping in.

A slight variation on this situation is found in the scrapbooks from the narrator's childhood. As Russell Brown notes, the scrapbooks are part of Atwood's rejection, in *The Edible Woman* and elsewhere, "of the mythologies of our present society,"[23] a telling comment in light of Frye's definition above. Atwood makes a clear distinction between the scrapbook which contains the narrator's childhood portrait of God with horns, what proves to be a visionary insight for her, and another, more properly socialized, set of images, of Easter eggs and rabbits. As Brown observes, "we recognize these Easter fantasies as part of a general modern abandonment of religious stories for secular fables that will turn sacred holidays into occasions for commerce."[24]

The next stage of the scrapbooks shows a complete acceptance of this commercial culture, with a series of pictures much like that presented by Anna above. The narrator states,

> I searched through it carefully, looking for something I could recognize as myself, where I had come from or gone wrong; but there were no drawings at all, just illustrations cut from magazines and pasted in. They were ladies, all kinds: holding up cans of cleanser, knitting, smiling, modelling toeless high heels and nylons with dark seams and pillbox hats and veils.

As an illustrator, the narrator continues the commercializing process. She discusses at length how she has constantly created illustrations which fit not what she perceives as a child's taste ("I said children liked being frightened") but rather the publisher's views of what will sell. The narratives, in this case called *Quebec Folk Tales*, are similarly lifeless and commercial. The results of her efforts become not figures from Grimm but unattractive aspects of mass culture. A bird looks like "a fire insurance trademark," the princess is an "emaciated fashion-model," and the king is "a football player." The latter comment should remind one of the very negative portrait of the Americanized Canadians in the canoe and Anna's similar, and similarly evil, husband, David. Their point of contact is their devotion to the New York Mets baseball team. Clearly, mass leisure isn't any better than the mass media.

The narrator's reaction to folklore as represented in the novel is ambivalent. She cannot accept that these tales are other than bowdlerized. As well, she cannot think of anything akin to the tales as a natural part of the local folklore:

> It's hard to believe that anyone here, even the grandmothers, ever knew these stories: this isn't a country of princesses, The Fountain of Youth and The Castle of the Seven Splendours don't belong here. They must have told stories about something as they sat around the kitchen range at night: bewitched dogs and

> malevolent trees perhaps, and the magic powers of rival political candidates, whose effigies in straw they burned during elections.

Carole Gerson has noted that "the narrator is in fact asking French Canada to fit the conventions used by William Kirby, Susan Frances Harrison and Duncan Campbell Scott."[25] I think a more precise assessment might be that she presents the conventional Quebecois as a possibility but a tenuous one. Her perceptions of Quebec are limited by a combination of the quaint habitant, an image which might have been folkloric but has become kitsch, and "QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU," a mindless popular reflection of the mass media.

The novel leaves no doubt that the Indian rock paintings are the true source of vision. They are like the narrator's childhood painting of God, a pointer. Her father realized that it would be possible to go straight to the source and even avoid the mediation of the image: "He had discovered new places, new oracles, they were things he was seeing the way I had seen, true vision; at the end, after failure of logic." Thus it is only with the native vision, the indigenous people, that an answer can be found. One would assume from the comments on the bowdlerized folk tales that an accurate image of Quebec folklore might provide some insights but none of the narrator's experience show such a process.

There are a number of other images that reflect the split between the natural life and mass culture. Many are associated with the different themes of the novel, such as fertility. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator deludes everyone, including herself, about her pregnancy and abortion. As she experiences a psychological transformation through the Indian paintings she seeks a fertility transformation through an animal-like mating with her lover, Joe, earlier described as "like the buffalo on the U.S. nickel," and then an animal-like birth: "it will be covered with shining fur, a god, I will never teach it any words."

The opposition to such fertility is once again connected to images of popular culture. David recalls the "old and shoddy" joke of the national flag, "Nine beavers pissing on a frog." Much later he provides a further development: "That's what they should've put on the flag instead of a maple leaf, a split beaver; I'd salute that." It is the same process as the abortion experienced by the narrator, a removal of the potentially fertile parts to suit the evils of civilization, in this case a sexist and anti-animal joke.

The remnants on the abandoned tugboat, presented on the same page, follow the same theme. The men on the tugboat left pictures of genitalia:

> I was shocked, not by those parts of the body, we'd been told about those, but that they should be cut off like that from the bodies that ought to have gone with them, as though they could detach themselves and crawl around on their own like snails.
>
> I'd forgotten about that; but of course they were magic drawings like the ones in caves. You draw on the wall what's important to you, what you're hunting.

In the careful scientific analysis of the rock paintings, Dr. Robin M. Grove (a nature name which hides an un-naturelike dissection) states,

> In treatment they are reminiscent, with their elongated limbs and extreme distortion, of the drawings of children. The static rigidity is in marked contrast to the rock paintings of other cultures, most notably the European cave paintings.
>
> From the above features we may deduce that the creators of the paintings were interested exclusively in symbolic content, at the expense of expressiveness and form.

A number of elements can be deduced from this passage. Most obviously, if these images are the source of truth and European traditions are not, even in the original folktales, then it is not surprising that they should be different from European cave paintings. Secondly, that they should be child-like suits the connection made to the narrator's childhood drawing of God.

More important, perhaps, is the comment on their static and symbolic nature. Bruce King refers in passing to "the flat style of the book [which] makes us aware of the narrator's lack of involvement with others. . . ."[26] The comment by Grove should help us to recognize that more than just an aspect of the narrator's personality, the novel's unexpressive symbolism presents a further image. It is the one possible contemporary example which can follow in the tradition of the Indian paintings.

NO ASPECT OF POPULAR CULTURE, mass culture, or European folklore can fit that position. Neither is modern elite lore or technology a possibility. The narrator's mother, her ancestral aid in her search, provides a clear opposition to the latter: "She hated hospitals and doctors; she must have been afraid they would experiment on her. . . ." Her father's absolute devotion to reason is also rejected. In fact, his scientific approach apparently contributes to his death. The narrator refers to him "collecting them with his camera." She realizes, "I had the proof now, indisputable, of sanity and therefore of death." When she is notified that his body has been found, David states, "he had a camera around his neck, big one, they think the weight kept him down or he would've been found sooner."

Photographic images give few answers in *Surfacing* but here the whole technology associated with photography is opposed. It is part of a scientific need to collect and destroy and destroy and collect, as in her brother's laboratory or even the photographs in her high school hygiene book:

> That was in the green book at high school, *Your Health*, along with the photographs of cretins and people with thyroid deficiencies, the crippled and deformed, the examples, with black oblongs across their eyes like condemned criminals: the only pictures of naked bodies it was judged proper for us to see. The rest were

> diagrams, transparencies with labels and arrows, the ovaries purple sea creatures, the womb a pear.

The photograph is rejected only partly because it is an arm of popular culture and an extension of defertilizing deforming science. It is also seen as an attempt at maintaining control over the spirit rather than submitting to it. Susan Sontag notes that "the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood. To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge — and, therefore, like power."[27] On the other hand, *Surfacing*'s narrator, without camera, gives hersely up wholly to the power of the gods themselves.

The Diviners, with the possible exception of Jules, does not present the photograph as a force of contemporary science. The camera is accepted as an aid to possession in a much more positive sense. Morag possesses her parents and Jules possesses Pique in extensions of family memory rather than as assertions of technological control. *The Diviners* shows the photograph as an useful adjunct to the accumulation of tradition. In *Surfacing* the contributions of photography are few, the dangers many.

Yet the reaction in *The Diviners* to technology in general, and to academic scholarship, is similar. The stories told by Christie and Jules are of much more value to Morag than established historical fact. Her husband, Brooke, represents the sterility of academic life and the sterility of modern cosmopolitan life in Toronto. A-Okay Smith, former teacher of computer programming and now back-to-the-lander, finds his background makes it difficult to comprehend the actions of Royland, the diviner: "A-Okay, ex-science man, groping, wondering about all this procedure."

High technology and academic scholarship, the pinnacle of the "progress" of civilization, are not acceptable in either novel. Well beneath the pinnacle, however, the responses differ. The rejection of popular culture and mass culture in *Surfacing* is quite complete. I have already noted a number of ways in which popular culture is accepted in *The Diviners*, from the photographs through Pique's interest in popular songs. One of the most interesting examples is Fan Brady, the stripper.

Fan is unattractive, particularly physically, and there is no suggestion that Morag or Laurence considers stripping to be the optimum vocation but neither is Fan nor her life style simply dismissed. She has an indomitable will to survive and even succeed: "Fan is tough in the spirit, wiry and wary in the soul." Like Christie and Jules she represents someone who fights through no matter what the situation. Rather than rejecting her debased status, she attempts to turn her little bit of popular culture into an "Art." One is reminded of Jules who is unable to reconcile the folk culture of his songs and the popular culture context, the bar, in which he must perform. Yet even he had the possibility of finding a popular

culture setting in which he could have communicated his art: "Lotsa new places now, and they don't think you're some kind of nut if you sing your own songs sometimes, but most of those places, they're for the kids, and they want young singers."

Jules's most important role in the novel, however, is not as a professional performer. At one point he says, "I'm the *shaman*, eh?" He is likened to the "divining" tradition which includes Royland, Christie, Pique, and Morag. He might seem part of the great old cliché of the savage Indian who provides the interloper with a connection to the land. Traditionally the white is a male and the Indian a delicate yet intrepid maiden[28] but in contemporary terms switching sexes seems quite appropriate. And in perfect Indian maiden style, Jules dies tragically before the end of the novel.

Jules's death might link the novel to *Surfacing*, in which the Indians are also dead. A major difference, however, is that the Indians in the latter are well dead before the novel begins. All that is left is the rock paintings. The Indians are shamans but never humans.

If one can divide the two, Jules represents Indian as ethnic minority rather than as noble savage. This could be part of the reason why he is Métis rather than full-blood. His traditions are pre-eminent over Christie's only because of length of tenure. He offers not a mystical tie to the land but a mystical tie to the roots of tradition which lie behind everyone. His insights are to be distinguished not from Pique's songs or even from Fan Brady but from the aridity of contemporary high culture as represented by Brooke.

The various narratives of *The Diviners*, including Morag's novels, present a possibility of continuing the "myths" established in folklore. In *Surfacing*, the rejection of popular culture and mass culture extends to the point where there is no inkling of such a possibility. Beyond the Indian paintings, the visionary images are only the God painted in early childhood and perhaps the novel itself.

One possible reason for this difference is the distinction between the narrators. In their processes of individuation, Morag and the narrator of *Surfacing* each begin in a state of confused identity[29] and slowly clarify it. At the end of the novels, each has reached a state of heightened awareness, although there remains an ambivalence: "How far could anyone see into the river? Not far." "I tense forward, towards the demands and questions, though my feet do not move yet."

Still, there is a clear division. It has been noted that *Surfacing* is not expressive but its narration is expressionistic. Reality is distorted to suit the vision of the narrator, a technique which suits a novel in which *all* discovery is internal. The narrator and, I think, Atwood, comment disparagingly on those young people who attempt total rejection of their parents. However, for the narrator her parents are not a social presence but an aid to her internal, mystical vision. They are not that different from the long dead Indians. On the other hand, Morag's

narrative remains within the bounds of realism. Similarly her individuation is never divorced from her socialization. Her various shamans are living humans with whom she must function. The insights provided by Christie and Jules cannot be divided from the torment caused by their socially unacceptable lifestyles and difficult personalities.

As noted by various critics, both novels represent a rejection of the achievements of contemporary civilization and a turn to primitive traditions. However, *The Diviners* is also willing to accept a good part of contemporary popular culture, that aspect of our society which is at least partly shaped by the mass media but which seems to mean so much to the general populace. In *Surfacing*, the rejection of elite culture is linked to the rejection of all aspects of contemporary life, most emphatically including popular culture and mass culture.

The Diviners suggests that whereas it is necessary to be selective, some aspects of contemporary popular culture must be accepted if the members of that society are to be accepted. It is all very well to reject our technocratic age and accept what King calls that "search for authenticity" and "rediscovery of the past" but if it does not include a recognition of the ways that the culture of the people continue in the present, then there is no possible social referent. In *Surfacing* the individual, without science, without elite culture, without popular culture, without mass culture, is left in insularity. The narrator's attempt to define self while refuting Donne's dictum that "No man is an island" leaves her clinging to small rocks of a barely remembered and unadapted past.

NOTES

[1] Bruce King, "Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 12 (August 1977), 26.

[2] Clara Thomas, "The Chariot of Ossian: Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13 (Fall 1978), 62.

[3] C. G. Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," *The Portable Jung*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 121.

[4] "Folklore in the Canadian Novel," forthcoming in *Canadian Folklore*.

[5] "Folklore," *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*.

[6] A universally acceptable definition of folklore is probably impossible. A widely-used one is that quoted by Narvaez (note 8), that folklore is "artistic communication in small groups," Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," *Journal of American Folklore*, 84 (January-March 1971), 13. An example of how wide the field can become is provided by the following: "The discipline of 'Folklore' analyses the transmission (the underlying causes and accompanying processes) of cultural values, their concrete manifestations and subjectifications, and aims at contributing to the solution of socio-cultural problems," *Falkensteiner Protokolle*, ed. Wolfgang Brückner (Frankfurt, 1970) (translation provided by Professor Rolf W. Brednich). For the purposes of the present paper the Ben-Amos definition might be suitable but it is important to distinguish between contemporary and traditional "artistic communication."

[7] Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 59.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[9] Peter Narvaez, "Country Music in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland," *Journal of Country Music*, 7 (1978), 93.

[10] Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture: Notes Toward a Definition," in *Popular Culture and Curricula*, ed. Ray B. Browne and Ronald J. Ambrosetti (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1972), p. 11.

[11] Pauline Greenhill, "Record, Communication, Entertainment: A Functional Study of Two Family Photograph Collections in St. John's, Newfoundland." Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial Univ. of Newfoundland, 1981, p. 82.

[12] Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 6. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[13] Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (Don Mills, Ont.: Paperjacks, 1973), p. 108. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[14] Paul Byers, "Cameras Don't Take Pictures," *Columbia University Forum*, 9 (Winter 1966), 30.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[16] Margaret Atwood, *The Edible Woman* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), p. 232.

[17] See also Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977), pp. 8-9.

[18] Various critics have examined the relationship between Morag's own fiction and *The Diviners*. The most detailed study is probably Ildiko de Papp Carrington, " 'Tales in the Telling': *The Diviners* as Fiction about Fiction," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 9 (Winter 1977/78), 154-69. Two other articles which look more broadly at the use of narratives in *The Diviners* are Barbara Hehner, "River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's Narratives," *Canadian Literature*, no. 74 (Autumn 1977), pp. 40-57; and Michel Fabre, "Words and the World: 'The Diviners' as an Exploration of the Book of Life," *Canadian Literature*, no. 93 (Summer 1982), pp. 60-78. Clara Thomas (see note 2 above) should also be noted.

[19] Clara Thomas, p. 57.

[20] Northrop Frye, *The Modern Century* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 105-06.

[21] In a very perceptive paper, Laurel Doucette has pointed to a number of ways in which Laurence's "folklore" is implausible when compared to the experience of folklorists in the field, particularly in the context which she creates. Still, there can be little question that Laurence's intent is to create something which looks like folklore. Doucette's paper, given to the meeting of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada, at Halifax in 1981, is unpublished but an abstract is given in the *Bulletin of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada*, 5 (May 1981), 13.

[22] The article by Narvaez noted above examines how radio songs were adapted for personal use by a singer of country music in Buchans, Newfoundland.

[23] Russell M. Brown, "Atwood's Sacred Wells," *Essay on Canadian Writing*, 17 (Spring 1980), 32.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[25] Carole Gerson, "Margaret Atwood and Quebec: A Footnote on *Surfacing*," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 1 (Winter 1976), 117.

[26] King, p. 25.

[27] Sontag, p. 4.

[28] There are various nineteenth-century Canadian examples which show the Indian maiden as helpmate to the adventurous white. Among the best known are *Wacousta* by John Richardson, *Tecumseh* by Charles Mair, and *De Roberval* by John Hunter Duvar.

[29] Some critics have suggested that in fact Morag has already reached a mature understanding at the beginning of the book and she spends the novel recalling how she reached that understanding. One should note, however, that the frame story, what one could call "Morag's present," also begins in confusion, over Pique. Through recollections of what brought her to this stage, and through various experiences in this "present," Morag is able to develop much further. Her increased acceptance of Pique at the end of the novel reflects an increased understanding of herself.

LAGOON

John Marshall

raingear on the porch, bright green
& yellow flaps in the wind
terrorize the gulls who normally
rest patiently for the guts of things

my hands seem so much more red today
they seem to be finally filled with lessons
best learned on the sea, saw whales

again today thought out the intricate
exchange of songs between one ocean
& another, the greater distances

the sun & so on I walk back down
to the shore where the monstrous
washes up, plunge
my own hands in

books in review

A DOG'S LIFE

LEON ROOKE, *Shakespeare's Dog*. Stoddart, n.p.

LEON ROOKE'S *Shakespeare's Dog*, which recently won the Governor General's Award, is a feisty tale narrated with verve by its title character, a mangy mongrel named Hooker. A dog as narrator has obvious disadvantages, which Rooke seems to overcome by making Hooker wildly energetic in his behaviour and language, and at the same time whimsically philosophical in his reflections, especially those on his master Will Shagspeer (one of many variant spellings Hooker-Rooke uses). Hooker is the questioner, while Will is "strict in his conformity." Hooker's bias is democratic and humanitarian, Shakespeare's aristocratic and hierarchical. Hooker is devoted to "soul," his master is a crude materialist, whose addiction to "words' double-turning" is as much a problem for Hooker as his obsession with Anne Hathaway's "harlotrous wedge." For Hooker, the double addiction keeps Shaxpoot both from seeing the pain of human reality and from simply leaving Stratford to seek a theatrical career in London town. However, partly by luck and partly by design, Hooker eventually prevails and the novel ends as the two set off, visions of glory in their eyes.

As a speaker, Hooker is drunk on language. He talks like a determined twentieth-century romantic who's been reading too much Thomas Nashe, with perhaps a bit of Joyce thrown in. He invents words, tosses in familiar words in contexts which undo their meanings, makes up compounds, uses adjectives and nouns as verbs, all, I assume, in a last ditch effort to sound "Elizabethan." The result is mixed in more ways than one. Individual phrases can be dazzling, but there is too much self-consciousness, too much superficial glitter. I began to be bothered by the archness, and I found the cumulative effect tiresome. A few examples will illustrate the prevailing style:

> We were making quite the whoobug when my master Two Foot's kicksy-wicksy, the noxious Hathaway, still stiff and pudged from laying eggs, howled in her drone's eminence from the back door.

or, on Shakespeare's education:

> What had soaked in was all slime and sludge, to a dog's true belly. The strutter knew no Latin and less Greek, but in these areas he smoked like a chimney compared to what he knew of suffering and misery, of the soul and its plumage, of man's most bloated condition.

or Hooker as philosopher:

> She was making my dogger [canine slang for penis] yearn to plug up life, to cork up the whole of it so that I might stand back from my tongue-hang and verily ask, What is dog? What is dog's life? Whereof has he come and whither will he go? Dog is poetic, dog wants a vermin-free muse to spell it all out.

As the second of the quotations illustrates, Rooke, like Shaw, Burgess, and others who have taken Shakespeare on, cannot resist the temptation of allusion. In *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, Shaw invented a bumbling Shakespeare who keeps jotting down pithy lines as they come to him from the palace guard, mistress, or even the dark lady herself, who turns out to be Queen Elizabeth. (Burgess devoted a whole novel to investigating Shakespeare's relation to a very differently conceived dark lady, but Rooke offers an unceremonious solution to that mystery — "by which he meant one not existing"!) Rooke too has his characters

feeding Shakespeare versions of famous lines ("Untune the lute... Take but degree away and hark Jupiter's bolt that would follow," or "You'll strut and fret your sultry wage another day or two").

The book's references to *Hamlet* are multiple, enough to make it seem almost an extended parody of that play. There is a mad scene with Shakespeare's sister Joan wrapping herself in sheets and flowers and singing Ophelia's risqué songs; there is, near the end, a graveyard scene in which Shakespit wanders through Trinity churchyard confronting his own and mankind's mortality and the dribbling away of his life (he lacks Hamlet's humour though, and seems, even to Hooker, a "sniveler, all bellyache and drivel"); and there is a ghost scene where a murdered deer appears to hunter Hooker, calling "Mark me, mark me! List! List!" and finally bidding him "adieu, adieu." Hooker a blend of Hamlet and Claudius! Perhaps too Hooker's own lengthy and maudlin reminiscences about his "old Mam," who's now passed on to a better world, and the meeting he describes with his long lost, probable Dad, could be taken as ironic reminders of the importance of such themes in *Hamlet* (though I'm afraid we're *meant* to take these passages straight). The allusions culminate in Hooker's wonderfully appropriate put-down of the boastful Two Foot, Will: "Cat will mew, I thought, and dog will have his day." In the end, however, the allusions don't really add up to much — they're simply there as signs to knowing readers of their own readerly accomplishments.

For all its feistiness, the book is oddly sentimental. Hooker turns out to be a kind of Elizabethan Lassie disguised as a horny, tough-minded, and quarrelsome mongrel. He rescues the besotted Shakespeare from the turbulent waters of the Avon (so Rooke describes that tranquil stream), after the latter's late night assignation with Anne of Shottery has stupefied him, and he pulls the town witch from the water too, after she has been hounded nearly to death by the local (human) curs; he scatters the witch's persecutors, and in general stands up for the lowly while his ambitious master has his mind's eye on noblemen's ceilings and courtly lap-dogs. Hooker, in fact, proves to be a canine Robin Hood — he takes pleasure in bringing down the deer in the forest of the local lord (though he is troubled later by bad dreams), and he steals a leg of mutton from the town butcher (one of the witch's attackers) to give to the squalling infant of a vagabond family camping at the edge of town. And most important, of course, he rescues Shokespit not only from the Avon, but from mediocrity and conformity. That a dog should be the source of some of Shakespeare's richer insights is of course amusingly ironic: Hooker becomes a parody of the Fool in *King Lear*. But the joke gets tedious as the book goes on, and the portrait of Shakespeare as narrowly romantic and trivially ambitious, though it pleases with its irreverence, comes to seem rather facile.

Shakespeare, it has often been said, was no dog lover. And it's true enough that when he has something particularly unkind to say about a character, a canine metaphor seems frequently to pop naturally into his imagination. But we shouldn't forget, on the other side, Launce's devotion to his mangy pet (a model for Hooker?) in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the hound's reciprocal love for his endearingly foolish master. Higher up the social scale, Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* boasts fondly of his hounds, who seem in return to merit such high praise. Perhaps, as with everything else, Shakespeare's dogs are viewed with that characteristic "negative capability" that Keats admired. In any

event, Leon Rooke has given us an inventive reassessment of Shakespeare's relation with at least one member of the canine species. Despite its energy, however, the book is disappointingly thin. I doubt that it will do much for the reputation of the Governor General's Awards.

ANTONY B. DAWSON

SLEEPY TRIO

CHRISTOPHER MOORE. *The Loyalists. Revolution, Exile, Settlement.* Macmillan, $27.95.

BEGIN BY LETTING THE SHOE DROP. Moore has not written here a book as memorable as his *Louisbourg Portraits.* Nonetheless, that leaves room for considerable achievement, and *The Loyalists* is certainly a worthy treatment of the subject.

The book divides easily and neatly into the three sections indicated by its subtitle, and Moore gives a sense of individuality amid grand, impersonal historical events by following three lives throughout the story. What we have here is good popular narrative history. What keeps it from being the great popular history that the earlier work so certainly is?

Let us return to those three individuals I mentioned. Moore's reasons for choosing that particular trio remains mysterious. They were not, it would seem, particularly interesting, complex, or articulate men. Their stories are far from gripping. Perhaps, in their resemblance to you and me, they are average; they provide a more representative encapsulation of the Loyalist experience than say, a Jarvis or a Brant. Very well, but it makes for dull reading. If I were looking for that, then I would go to all the academic treatments of the subject, for the value of works like Moore's lies not in their scholarly apparatus but in accessibility and the arousal of reader interest.

Moore has proven himself a shrewd assessor of human appetites and motives; just as his selection of dull characters dims the shine of his project, so the restraint he places on these insightful powers weakens the work's impact. One would expect, given Moore's capacities for informed observation, some penetrating conjectures on the curious Loyalist propensity for sleepwalking through a revolutionary era that demanded total alertness. Instead, as if hagiographic considerations prevented him from outlining the flaws of his characters, Moore appears to soft-pedal any discussion of the widespread passivity that made defeat inevitable.

An example of this occurs in a bizarre incident that Moore recounts without comment: In Dutchess County, New York, a town meeting of some 200 people was chaired by a rebel sympathizer. Finding fourteen "ayes" to a pro-rebel motion, the chair, in the best Mayor Daley fashion, declared the motion carried. The indignant 186 stomped out of the meeting, leaving the field to the outnumbered upstarts. Later, the chief Loyalist found himself under arrest.

So sleep-like a refusal to be panicked into self-defence cries out for extended commentary, for in this single anecdote is distilled an entire, tragic historical process. Failing to explore sufficiently some of the jagged ironies makes for a less compelling work.

The final drawback I would mention comes as a result of too huge a canvas. A narrower geographical or temporal focus would have improved the work, but then of course its appeal to a wider, let's-read-something-on-the-Loyalists-because-it's-bicentennial-in-Ontario audience would have been lessened.

Still and all, I can't think of a finer one-volume treatment of the subject, and it is unmatched in fluency. If the author had been almost anyone else, the sense

of disappointment would never have existed. Let us hope that Moore's next work will reflect the virtues he displayed in his account of Louisbourg.

DENNIS DUFFY

DAVEY'S AGGRESSIVE ART

FRANK DAVEY, *Surviving the Paraphrase.* Turnstone, $9.95.

IN HIS LAUDATORY PREFACE to *Surviving the Paraphrase,* Eli Mandel places Frank Davey in the mainstream of Canada's tradition of aggressive literary criticism and concludes that Davey has "given our criticism its contemporary voice, its sound and its rhythms, and to the mood of our most recent critical writing added his generous and welcoming spirit." Even if other readers would want to qualify Mandel's claims for his colleague, *Surviving the Paraphrase* leaves no doubt that Davey is one of Canada's most important critics: the sweep of his critical enquiry is broad; his writing crisp, incisive, and persuasive; the intelligence behind it sharp.

The opening essay, which lends the book its title, should become a classic of Canadian literary theory. It candidly and convincingly points out the limitations of thematic criticism, the heretofore dominant mode of our critical writing, especially as it is practised by its most influential exponents, D. G. Jones, Margaret Atwood, Northrop Frye, and John Moss. It argues that thematic criticism in its concern for what the literature *says,* especially about this country and her people, deflects the proper critical focus away from what the literature *means,* away from the writing as *écriture.* (Although Davey occasionally uses terms like this, his post-modernist theory and language are well assimilated and thus nowhere obtrusive.) One of the other unhappy side-effects of thematic criticism, he asserts, is the "creation of the illusion that palpably inferior writers are somehow more important — at least to loyal Canadians — than obviously superior ones." Davey then goes on not only to suggest that critical practitioners could more profitably engage themselves in the alternative modes of historical, analytical, genre, phenomenological, and archetypal criticism, but also to offer specific exemplary projects of each type.

The balance of the book allows the reader to see the critical theory put into practice, with the emphasis on analytical, phenomenological, and genre criticism. "The Explorer in Western Canadian Literature," which looks at first to be a piece of conventional thematic criticism, is turned into a consideration of the relationship between thematic stance, and form and style. By concentrating on the narrative voice, diction, and imagery of Robert Stead's *Grain,* Davey offers a stimulating reading of the novel, concluding that by the final chapters of the book *Grain* is "the story of a narrative as much as the story of Gander Stake . . . The story of a novelist." He adeptly charts Clark Blaise's efforts "to render invisible the linguistic surface of the writing, its narrative structure, and its fictional strategies," showing, for example, how narrative structure is used as a method of characterization. Writers who, like Blaise, are concerned with the fluidity of existence and the problems of rendering it in a literary work are those likeliest to gain Davey's approbation. "Atwood's Gorgon Touch," the best piece I have read on her poetry, and his ground-breaking study "The Language of the Contemporary Long Poem" make this preference quite clear.

Davey is by no means a dispassionate critic, much of what he writes being antithetical criticism. While this fact results in engaging prose and important revaluations, it can, in its most extreme forms, lead to misrepresentations and arguments grounded in unfairly loaded language. Nothing illustrates this better than Davey's two essays on E. J. Pratt. Amid many observations that are new, stimulating, and astute, are the labels, calculated to create a negative impression among liberal humanists, that he pastes on Pratt: "*authoritarian* craftsman," "apostle of *corporate* man," "rationalist *technician*." Where Davey sees an argument for submission to corporate welfare, less hostile readers may well see an argument for a genuinely heroic, selfless devotion to community. This is a matter of interpretation, but elsewhere Davey actually misrepresents the facts. He states, for example, that the seaman Wertanen in *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, while being one of Pratt's few characters who does not act as "an agent of society or member of a social order," performs his heroic rescue in a manner that is "unwitting and unwanted," and he cites lines that suggest that Wertanen's boat rather than the man is the wilful agent. What Davey does not cite is the few lines previous to this that give the lie to his assertion, namely: "Wertanen, who twice / And *willingly* [my emphasis] released his own firm grip / To take within his teeth a rope eyesplice, / Swam fifteen yards to leeward of the ship / To help an exhausted mate."

Thus, while *Surviving the Paraphrase* represents an eminently important contribution to Canadian criticism, the recommendation must also be offered — *caveat lector!*

SUSAN GINGELL

OXFORD COMPANIONS

The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, ed. William Toye. Oxford Univ. Press, $45.00.

WHAT IS AN *Oxford Companion* and what should we expect from it? These are the questions I asked myself as I worked through the first *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* edited by William Toye. First of all an *Oxford Companion* is a tool, a resource text where one expects concise, accurate information; it must be thorough in its coverage, scrupulous about its facts, meticulous about headings and cross-referencing, and consistent in its relative weighing of entry material. This last task is an especially tricky one to fulfil judiciously, and points on to the second major function of the *Companions*: these volumes represent and, in effect, evaluate a literature to its own nation and to the world. The general editor must decide what goes in and why and how much space can be devoted to each entry. He or she must also assume responsibility for the objectivity and consistency of the entries — a formidable task to be sure, but one of immense importance in a text that will stand for the literary canon of a country for years to come.

William Toye should be congratulated for bringing this *Oxford Companion* to fruition. It is, on the whole, a creditable job, especially with respect to its primary function. I have found it easy to use, factually accurate, informative about a number of lesser-known writers of the nineteenth century, and in many instances very well written. To cite just one example — the entry on Lampman is clear and concise, but also provides a thoughtful commentary on this important figure. Although Toye has maintained a reasonable balance in the weigh-

ing of entries, there are problems, such as omissions, curious inconsistencies in information, and so on. For example, why are Joan Haggerty, Lorris Elliott, and Ken Norris not included? Or Augustus Bridle and Lawrence Mason? Should Sandra Birdsell's name not be listed and cross-referenced to the discussion of her stories on page 754? Why is there no entry on Theosophy in Canada when it affected a number of our writers, especially during the twenties and thirties? Why is Alec Lucas's fine study of Peter McArthur not mentioned for reference in the McArthur entry? Most contributors refer to their own work on the author they are describing. And why, finally, are manuscript holdings identified for some authors (for example, Ringwood and Voaden), but not for others? The University of British Columbia has *the* Lowry Archive, consulted constantly by scholars from all over the world. Or, on a smaller scale, there is a very fine Brooker collection at The University of Manitoba. The archival list could go on and would provide, I believe, valuable additional information. I am also sometimes puzzled by Toye's choice of contributors: why ask George Woodcock to do the entry on *Canadian Literature*, and why are twenty-three of the contributors from The University of Toronto?

These points, however, are relatively small ones compared with the more serious failures of tone and the biased generalizations that have eluded editorial vigilance. For example, in the entry on E. K. Brown, we are told that "had he not died so early, his authority could have been a valuable check on the narrow and wayward tendencies of much subsequent criticism." Later, we are told that Jean Éthier-Blais is one of Quebec's "most cultured" men of letters and that "his knowledge encompasses the world." Unsubstantiated personal opinions like these do not belong in a reference text of this sort.

But when Mr. Toye takes out his blue pencil to prepare the second edition of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, he should begin with Sam Solecki's extravagant personal opinions about the criticism on Rudy Wiebe and, most important of all, his obtuse generalizations about women novelists. With a hopeful appeal to authority, Solecki assures us that,

> In most contemporary novels by women the point of view or "voice" of the heroine usually assumes what Sartre calls a "contestational" attitude towards society. One unfortunate, and perhaps inevitable [*sic!*], result of this has been the inability of most women novelists to create fully realized and memorable male characters.

Now this kind of nonsense had its day when James could write disparagingly of lady scribblers and Joyce (together with many of his male intellectual devotees) could presume to have created the quintessential female in Molly Bloom, but that day, together with its fallacious assumptions, is past. Surprisingly, the *only* Canadian woman novelist whom Solecki excludes from this silly generalization is Alice Munro and he excepts her because she creates "sympathetically rendered males." Is it sympathy that guarantees full realization and memorability? If so, perhaps Solecki should reconsider Marian Engel's bear.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Toye's inclusion of general categories such as the regional ("Writing in Newfoundland"), the ethnic ("Yiddish literature"), and others such as "Children's literature" or "Mystery and crime." (Though here I wonder why other groupings such as Italian or Caribbean were not included.) Sometimes these entries overlap with those on individuals, but the repetition is largely unavoidable and the entries do provide a

useful overview of the literature from a number of important perspectives. Clearly, an enormous amount of work has gone into the preparation of this volume and the combination of specific author and title entries with a number of broad discussions of genre, period, and regional writing is both worthwhile and interesting. Shortcomings aside, the final impressions I am left with are those of pride and satisfaction: pride that Canada has produced so much rich and varied literature; satisfaction that that accomplishment is now recognized in a prestigious volume. How much greater that satisfaction would be if the volume were free of an accumulation of small oversights and inconsistencies and if the personal biases of some of the contributors had been quietly expunged.

SHERRILL E. GRACE

WINNERS & LOSERS

DONALD JACK, *Me Too*. Doubleday, $17.95.
ROY MACGREGOR, *The Last Season*. Macmillan, $19.95.
KEN DRYDEN, *The Game*. Macmillan, $19.95.

TWO OF THESE BOOKS deal with Canada's national sport, and all are first person narratives, but they are distinctly unalike in tone, style, aspiration, and attitude, and they represent very different levels of achievement. There are, nevertheless, sufficient similarities to justify reviewing them together — their concern with identity (personal and national, public and private), their interest in and use of the past, and, in particular, their focus on the experiences, meanings, and costs of failure and success, losing and winning.

Me Too is the fifth volume in "The Bandy Papers," a serial work which has earned Donald Jack the Stephen Leacock Award for Humour on three occasions. With the Bandy series Jack appears to have embarked on a comic chronicle of Canada in the twentieth century, a less ambitious but nonetheless entertaining comic counterpart to Hugh Hood's *The New Age*. Bartholomew Bandy, the series' individualistic anti-hero, first appeared in *Three Cheers For Me*, and his picaresque adventures continue in *That's Me in the Middle, It's Me Again*, and *Me Bandy, You Cissie*. *Me Too* begins with a flashback to Bandy's experiences in 1919 as a prisoner of the Russians and then moves forward to 1923 and his return to Gallop, his home in the Ottawa Valley. Structurally, the novel consists of three large sections subdivided into twenty-six episodes. Part I describes Bandy's abortive efforts to establish an aeroplane industry in Gallop by promoting the Gander, a high-wing amphibious craft of his own invention. In Part II Bandy's accidental nomination as a Liberal candidate leads him to resort to delivering bootleg liquor, the mainstay of Gallop's economy, as a means of defraying his election expenses. Following his unexpected election, he settles in Ottawa and in Part III proceeds to scandalize his party and aggravate Prime Minister Mackenzie King by focusing attention on corruption within the Customs Department. *Me Too* combines slapstick exploits, parody, caricature, and a tiresome series of puns within a detailed social and political framework. Jack rings comic changes on a range of Canadian stereotypes and preoccupations including the small town, the various hypocrisies associated with prohibition, politicians in general and the Liberal party in particular, and, inevitably, Mackenzie King.

Parodying Chekhov, a line in the opening episode of *Me Too* describes life as "boresome, tiresome, tedious, monotonous, wearisome, and drearisome." These terms are, regrettably, at times appropriate for describing this book. Despite

the array of comic characters and incidents and the successful re-creation of a world all too prone to succumb to Bandy's buffoonery and his proclivity for chaos, *Me Too* fails to sustain its humour. Forced alliterations, adolescent sexual innuendo, and an episodic structure lacking sufficient narrative momentum diminish the book's appeal. Yet Jack's imagination is remarkably inventive and carefully attuned to the "Bandyish mayhem" to which many aspects of life seem vulnerable. *Me Too* reveals, moreover, a serious and persistent concern with the survival of the individual. Bandy is, above all, an unrepentant individualist, and his antics leave no doubt that Jack agrees with his character's view that the individual must possess "the right to take his own route to perdition or self-discovery." Embedded in the comedy of *Me Too* is a sustained questioning of set notions concerning the Canadian identity and an admiration for "the opposition of the individual" and his capacity to win against the deep-seated hostility of the forces of authority.

Roy MacGregor's *The Last Season* is a too-often predictable account of Felix Batterinski, a tough professional hockey player nearing the end of his career. The extensive descriptions of a wide spectrum of experiences associated with the career of a professional hockey player and the frequent discussions of NHL teams, coaches, and players at first suggest *The Last Season* is simply MacGregor's attempt to write a "hockey novel." His aims, however, are more ambitious as he attempts to capture the sad ironies and bitter disappointments which multiply as Felix Batterinski struggles to find a sense of purpose and identity in the midst of systems, inside and outside the world of hockey. Batterinski finally emerges as a pathetic and confused victim of forces he cannot comprehend and ironies he never perceives. Yet his narrative creates a curious sense of discrepancy since neither his background nor his limited ability to express himself in conversation suggests any plausible explanation for the flow of thoughts, memories, and feelings he articulates in the novel.

Divided into seven sections, *The Last Season* alternates between episodes from Batterinski's past and events occurring in his final season as the player-coach of a Finnish hockey team. In addition, each section is prefaced by portions of a sportswriter's feature article on Batterinski's career. Contrasts between his own frequently self-indulgent commentary and the sportswriter's facile analysis emphasize the incompleteness of both perspectives. Details and events in Batterinski's present and past are, not surprisingly, closely related, but the most satisfying sequences are those describing the odd assortment of friends and family members with whom Batterinski grows up in a small Northern Ontario town originally settled by his Polish ancestors. Surrounded by poverty and filth and unable to find meaning in the mixture of traditions, rites, and superstitions of his Polish heritage, Batterinski uses his skill as a hockey player to escape and ultimately to forge a "reputation" as a ruthless bully identified with repeated and often gratuitous acts of violence. Unable to locate a personal meaning in the values and attitudes of his father and unresponsive to the identity offered by his heritage, symbolized by his grandfather's history of the Polish people's struggle for freedom and dignity, Batterinski exploits his brute strength to establish a career in hockey.

The Last Season promises more than it achieves. Impressive in several respects, it lacks consistency and is flawed by stilted dialogue, banal images, forced and artificial encounters between characters, and a macabre and unconvincing conclusion. MacGregor's most impressive

achievement may well be the sympathy, however grudging, won for Batterinski. For despite his arrogance, cynicism, and brutishness, his primitive notions of justice, love, and loyalty, and the terrible narrowness of his perspective, Batterinski is not the Frankenstein of his own reputation. Rather, he is a pitiable figure — insecure, fearful, profoundly alone, and desperately seeking a purpose and an identity lost in his past and denied in his present.

The Last Season is a partially satisfying study of one of professional hockey's losers; Ken Dryden's *The Game* is an autobiographical account of one of the winners. Structured around nine days near the end of the 1978-79 regular season, *The Game* is both an informative and detailed account of Dryden's final days as all-star goaltender for the Montreal Canadiens and a personalized series of reflections on his own career and the multi-faceted world of professional hockey. A compendium of hockey lore, *The Game* is written in balanced, thoughtful, and lucid prose, and although the final games of a specific season provide a sense of focus and continuity, the larger appeal of this book results from the complex personality it reveals and the broad range of places, people, and events associated with his career.

Describing hockey, Dryden frequently refers to the importance of control and speaks of himself "fighting for control" as games develop. *The Game* reflects his efforts to shape and order a myriad of experiences and responses to a life lived in hockey. It reveals Dryden's conscious efforts to organize his complex responses to his retirement, his career, and, in particular, his coaches, trainers, and fellow players. His portraits of his Montreal teammates are especially impressive. Lucid, candid, and perceptive, the characterizations of figures such as Larry Robinson, Guy Lafleur, and Bob Gainey involve not only fascinating analysis of individuals but also a range of attitudes and values associated with professional sport.

Dryden's view of hockey is sophisticated, and his approach to the game is detailed, analytical, and, at times, philosophical. The book moves easily from flashbacks to his life as a student at Cornell or as goaltender for Team Canada through musings on arenas, relationships in the locker room, and the language crises in Quebec to reflections on the nature of goaltending, the significance of trades, celebrity status, and different styles of play. Dryden's articulate and at times provocative commentary on the past, present, and future of the game he clearly loves and in which he excelled makes *The Game* a deserving nominee for the Governor General's Prize for 1983 non-fiction.

D. DAYMOND

OUT OF AGONY

STEPHEN LEWIS, *Art Out of Agony*. CBC Enterprises/Macmillan, $8.95.

A. M. KLEIN, *Beyond Sambation*, ed. M. W. Steinberg. Univ. of Toronto Press, n.p.

WHEN I THINK OF THE HOLOCAUST, I do it through images of dark Edvard Munch-like figures on a dark ground, black cavernous mouths opened in silent screams. For many years silence surrounded that irrational eruption of evil until the pressure to speak became overwhelming. Today there are Holocaust Memorial Centres, Holocaust Studies Chairs, and a Holocaust publishing industry. But there are serious reservations about the imaginative suitability of, and even the propriety of using, this material for artistic representation. Questions such as these led Marilyn Powell of CBC-FM's *Stereo Morning* to approach Ste-

phen Lewis about doing a series of interviews with artists who had made artistic use of the Holocaust. *Art out of Agony* is the collection of those interviews, aired from May 30 to June 3, 1983, and winner of a special Media Human Rights Award.

Stephen Lewis is best known as a politician and commentator, but unlike many politicians, he has a respect for language and a love of literature. An ardent reader, Lewis elucidates children's literature as compellingly as he analyzes a labour dispute. Yet, he notes in the Foreword, the proposed series made him apprehensive for three reasons. First, he had lived half his life only "nominally Jewish . . . saved from a passive assimilation by marriage alone." Second, he was used to being interviewed rather than interviewing others. Finally, the Holocaust having "impinged only indirectly" on his life, Lewis was unfamiliar with the artists he was to interview and "had to undertake . . . [a] crash course" before beginning.

Despite his uncertainties, Lewis showed a remarkable grasp of his subject and sensitivity toward the ten interviewees — Aharon Appelfeld, Yaffa Eliach, George Steiner, D. M. Thomas, Jurek Becker, George Segal, Annette Insdorf, Hans Jurgen Syberberg, Elie Wiesel, and William Styron. Each interview is preceded by a photograph and brief biography of the artist, followed by Lewis's thumbnail appraisal of the artist's work and impression of their encounter. The introduction to Israeli novelist Appelfeld illustrates Lewis's style:

> Aharon Appelfeld was one of the sweetest, gentlest, and most thoughtful of the people whom I interviewed. Unhappily, because of his discomfort in the English language, his words seem a little halting and his ideas a little abrupt.
>
> But the truth of the matter is that Appelfeld's novels are magnificent. More than any other contemporary writer, he catches, unerringly, the nature of assimilated European Jewish society on the eve of the Holocaust, and somehow takes his readers through the chill of enveloping horror without ever wallowing in the horror itself. *The Age of Wonders* is the finest book I have read in the genre of Holocaust literature.

Except for sculptor Segal, film critic Insdorf, and film-maker Syberberg, interspersed among the questions are excerpts from the writers' works. The artists comment on their own visions and on the visions of others. The reader is led through a hall of mirrors, each interview reflecting and opposing themes before and after. All the big questions are posed. Ought the holocaust be a subject for art? Can it be? How does one avoid falling into commercial exploitation? Is documentary more effective than narrative cinema? fact more respectful to the victims than fiction? Is the event imaginatively assimilable?

Paradox runs through the volume, illustrated more poignantly for me by Yaffa Eliach, professor and author of *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, who, in searching for a way to present the Holocaust to her students without a sense of despair, revived the dormant tradition of Hasidic story-telling. She explains that eighteenth-century Hasidim "Felt that story-telling could restore all lines of communication between men and men, and men and God. When everything else fails, the only resort left to man is to tell a story, a tale. It has the power to mend, to restore." Eliach interviewed hundreds of survivors trying to collect material that would illustrate to her students not only man's capacity for evil but "the greatness of man's spirit even in the valley of death." Among the stories she collected were many of miraculous escape, which she published after verifying the authenticity of every one. And the paradox? It lies in the fact that, while most of the tales, unlike typical Holocaust

stories, end on a note of hope or spiritual triumph, the one tale ending in a sense of despair is that told by Eliach herself, also a survivor. Despite her essentially optimistic nature, she could not suppress "the non-Hasidic element" in herself in telling her own tale.

Art out of Agony is a collection that should be read by anyone interested not only in Holocaust art but in the relationship between art and morality and art and society, ideas out of vogue for many years while we retreated into a universe of literature and forgot — that art should illuminate the whole universe, especially its darkest recesses.

Long before the current artistic preoccupation with the Holocaust, A. M. Klein addressed the horror and probed the darkness with the passionate, prophetic conviction and moral concern that he brought to all subjects. Critics concentrated on Klein's poetry until Professor M. W. Steinberg, in 1979, suggested in this journal, that Klein's voluminous prose writings "also represent no mean achievement" and "constitute an intellectual and to some extent literary autobiography." Now the imbalance has been corrected by publication of *Beyond Sambation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955*, edited by Professor Steinberg and Klein biographer, Usher Caplan, with an introduction adapted from Steinberg's 1979 essay.

As editor of *The Judean*, *The Canadian Zionist*, and *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Klein wrote editorials, articles, and reviews, taking upon himself the task of educating North American-born Jewry, making them proud of their traditions and culture, and of alerting them to present political dangers; he also hoped to communicate to non-Jewish readers the reactions of the Jewish community to current events. And so his Jewish writings range from Biblical commentary, cultural and literary essay and criticism, to political analysis, first of the growing anti-Semitism of the 1930's, then of the war and the Holocaust, and finally, of the founding of the State of Israel and its growing pains. But Klein also had a passion for world literature and socialist reform, which became frequent topics.

Steinberg and Caplan have culled for this selection less than one-tenth of Klein's journalism. According to principles laid down in the introduction:

> First, we wished to represent as best we could the full range of Klein's ideas and interests, historical and contemporary, the opinions that he brought to bear upon current events, and the values, religious and secular, by which he judged these events. . . . A second consideration was the desire to choose from the abundance of material . . . those articles that had special literary merit, or gave evidence of particular qualities, admirable or otherwise, that characterized the style of the author.

Because they chose to omit the literary criticism, *Beyond Sambation* does not therefore reflect "the full range" of Klein's interests, but given the need for choices, the editors do present a fairly broad range. Editorial choices are always matters of personal predilection. Organized chronologically, this collection illuminates an historical period as well as a man's mind. A reader of Troper and Abella's *None is too Many* will find in Klein a contemporary response to Canadian government policy on Jewish refugees. A student of Klein's poetry will find seeds of many renowned poems — "Little Red Riding Houde," dated 24 February 1939, should be read beside "Political Meeting." A lover of *The Second Scroll* must study "Notebook of a Journey," the record of Klein's own journey, real and spiritual, to the newly founded State of Israel, and the questor into the causes of Klein's final silence must explore "In Praise of the Diaspora (an Undelivered Memorial Address)," from January-February 1953.

With its list of textual emendations (because Klein often composed in haste to meet deadlines, his work had many errors, most of which the editors leave as written), its notes on Klein's many elusive allusions, its glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words, and its subject index, *Beyond Sambation* is a welcome addition to Klein scholarship that is also accessible to the general reader. Klein was one of the first to make art out of agony.

LINDA SHOHET

LOST CULTURES

MIODRAG PAVLOVIC, *Singing at the Whirlpool*, trans. Barry Callaghan. Exile, n.p.

ROBERT MARTEAU, *Mount Royal*, trans. David Homel. Exile, $9.95.

ROBERT MARTEAU, *Interlude*, trans. Barry Callaghan. Exile, $8.95.

MICHAEL USISKIN, *Uncle Mike's Edenbridge: Memoirs of a Jewish Pioneer Farmer*, trans. Marcia Usiskin Basman. Peguis, $9.95.

THE INTERCONNECTIONS among the first three of these four translations go beyond the obvious: Robert Marteau has translated both Barry Callaghan and Miodrag Pavlović, an internationally-known Serbian poet, into French. Pavlović, fascinated by the culture of a neolithic people who fished in the great whirlpools of the Danube, and who left behind them monumental stone carvings of the human head, adopts the voice of one of these fishermen. Of some nearby "strange people" this singer says:

> drown them in the river
> let leaves be burial mounds
> until their bones abort
> hollow and white
> then we'll be able
> to talk together

Pavlović proves the truth of this apparent paradox by allowing the whirlpool people, lost but for a few material remnants, to sing to us after eight thousand years. Their heads are still human, as the drawings of Mario Mascarelli accompanying the text remind us. The fisher-singer says "Lost in thought / the head / itself / is sunken treasure": these twenty-six terse and gnomic poems manage to salvage some of that treasure.

Lost cultures also fascinate Robert Marteau, who fills pages of his journal, kept between January 1979 and April 1980, with the names of vanished or decimated North American native tribes. *Mount Royal* moves between Montreal, where Marteau lived during that period, and Poitou, the region of his childhood. Most striking are his descriptions of birds, small animals, and the landscape: "High in the silver maple, the woodpecker returning after an absence. Brief bursts of beak, ripping open the moment, sewing it back again, leaving no seam. His back is white and he is wearing two black suspenders." Marteau believes that modern man has lost a noble harmony once possessed by all: "humanity has completely lost the desire to make meaning or sense. It will fasten neither heart nor eye to the beauty whose riddle suddenly bursts into meaning." The loss of belief in the Logos, the universal myth, the hidden truth that underlies the world, explains all modern ills. Like Blake, a Romantic, Marteau has worked out his own system through which he views politics, religion, culture. Even his strong, eccentric, and opinionated voice is at times reminiscent of Blake's: "The green woodpecker counts in odd numbers," and "The poem clings to the world through its flaws."

Interleaved with symbolic drawings and heavily footnoted, Marteau's *Interlude* is a difficult text to categorize. It imitates hermetic compilations of ancient wisdom, collections of comparative mythology, and books which work on the frontier between religion, science fiction, and anthropology in a way reminiscent

of Castaneda, perhaps, or Frank Herbert. Marteau is more literary than these, however, and one suspects he would prefer comparison to Borges or Calvino, although he lacks their sophistication and humour. The jacket copy states solemnly that "this is a book of revelation concerning the vegetal creation of the human creature": I find it difficult to take Marteau's invented myths as seriously as he seems to want me to, although they are certainly charming. The concern of this fiction aspiring to revelation is the ancient people, the Urs. The modern narrator visits the villages of Lumne, Monne, Lubiane, and Carséré, built over this ancient civilization, and copies stone carvings that preserve its beliefs, listens to long-remembered stories, and hears voices speaking from the past. These villages, and the ancient world beneath them, the reader is eventually told, are "built on a membrane separate from the one on which our circuits operate, and they no longer run any risk of being seen." Marteau's main, and most convincing plea, is for a renewal of perception and imagination. Like Yeats's *A Vision*, however, Marteau's personal mythology seems less powerful than the poetic language it sets out to inform.

The lost culture of *Uncle Mike's Edenbridge* (a translation of the Yiddish *Oxsn un Motorn*, 1945) is that of the Jewish settlements of the prairies — Hirsch, Hoffer, Edenbridge, Lipton, and Sonnenfeld, among others — some ghost towns, some vanished to the point where there can be disagreement about their location. (See Eli Mandel's book of poems and documents about the Saskatchewan settlement of his youth, *Out of Place*, Porcépic, 1977.) Michael Usiskin escaped Tsarist Russia in 1906 and went to London's East End, where he worked as a fur cutter and pursued his anarchist political ideals for five years. Then he and his brother moved to Edenbridge, Saskatchewan. It could be argued that this small colony, for its size and age, was more civilized than the London Usiskin left, since the first concerns of the community were to establish a hall for meetings and performances, a library, and a drama club. He brought 200 books with him, and subscribed to nine periodicals, in several languages, from all corners of the globe. On his first visit to the post office (a nearly inaccessible hut) he found himself in the middle of a heated political discussion, in which feminist, anarchist, Zionist, and Marxist points of view were all represented. He and his fellow settlers had, for the most part, escaped anti-Semitic oppression and the hated bosses, and been given the means to ground some of their political ideals in reality. They farmed co-operatively, and set up a credit union and a co-operative store. Despite the unfamiliar, back-breaking labour, they survived, and so did the co-operative institutions they founded. Behind the survival lay, along with political conviction and determination, a great deal of good humour and mutual affection. One winter Usiskin, his brother, and two other men formed a miniature co-operative to save fuel, and the time spent gathering it, so they could read and write:

> Cook managed to get dinner cooked and the dishes washed every evening, that is when his eye wasn't captivated by some book or article. At those times he was hooked. If his eye landed on just one word, he simply had to know if the next word did justice to the previous one, and so on and so on.... We awoke in the middle of the night, not because we were well rested, but because we were freezing.... We had counted on the cook to fill the stove before retiring, as he had every other night. We awoke to find him sitting on his log, the book in his hand, eyes fastened on the pages before him. So as not to make our friend feel badly about neglecting the fire (thereby subjecting us to freezing conditions), Joe Pullman came up with the story that a dream woke him up. It was a

> delicious dream, he said. He dreamt he was lying in the most comfortable bed in the world. . . . As he told the story, he got out of bed and lit the fire. All this was concocted so as not to make the cook feel badly, but he was still so engrossed in his book he didn't hear any of the 'dream' or notice the fire being made. We awoke in the morning to find him still in the same pose, book in hand, sitting on the same log in the corner of the room.

We never do find out what the book was, but Usiskin's reminiscences are almost as engrossing.

Like the whirlpool people, the pioneers of Edenbridge live now in human heads. Through the imaginative effort espoused by Marteau, readers see these "vanished" cultures.

MARGERY FEE

CREATIVE SPIRITS

DAVID BURNETT and MARILYN SCHIFF, *Contemporary Canadian Art.* Hurtig/The Art Gallery of Ontario, $29.95.

JOHN MCGREEVY, ed. *Glenn Gould: Variations, By Himself and His Friends.* Doubleday Canada, $28.00.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN ART in Canada was not an easy delivery. As late as 1955 Toronto mayor Nathan Phillips could dismiss the paintings of Michael Snow and Graham Coughtry as "something I wouldn't want my children to see." The decade that followed saw not only furious debate over the unveiling of a Henry Moore sculpture in front of Toronto's new city hall, but the conviction of one of that city's most respected art dealers on obscenity charges. *Contemporary Canadian Art* sets out to map for a broad and non-specialized audience the often rocky course taken in this country by what used to be known as "advanced art." Its initial pages trace with admirable clarity the arrival of modernism in the urban centres of Montreal and Toronto, setting the context for Borduas's *Refus Global* manifesto of 1948 and the formation in the early 1950's of Ontario's Painters 11. Subsequent chapters are devoted to the fortunes of post-painterly abstraction in French and English Canada, the advent of modern painting in the Maritimes and the West, and the emergence of non-figurative sculpture throughout Canada in the 1960's. After a brief detour, during which the authors consider the nature of Canadian realism since the war, and what they choose to term "alternative modes" — installations, video, performance art, and photography — the volume concludes with two long chapters that survey in tandem the achievements of "post-modern" Canadian sculptors and painters. It is, all in all, an ambitious undertaking, and we should not be surprised if it is only partially successful.

The book is most useful when it provides an historical overview of a particular period, movement, or group of artists, and is strongest in its opening chapters where its subject matter yields readily to such an approach. Particularly telling distinctions are drawn between the nature of non-representational painting in Montreal in the 1950's, tied to a series of position papers and calls to action, and the determination during the same period of many Ontario artists to hold their work apart from aesthetic proclamations. The authors are especially adept at evoking the "feel" of both communities through passages that throw a highly personal light upon the period: Borduas, the radical, confessing his scepticism over the simplistic equation of art and social purpose in the murals of Diego Rivera, or an embittered Jack Bush recalling from the perspective of some thirty years his frustration and anger at the stranglehold maintained on Canadian art by the Group of Seven and its followers. Valuable insights are also offered in the vol-

ume's discussion of the ways in which Canadian artists transformed their non-Canadian sources into parts of a new visual language — or at least dialect. The very different impact made by Barnett Newman and colour-field minimalism upon painters working in Montreal, Toronto, and on the prairies is nicely set out, as is the split between "organic" and "formal" sculpture in post-war Canada, a division that is traced back to the rival camps of Brancusi and the Russian Constructivists.

It is when the authors move towards the present, and especially when they leave the familiar territory of Montreal and Toronto behind, that their chart of the aesthetic terrain seems less a map than a tourist's itinerary of not-to-be-missed items of interest. Sometimes this randomness appears in unlikely combinations of disparate artists, as in the volume's chapter on "The Maritimes, Modernism, and the West," a kind of mopping-up operation for places that do not happen to be either Quebec or Ontario. More often it takes the form of fragmentation, as artists are pulled from their immediate social or aesthetic contexts to be considered generically with fellow workers in a common style or medium. It is, for example, very difficult to get the same sense of place or region on the prairies that the authors provide for Montreal and Toronto, when painters like Perehudoff, Rogers, and Lindner appear in the grab-bag chapter noted above, Kurelek in a following unit with the post-war realists, and sculptor Joe Fafard some sixty pages after that tucked away with other workers in ceramic. Nor does the volume's organization always allow for the assessment of the *oeuvre* of individual artists. When, for instance, a sculptor like Murray Favro creates both mixed-media installations and free-standing objects we find that we must refer to two widely separated sections of the "Recent Sculpture" chapter for quite independent accounts of his work. Perhaps, though, the most curious performance in the book is its final section on contemporary painters, where in an attempt, one supposes, to be comprehensive, the authors present a dizzying whirl of names and works, many virtually without comment. A single eleven-line passage on page 290 is the only "discussion" provided for nine "post-modern" artists whose works are reproduced on adjacent pages. It is in this same section that the authors deliver a sharp slap on the wrist to the present generation of Canadian neo-expressionists, cautioning them against the dangers of transplanting non-indigenous styles. The tone is remarkably similar to that of a 1927 passage from *The Canadian Forum* cited by the authors at the outset of their survey, in which it is solemnly argued that "abstraction is not a natural form of art expression in Canada." The wheel apparently has come full circle.

* * *

Adopting (as its title suggests) a musical form as its method of organization, *Glenn Gould: Variations* gathers together some twenty-one essays by different hands, all celebrating the genius of the late Glenn Gould. The individual approaches vary widely, from Joseph Roddy's popular *New Yorker* profile, to Edward Said's analysis of Gould's "contrapuntal vision" and the philosophic musings of William Littler on solitude and its role in the creative process. The collection happily makes way for a number of pieces by Gould himself, including a highly readable account of Bach's fugal writing, and the complete text of "Glenn Gould's Toronto," prepared for John McGreevy's admirable *Cities* television series. Yet impressive as some of these "handlings" are, what is most remarkable about the volume is its creation of an

appropriately polyphonic unity that is considerably more than the sum of its individual voices. As we encounter in essay after essay the familiar eccentricities of the book's subject — the gloves, muffler, oversize coat, obsessive hand soaking, slouched piano posture, and the like — they begin to seem less the quirks of an idiosyncratic personality, than integral parts of a creative being of incredible consistency and integrity. By the time we close the volume, Gould's decision to abandon his concert career at the very height of his powers becomes an aesthetic and moral imperative dictated by both the artist's knowledge of his own working methods, and a firm belief in a technological future that had simply made public performance obsolete. That Gould was able to transform so many of the instruments of twentieth-century technology — the microphone, tape recorder, radio, television, and telephone — into the means for maintaining a "creative solitude" that paradoxically enabled him to communicate with his public must be seen as at least a partial vindication of his vision. It is only to be regretted that a volume that captures this so well should be marred by too casual an attitude towards documentation. Of the nine essays previously in print original dates of publication are supplied for only two, one of the book's contributors is inexplicably omitted from the "Notes on Contributors" section, and no cross-index is provided for the "Discography": R. Strauss's *Ophelia Lieder*, Scriabin's *Two Preludes*, *Three Scarlatti Sonatas*, and C. P. E. Bach's *Sonata #1 in A Minor* all have their *single* entries under "Gould" because they were released as parts of the *Glenn Gould Jubilee Album* of 1980! One might also quarrel with the practice of using titles as they appear on album jackets, without making any attempt to impose consistency upon potentially confusing material. How many members of the popular audience for whom this book is apparently intended are likely to know that Morawetz's *Fantasie* and *Fantasy in D Minor*, recorded by Gould in 1954 and 1966 respectively, are one and the same piece?

JOEL H. KAPLAN

LES VOIX DE MONTREAL

CLAUDE BEAUSOLEIL, *Une certaine fin de siècle*. Eds. Noroit, n.p.

JEAN CHAPDELAINE GAGNON, *Essaime*. Eds. Noroit, n.p.

PIERRE NEPVEU, *Mahler et autres matières*. Eds. Noroit, n.p.

RICHARD PHANEUF, *Ille*. Eds. Noroit, n.p.

LE DERNIER LIVRE de C. Beausoleil est un recueil volumineux de près de 350 pages, ce qui est rare en poésie. "Je ne suis que celui qui parle comme malgré lui" nous révèle-t-il soudain. "Je parle comme si c'etait la fin. La fin des illusions (. . .). Je sens qu'il faut que je parle. Que j'inonde tout de mots (. . .). Qui donc veut me faire taire." Ce ne sera certes pas aujourd'hui la fin du flot verbal du poète le plus volubile que le Québec ait connu. Il parle. Il écrit. Dans la crainte que son inscription ne soit jamais assez profonde, que son passage ne soit pas assez remarqué(cable), "quand tout vacille et que le temps déferle sur tout ce qui dicte un tracé." Tout se passe comme s'il y avait urgence de tout dire avant *Une certaine fin de siècle*.

Cependant, on est loin de la certitude quelque peu dramatique de *la fin* mais d'une fin quelconque, "biographant le lugubre/empêche," "rassemblant nos fictions / une plainte alangui / dans la manufacture moderniste." Beausoleil prend le parti de la rêverie plutôt que celui du rêve et, sur des rythmes bien accordés, il nous scande avec aisance "le

désir des bibliothèques," il multiplie les citations et les dédicaces, comme pour se rappeler avant une certaine fin la faim d'amitié et d'échange que rend possible, semble-t-il, le divan de l'imaginaire — puisqu' "il y a toujours de l'écriture qui file entre les corps" — , il nous raconte à l'abondance les nombreux voyages qu'il a fait, les musées qu'il a visités, les rencontres, les reconnaissances, les connivences culturelles que l'écriture retient et sauve de la menace constante de l'éparpillement et de la perte, de la fuite et de l'oubli.

On comprend mieux alors cette insistance à parler de l'écriture, surtout quand "écrire devient une question," je ne sais trop laquelle? — mais je sais qu'il est toujours beaucoup question d'écriture chez Beausoleil, partout, des "secousses du souffle," de "la passion rythmique," "à la page suivre l'agonie mythique du sens," la "freetextecity," "on avance," on voyage de ville en ville, de livre en livre, "on dépasse le temps," "page, corps & anecdotes," l'espace blanc appelle l'écriture, le texte prend la relève de tout et se fait faussement barbare, amoureux même, "phrases du corps aimé," etc. Beausoleil ne bavarde pas. Il parle et à s'écouter, il s'écrit. Une vraie fureur de vivre et d'écrire, en ville, en Amérique, de s' "induire de fiction," pour le meilleur et pour le pire.

J'ai beaucoup aimé "La tenue du décor," là où la parole joue de l'écriture et vice versa. Ailleurs, il y a parfois trop de complaisances et j'ai du mal à me laisser bercer par les retombées disparates du "palmier sémantique," fussent-elles "la rumeur de la ville" ou la dérive du sens sur le corps de la plage.

Cette dernière expression, "le corps de la plage," appartient à Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon qui, dans le no. 125 de *la NBJ*, publiait un texte du même titre. Ce même texte se trouve de nouveau dans le dernier recueil de Chapdelaine Gagnon, *Essaime*, sous un autre titre, moins intéressant selon moi: "Corps androgynes." Ce texte n'est pas le plus original parmi ceux de *Essaime*, mais comme il est publié pour la seconde fois et qu'il apparaît en plein centre de recueil, je m'y attarderai quelque peu.

"Au hasard des blessures, des lignes prennent sens, des silhouettes se démarquent, mais sans vie. Calligraphie (. . .) qui ne se laisse pas lire, se refuse à un sens. Des lettres, comme des corps chiffrés, se cherchent une langue." Cette citation d'une partie du dernier paragraphe convient bien aux cinq dessins de Denis Demers, même si ces derniers auraient pu ne pas être reproduits parce qu'ils sont ternes, in-signifiants, inutiles, n'ajoutant rien à la valeur "poésie" des textes ici rassemblés. Cette citation s'accorde bien aussi, dans le sens de bien s'entendre, avec ce qui me semble le projet le plus fondamental de Chapdelaine Gagnon, celui d'écrire des récits qui n'en sont plus tellement l'écrivain pratique un brouillage systématique au niveau des acteurs, dont l'existence est toujours problématique, dont la parole est une énigme, dont les coordonnées spatio-temporelles sont brouillées, les programmes narratifs amorcés mais aussitôt redoublés, repliés, empêchés, surtout dans les premiers textes du recueil, ceux de la première partie intitulée "Enigmes," beaucoup plus réussis et convainquants que les monstres féroces et vengeurs de "Exils" qui exploite la veine fantastique.

Les textes d' "Enigmes" sont plus subtils, très bien maîtrisés: "A quoi bon revenir sur soi-même et sur elle, à quoi bon s'arrêter? Mieux vaut continuer, recommencer. Mieux vaut refaire, ailleurs peut-être, notre histoire. Vous n'en serez pas dupes. Nous non plus." Ce clin d'oeil au lecteur cristallise la nos impressions et notre inconfort à voir le narrateur raconter des départs et des retours d'une femme imaginée(aire), "essaim de

déviance," qui fait comme si elle commençait et/ou terminait quelque chose, disait et/ou taisait, par quels yeux? par quels lieux? avec en miroitement le double d'Orphée et d'Eurydice. "Le jeu infiniment pourrait se poursuivre, qui sait? (. . .) Elle fait toujours comme si. On n'arrive jamais à savoir ce qu'elle parade (. . .). Et qu'avait-on à croire (. . .)? Cela ne fait pas sens; cela contre le sens, à ne rien dire." Sous le jeu des apparences trompeuses, il n'y a ni corps ni miroir, pas même une histoire, un "monde à la ligne, à la limite du réel."

Toute la deuxième partie, "Plaies d'Il," poursuit ce questionnement, cette traversée de l'énigme, mais d'une manière plus atténuée, plus cérébrale peut-être; le narrateur joue à l'égaré, à l'écart, en fuite, en chute contrôlée, ce "fil glissant enfin dans le chaos." La partie centrale, "Corps androgynes," renchérit avec un mode d'écriture par trop maniéré et qui, par le fait même, ne parvient pas à gagner la connivence et la conviction du lecteur: "Qui reconnaît ici présence entre les marges des mots étouffés, des paroles sanglées? Susurrements qui entre tant se tendent et tendent entre tout à se redire, à se comprendre (. . .). Qui vous a tue qui aujourd'hui déjà manque à vous étreindre, vous démembrer?" Ce maniérisme cède la place avec "Exils à un fantastique féroce, avec sa moralité évidente et ses sacrifices sanglants à des dieux androgynes s'entre-dévorants et coulés dans le bronze. La chair de poule ne me vient pas sur ces "dos d'or," et même le narrateur, dans "la liseuse," vient rompre le charme de cette toile bouleversée(ante) et habitée par une tempête de cris, en nous disant que la "voix" n'est que celle d'une liseuse dans son lit, un roman sur les genoux, et qui crie à gorge déployée: Justice! Justice!

On y reconnaît parfois le souffle et la voix de "La ville tuée" d'Anne Hébert et de certains autres textes colériques de cette époque, habités par des monstres atrophiés. On y reconnaît parfois aussi le fantastique devenu monnaie courante de la bande dessinée, surtout dans "La sentence." Il est possible que ce soit à partir de ce seuil, après "Pages androgynes," que je deviens un mauvais lecteur pour Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon. Je garde la nostalgie des impressions fugitives . . . des deux premières parties du recueil. Pour le reste, je pourrais le citer de nouveau: "Il prétend qu'on n'a pas su lire et qu'on a tout faussé, qu'on n'a rien deviné entre les lignes, qu'on a le regard court et tronqué. Il continue de croire, d'affirmer et de clamer que sous les mots les plus simples (. . .) se trament des sens que nous falsifiés."

La dernière partie représente une sorte de galerie de femmes quelque peu inquiétantes, aux prises avec le double, l'androgyne, l'incertitude du gain ou de la perte de la "croyance," de l'existence même. Le titre est fabuleux "Mal(e) essaimé(e)" et toute réalité ne présente plus, qu' "un ENDOS." Le livre retrouve ici l'intérêt et la qualité de l'écriture que je signalais à propos du début. L'essaim est vivant.

Le lyrisme de Pierre Nepveu est, lui aussi, suprenant de vitalité. Depuis ses premiers recueils, sa voix ne cesse de grandir et de s'imposer dans le champ de discours québécois. Son *Mahler et autres matières* l'amplifie encore davantage, jusqu'à l'intolérable parfois, "les pages où quelque bonheur / pressait le corps / de livrer ses sources / ami toujours vert." Oui, la voix est encore verte, "dans la chair et l'encre," même dans la démesure qui risque de tout bouleverser, de tout rompre: "Si lointaine et aveugle, / elle (la voix) me veut effondré / au milieu d'elle."

Nepveu inscrit une obstination. Son écriture n'est hachurée qu'en apparence. Sa phrase est complète, parfois très longue, cascade d'impressions que si su-

perposent comme des ajouts à une expérience sans cesse "reprise": "ma vie / enfin tenue pour entière (qui ne me fera jamais trop mal"; "Je me soumets / aux avances du désastre," "comme le livre où l'on / se couche, invivable réel / d'une journée dans la gorge." Cette rêverie de la voix envahissante parcourt et charpente toute cette dernière partie du recueil: "Le solitaire en automne." Son obstination et la réussite de son travail, c'est de parler dans la voix et de garder l'écoute. Je n'aime pas cette manière trop arbitraire de couper le vers, sans nécessité rythmique et sans effet sémantique percutant. Par contre, en-deça de cet agacement, j'entends une voix, celle d'un solitaire "brassé dans (ses) noirs pour ne pas périr, / mangé pour mieux être," un solitaire qui impose un ton et une revendication qui, loin d'être toute tournée sur elle-même (puisque "Le moi / n'est pas intéressant. / Ni son bonheur. / Encore moins son malheur") s'élève sans hargne jusqu'à la critique sociale et politique avec des textes comme "L'humeur perverse," "Topographie," et "Plébiscite." Ce ne sont pas ceux que je préfère mais ça rompt efficacement le ron-ron rhétorique des corps-textes et des plages-pages auquel nous ont un peu trop conviés les poètes de ces dix dernières années au Québec. Nepveu garde la question ouverte dans un très ferme "Eloge de la poésie": faut-il que nous prenions aux sérieux le malheur de ce rongeur de crayons qu'est le poète?

C'est pourtant la première partie du recueil qui lui donne son titre: *Mahler et autres matières*, cet apprentissage, à la fois violent et rieur de la délinquance poétique, du délire poursuivi et redouté, cet apprentissage d'un chant nouveau et de la solitude: "je ne chantais plus que comme un vent privé d'arbres," condamné à éprouver sans cesse les mêmes peurs, jusqu'à l'épuisement, jusqu'à l'abdication, jusqu'à la découverte subite de sa "musique" — je parlais plus haut d'une voix, la découverte de l'anecdote, du sensible, de la texture, des qualités du monde, jusqu'à la folie presque, tel un "chien fou" sollicité par mille et un jeux à la fois: "Seul ma musique se manifestait, enragée, publique, me prenant pour son homme, moi qui me croyais mort," "comment croire / cet enchantement qui m'arpente, ma voix / déshabillée à l'aube de la salle de bains / soudain captive de l'allegresse comme / d'une syntaxe qui japperait des mots / toute une époque pour y apprendre à vivre." Telle est la trame et l'orchestration intime.

Je n'ai pas entendu de pareils accents ni constaté une telle maîtrise de l'écriture depuis bien longtemps. Je laisse le lecteur poursuivre l'écoute de Mahler, ce "souffle qui a connu / le fond du corps."

L'*Ille* de Richard Phaneuf m'a paru un recueil un peu trop obscur pour que je le traverse et retraverse à volonté. C'est dommage — pour qui? On se retrouve pourtant devant des formes d'écriture assex "modernes," quoiqu'avec une faible pratique des blancs, une scancion déroutante, une phrase très elliptique. Voilà un recueil qu'il conviendrait de glisser sous la bannière de la "nouvelle écriture" soustenue par *la NBJ*. En deçà du discours de ralliement, la lecture est malheureusement bien laborieuse et le poète bien exigeant pour des lecteurs déjà peu nombreux. Même le tératologue sémioticien formaliste que j'ai déjà été a eu un mouvement d'hésitation dès les premières pages. La syntaxe est pourtant là, intacte, comme un fond de parole. Et pourtant, "je suis devant ma phrase / comme devant un calvaire."

> mes douleurs baignées
> dans l'amniotique de l'alphabet
> corps commis
> ma santé blanchit
> au fur et à mesure
> qui l'assiégé prend texte

C'est ce que l'auteur appelle "faire que

nous habitions nos plaisirs," "nouveau risque" à partager avec cet autre féminin qui est partout présent et grâce à qui l'on apprivoise le "nouveau visages des mots." Décidément, ce recueil va finir par me plaire. Je me surprends à le parcourir et à me laisser séduire, même par les illustrations de l'auteur qui me paraissent, ici, sobres et très évocatrices sous leur figuration estompée. Au fils des pages, le corps-texte tant évoqué durant les années '70, le "poème couché," le "corps épelé," la prosodie bridée des spasmes et des passions, "les caresses d'une écriture," voilà vers quels lieux de rêveries et de réflexions nous convient Richard Phaneuf, "ce corps dans la boîte aux lettres" et/ou cet "homme du corps de l'écriture." Serions-nous au seuil de la parodie?

Que conclur? Pour être bref et pour jouer le jeu des préférences textuelles, la palme me semble revenir au recueil de Pierre Nepveu, pour le lyrisme contenu, la simplicité, l'humilité, et la force vibrante qu'il communique:

> La plaine est une mer,
> autour de Montréal, mai
> me mange de ses fleurs,
> ses pommiers sur une pente
> imprévue, à Saint-Hilaire
> où je me couche dans un accord
> humain, une passion
> qui boit

ROBERT GIROUX

READING PLAYS

ANNE CHISLETT, *Quiet in the Land.* Coach House, $7.00.

MAVIS GALLANT, *What Is To Be Done?* Quadrant Editions, n.p.

ANNE CHISLETT'S VERY FINE PLAY takes its title from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist resolution to become "quiet in the land" in order to escape both Catholic and Protestant persecution. The Amish community which Chislett recreates so successfully struggles to remain quiet in the land in southwestern Ontario during the First World War. How well the play succeeds on stage I can only guess (I'd guess very well — it won the Chalmers in 1982 and the Governor General's Award in 1983); on the page, it reads as a powerful and compassionate exploration of the Amish community's embattled condition in Canada at a particularly charged moment in history.

Chislett has taken admirable care not to simplify character or context. Her Amish are not cut from cloth; they represent complex human beings responding to complex situations. The play's conflicts arise from, illuminate, and are resolved — sometimes tragically —in the development of character, and a penetrating view of the Amish way of life emerges as Chislett subjects her characters to the temptation of ambition, the strictures of rigid familial and social constraints, the stern demands of faith, and the impassioned impulse to rebel against faith misapprehended. These internal tensions are subsumed in the tensions between the Amish and the larger world, where registration and conscription summon loyal Canadians to their duties.

Two Amish families, the Baumans and the Brubachers, dominate the action. Yock Bauman rebels against his pious, widowed father Christy, who is ruled by blind adherence to his dead father's rigid version of faith. Christy's mother Hannah, who presides over two generations, dies and leaves Christy utterly adrift, as unyielding as bishop of the community as he is to his son. Yock flees father and faith to join the army, realizing his mistake too late as he looks down on a dying German he has bayoneted. Ironically, Yock becomes a Canadian hero, but he is lost to his own community. His father's nature, the nature of his own insight, and above all Chislett's refusal to opt for simplistic or sentimental resolutions pre-

vent the play from lapsing into a variation on the prodigal's return. Yock has lost his love, Katie Brubacher, and Christy is in the process of losing his church because he has failed to minister to the community's needs as he has failed to minister to his son.

By way of instructive contrast, the Brubacher family lives more fully engaged with the day-to-day realities of war fever, conscription, and the pressures exerted by the modern world at large. They are attracted to the "devilish" temptations of technology — telephones, tractors — but also firmly grounded in their faith. Zepp Brubacher is a more moderate, more reasonable, more compassionate, more humane character than Christy, ministering to his family with a more temperate vision and a healthy leavening of humour. In Zepp Brubacher's vision, perhaps, lies the path to Amish survival as a community in the twentieth century. Chislett has given us a compellingly vivid, meticulously detailed recreation of a family's and a commuity's trials, triumphs, and failures of faith.

Mavis Gallant's *What Is To Be Done?* is another kind of reading experience altogether, and I suspect that it does not *play* as well as *Quiet in the Land.* But the comparison is pointless, just as it is pointless to say that Gallant's play *reads* better, which it does. What impresses immediately — this should come as no surprise to readers of Gallant's fiction — is her peerless command of language. The language of *What Is To Be Done?* is, first, marvellously supple, dexterous, nuanced, a finely honed cutting instrument which lays bare the inner workings of characters living through an instantly recognizable era — wartime Montreal, passionately involved (at a distance) in the Great Events Overseas, chronically underinformed about Them. But the play's language also conjures its own reality, its own sharply bitter, ironic, ultimately comic universe as Jenny, Molly, Willie, and Mrs. Bailey stumble through thickets of slogans, mouthing clichés, adopting political platitudes as social attitudes, forming and dissolving relationships as half-digested dialectic, preparing for postwar political action by passing on tattered texts (like Lenin's pamphlet, from which the play takes its title) half memorized, half mesmerizing.

The play opens with a display of language confused and confusing, as an "emphatic and cheerful" voice over the radio — it is August 1942 — announces the latest wartime news:

> . . from Vo-RO-nezh . . one moment . . allow me to correct that, please. From VO-ronezh to the Black Sea . .
> (Static)
> General von . . sorry, I'm having a little trouble reading the name. General *von* has reached the *Bock*. Let me just take that again. General von Bock has reached the Don.

From here on, the trials of character by language intensify, with the result that the play is above all *quotable.* Gallant's characters become what they say. Dialogue becomes gesture. Verbal indirection directs us through a comical pastiche of earnest political posturing to reveal, over and again, Jenny's bewildered naiveté, or the absurd pathos of Molly's life in limbo, waiting for her soldier-husband to return from overseas, telephoning her mother from various venues, in various accents, idioms, and poses, to ask after the baby and assure her that there are no men present. The man who *is* present in the first of the play's ten scenes is Willie, Glasgow socialist and poster-maker. Reputed to have fought against Franco, Willie has now come to bring the light of the revolution to darkest Montreal, where he instructs Molly and Jenny in the several "wise rules of political action." But witness the formidable task he faces:

MOLLY: Can you read what it says on the posters?
JENNY: 'No pasaran.' It could mean anything.

Typical of the play's corrosive treatment of characters' political commitments is Willie's bathetic regress: at the close of the play, Glasgow accent all but vanished, he has devolved into an up-and-coming advertising man, moved up from the bare and shabby room of the first scene to the slick, well-appointed apartment of the "well-heeled bachelor."

In effect, the worldview of *What Is To Be Done?* is created through Gallant's exposures of the era's tragic, hysterical, hilarious abuse of language — an abuse nowhere more comically, more poignantly dramatized than in Jenny's closing V-day speech, as she carries on a rambling, disjointed mono-dialogue with Molly's mother, with Jenny's hard-nosed editor Mr. Gillespie, with herself, and finally with the times themselves. Jenny's plaintive, earnest meanderings trace erratic paths across a language-littered landscape, coming to a hundred half-resolutions, each one devastatingly undercut by an ironic juxtaposition:

Mr. Gillespie said, 'What the coming generation needs is an iron hand.' Mr. Gillespie? It's Jenny here, from Appraisements and Averages. This is our first day.. the first day of the new era. I thought you'd like a nice little story to celebrate. Remember the series we ran? Towards a Better World? We're in it. A whole day in. Almost. So. Towards a Better World. There's a place here where they lock girls up and work them to death. Really, to death. They're locked up and they die.

As Jenny remarks in this closing passage, "we never had the right language." And so she must resort to the debris of fragmented homilies:

You're right. It is a new world. Down to brass tacks. Two and two make. Shoulder to the. A lot to be done. Problems facing. Yes. If people minded their own business, we'd all be a lot.

The play closes on Jenny's bravely repeated assertion that "it won't happen again" — with the two girls "sweetly singing the 'Internationale' " — even as the rhythms, the tone, and the general fragmentation of voice signal that "it" has indeed happened: the war is over, with no new era brightly dawning, and no-one quite sure what is to be done.

Gallant's play reads so wonderfully that I'm not sure I'd like to see it on stage, where I wonder if the action might not be overwhelmed by the beautifully sustained and serious play on language. Reading *What Is To Be Done?* is high drama enough for me.

NEIL BESNER

TRISTES MENSONGES ET ROMAN GAI

GUY MENARD, *L'Accent Aigu*. Leméac, $14.95.
GABRIELLE POULIN, *Les Mensonges d'Isabelle*. Québec/Amérique, $13.95.

LA PAGE-COUVERTURE du premier roman de Guy Ménard est accrocheuse, à l'image de son récit au rythme accéléré, au dialogue banalisé bourré de mots de passe et de lieux communs, truffé d'images excessives et pourtant vides comme de conversations d'initiés. L'initiation est ici celle du coup de foudre entre un petit Québécois frais débarqué à Paris et un jeune Français irrésistible mais chiant. L'aventure tient du tourisme intellectuel et du sexe libéré, tout en évitant soigneusement le *gai savoir* dont le narrateur et son amant aiment faire parade sans en assumer les premiers rudiments. Tout est à fleur de peau, au dernier frisson, à la moustache la mieux taillée et au jeans le plus moulant. Le vocabulaire accuse une fréquence très marquée des mots bander, draguer et baiser, ce qui ne suffit pourtant pas à faire des amours du narrateur un texte particulièrement excitant. Guy

Ménard témoigne d'une recherche constante de l'immédiateté du langage et de la vie, si tant est qu'une si lourde incidence sexuelle dans sa pose puisse être qualifiée de signifiante ou de vivante. Il arrive que l'écriture connaisse de courts bonheurs d'expression, mais *L'Accent aigu* reste un divertissement de ghetto et un document exhibitionniste. On y fait mine de dédaigner la justification pour décrire sans la marginaliser une réalité soi-disant libérée. Ainsi un jeune homme scolarisé (même un peu ethnologue, avoue-t-il) et homosexuel trouve à Paris les conditions requises à l'accomplissement de sa sexualité. Il ne fait que suivre deux générations de Québécois qui y allaient chercher une alternative, sinon un exutoire au patelin étouffant d'un catholicisme répressif. La couverture du livre (j'y reviens) consacre l'officialité de ce provincialisme bien portant en dépit de la libération *gaie*: on y voit la plaque toute neuve de la nouvelle Place du Québec du 6e arrondissement parisien.

> Je m'essaie aux corps de Paris. (. . .) je deviens caniveau, place publique, réverbère, égoût, gargouille de Notre-Dame; mon corps, tour à tour Champ-de-Mars et place de la Concorde, mon corps Pont-au-Change, ma bouche Halles, mon ventre Jeu de paume, mon cul Arc de Triomphe, mon sexe tour Eiffel, mon désir Gît-le-Coeur.

Gabrielle Poulin, l'auteure des *Mensonges d'Isabelle*, signe son troisième roman avec la parution de ce titre. La page-couverture ne ment toujours pas: l'illustration de Norman Pagé, d'une exemplaire débilité, montre l'image à demi effacée d'une fiancée couronnée de fleurs, tenant à la main le flambeau nuptial, regard fixe et visage exsangue. Un tel poncif n'a malheureusement aucune valeur caricaturale, la narratrice ne correspondant que trop exactement à la navrante maquette décolorée. Isabelle est une jeune fille comme on n'en fait plus et c'est heureux. Son drame de 200 pages est digne d'un téléroman. On a l'impression de lire des scènes qui s'effacent à mesure que l'on tourne les pages, hélas sans l'interruption d'aucun message commercial pour en poncteur l'insipidité.

Isabelle est la fille adoptive de parents bourgeois. Sa mère naturelle la hante vaguement, mais le souvenir en est trop imprécis pour nourrir la grande tourmente émotive dont son adolescence est avide. Elle est donc tout occupée d'un conflit larvé avec sa mère adoptive, Suzanne, et d'un amour passionné pour son frère adoptif, Daniel. Coupable de son ingratitude à l'endroit de Suzanne dont l'affection l'étouffe, Isabelle ne connaît que des velléités d'émancipation qui la livrent au cercle des images maternelles: sa grand-mère, ses tantes, une camarade religieuse qui suit des cours avec elle à l'Université. Isabelle étudie la famille dans le roman québécois, rédige une thèse, remplit des carnets, assiste au mariage de son frère bien-aimé et revit lyriquement les mille et une nuits de son enfance incestueuse! Tout cela dans une langue d'une élégante correction, soignée selon les meilleures règles de la composition comme on suppose qu'elle devait se pratiquer avant la grande débauche de l'écriture contemporaine. En somme, *Les Mensonges d'Isabelle* rendent le son plutôt décevant d'une assez fade vérité.

Ces deux livres sont sans doute, l'un par rapport à l'autre, ce que l'on peut trouver de plus éloigné dans la diversification de la production québécois. Autant Guy Ménard souligne sa voyante actualité, au moyen des références culturelles et des prescriptions d'une nouvelle conduite sexuelle probablement plus codée que la morale qu'elle refuse, autant Gabrielle Poulin manifeste la résistance des modèles et des structures familiales qu'on croit peut-être, à tort, trop rapidement enterrés. Sur un autre plan cependant, le rapprochement des deux textes

soutiendrait une fructueuse comparaison: la récente tendance de la prose québécoise à produire des textes destinés à la consommation commerciale plutôt qu'aux délectations élitistes des *happy few*.

REJEAN BEAUDOIN

PLAISIRS & COLERES

ALEXANDRE AMPRIMOZ, *Sur le Damier des tombes*. Editions du blé, $5.50.

JACQUES BRAULT, *Moments fragiles*. Noroît, n.p.

GUY CLOUTIER, *L'Heure exacte*. Noroît, n.p.

CELYNE FORTIN, *L'Ombre des cibles*. Noroît, n.p.

JEAN JONASSAINT, *La Déchirure du (corps) texte et autres brèches*. Dérives/Nouvelle Optique, n.p.

LOUIS LERICHE, *Plein soleil*. Prise de parole, n.p.

PLAISIRS ET COLERES, voila ce qu'offrent ces six livres de poésie. Plaisirs quelquefois légers, plus souvent graves, de ceux que suscite une parole vraie et belle, fût-ce pour dire l'angoisse. Colères aussi, face aux ahurissantes cruautés que les Blancs firent subir aux esclaves noirs, tortures massives que Jean Jonassaint dévoile et dénonce; colères encore face aux injustices et au mal de vivre d'une condition féminine qu'évoque Célyne Fortin.

Cette sélection de six volumes en comprend deux publiés chez des éditeurs hors Québec. *Sur le Damier des tombes* d'Alexandre Amprimoz enrichit le fonds des Editions du blé (Saint-Boniface) d'un bon livre empreint d'une nostalgie double, celle du "là-bas" et du jadis. La poésie d'Amprimoz comporte une recherche exigeante, en témoigne sa quête de "la vérité / un peu / plus / loin" et du "coeur des choses." A la nostalgie, se joignent les thèmes de la solitude, de l'exil, de la peur, et — source fondamentale peut-être de cette nostalgie — l'image de la femme autrefois aimée, devenue inaccessible, voire interdite. Certains poèmes comportent une musicalité qui les rapproche de la complainte.

L'hermétisme peut conférer au poème une profondeur accrue en amenant le lecteur à laisser résonner le poème en lui; plusieurs livres présentés ici offrent cet enrichissement. Hélas, le dosage n'est plus respecté dans *L'Heure exacte*, ouvrage que l'hermétisme envahit, au point de compromettre le nécessaire rapport dialogique entre le lecteur et le texte de Guy Cloutier, dont on retiendra néanmoins plusieurs vers de qualité, dont ces deux qui évoquent des corps "statues aux membres brandis comme des crayons / une encre vermeille coule dans nos regards."

Le deuxième volume publié hors Québec est *Plein Soleil*, de Louis LeRiche, paru à Sudbury. A des thèmes rencontrés ailleurs dans cette sélection — solitude, exil, mort, nostalgie, tristesse, angoisse, sentiment du vide, la femme, la poète, la poésie — s'ajoute un accent particulier sur l'errance et le chemin. Les nombreuses images du monde naturel se présentent dans le contexte d'une nostalgie qui suggère que l'apport positif de ce monde n'est plus; à ces images, s'opposent celles qui évoquent un cataclysme, voire l'apocalypse. Tel poème dénonce le néo-colonialisme en Afrique, tel autre la grande ville aliénante; plusieurs offrent des images insolites témoignant du ludisme de l'écriture.

Il faut lire *La déchirure du (corps) texte et autres brèches* de Jean Jonassaint, poète qui a le courage de dire l'horreur absolue, qu'on aurait cru indicible. Si ces vérités-là sont déchirantes à lire, combien plus encore devaient-elles l'être à écrire: on comprend que le texte de Jean Jonassaint a dû, tout au long de son écriture, déchirer l'auteur dans son coeur comme dans sa chair, et que son corps est dans son texte, vérité que signalent bien les parenthèses du titre. Ce

titre souligne aussi la problématique de l'auteur doublement déchiré entre deux cultures, l'une noire et haïtienne, l'autre blanche et québécoise — problématique d'une importance croissante dans une société québécois francophone de plus en plus polyethnique et polyraciale. L'écriture de Jonassaint révèle une belle maîtrise du rythme et une grande capacité d'invention verbale, celle-ci trop envahissante toutefois, sous l'impulsion sans doute d'un certain partipris ("JE NE PARLERAI PAS LE LANGAGE DES MASSES").

L'Ombre des cibles de Célyne Fortin porte le sous-titre "Histoire de mots" et offre deux parties, l'une intitulée "L'Histoire," l'autre "Les Mots." "L'Histoire" évoque et dénonce un passé encore présent à maints égards; "Les Mots" annonce le changement, la prise de parole, la libération (même si le livre se termine sur le ton de l'interrogation). Cette thématique, fréquente à notre époque, garde toute sa pertinence; aussi *L'Ombre des cibles* est-il un apport thématiquement utile. De plus, il est d'une écriture particulièrement réussie. A l'homme et au phallus répressifs de la femme, à l'oppression du corps-langue de celle-ci, succéderont la femme et le refus de cette répression — "Les mutantes soulèvent le décrêt des âges." Passé de répression et présent de lutte aboutiront à un avenir clair et sonore: "désormais nos filles échapperont / aux chasseurs," ces filles accéderont à "la lumière / d'une parole nouvelle."

Cette problématique de la parole signale une sensibilité aux faits le langage. Célyne Fortin exprime de façon simple, belle et émouvante la problématique de toute parole poétique: l'indépendance fondamentale des mots. D'où une inadéquation (partielle) incontournable entre visée expressive et langage poétique, inadéquation que la poétesse dit avec grande modestie à la fin du livre: "je les fais miens / et ils s'appartiennent / les mots." Elle le redit par une citation bien choisie de Jovette Marchessault; l'ensemble des cinq auteurs cités le sont avec beaucoup d'à propos, réalisation fort réussie de cette constante des écritures contemporaines qu'est l'intertextualité. Les quatre dessins de l'auteur écrivent fort bien, autrement, le sens fondamental du texte écrit.

Complémentairité et harmonie complètes entre art graphique et écriture poétique illustrent *Moments fragiles* de Jacques Brault — et pourtant, chez lui seul, les illustrations (onze lavis de l'auteur) se prêteraient-elles à une publication independante, possédant en elles-mêmes cette harmonique qui suscite le sentiment d'être en présence de la plénitude d'une oeuvre d'art accomplie. Tout comme le texte écrit. Le titre, *Moments fragiles*, et ceux des cinq parties du livre —"murmures en novembre," "amitiés posthumes," "vertiges brefs," leçons de solitude," "presque silence" — disent bien la thématique et le ton: la mort de l'amour, la solitude, le silence, le mal de vivre, le sentiment du vide, celui de l'irréalité là où rôde l' "ombre toute blanche," l' "ombre / de rien," celui d'errer sans but — "le chemin lui non plus / ne sait où aller"; le tout dans un univers de froid, de vent, de nuit, de pluie, de gel. Ce contenu dysphorique prend texte sans rien de larmoyant; au contraire, il y a un courage stoïque dans la discrétion de l'expression, dans la retenue du lyrisme. Poèmes et lavis sont d'une économie de moyens évocatrice de certains arts japonais, dont cet ouvrage s'inspire pour donner texte à une poésie à la fois contemporaine et classique, jamais facile, toujours limpide sans rien sacrifier de l'épaisseur du sens. Moyens sobres, parfaitement mis en oeuvre, d'où une prodigalité de beauté. Ces *Moments fragiles* se transmuent, pour le lecteur, en de longues heures de grâce.

NEIL BISHOP

MUSEUM & WORLD

KEN NORRIS, *The Better Part of Heaven.* Coach House, $8.50.

JANE URQUHART, *The Little Flowers of Madame de Montespan.* Porcupine's Quill, $6.95.

J. MICHAEL YATES, *Insel.* Penumbra, $7.95.

IT IS AGAINST the background of the South Pacific that Ken Norris maps his narrative prose and poetic diary, *The Better Part of Heaven,* which is the fifth book of his life-long *Report on The Second Half of the 20th Century.* Perhaps because I've been reading a fair amount on the parodic intent lately, I initially assumed *The Better Part of Heaven* to be parody since from the first poems there is a sense of futility, of vain attempt to conjure old ideals/ideas of going off to some exotic land in quest for the self. So many of the poems work their way towards heavily clichéd suspense: "it will be / so many days until we meet again, and then / who will we be, what awaits us?"

It becomes clear as the reading progresses, however, that the expanded scope of a text parodying itself in to a post-romantic journal that demystifies illusions and expectations of a romantic imagination is not the full intention of the author. True, he finally admits that nothing turned out the way he planned but the journey leading to this conclusion is not one that often reaches "poetry's most perfect magic," which, according to the afterword, is what the author needs to reach deeper inside himself and into the lives of others. There is some fine prose and poetry but on the whole the journal is laden with shop-worn language and symbolism. Norris claims he "values writing that offers itself as consciousness and definitely not as a well-constructed aesthetic object we should all learn to appreciate" and he adheres so strictly to this belief that his language rarely extends the limits of consciousness or expands the interpretive strategy of the reader. Time and again Norris tells us what art should be. Above all it should not "assure you you've been to the museum, but to the world."

Ironically Norris's points of reference seem less to be in the South Pacific than in what he already knows. Melville, Shakespeare, Leonard Cohen, Bob Marley, Somerset Maugham, movies, Poe's women, women who look like Cheryl Tiegs, women who don't quite look like Diane Keaton. There are many women in Norris's poetry. Those left behind, those met along the way, "fucking / but there hasn't been love or compassion," those with whom he "really ripped it up," those with whom he "never made it." And there is a great deal of girl watching. As a woman reading about women being watched, I was reminded of a comment by Geoffrey Hartman in *The Fate of Reading* in which he writes that too much reading is like girl watching — a simple expense of spirit.

Unlike Norris who prefers to "go to the world" for his poetry, Jane Urquhart has chosen a museum as the setting for her third book. The poems of *The Little Flowers of Madame de Montespan* hover in and out of the rooms and gardens of Versailles in the persona of Montespan who was for a while a favourite mistress of Louis XIV. They pause over catalogued items and saved artifacts like "loose fragments drawn into new configurations." They shift behind windows and over brocade coverings of baroque beds; they witness and conjure devious plots; they settle in glass coffins or the frozen ground under lifeless monuments and leafless trees of the carefully kept winter gardens. The six photographs of Versailles by Jennifer Dickson are very effective in both capturing and adding to the mood of the book.

The Little Flowers is in the same sleight of hand spirit as Urquhart's second book *False Shuffles*. Where it engaged the author's own history, *The Little Flowers* suggests behind-the-scene machinations of social life when the Sun King held court "dressed in a hundred diamonds." The games, costumes, and disguises prevalent in Urquhart's poetry serve less to conceal than dis/guise and capture the deceptive space, the absent revolving around the obvious. Historical fragments are gathered (like little flowers?) and through the author's imagination new configurations are drawn (a garden?). Dialectical tension between past and present, between historical characters and author makes it difficult to discern between voices, as in the Anonymous Journal "entries" where someone walking in the garden is making "new marks . . . new boundaries."

Within the artificial structure of the poem/garden/journal the reality of the subject is caught. As the trap of the poem/garden closes in, the subject matter is the only reality that lingers on. Where the theme of this book revolves around love (and hate) as means to the king, and the king as means to love; in fact love is presented to us less as a human reality than an historical construct organized around strategies of power. As Michel Foucault so brilliantly demonstrated in *The History of Sexuality*, it is a construct which still has far reaching effects today.

While I don't find Urquhart's poetry uniformly strong, there are some poems, such as "Le Roi S'Amuse," that draw me again and again:

The man who touches you
without love
. . . . .
he is the death
of the child in you
the beginning of dark
. . . . .
the mouth he puts to yours
contains a brutal statement
your limbs become machinery
to the limits he enforces
. . . . .
his breath remains
forever at your throat

remember him

Michael Yates did not have to alter his geography for *Insel The Queen Charlotte Islands Meditations* since he has used a northern setting for many of his books. And the North for Yates is less a place than a function. In the face of this vast absence, or concealed presence, it is necessary to add a measure which requires a long process of contemplation and musing over.

Thematically, *Insel* could be compared to his other meditative books, especially *The Great Bear Lake Meditations*: the emphasis on a fusion of inner and outer selves, on death, and on the laws of nature vs. the laws of man. But what impresses mostly is Yates's language. It is always much more or much less than what is perceived. In either case the perception can never be contained. To speak of language as consciousness only limits both since they could never escape the system of relations between signifying word and signified object. Neither does Yates seek to extend consciousness to its limits, but rather displaces and fractures the linear movement of the mind because "until he breaks his mind against it the absences exist and exist." Yates loves to stretch the point just beyond reach because it is precisely where language and perception do not meet that he experiences his most profound reality. The rupture between words and event is an occasion for imaginative freedom; "it is the thought gone dancing to celebrate . . . where the sea is seen only by ear."

Yates's innovative way of linking words is his tool to "forge in the foundry of silence." All three definitions of the word "forge" are at the core of his writing:

to form or shape; to imitate falsely; to move forward. His language shapes another reality that always leaves room for re-interpretation. Much of Yates's writing has been labelled as self-indulgent, private word play, and surreal, but for a reader who likes to take an active part in the act of reading, *Insel* makes you sit up and take notice.

LOLA LEMIRE-TOSTEVIN

SIFTING THE DROSS

JUDITH FITZGERALD, ed., *Un Dozen: Thirteen Canadian Poets*. Black Moss, $6.95.

GARY GEDDES, ed., *The Inner Ear: An Anthology of New Poets*. Quadrant, $6.95.

HEATHER CADSBY and MARIA JACOBS, eds., *The Third Taboo: A Collection of Poems on Jealousy*. Wolsak & Wynn, n.p.

IF GOD WOULD HAVE saved Sodom for the sake of ten righteous souls, how many good poets does it take to justify yet another Chronology of Canadian poetry? When the reviewer takes refuge in such philosophical riddles while reading page after page of over-inflated self-indulgence disguised as "poetic promise," the answer is probably still "one delightful surprise" and, mercifully, all three of these anthologies contain at least one saving grace.

Both *Un Dozen* and *The Inner Ear* proclaim themselves as "alternative anthologies," collecting poets outside of the mainstream and the establishment. Contrary to the cover blurb, Judith Fitzgerald's introduction to *Un Dozen* does *not* place "each writer within a relevant context and examine their (*sic*) respective strengths and reasons for their inclusion." Although she suggests that her selection "cannot fail to raise questions" about its logic she does not satisfy them. Her rationale is mostly negative: the volume does not have a "formula"; the writers are not "representative"; they do not fit into any category or share the same themes, settings, or concerns. According to Fitzgerald all they have in common is their obscurity and their potential but, even here, Reaney is an unexplained anomaly and five of the others are not so obscure after their appearance in *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*.

Each part is introduced with a photograph, bibliography, and a biographical-critical note. Since the poets are relatively unknown, the critical statements are welcome but are too short and often careless and confusing. The selections from each poet are not quite the "generous sample" claimed by the editor, but an average of four poems and five pages per author.

What about the poets she has chosen? To some extent this becomes a matter for subjective judgement. George Amabile's poems have a terse narrative line; his detailed descriptions match his excessively unpleasant vision. Marilyn Bowering reworks the trite feminist metaphors of sex as murder and men as killers, without Atwood's humour. David Donnell dresses his clichés in irony and parody, but they are still cheap cynicism. I find the poems by Gail Fox too inwardly obsessive and her images unrealized. Marty Gervais's "Star Pony" has a sweet, unpretentious nostalgia, but his "Maggie T" poems are silly and dated. sean o'huigin is represented by a multimedia "performance poem" but something obviously is lost in the print translation.

On the plus side, M. T. Kelly has an interesting range of imagery interweaving man and nature, moving from grotesque to pastoral. Mary di Michele's poems are poignant and lucid, her metaphors a delicate counterpoint. Ken Stange is represented here by individual poems with "short lines / quick rhythms / abrupt conclusions" and innovative metaphors. Fraser Sutherland displays his intelligent irony in "The Finches in

Faludy's Apartment." And I like the precise diction of Myron Turner's "Art Institute (Chicago)." But Colleen Thibadeau is the delightful surprise that redeems this volume for me. Her recreation of past lives is moving and meaningful. Her mythologizing of history counterpoints James Reaney's "Triads for John Richardson" and "Entire Horse," written with an intelligence and craft to which all these poets might aspire.

The Inner Ear gives a larger sample of each of its eleven poets. Geddes's introduction is also lengthy but not illuminating: complaints against the Canada Council, clichés about writing as "a political act" and generalizations about the "young poets" whose "verdicts" on contemporary culture are presented. There are, however, no critical comments about the criteria, organization, or individual poets in this volume, only brief biographies at the end.

The proportion of good poets in this book is smaller than in Fitzgerald's. Many of them practise intellectual pretentiousness without depth of feeling or meaning. St. John Simmons performs indecent assault on the reader with his images but the horror and eroticism are hollow. Jim Smith is a child of the modern media with a telephone fetish. His prose poems are too-clever clichés, occasionally saved by irony. Ross Leckie displays more variety of subject matter but his soliloquies of famous peaople are artificial and self-conscious. In John Barton's poems some conceits are inventive ("My Cellophane Suit") and some just silly ("Men Who Don't Cry"). Margo Swiss takes the prize for the most abstract and confused metaphors; even "After You Died," potentially moving, is rendered emotionless. Ronnie Brown's narratives of a carnival/freak show are interesting (if predictably melodramatic) but the slangy tone and diction, and the cheap aphorisms leave a sour aftertaste.

In contrast, while the existential quests in Ronn Silverstein's "Angelo-Blaank Letters" are not novel, they are communicated with intelligence and humour. Robert Billings's poem sequence juxtaposes horrific descriptions of torture and death with gentle domesticities to expose "the death of compassion" in our modern world. Geddes also includes excerpts from Ken Stange's *Bourgeois Pleasures*, a prose narrative with poetry. The prose is least successful — the persona self-indulgent and the wisdom too slick.

My two favourites in this volume are women, but their voices are not recycled Atwood. Susan Glickman says she writes out of "prolonged depressions," but her images are rich in reference and her metaphors vivid. Robyn Sarah has a refreshingly honest vision and humour. Add a virtuosity of musical phrasing ("The Cyclist Recovers His Cadence") and metaphors that grow organically ("The Umbrellas Have Shut") for a very accomplished poet.

If evangelistic anthologies heralding new poets are at least commendable, does anyone need a thematic anthology on *jealousy*? The editors claim it is "our Third Taboo," "after death and sex." I would be more interested in the other two. Fifty-eight Canadian poets have provided poems on jealousy concerning everything from chairs to lovers; sisters get a surprising number of votes (maybe not so surprising). Don Coles contributes a brief introduction ("It can lead to suicide, to murder, to poetry") and also one of the finest poems in the volume ("On Envying Two Dead Russian Lovers"). His count of excellent poems in the anthology — only fourteen out of fifty-eight — agrees with mine (though they may not be the same ones) and, again, they probably redeem this anthology by their presence.

BARBARA PELL

MACLENNAN & RICHLER

T. D. MACLULICH, *Hugh MacLennan*, Twayne World Authors Series, n.p.

VICTOR J. RAMRAJ, *Mordecai Richler*. Twayne World Authors Series, n.p.

IS IT POSSIBLE to produce an introductory survey of such an established author as Hugh MacLennan or Mordecai Richler which will be not only inviting and informative enough for a new reader but also in any serious way original?

T. D. MacLulich has the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with a career which is virtually complete (MacLennan is now in his 77th year). He can be more magisterial in summing up a lifelong accomplishment: *Each Man's Son* and *The Watch That Ends the Night* "represent the peak of MacLennan's achievement," the latter being the very "pinnacle" of his success; *Barometer Rising* and *Two Solitudes* are the "qualified success" by which MacLennan climbed to those heights, while the later novels, *The Precipice*, *Return of the Sphinx*, and *Voices in Time* are fallings away, essentially "lessons presented in fictional form" marred by "excessive didactism" and "superficial characterizations," though not without their own kinds of interest.

These emphatic judgements are not presented so nakedly, of course, but are suitably clothed in straightforward commentaries on the details of structure and character which can be helpful for readers who may eventually come to different evaluations. Here the survey nature of the book becomes most evident — Ramraj has the same problem with his treatment of Richler — as we get a good deal of description and paraphrase of the novels. But MacLulich is a shrewd and perceptive critic who is capable of fresh insights often all the more effective for their simplicity. For example, he chooses to treat *Barometer Rising* as a version of historical romance, and thereby to understand better the success of setting and event and the thinness of character typical of that genre. Similarly, his application of MacLennan's comment on the South African novelist Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* to MacLennan's own *The Watch That Ends the Night* offers a vivid way of seeing it afresh: as an attempt to show "the dynamics of goodness in operation." And the hint MacLulich throws out that MacLennan's *Voice in Time* and F. P. Grove's *The Master of the Mill* would bear comparison produces a whole new vista — each is "an ambitious attempt, undertaken by an earnest and sometimes ponderously didactic author, to define the principal forces shaping twentieth-century society."

However, the most striking aspect of MacLulich's study, and no doubt the source of its attractive gusto, is the single-minded thesis that runs through it. "My study," he says, "argues that MacLennan's writing was shaped as much by private imperatives as by reasoned responses to external political and social conditions." Put so generally as a corrective to the view of MacLennan as a quasi-official spokesman for nationalism, the proposition would apply to any author. But MacLulich intends it in a very specific way. He sees all of MacLennan's fiction as a working out of the "oedipal triangle." Again, when the thesis appears in general terms it is relatively unexceptional: "Unresolved oedipal tensions underlie a number of vividly rendered primal scenes scattered throughout MacLennan's fiction." The reader may well be stirred by a sense of recognition, but will he or she be prepared to take the leap to the view that, for example, the Halifax explosion in *Barometer Rising* "functions as an extended primal

scene, a magnified image of the child's fearful misunderstanding of the nature of parental sexuality"?

It is this same riding of a Big Bang psychoanalytical thesis which leads MacLulich to see the "pinnacle" of MacLennan's fiction, *The Watch That Ends the Night*, in such almost exclusively personal terms. He thereby narrows the relevance of a novel which tries obviously, indeed explicitly, to connect the private fates of its individual characters with the history of the age — the mortal threat of heart failure hanging over the fictional heroine and the awesome prospect of the Bomb facing civilization represent only the most conspicuous of MacLennan's deliberate parallels between "private imperatives" and "external political and social conditions."

Like MacLulich, Victor Ramraj has a double aim: to produce "an introductory survey" of Mordecai Richler's fiction, and to present a general argument: namely, that the 53-year-old Richler has always exhibited "an acutely ambivalent perception of life" and that "his ambivalence is the central and unifying factor in his work." Also like MacLulich, Ramraj pursues his thesis diligently through both the biography and the writing, discovering that both Richler and his fictional protagonists "constantly find themselves faced with situations in which they experience simultaneously opposed attitudes and feelings towards people, places or ideas. . . ." This doubleness with its biographical roots springs up everywhere to the critic's hand: in Richler's attitudes to being Jewish, in his response to the Germans, in his links with Canada, in his views of journalism, entertainment, popularity, and the seriousness of the art of fiction.

Ramraj's central critical idea is useful in understanding the nature of such important two-sided characters as Duddy Kravitz and Jake Hersh, as well as the conflicting responses of readers to them. And it helps to account for Richler's inability or unwillingness to maintain a consistent satirical tone: "Richler certainly possesses considerable talent for satire, but his ambivalence, reflected in so many of his protagonists with whom he is identifiable and through whose consciousness his novels generally are narrated, fosters an inquiring rather than a censorious approach."

But again, a thesis may narrow as well as enlarge a critic's interpretation. To see Duddy as a manifestation of his creator's "binary" nature ideally should not lead the critic to forget that the literary moment of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* was also the time of the "angry young men" — writers and protagonists — who, like Duddy, at once attracted and repelled their audiences, while representing powerful social statements.

These two critical books effectively accomplish one-half of the job they set themselves: to introduce and sum up the careers and literary achievements of their two authors in a clear, comprehensive and readable way. They would have been safer, but far less interesting, if they had not risked failure in the second half of their job: to offer essential re-readings of major bodies of fiction from the vantage point of single governing ideas. But it is this attempt that has turned two routine chores into the challenge of original literary criticism.

F. W. WATT

THE DIMMING OF INNOCENCE

TIMOTHY FINDLEY, *Dinner Along the Amazon.* Penguin, $6.95.

TIMOTHY FINDLEY IS A MASTER of artifice, and *Dinner Along the Amazon,* which gathers stories written over nearly thirty years, shows the range of his control of fictional crafts. But of artifice we have a great deal in these days of "creative" writing schools, where the techniques of writing are assiduously taught in a kind of despair over the scarcity of real creativity, and we have more than our share of journeymen who can turn a clever tale without the authority of imaginative power. Findley, who came into writing by hard and solitary traditional paths, learned his craft by long practice. And one finds in it not only a patiently perfected prose, a never-flawed inventiveness, a sheer joy in literary gamesmanship, a power of handling metaphor and almost obsessive image clusters, but also an imaginative authenticity that irradiates everything he writes, whether the manner is that of illuminated realism, as in the earlier childhood stories of *Dinner Along the Amazon,* or of stylized fantasy, or the kind of inspired parody which some of the later pieces share with his novel, *Famous Last Words.*

Perhaps, however, the most important division in *Dinner Along the Amazon* is that between the stories of childhood, which concentrate on the solitary truths of innocence, and those of adulthood, which exemplify the collective falsehoods of experience, with a section in between that shows how physical change and social pressures conspire to bring about the change between the two ages of man, as Findley in his simplified fictional division seems to see them.

The opening novella, "Lemonade," belongs to the same haunted childhood world as Findley's *The Last of the Crazy People,* and is at once moving and appalling in the same way as that early novel. It also is the story of a child awakening to the frightful realities of the adult human world. Harper Dewey is eight years old, born on the day after his father was killed at Caen. His mother is "a lady who lay in bed till nine o'clock every morning because of the night before." By the time the novella begins, Harper's relations with his mother have become no more than daily rites. He sits outside her door when the maid goes up with breakfast. When she has been awakened and has been made presentable, he is allowed into her room for a brief period. Then he is dismissed and left to the company of the maid Bertha, while his mother vanishes on mysterious errands.

This has been going on for years; the action of the novella is suddenly precipitated by a shaky note from Harper's mother asking to be awakened at ten o'clock. Then she fails to come home one night, and while Bertha seeks her wandering mistress, Harper begins on the series of quasi-magical rites that attend his initiation into the central reality of human existence, its terminability. He confronts Miss Kennedy, regarded by all the local children as a witch, and finds in her the good fairy. He spends a night of vigil in the two-centuries' old oak tree in his street, whose inner rings were formed when the Indians still roamed freely over the country. With lemonade laced with gin stolen from his mother's secret store he performs a kind of mass of reconciliation in which Miss Kennedy and the children exchange their various innocences. He sells the enriched lemonade in the hope of buying back the jewels his mother has sold to finance her drinking. But on a stormy night when Harper has a dream of war, she shoots

herself with his father's Colt revolver and his guinea pig drowns in its cage. Harper goes out and with the Woolworths' gems he buys decorates not his mother's coffin but the small animal's grave. Childish bewilderment and childish sorrow blend all deaths together in Harper's revelation.

> He tried to think, but nothing happened. Nothing.
>
> That was all he could grasp. Nothing. Everything was over — everyone went away — and finally you went away yourself.

Dark revelations shadow other tales set in childhood. In "War," a boy whose father is going to war is filled with an inexplicable anger, and symbolically kills the father by throwing a stone from a barn where he is hiding and knocking him out; we are not told whether real war makes the death real. In "Sometime — Later — Not Now" the incandescent brilliance of a girl dedicated to the idea of a career in music is dimmed as her sensibility fails to equal her ambition and she fades into bohemian futility and physical decline. But counterbalancing these instances of innocence destroyed by experience there are those strangely joyful tales of beings whose essential innocence is invulnerable, like the nursemaid in "About Effie," who is sustained by the expectation of a magical stranger who never comes, or like Loretta Lewis in the bittersweet "The People on the Shore," who has retained all her life the ability to see with a child's eyes and whose death seems, as it is watched by the narrator who has known her since childhood, to be a reunion rather than a departure.

The adult stories of *Dinner Along the Amazon* are those in which the artifice is most obviously displayed and imagination at times seems to waver before the brilliance of invention. They play with literary conventions, in the mocking laughter of high parody, as in "Hello, Cheeverland, Goodbye," or in grim irony, as in the futurist parable, "What Mrs. Felton Knew." They play with history in the same way as *Famous Last Words*, in the literary vignettes, "Daybreak in Pisa" about Pound in his prison cage, and "Out of the Silence" about Tom Eliot and his first wife Vivienne, in whch the borders of madness and sanity are sharply tested. And the final story, "Dinner Along the Amazon," is a sardonic comedy of manners in which the anger that is never far below the surface in Congreve and Wilde emerges in a manifestation of malign social futility. In the good sense there is a great deal of staginess about this story which reminds one of Findley's theatrical background.

By now there is no need to establish Timothy Findley's position as one of the best of Canadian fiction writers; he has achieved the success he deserves. But *Dinner Along the Amazon* confirms the variety of his moods and the versatility of his methods as it introduces us again into the luminous ambiance of what, in his Introduction, he calls "the world with which I have been obsessed for so long."

GEORGE WOODCOCK

FLEMING

GWYN MACFARLANE, *Alexander Fleming: The Man and the Myth*. Academic Press, $36.95.

THIS IS AN ADMIRABLE BIOGRAPHY of a medical scientist who remains as much an enigma almost thirty years after his death as he apparently was in his own lifetime. Well written, lucid, and rich in illustrative anecdote, it constitutes a fair and even affectionate appraisal of the man whom we have come to regard as the discoverer of penicillin and benefactor of all mankind.

Gwyn Macfarlane, himself a clinical pathologist of no little renown, appears

to have begun his task from a critical, even antagonistic stance towards his subject, as befits a biographer and self-confessed admirer of Howard Florey. Florey always felt that the public recognition accorded Fleming as the discoverer of penicillin was out of proportion to the significance of his actual contribution and that this tended to detract from due appreciation of the credit owed to others, namely himself and his co-workers, whose prodigous efforts established penicillin as a therapeutic agent.

Macfarlane records his own impressions of Fleming; he met him on a number of occasions prior to his canonization as the saviour of the human race, and found him oddly unimpressive, a taciturn, self-contained Scot, "oligophasic" in the memorable epithet of Sir Almroth Wright, with an appalling lecturing style. Macfarlane almost blames Fleming for lacking the communication skills which might have led to earlier and more complete appreciation of the significance of his work. The scientific world accorded greater honours to Florey than to Fleming, despite the universal public acclaim and adulation of the latter, and Macfarlane argues that this was a fair adjudication of their rival claims to proprietorial interest in pencillin. To Fleming went the popular fame, to Florey went the peer recognition, while each had to share the Nobel Prize with Sir Ernst Chain. Even then, the lion's share of the publicity went to Fleming, leaving his co-Laureates feeling neglected.

Macfarlane gives a succinct account and professional analysis of Fleming's research on the applicability of the antibacterial effect of the penicillium mould. Fleming was by no means the first to note this property in moulds and a large bibliography on the subject was already in existence before Fleming's original paper announcing his observations. Whether Fleming was aware of this or not is unclear, he made no reference to it in his paper, "On the antibacterial action of cultures of a Pencillium, with special reference to their use in the isolation of B. influenzae" which appeared in 1929 in the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. His good fortune, and ours, lay in the chance seeding of a culture plate with the very mould which exhibited the greatest *in vitro* antibacterial effect. Good fortune continued when Fleming recognized this as an event of unusual significance and potential, but ran out abruptly when Fleming noted the short half life of penicillin, the active principle of mould juice, when injected into healthy laboratory animals. He had observed that penicillin took four hours to kill mature bacteria *in vitro*, but failed to observe its more rapid effect upon immature bacteria. He did not proceed to observe the clinical outcome of injecting penicillin into animals already innoculated with susceptible bacteria because he had reason to expect it to be favourable.

Penicillin might have languished indefinitely as a means for the selective culture of *Haemophilus influenzae*, but for the intervention of Florey and Chain who, duplicating much of Fleming's earlier unpublished work, succeeded in going some giant steps further and producing the penicillin which revolutionized medicine.

Whence came Fleming's fame? Was it duly earned or was it the product of an astute piece of marketing by St. Mary's Hospital in search of patronage? Was it the result of Lord Beaverbrook's earnest quest to see credit where he thought credit was due, or of the British Ministry of Information's need of morale-boosting propaganda? Macfarlane's own views come as little surprise given his admiration of Florey.

This critical appraisal of the professional capabilities of a revered public

figure will seem iconoclastic to many. We live in an age when the debunking of legends and the demolition of heroes has become fashionable and retrospective wisdom makes pygmies of the giants of yesterday. Macfarlane's biography of Fleming is not unflattering, but tends to discount Fleming as an intellectual great, portraying him instead as a clinical bacteriologist of the first rank, the possessor of many sterling qualities, but lacking that stamp of genius which less discriminating biographers had imagined. Fleming himself believes that he was just lucky, but I do not think he went far enough. We are all lucky, lucky to enjoy the fruits of Fleming's life's work! Hero or not, Fleming was a remarkable man and this is an enthralling account of his life.

J. A. MCSHERRY

THE MYTH OF THE MAJOR

DAVID STOUCK, *Major Canadian Authors: A Critical Introduction.* University of Nebraska Press, $22.95, US.

MAJOR CANADIAN AUTHORS is published by an American university press and appears to be intended to provide readers south of the border with an introduction to Canadian literature. This intent is shown by the final chapter, "Conclusion," which sets the chosen "major" authors within a wider context, and by the appendix entitled "Guide to Other Canadian Writers," in which more than seventy individuals are summarily discussed in eleven pages, some of them receiving less than thirty words of comment.

All this reminds me of the old English cricket games, which survived until World War II dislocated the class order, between "Gentlemen" and "Others." It suggests an artificial standard of excellence that evades real critical analysis and judgment. For, when one looks at the list of "major" writers Stouck has picked, one wonders in what their majority consists, and why they and not some at least of their contemporaries should have been picked to represent Canadian literature to foreign readers, particularly as Stouck's approach is essentially a historical one and the writers are presented as milestones on the journey of Canadian literature from early days until the present.

Why, one asks, is that stumbling giant Grove included, and neither Morley Callaghan nor Hugh MacLennan? Why Haliburton and not Leacock? Why is the one really good nineteenth-century novelist, Sara Jeannette Duncan, relegated to a four-line note in the appendix which does not even mention her fine Indian novels? Why is Layton given an essay, and Dorothy Livesay, whom many of us consider a better poet, six lines in the appendix? Stouck cannot get away with the explanation that this is a representative collection of examples from among Canada's interesting writers over the generations, since he announces his intention at the start as being to "introduce to a wide audience Canada's *most important* authors writing in English." (*My italics.*) Clearly he is not merely choosing Grove *instead of* MacLennan; he is putting Grove *above* MacLennan as more "important."

If Stouck had not created his historical framework, if he had not deliberately established a hierarchy of "importance," and had merely presented his essays as a random series on writers to whom he happened to be attracted, one would have had no grounds for objection. But as an introduction of Canada's most interesting writers to a foreign audience, this is a misconceived and misleading book.

Even by his own criteria, Stouck is inconsistent. Presenting this as a book on "authors writing in English," he includes Gabrielle Roy. While it is true that Roy is better known to English Canadians than any other French-Canadian writer, to place her in isolation among anglophone writers is the kind of tokenism I thought we had long outgrown. Either Stouck should have abandoned his quite legitimate intent to discuss writers in English alone and included other French-writing authors, or he should have left Gabrielle Roy to be the fine example of French writing she is without introducing her here as a translated author. Again, after telling us that his essays are confined to writers of "short stories, novels, poetry and occasionally drama," he proceeds, as his second author, to discuss that essentially autobiographical writer Susanna Moodie, without even making the attempt which some critics have done to prove that her fact is really fiction.

What essentially unites Stouck's book is a conservatism of taste and preference, and this, it seems to me, rather than any kind of "importance," is what explains his choices, and indeed his general approach. He is really a late member of the literary historical school, represented by Desmond Pacey and Carl F. Klinck, which has generally been replaced among critics by an approach that is at once more analytical and more aesthetically inclined. Clearly he is ill at ease with writing that is experimental and innovative, and it is significant that he often stresses the regressiveness of writers he approves; for example, he calls Alice Munro, with what seems to me scanty justification, "an essentially old-fashioned writer."

This preference for the "old-fashioned" certainly explains many of his choices between possible alternatives. Lampman, for example, was the Confederation poet who remained most attached to Romantic models, and Stouck picks him in preference to Duncan Campbell Scott, whose later verse moved notably towards modernism. He chooses E. J. Pratt, technically an extremely conservative writer, in preference to either A. J. M. Smith or F. R. Scott, who between them took Canadian poetry into the modern era. He picks Klein, with his strong Elizabethan echoes, rather than the more contemporary P. K. Page. Two of his other choices, Ernest Buckler and Robertson Davies, are both, in approach and technique, writers to whom the epithet "old-fashioned" would apply much more exactly than it does to Alice Munro. Given such an approach, it is not surprising that Margaret Atwood gets five lines (one more than Charles Heavysege) and Sheila Watson three lines among the also-rans of the appendix and that Timothy Findley is not mentioned even there.

Stouck's essential conservatism runs into his discussions of the writers included in *Major Canadian Authors* as well as into his choice of them. He is, it is true, given at times to wild and unsupportable claims. We are told, for example, that "Margaret Avison is known to readers as Canada's most intellectual and deliberate writer." More intellectual than Northrop Frye? More deliberate than Robertson Davies? And that "from among the many women writers who were published and enjoyed critical success in the 1970s, Alice Munro has emerged as the most accomplished artist." More accomplished than Marian Engel? Than P. K. Page? Than Audrey Thomas? Such evaluations are patently absurd, and seem all the more so when they are combined with the plodding explicatory manner, the heavy plot summaries and biographical asides, that characterize the rest of the text.

Judged by its own pretensions, *Major Canadian Authors* does not stand up to

examination. American readers deserve something less arbitrarily selective, critically maturer, and less dominated by that variant of the "great man" illusion which finds expression in terms like "major" and "most important."

GEORGE WOODCOCK

UT PICTURA POESIS

BILL BISSETT, *Seagull on Yonge Street*. Talonbooks, $7.95.

DAVID HELWIG, *Catchpenny Poems*. Oberon Press, $19.95.

RAYMOND SOUSTER, *Queen City*. Photographs by Bill Brooks. Oberon Press, $27.95.

ALTHOUGH ONE COULD HARDLY imagine three Canadian poets more widely differing in technique than Raymond Souster, bill bissett, and David Helwig, all three share in their most recent collections a fascination with the relationship between the word and the visual image. Raymond Souster's *Queen City*, published on the occasion of Toronto's sesquicentennial, is the product of Souster's collaboration with photographer Bill Brooks. Following the precedent of earlier poet-photographer collaborations (Ted Hughes's *Remains of Elmet* comes to mind, as does Al Purdy's *In Search of Owen Roblin*), poem and photograph face each other on the page, each art form illuminating the other. That this is indeed the artistic aim of *Queen City* is suggested by its predominant black-and-white design; photographs are exclusively black and white and most of Souster's poems appear in white on a black surface, emphasizing the mutually sustaining roles of the two arts. Occasionally, though, like Purdy and Waller, Souster and Brooks experiment with the superimposing of poetry on a photograph. The most effective instance of this merging of two forms occurs in "Old Mill Bridge," wherein Souster's memories of skating under the stone arch of the old bridge are located on the photograph, directly underneath the arch of the bridge.

Queen City is largely a reprinting of earlier poems, albeit not in the chronological arrangement found in *The Years*. Approximately three-quarters of the poems date from the 1950's and 1960's, though Souster has chosen a few from his 1947 volume *Go To Sleep World*, most notably "The Hated City," "Shake Hands with the Hangman," and the lovely lyric "Falling of the Acorns." In general, the quality of these poems is uneven (a judgment which applies equally well to the *Collected Poems*); one wonders, for instance, why "Milk Chocolate Girl" is so often reprinted — a poem whose unsettling ethnic undertones are regrettably unrelieved by Bill Brooks's accompanying photograph.

bill bissett's experimentation with language may seem light years away from Souster's poetry, yet *Seagull on Yonge Street* reveals several common concerns. Like Souster, bissett is aware of the constricting forces of the "electric citee" and like Souster, he chronicles the threat posed by the industrial world to the poet ("dont tell them yr an artist" is one example).

This collection reveals bissett exploring further the restlessness of those who feel themselves at odds with the dominant powers of a society. Earlier, in *pomes for yoshi* (1972), bissett had included among the love lyrics poems dealing with domestic troubles. In *Seagull on Yonge Street*, this need to find a place to live dominates the entire collection, in poems such as "last daze uv th hous "and "eclipse." At the heart of this concern with the "house" is a vision of man as an alien in his larger home, the universe: "peopuls blatant powr surges set fire to / th hous onlee conflagraysyun . . . wher will we live killing mor oxygen."

If one of bissett's flaws is his tendency to sound the same note too often ("HELP ium being absorbed by th private sector" is overly clichéd), his evocation of childhood is certainly one of his strengths, particularly in "grade school in halifax." As for Souster, childhood is for bissett a time of wholeness before the fragmentation of our personalities sets in with age. As always, too, one finds in bissett an imaginative use of space and typography, as in "yello day," wherein the spacing of letters on the page recreates the impression of the sun peeping over the mountains at dawn. Other exexamples of bissett's concrete poetry, however, tend to induce not excitement or expanded vision in the reader, but weariness.

On the contrary, David Helwig's use of the visual element in *Catchpenny Poems* is never wearisome and often illuminating. The catchpenny print images do not merely accompany each poem (as too often occurs in Souster's collection). Rather, the image provides the point of departure for Helwig's sophisticated, energetic meditations. In "Fool's Head" and "Bow Pot," for example, Helwig explores the treachery lying behind the ordinary object, whereas in "Musick" and "An Organ" he examines the conflicting elements of logic and imagination. In formal terms, Helwig reveals a greater inclination to experiment; "Cross Keys" is written in a catechistic form and "Three Black Birds" becomes in Helwig's hands a richly suggestive allegory of the human psyche. In general, one notes a greater assurance in Helwig's poetry, in comparison with earlier collections such as *The Best Names of Silence* (1972) and *The Sign of the Gunman* (1968); less frequent are the occasions when one would desire a different word or line (particularly at the end of a poem). *Catchpenny Poems* is, in short, a work of maturity. LORRAINE YORK

ALTERNATIVES

RENATE USMIANI, *Second Stage: The Alternate Theatre Movement in Canada.* Univ. of British Columbia, $19.95.

CERTAINLY IT IS TIME FOR A BOOK ON Canadian theatre's alternate stage: how it came to be and developed, what was and is its essential character, the nature of its continuing contribution to and impact on Canadian theatre. The period Usmiani writes about — the late sixties and seventies — has been called the most important period in Canadian theatre history.

In the preface of *Second Stage*, Usmiani states that she has not attempted to be "complete," or to create a "reference work." Rather, her aim is to give "a reasonably accurate and balanced overview of alternate theatre in Canada, its evaluation and most representative manifestations." She begins with a chapter on the international context, on European and American historical precedents. This is followed by a chapter on English-Canadian theatre history, which is later matched by one on the alternate theatre movement in Quebec. Each of the remaining chapters presents a particular theatre group: Theatre Passe-Muraille in Ontario; Tamahnous Theatre and Savage God in the West; the Mummers in the East; and Jean-Claude Germain's Theatre D'Aujourd'hui in Quebec. The history, philosophy, and productions of these "pioneering companies . . . representative of developments in the major cultural regions," are discussed in detail. What links these groups to each other and permits the motion of a "movement," is summed up in the interpretation of the term "alternate." Alternate to what, one might well ask.

According to Usmiani, "Alternative theatre in Canada is definitely a phenomenon of the 1970's, a movement of

protest and rebellion against the newly arisen theatre establishment. Its emergence reflects the development of a new type of theatre consciousness, largely influenced by the European and American precedents." She itemizes the basic shared criteria:

> 1. Alternative theatre is produced by companies operating outside the theatrical establishment . . . This implies freedom of expression; it also implies poverty of means.
> 2. Revolutionary and experimental in its aesthetics.
> 3. Revolutionary in its social and political ideology.
> 4. Takes a different approach . . . and aims at . . . theatre physically and financially accessible.
> 5. Not necessarily based on the traditional author-director-script triangle.
> 6. In the Canadian context . . . Its emphasis on original works and the need to support Canadian playwrights constitutes a strong protest against cultural colonialism.

But this list only marginally applies to the English-Canadian theatre scene. For the community of theatre people operating here at that time her last item would be their first and, even at that, they were less nationalistic and idealistic and more straightforwardly committed to getting their own work on stage. As Tom Hendry puts it in *The Work*: "Various theatres were in existence and the one thing that they and the festivals, such as Shaw and Stratford, had in common was that they were based on imported work and classics . . . At that time, all of us in Toronto who were concerned with the founding of the Free Theatre were interested in having our own work and the work of people we knew produced." Even Paul Thompson, whose theatre Usmiani considers radically experimental, was not bound by avant-garde aesthetics. For him, as for the others, alternate status meant small theatres, limited means, and the continuing attempt to mount their own new works. Sometimes these were boldly avant-garde productions or, purposefully socially conscious and political; sometimes they were not. In short, what distinguished "alternate" from "mainstream" was, and remains, considerably fuzzier than Usmiani's definition. This is even more the case since the Canada Council has pressured the regional theatres to include more Canadian content. According to playwright Sharon Pollock: "The ambition of most alternate theatres that I've gotten to know is to become mainstream . . . The alternate label developed because the so-called alternate theatres did Canadian work. That is not a sufficient definition of alternate theatre anymore." What seems to have happened is that Usmiani has imposed on the country-at-large a definition of "alternative" derived from the *jeune théâtre québécois*, a group which she says did set itself up as a "deliberate alternative both to traditional theatre and to the more literary *nouveau théâtre québécois*." Therefore it can be seen as a second "thrust" — hence the book's title, *Second Stage*. Using the *jeune théâtre* as a model for the country would also explain Usmiani's emphasis on rebellion, her strict division between politically oriented companies and those more committed to self-development and psychological explorations, and the attraction to companies with manifestos, usually consisting of lists of opposites. But the ultimate consequence of Usmiani's taking the Quebec example as the national model and tending to equate "alternate" with "avant-garde" in her choice of particular companies, is that the entire undertaking is largely misdirected.

Chapter One, a potted version of the early developments of the avant-garde, turns out to be essentially irrelevant. Usmiani admits this herself, contradicting her own statement a few pages before: "there is no evidence that the leaders of the movement were aware of these antecedents at all." So why include

them? The discussion could have been limited to the American theatre of the sixties. And what should have been the most important chapter, Canadian theatre history, has glaring omissions or central issues given scant attention: the significance of the Massey Commission and the formation of the Canada Council in 1957; the creation of different levels of theatre — national, regional, civic — each with a particular mandate; the impact of the federal Local Initiatives Program and Opportunities for Youth Grants and the serious repercussions for the theatres when these were cut back; the impetus provided by the 1971 Festival of Underground Theatre; how the alternate theatres became established and the perils that came with success; the disconcerting slump in the late seventies; and, finally, the emergence of the alternate-to-the-alternate theatre, a whole new wave of fringe theatres, whose presence brings us up to the eighties.

Furthermore, since Usmiani's use of the *jeune théâtre* as a model determines which theatre companies she chooses to discuss in detail, Tarragon is dismissed as "fully mainstream," the peripatetic John Juliani of Savage God is given extensive treatment, and there is no mention at all of alternate theatre in English Quebec, the New Play Centre in Vancouver, the Globe Theatre in Edmonton, Open Circle Theatre, Redlight Theatre or NDWT, and a host of significant others. In summary, then, one has to conclude that this is a disappointing book. To a teacher of Canadian drama, or an active theatre-goer, the sections on individual companies are informative and often insightful, especially the chapter on Theatre D'Aujourd-hui, but as a book on the alternate phenomenon, one is left with no clear sense of a period which was the most lively, varied, and complex in Canadian theatre history.

CYNTHIA ZIMMERMAN

PROCESS & STASIS

GEORGE SWEDE, ed., *Cicada Voices: Selected Haiku of Eric Amann (1966-1979)*. High/Coo, $8.50.

GEORGE SWEDE, *Night Tides*. South Western Ontario Poetry, $2.00.

JONES, *Jack and Jill in Toronto*. Unfinished Monument Press, $3.00.

ROBERT SWARD, *Movies: Left to Right*, S.W.O.P., $2.00.

IGNORING FOR THE MOMENT that both Chinese and English rely on word order to make sense, it is easy to imagine the advantages of the emblematic character over the abstract word. Whereas the former carries the freight of symbolic logic and pictorial abstraction, the latter is reduced entirely to arbitrary ciphers. This fact poses an immediate problem for the English haiku poet: how to render *process* — the intuitive moment or zen experience of "suchness" — in a relatively static form. Indirection — use of metaphor, symbol — is anathematized by all who adhere to the most basic "rules" of the game.

For Eric Amann, the ideal is to capture the "ah experience" or "a mood of serene calm and beauty." The form may vary from the traditional three-line, 5-7-5 syllable count to the one-line portrait; it may even be stretched to include the "mutational possibilities" of senyru, vertical, visual, and sound haiku. All are included in Swede's selection.

The majority of the poems present a considerable range of nuance within traditional subject matter. The reader will find everything from Buson-like pieces to comic senyru to variations in concrete using the asterisk, zero, double quotation marks, and parenthesis keys. The latter, for the most part, are fresh and effective. The imagery is focused and specific, if not always epiphanic.

George Swede has a lighter touch. The poems in *Night Tides* — though spare

and imagistic in the way of much oriental verse — do not eschew a Western aesthetic. Rather, they combine metaphor with a laconic style and quick ratiocinative moves:

Her hands
small birds

My body
a branch

I quiver

The best of the poems are witty and spare; the worst are slight and contrived. Fortunately, the compact diction and sure sense of rhythm rescue the book; the poet is in control of his craft, if rarely brilliant.

Alas, the same cannot be said of Jones. *Jack and Jill in Toronto* begins and ends in sophomoric pastiche. The rhythms are prosaic and the street cant derivative of the worst of Bukowski and Purdy. The poet affects a cavalier, street-wise, hip persona and applies formulaic rhetoric to every conceivable episode and scenario. Jack "[suffers] migraines / for which he consults a psychologist on Tuesday / mornings while Jill attends her pottery class." "They both want to be writers / and need their own space." What irony there is is quickly spent on little targets. We are in the realm of comic-book satire here, the "poetic" equivalent of high-camp pulps. The yuk yuks come too easily and little else is earned.

Not so with Robert Sward's latest offering. The humour here is considerably more sophisticated, even though it emerges from careful manipulation of similar colloquial rhythms and comic scenarios. The poems here typically begin with anecdotal reportage. What is interesting is the concatenation of detail and the swift reversals and juxtapositions which drive home the poems' themes. "Name-dropping," for example, begins with a distinctly unpoetic first-person account of the poet's stay at Yaddo and ends with a Security Sales Consultant handing the poet a business card and making a plea for mention in the poet's next book. "Pennsylvannia Turnpike" begins with the unlikely conjunction of pastoral mood and a mirror at a Howard Johnson restaurant. The poet/persona and his lover observe themselves and "chocolate coloured clouds" while they indulge themselves in "Norman Rockwell sodas," lick themselves and the sunset's "tongue" licks them. The poem suddenly shifts to the notion of amnesia — in the process recounting a theme set earlier in the book — and poses the question of whether the poet and lover are a lovely couple or if the lover is the speaker's wife, whereupon the poet asks Howard Johnson. In a delightful *non sequitur*, the poet, not receiving an answer, asks his sister (also present) if she would like some incest. She responds in the negative, claiming to be too full of ice cream. The poem ends with the poet asking Howard Johnson why there are no white or yellow lines in the "dark . . . deep, chocolaty maraschino sky." Howard just sips his "fizzy, Howard Johnson death-coloured Coke."

The poems are zany but revealing; the voice is distinctive and appealing. There is nothing gratuitous about their surface structures. Moreover, the slighter pieces are carefully set in context; the sequence builds to subtle and powerful conclusions. Sward reminds us that consciousness itself is frequently a process of moving left to right as Fenellosa and the haiku poets contend in depicting the languaging process as movement from "a term from which" through a "transference of force" to a "term to which" language applies. He also reminds us that the circumambulatory route is possible and still very much "the substance" of which linguistic propositions — and poems — get made in English.

RICHARD STEVENSON

SHADOWLAND

ALLAN DONALDSON, *Paradise Siding*. Fiddlehead/Goose Lane, $6.95.

THIS COLLECTION OF SEVEN short stories presents unpretentious segments of small-town life that tamely parallel Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* and faintly echo James Joyce's *Dubliners*. However, unlike Leacock, who provides us with familiar "spots in time" easily identifiable across the Canadian cultural landscape, Donaldson offers a segment of the history of a particular town without significantly transcending the regionalism of his portraiture. Unlike Joyce, who shows his reader a moral history of Dublin subtly filtered through the experiences of its citizens, Donaldson depicts the experiences of the town dwellers in Paradise Siding through the eyes of one person, a boy who is the grandson of Irish immigrants; we follow his narration as he advances from the age of three to adolescence.

Donaldson tries to extend the microcosmic-macrocosmic equivalences beyond the small-town Maritime dwellers and the ordinary Canadians of the late 1890's and early 1900's to the world at large by finally telling us: "Paradise Siding covers the beginning and end of the . . . world." But we are hardly persuaded, except for the sense of the ominous which the threat of nuclear war introduces into Paradise Siding through local news reports.

The methodology of the book will not be new to readers of Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House* (1963) or Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), where the narrator matures while describing the life stories of others who form an important part of her society. Laurence and Munro, however, seem more interested in their narrators and reveal more about them than Donaldson does. Donaldson begins his seven stories with an "Elegy for a Sergeant," George Ralston, an unsung hero of "the Great War," and with the conflicting legends which circulate about him after his death. In the next story, "God Bless Us Every One," we are given a childhood perspective on an embittered grandmother, a Scrooge who overshadows the narrator's mother's Christmas celebrations. "The Refugee," which follows, presents the conflicts of ethnic prejudices which culminate in a schoolyard fist fight. In "Ruby," we see the legal harassment which frustrates the underprivileged. "The Death of Mr. Lee" describes the fears and adventures of a growing boy who dares to cross over neighbourhood boundaries. "The Sisters" (there is no resemblance to the story with the same title in *The Dubliners*) explores the theme of loneliness and the altruism it excites in a young growing boy. The final story, perhaps the best, carries the title of the book and tries to gain some universality by revealing the impact on the residents of Paradise Siding of the news of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and the Germanophobia which affected western society during World War II.

Paradise Siding seems to become a "shadow-land" where the people wait for returning soldiers, talk about the war, and endure the slow routine of birth, growth, and death. An early poem by Donaldson called "Shadow-land" seems to have captured the atmosphere of Paradise Siding: it is a place where "sunlight is gone . . . / Almost from memory," where

> Shadow moves into shadow
> Growing slowly,
> To darkness.

Ultimately Donaldson in *Paradise Siding* keeps us within the world of "Home Front" an earlier story he published in 1980 in the *Journal of Canadian Fiction* — the world of soldiers, war, bullying,

fist fights, hatred, and disadvantaged minorities. The atmosphere is controlled by shadows where voices are briefly heard then sink "long . . . into silence / . . . muffled and echoless."

Donaldson's style is limpid and simple. It is carefully denuded of ornate diction even when scenic description is used. His prose can also be rhythmic: "There was land and work and weather and birth and illness and death." The gramatically discordant "there was" in the preceding sentence can quickly shift in the same paragraph to "there were people" and "there were wars." We also get such terse and well-etched descriptive statements as "our yard was an unredeemed waste of nature" or "this schizophrenic fence belonged exclusively to Mr. Lee."

In the final analysis, then, *Paradise Siding* contains nothing that is subtle, fresh, original, or complex. It will not move the reader to very deeply felt responses by its theme, setting, characterization or by the personal tone of its narrative voice. Yet Donaldson has achieved a commendable smoothness and lucidity of style, an economy of expression and a distinctiveness of local colour, all of which make this collection of pieces indigenous — something with which a Canadian will identify, but beyond which he will want to advance toward more universality and complexity.

CLEMENT WYKE

LYRIC MEMORY

RAYMOND SOUSTER, *Going the Distance*. Oberon, $11.95.

H. C. DILLOW, *Orts and Scantlings*. Thistledown, $7.95.

IN AN EPIGRAM ON HIS 60TH birthday, Souster confesses that "it's taken the poor old bugger / over forty years just to learn not to stick that foul word *death* / in the last line of every other poem." But that foul word, spoken or not, clings to him, like the "nauseous stink" of the "death-smelling old man" of "Body Odours," whom he flees but whose odours remain in the memory as a "fear still living, breathing very close by." Nevertheless, what most marks this book are not the deaths, which abound, but the escape from death, survival, persistence.

Souster has always been drawn to figures who tread the edges of society, excluded and battered; now they have emerged as unequivocal reflections of the poet, who by choice or necessity go a different distance from those they seem to walk beside. Modest heroes of persistence and survival, they are more memorable than earlier characters of this type, because they bear more weight of implication and inspire our astonishment and delight and not merely, as we forge onward down Yonge Street, a sidelong glance of pity. There is, for instance, "The Blind Biker," riding down the centre of a one-way street, then pumping "boldly on across the intersection"; and this, "far from being foolhardy / is more a matter of guts, sheer guts, and a flat refusal / to give" in. For Souster, this foolishness which is in fact an act of courage is at the centre of what it means to be a poet. We find it in "The Quiet Evangelist" who preaches without "even an audience of one," and unable to "be heard above the midday roar / of Yonge Street traffic," but who persists because "the words are enough . . . With a little less luck he might have been a poet." In "A Picture of Isabella" Souster creates a poignant image of Isabella Valency Crawford, virtually anonymous but courageous in her devotion to creating an art that sustains her unacknowledged being. Like all of Souster's artists, she must endure the shameful disregard, even enmity, of the world; hence the courage —

and the foolishness — of the artist's persistence.

Souster has dark moments when he fears that his own — or for that matter every — art will disappear meaningless into the future. But these moments have less presence and credibility than those in which, like Isabella, he embraces his own survival. For he is at his best when he exploits his good humoured capacity for psychological balance, at his weakest when he does not. The theme of the poet's exclusion, for instance, society's shameful disregard of art and artist, is often too insistent and self-indulgent. And he is sometimes embarrassingly eager to wrap himself in the mantle of the poet's foolishness. Told that "Only a fool competes with himself," he replies, "thank God I've been chosen to join that high company." This inability to achieve sufficient distance both from himself and his work is frequent enough to stand as a limitation to a more fully realized art. In matters of feeling we have to admire Souster for his frank emotionalism, for being unafraid to wear his heart on his sleeve; still, too often he fails to stand back from his emotion, and we get sentimentality of both language and attitude. It is not enough to speak of "Norman Bethune etched in agony" or of the mysterious peace of a snowfall on Christmas morning as "this miracle, this unreal fairyland." One must be careful, however, not to misjudge Souster; for his language always takes the risk of a poetic which aims to transform the ordinary and the colloquial into art. At its best, Souster's poetry offers an effective, sometimes powerful simplicity of language carried forward on closely felt, lovely and complex colloquial rhythms, as in the first sentence of his "Picture of Isabella," a masterful arrangement of syntax and rhythm, 17 lines long, or in "The Coming of Summer," where every aspect of Souster's art unites, as he speaks with affection to an old neighbour who did not survive the winter; the poem becomes a witness to the powers of art to transmute memory into something more permanent than human life in a universe where only nature can be counted on to outlast its own death.

H. C. Dillow's *Orts and Scantlings* is another book by a poet recently passed sixty and, like Souster, Dillow is also concerned with memory. Otherwise, these books are very different. For Souster memory is one of the means by which the poet creates his identifiable "Souster" persona. However "personal" Souster gets with us, he never transgresses the limits set by this persona, which is the literary manifestation of an understanding, a social relation, between poet and reader, and which bars us from ever entering the penetralium of some deeper self. When he does try to enter into such mysteries, language fails him, as in "Darkness," where he speaks of "those worse darknesses than night / that every man knows," calling them the "inky depths / . . . of hell." Unable (or unwilling) to define this mystery, he relies on the weak social consensus of cliché, beyond which the social self at such moments prefers not to go, because to do so would be to violate its own conventions and to annihilate itself at the threshold of more interior and less controllable imaginings. Dillow, by contrast, uses memory to enter into just such imaginings. He, therefore, makes no effort to create a palpable persona that might intrude itself between the poet and his psychic depth or stand between those depths and the reader. The result is that we know both more and less about Dillow than about Souster. Dillow characteristically presents himself as a consciousness listening for profoundest inner silences, and what he finds in those silences is a very twentieth-century version of hell — cosmic indifference and

the fragile reality of all things human beneath an uncaring sky.

A typical Dillow poem, therefore, densely metaphorical, in order to capture what is elusive, begins in the personal and ends in the metaphysical. In "Cracked Veneer," the first of a sequence on the break-up of the poet's marriage, the dissolution of the relationship becomes an occasion for a "meditation" that "proves evasive" about time, reality, inevitability, and the puzzling unfriendliness of a universe ("You and I / Rattling around in God's black box of shiny buttons") which offers no salvific light, only indifference; yet despite the hopeless processes of time and death, the poet finds value in the individual's capacity to persevere in growth and self-knowledge. This is a great deal to pack into any lyric poem, and one feels that the metaphors tend to become victims rather than vehicles of the poet's thought, with the result that the reader is left to do a great deal of disentangling. In certain poems, such as "Father and Son: Miami, 1929," the problems of disentanglement defeat comprehension altogether. In such poems it is as though Dillow has not sufficiently grasped the principle of wholeness, of sequentiality and interrelatedness, that metaphor requires, hence creating works that are disjointed and keep the reader disoriented and unrewarded for his concern.

Dillow is, however, quite able to write with directness and with narrative and metaphorical fluidity in poems which achieve most, even all, of his aims. In "Going Down to Maybrook" he creates a memorable portrait of his railroading grandfather, rich in finely observed particulars which make palpable the mysterious qualities of time and memory — and without any need for an imposed diction of metaphysical speculation. In "Spring Moving" the nicely rendered particulars of a childhood moving day capture the half-world of memory and the mysterious distances that separate us from the remote selves of our past. Here Dillow successfully indulges his fascination for the opacities and translucencies of metaphysical diction, using it in the service of description and evocation (and not, as elsewhere, the other way around).

One of the difficulties in reviewing Dillow is that this is the first book of a poet who has been writing for at least thirty years, and clearly the poems in this volume reflect the differences in style that one finds in a poet over the long haul. There is a good deal that is derivative and literary — we hear Stevens, Yeats, and perhaps significant in dating some of these pieces, echoes of Snodgrass's *Heart's Needle* — the kind of thing one finds in a poet's early work when he or she is searching for a voice. One would like to think that those poems are most recent which are no longer turgid, in which metaphor is no longer subjected to the distorted pressures of a metaphysical attitude, poems in which the poet has mastered his influences and comes forward as his own articulate presence.

MYRON TURNER

EXTRAVAGANZA

GEOFFREY URSELL, *Perdue, or How the West was Lost*. Macmillan, $14.95.

THIS NOVEL IS REALLY ABOUT how Perdue triumphs over the forces of evil bent on driving him and his "she" out of the garden which is the Canadian West. As it should in this epic of the founding and expansion of the Prairies, hyperbole abounds. Perdue himself has lived through two hundred years of his land's history and daily rubs shoulders with Giants and Dwarfs. There are miraculous births and gory deaths. There are mind-

bending copulations with cocks that "tremble and pulse" and seem the size of telephone poles. The Holy Family — Perdue, "she," and the redeeming child — inherit the rolling plains once they have been purged of the evil of colonialism, racism, capitalist greed, and war:

> They stood up holding the child between them. The sun had just risen behind their backs, and from the top of the ridge of hills their shadows should have stretched out enormously long, spindly and dark. But they held the child, and the child was ablaze with light... The land! A vast expanse of plain rolling out and away to the purple blur of the horizon... The pungent whirlwind of scent, the marvellous smell of wild, unbroken prairie.

It's a stupendous exercise in verbal histrionics. It's a kind of Cecil B. deMille extravaganza with background music from the New World Symphony, maybe a bit of Miltonian majesty, and a dash of Hieronymous Bosch. The birth and maturation of the Canadian Prairies occurs on a grand scale. And occasionally it all works.

When Ursell is dealing with setting rather than people, his high style does impart an appropriate vitality and beauty to the scene, as in this description of a prairie storm:

> The walls of the clouds soared upwards, their tops leaning towards one another until it seemed that they were falling down onto Perdue's head. And then they touched, falling, merged in their highest reaches, forming the swirling roof of a vast cathedral. The floor of the cathedral was all of gold, a gold that pulsed darker and darker and darker as shadows rippled across it in the waning light.

And I enjoyed the occasions when Ursell's love of cataloguing takes over, as when Perdue shows "she" the seeds he has stored up for the planting of his own Garden of Eden. Epic, fantasy, allegory, apocalyptic, language of legend, myth — others using these terms have accurately described the method and content of *Perdue*. But these things do not a novel make and it seems to me that sustaining the kind of prose that calls forth such adjectives results in a work that feels forced, is confined to a plane of expression that in the end becomes tedious and flat.

Perhaps I could start with some of the sillier results of adopting a high-flown style. Here is how useful words like car and truck get lost in the verbiage: "More trains brought machines of glistening coloured metal and glass. People got into the machines and drove them up and down the roads, plumes of dust rising into the air behind their shapes. Some of these machines had open boxes at their backs..." A cigarette is "A thin small white tube that smoked at one end." Airplanes are "flying machines."

At a more important level, the characterization suffers. The chief characters, Sir, Gal Sal, Perdue — the only ones to have "names" — are caught in their symbolic roles. (Although it is hard to see why Perdue is called what he is considering the optimistic ending of the novel.) "The - One - Who - Brings - Them - In," "Maid," "Help," along with Giant and Dwarf, play other symbolic parts, and finally "she" emerges, the young girl who survives her slaughtered Indian parents and whom Perdue brings up to be his wife — or in the language of the novel, the one in whose moon-lake Perdue plunges his thing. It is absurd to suggest *Perdue* is a love story. The poor girl doesn't even have a name. Not surprisingly they both had to get high on a marvellously varied liquor supply found in the wine cellar before Perdue did his plunging. But even Perdue never emerges as a real person. He commits grand acts such as burning the barn down with Sir, his father, inside, but this kind of act does not spring from an individual motive so much as from his symbolic posi-

tion, in this case as one fated to end by violence the violent old order. Often Perdue stands in some elevated position merely watching a number of tableaux: war raging, the building of a city, or Prairie Storm.

Geoffrey Ursell obviously has all sorts of ability, but I don't think that he has displayed it in the way it deserves to be shown. E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* presents a similar panoramic view of society, but Doctorow does not allow himself to be the victim of his concept. Unfortunately, too, Ursell, in spite of the verbal brilliance, does not provide any new insights into the story of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Fathers, sons, and holy ghosts are carrying on in pretty much the same old ways and I have no reason to believe that Perdue's child will have any better luck with the fallen world than had that better known one.

KATHLEEN TUDOR

PRAYERS

LEONARD COHEN, *Book of Mercy*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

SELF-DOUBT, SELF-LACERATION, indecent exposure. There are thin dividing lines among gradations of existential or divine despair. The tradition of calling on one's God to offer Grace, understanding, relief, salvation is, of course, an ancient one. In his *Book of Mercy*, Leonard Cohen combines his well-established role of worldly-wise sinner who has experienced all with the new role of would-be penitent. The man who lit a thin green candle now asks to be taught to sit still.

Billed as "contemporary psalms," the fifty prayers in *Book of Mercy* reveal varying degrees of hope and pain. Pain at the absence of God (and therefore purpose) in a world dominated by easy or cheap success and self-interested feuding. Hope that divine fulfilment is attainable through the transcendent truth of God. The mood changes through the sequence; the last prayers embody more certainty than the earlier *cris de coeur* and there is a correspondingly diminished sense of emptiness. The opening sentences of the first and last prayers indicate the change. Here is the first:

> I stopped to listen, but he did not come. I began with a sense of loss. As this sense deepened I heard him again. I stopped stopping and I stopped starting, and I allowed myself to be crushed by ignorance. This was a strategy, and didn't work at all.

Although the lines deal with unfulfilment and loss, their verbal slickness does not convey real anguish. The ineffectiveness of the speaker's search is almost the object of self-congratulation or at least a knowing smirk. There is more conviction in the final piece:

> I lost my way, I forgot to call on your name. The raw heart beat against the world, and the tears were for my lost victory. But you are here. You have always been here.

Self-consciousness is both a theme in *Book of Mercy* and a mannerism. Cohen's linguistic facility, his balladeer's ease at producing the resonant phrase or the generally evocative image, often makes his prayers indulgent rather than anguished, their mood jaded rather than despairing. The blurb on the cover strikes a note more syrupy than the prayers themselves do, but nevertheless indicates the level of response aimed at by the book's promoters:

> These contemporary psalms utter the passionate human cry of a man to his maker. They are brimming with praise, despair, anger, doubt, trust — stolen from the heart of the modern world, yet in tones which resonate with an older devotional tradition. For many readers, these psalms will give voice to their deepest, most powerful intuitions.

The religious experiences you did not know you had until reading *Book of Mercy*.

While one might question in what sense the contemporary psalms are "stolen," there is no doubt that they reflect attitudes familiar enough in the modern world. The heartstrings they play on are meant to be common property: "My teacher gave me what I do not need, told me what I need not know. At a high price he sold me water beside the river. In the middle of a dream he led me gently to my bed." Those memorable rhythms and resonances are vintage Cohen. Although his ultimate turning to God distinguishes this evocation of fruitless past experience from those in his popular songs, it still shows his trait of creating broad, generalized emotions (which, "for many readers . . . will give voice to . . . ").

At its best the Cohen vocabulary does have a sharp suggestiveness: "Like an unborn infant swimming to be born, like a woman counting breath in the spasms of labour, I yearn for you." And his humour can be fresh: "He fastened his collar to the darkness so he couldn't breathe, and he opened the book in anger to make his payment to the law. An angel, who had no intrinsic authority, said, 'You have sealed every gate but this one; therefore, here is a little light commensurate with your little courage.' " But he cannot stay long away from grandiloquence, sonority, and lushness. He yokes his lavish images with that marvellously all-embracing word "of": "Though I scorched away the tears of return in the forced light of victory," and creates an all-pervasive religiosity: "I covered up the path of desire and I overthrew the bridge of tears, and I prepared the wilderness on which the Accuser walks."

Book of Mercy does not have the control or the passion associated with great religious poetry of doubt. But, taken on its own terms, the collection can achieve effective moments, when the wry self-consciousness of its narrator is the object of narcissistic rebuke: "Let me close down, let the puppet fall among the strings, until, by your mercy, he rises as a man." Leonard Cohen is always catchy. Response to his *Book of Mercy* will vary with the degree to which readers accept catchy prayers.

ROWLAND SMITH

EARLY NOWLAN

ALDEN NOWLAN, *Early Poems.* Fiddlehead, $12.50.

ALDEN NOWLAN WAS WHAT you might call a club writer. He wrote for the club's approval, and you can sense that in his verse:

> In summer-coloured dresses, six young girls are walking in the river; they look back frightened and proud; a choir and a cloud of starlings sing; in rubber boots and black frock-coat the preacher bends them separately under; since the up-rushing stream expands their skirts as they go down he closes them each time with gently disapproving hands.

You note the rhymes, the "literary" image (all that alliteration in "a choir and a cloud of starlings sing"), and the nice little touch at the end. Throughout the book it is the same: worked-up scenes, small vignettes, usually with a paradoxical detail at the end that makes the poem stick. There is no analysis — merely *what I saw, what I heard.* And this would be fine; but the trouble is, what Nowlan hears or sees is usually the thing you see when you don't look too hard. Small town cruising, for instance:

> The boys sport leather jackets and levis,
> but that's their underwear,
> the car is their real clothing:
> at Taylor's Corner they turn again,

their Hollywood mufflers
making sounds furious, derisive, vulgar —
like a bear growling and breaking wind,

I can almost hear the mufflers: but what about those boys? I can't see them. For one thing, no Canadian boy "sports" anything. You wear your clothes, you don't sport them. Beyond that, those leather jackets and levis show me nothing. And it is the same with the "frightened and proud" look of the girls in the poem above. The image is too neat. I "know" those girls without seeing them, and that is the problem. There isn't the effort of vision, the effort of specification.

Colonial and slightly archaic, the poems are comfortable: they could swim in the shallow water of an old-fashioned newspaper. And in my mind after reading the book, that was where I put them — there with the recipes and columns of community news. They spoke of a small world, and they shared that small world's outlook: the complacency, the "familiar" images, the uncomplicated fantasy.

But there is a charm in that, after all — in simple stories and simple themes. And Nowlan would have known it. He began his career as a reporter (that was his club) and he followed the rules: keep it short; keep to one point; give the familiar detail; don't press too hard; and wrap it up with an image. And the charm is there. The book works. That preacher pushing the skirts down, for instance, is real, and worth any number of pages of bp Nichol.

But too often the result is soft: the life that breaks through is the known life, the already-written-about life. There is a stab of harshness here and there, but the combination of intelligence and brutality that makes harshness work is absent. And so there is no real comedy either; just the wink, the easy joke:

Four decades away from home
his Scottish tongue
grows broader every year.

One looks for heather
to spring up between his toes.

You can see it: the smile, the mildness, the unwillingness to disturb the good old small town fantasy. Fat-faced and bearded, Nowlan was one of the boys, "their" writer, the big writer for a small world.

Distance would have helped; and intensity, raw emotion worked through. The cruising, for instance, the boys in their levis — there is more to that scene than Nowlan offers. But you have to "live" it, the way Guy Vanderhaeghe "lives" the end of a small-town fight in one of his wonderful stories:

> The crowd started to edge away as the cop car bounced over the curb and gave a long, low whine out of its siren.
>
> I took off my windbreaker and gave it to Gene. He pulled off his jacket and threw it down. "Get the fuck out of here," I said. "Beat it."
>
> "I took the wheels off his little red wagon," said Gene. "It don't pull so good now."

It don't pull so good now — this is the poetry Nowlan didn't write. But how could he? It wouldn't "go" in the comfortable print of a newspaper. The fact is, for a writer at least, this thing about being one of the boys is like a disease. Nowlan caught it; and his work is the poorer for it, from these early poems to his last.

BRUCE SERAFIN

POET AS HISTORIAN

LIONEL KEARNS, *Convergences*. Coach House, $6.50.

IN KEEPING WITH THE TENDENCY of contemporary Canadian poets and novelists to develop works based partly on documentary sources, British Columbia writers of the most diverse kinds have shown in recent years a special interest in the

journals and narratives of the eighteenth-century European explorers of their region. In *Convergences* Lionel Kearns joins this company with a book built around the journals in which Captain Cook and the members of his expedition described their encounter with the Mooachahts at Nootka in 1778, the first English and earliest extended European contact with the natives of what is now the Canadian west coast. Beginning with this historic meeting, he explores a series of other convergences that arise from it, especially the triple relationship, at once convergence and separation, between the participants and records of 1778 and the writer and reader: "Them, and me, and you — the gaps between us, the intervals. That is the elusive subject of my unrelieved preoccupation."

Kearns's purpose is to explore also the convergences between factual and imaginative literature, prose and verse, history and poetry. The result is a work of an unconventional and unclassifiable kind, in which a poet meditates on history and the writing of history. In his own narrative of the meeting of the two cultures, Kearns has embodied many extracts from the original journals, often *verbatim* or with very minor alterations, and accompanied them with a commentary, which is both personal and very wide-ranging. He compares his technique with that of John Ledyard, author of one of the most interesting of the journals, who incorporated sections of another journal by John Rickman: "Ledyard's method was something like my own. He used interesting parts of the other text and elaborated on these with his own personal testimony." In contradiction of conventional expectations, the documents are set out as poems, while the poet's meditations are presented as prose.

Kearns, who draws upon native Indian as well as European sources wherever possible, shows himself to be a well-informed and balanced historian, as he elucidates the meaning of the events of 1778, and reveals their immediate and long-range consequences, the ways in which they represent both the beginning of a pattern of two hundred years of destructive interference for the Indians and the convergence that produced "the eventual ambiguous contingencies of my life." Yet the special interest of his work clearly arises from the fact that his purposes extend beyond those of a documentary writer like Ledyard or a conventional historian. He comments on his purpose and problem in relation to the quotations he has incorporated from the early journals: "The challenge is to disguise this unpoetic material in such a way that you will approach it as poetry, a task which is almost impossible because the content of this language is more compelling than any formal flourish I can generate." In fact he often succeeds in giving the extracts from the journals the qualities of found poems, not only because they have been chosen by the eye and ear of a poet but also because of the contexts in which he sets them, the juxtapositions, connections, and perspectives he establishes, as he moves back and forth between the documents themselves and his personal responses to them. In his meditations, the events of 1778 become endlessly suggestive, as he draws out their meaning not only for the history of the region but in relation to the nature of culture and language, history and poetry, to questions about what civilization means, or what it means to be human. Gradually he draws his reader into the new triple convergence he has created.

Among the subjects of Kearns's meditations is the contrast between the realistic art of the Europeans, as represented by the Swiss artist John Webber, who accompanied Cook's expedition, and the symbolic art of the Indians, then con-

sidered by Europeans to be barbaric but now greatly admired. *Convergences* is well illustrated with examples both of Webber's art and that of the Indians. The volume is very handsomely designed and produced (although there are some obvious misprints that escaped proofreading and should be corrected in a later edition). It does justice to a rewarding convergence between one of British Columbia's leading contemporary poets and the journals that are the earliest English literature of the region.

Kearns does much to impress upon us the fascination which these journals of the early European explorers of the West Coast hold in themselves. Where the poets now seem to be leading the way we must hope the historians will follow and make more of the journals accessible to the reader. Many of those kept by members of Cook's expeditions can be read in the fine Beaglehole edition, which is used extensively by Kearns, and one by George Gilbert, which he examined in a typescript copy, has recently been published in England; but not all the journals of Captain Vancouver's officers and crews are so accessible. Some of the British Columbia sections, even of the exceptionally important journal of Vancouver's botanist, Archibald Menzies, remain unpublished among the manuscripts of the British Library, though the two-hundredth anniversary of those explorations is now drawing close.

ALLAN PRITCHARD

IMAGES DU RECIT

J. R. LEVEILLE, *Plage*. Editions du blé, $12.00.
RAYMOND PLANTE, *Le Train sauvage*. Québec/Amérique, n.p.

AVANT MEME D'OUVRIR LE ROMAN de J. R. Léveillé pour en commencer la lecture, on est frappé par la couverture du livre. Une jeune fille statuesque, aux cheveux longs, mouillés à la suite d'une baignade, se repose au bord de la mer, accoudée sur le table. Outre sa présence, le ciel, la mer et le sable dont les couleurs s'entremêlent dans les nuances d'un bleu vert, aucun objet, aucune ombre ne se profile dans cette photo. La figure de la jeune fille domine tout entier. Elle constitue une présence unique: présence mysterieuse puisqu'on ne voit la jeune femme que de dos et mystérieuse aussi, parce que telle une Eve ou une sirène, elle semble issue des profondeurs d'une mer sablonneuse. Sous la photo, le titre du roman est écrit en lettres majuscules — PLAGE. Cette couverture frappante a comme effet immédiat de diriger notre lecteur. Une promesse implicite est établie selon laquelle le lecteur s'attend à des éléments de mystère, d'érotisme et de lyrisme.

Le début du récit comble d'emblée le sens annoncé par l'image visuelle: "Je me rappelle le sable, la plage, l'eau. Le lieu. Les vagues incroyables . . . Et elle. Que dire d'elle qui ne soit pas la plage et l'eau et le soleil et le sable." Du début jusqu'à la fin, *Plage* est un roman où l'écriture du désir s'allie intimement au désir de l'écriture. C'est d'ailleurs par l'entrelacement fécond de ces deux thèmes aussi bien que par la force évocatrice de la prose que ce récit captive le lecteur.

Un souvenir déclenche la narration, "Je me rappelle." Un jeune homme solitaire écrit inlassablement ou, plus précisément, essaie d'écrire le souvenir d'une jeune femme entrevue sur un plage. Et il s'agit bien d' "une" jeune femme — femme mystère, femme muse — et non pas d'une femme en particulier puisque ses contours changent selon les phantasmes du narrateur. A un premier niveau, le récit exprime donc par la voix souvent déboublée du narrateur le désir de la femme et le souvenir de ce désir. Obsédante et belle, la femme mystérieuse représente le lieu même de l'imaginaire.

Aussi n'est-il pas étonnant que sa présence entièrement du rêve, du phantasme et de l'apparition. Elle est celle qui "passe et disparaît dans l'éclat de cette plage"; celle qui "retrace le passage oblitéré par l'eau."

Pourtant, il n'est pas nécessaire de lire le récit en entier avant de constater qu'il s'agit aussi d'une exploration de l'activité de l'écriture. Cette activité, dont les pulsions secrètes sont liées au désir, est perpétuellement nouvelle puisque le lieu de l'écriture ne peut être que celui du commencement et du recommencement. D'où la répétition fréquence dans le récit d'énoncés qui signalent l'acte d'écrire: "Il lui est impossible de décrire cette scène sans elle," "Une fiction peut-être," "Il note fiévreusement," "Il reprend." Il faut remarquer toutefois que si les thèmes du désir sexuel et de l'élan créateur se conjuguent avec bonheur dans la narration, c'est parce qu'un réseau métaphorique permet au sens de basculer constamment du littéral au figuré. Les "traces" de la femme sur la plage correspondent au "tracé" de l'imaginaire dans l'écriture alors que l'espace de la "page" se surimpose à celui de la "plage." En conclusion, même si on peut regretter qu'une syntaxe répétitive nuise quelquefois au rythme de la prose, dans l'ensemble ce beau récit représente une exploration émouvante et réussie des lieux divers du désir.

C'est aussi une image visuelle qui sert d'introduction au roman de Raymond Plante, *Le Train sauvage*. Il s'agit cette fois d'un tableau de Colville, tableau qui met en scène un cheval galopant sur des rails en direction d'un train mouvant. La course insensée du cheval ainsi que l'issue inévitablement tragique de la scène servent d'indices au lecteur quant au dénouement de l'intrigue.

Ce roman raconte le mal de vivre d'un homme Pierre, qui, passé la trentaine, n'arrive pas à réussir sa vie. Pourtant Pierre, qui selon son propre désir est photographe à la pige, possède un studio, vit avec une amie qui lui plaît, dispose de temps libre et a aussi des parents qui ont essayé de le rendre heureux. Nul drame, nulle tragédie, nulle souffrance profonde n'expliquent le désarroi presque perpétuel du narrateur. Angoissé et malcontent, il souffre, dira-t-on, du mal de notre siècle.

Pour exprimer ce sentiment, le roman raconte, par le biais d'une narration à la première personne, les expériences souvent farfelues de Pierre, ses souvenirs d'enfance et en particulier l'accroissement de son mal de vivre. Dans la première partie du roman, l'entreprise est bien réussie. L'énergie de la prose, l'humour des situations décrites et le langage coloré confèrent une authenticité à la narration: "J'enfile donc mes jeans râpés, mes runningshoes usés mais je noue une cravate, qui date de l'époque flamboyante de l'artisanat pour tous, sous le collet de ma chemise casseautée. Je mets enfin le veston de cuir brun que Mireille m'a offert à mon anniversaire. Je suis en équilibre entre le style bum et l'allure distinguée." Mais dans la deuxième partie du roman où le désarroi du narrateur provoque une révolte dont les manifestations sont puériles et destructives le récit perd sa puissance. L'authenticité disparaît, l'humour se fait rare et la situation dramatique devient de moins en moins plausible. On se souviendra que dans *Le Cassé*, Jacques Renaud avait exploré avec verve la condition d'un homme révolté, mais condition dans ce cas bien motivée. Or dans *Le Train sauvage*, la révolte gratuite ne répond à aucune motivation. Elle est vaine et insensée. Il en résulte que lorsqu'à la fin du roman le narrateur demande: "Je voudrais . . . j'aurais juste voulu savoir où est-ce que j'ai perdu mon étoile filante? Qui est-ce qui me l'a volée?," le lecteur, déçu, n'est plus à l'écoute.

JANET M. PATERSON

MEMORABILIA

FLORENCE MCNEIL, *Barkerville*. Thistledown, $7.95.

THIS IS A PLEASING BOOK to handle, and easy to read. The design of McNeil's Barkerville suite of prose and verse works well: the idea is to recapture the gold rush town in meditations on the vivid sepia photographs taken mostly by Frederick Dally, who trekked with "developing wagon and glass plates through the mountains to Barkerville." Another version of "archival literature" applying some of the methods of Findley's *The Wars*, this book follows naturally from McNeil's *The Overlanders* (1982). Where Findley used the method to create the memorabilia of one man in order to project the vast, tragic madness of the Great War, McNeil takes diverse images of the little mining settlement to give a sharp sense of one place and its vanished people. This modest but clever idea will delight lovers of British Columbia's history, and should sell itself to Barkerville tourists.

The book begins with the chatty bubble of excitement as Barkerville Dramatic Society celebrates its fifteenth production, *The Italian Corsair*, with a photograph posed against scenery flats propped up behind the Theatre Royal amid the "rocks / and tailings and broken flumes." *Vers libre* wanders casually down the page, one sentence evoking the familiar culture brought out and dusted off for fun amid a vast alien landscape feeling the grasp of the pioneer. Culture is a sort of pose in the middle of nowhere. The sentence has gaps on the page (not always used as convincingly elsewhere in the book) as if the voice stopped for shuffling and reshuffling to get the right grouping, or to suggest the silence of posed people as the shutter opens, "why then you have the picture."

From this group we turn to August 1862 and a narrator's voice telling of "Bow legged Billy Barker, late of Cornwall, a sailor with a weakness for women and the bottle" who strikes "Gold the like of which you couldn't imagine popping oozing out — $5.00 a pan $1,000 a foot." Billy stares at us wearing a bow beneath his salt's grey beard; he stares at us again, on the last page, on July 11, 1894, when he died, "penniless and crawling / with cancer in the Old Man's Home in Victoria." Between the two portraits, we read the town sign, BARKERVILLE, and go to pay our visit.

The town's buildings and trades form a wanton list wandering down the page like the place, "not in any order not surveyed but helter/skelter the signs like lighthouse signals in a storm" and we discover Bowron's Literary Institute or watch Captain Grant, Royal Engineers, and his sappers blast out the Cariboo Road; we ride the Barnard Cariboo Express coach driven by Steve Tingley up Jackass Mountain. McNeil repeats names such as Fred Dally, Pullet the editor, Deffis the grammarian, Martin the magician, and "Dr. Chipp the PAINLESS DENTIST packing his INCREDIBLE KHIGOLENE / SPRAY and pliers and whisky and heading for the Cariboo on his errand / of mercy." Mrs. Cameron extols the comforts of her Pioneer Hotel. The narrator sketches in sparse little verses people from Moses the Barber to Judge Begbie arriving for the assizes soiled by trail dirt "black as the handle of his gun." We find the Chinese in "their own section of town." We rediscover the old claims: Neversweat, Caledonia, Ne'er Do Well, Much Oro, Prairie Flower, Aurora, Davis, Forest Rose. The found poetry of the names jostles with town amusements and a whore, "a woman of the creeks who smelled like she wanted a tub."

The book is not all research (the Fire, the lists of the dead) written up in loose prose poetry. There is also the effort to create voices from the past:

> I stand outside and even the
> stumps in the cold mountain light
> look like white heather sprinkled
> on a glen
> And I could be home

In such pieces McNeil creates an economical art that renders the death of "poor Jimmy" who "when we picked him up" from the shaft where he fell after the dance "split like / kindling." The limitations of the book are the limitations of McNeil's style. It relies too heavily on two devices: "and" linking short past tense phrases in a breathless polysyndeton down the page; or a participle replacing the verb, "Mrs. Gannon the Milkmaid / large-breasted dressed always in a polka-dot muslin." Yet I love Mrs. Gannon's "tender / fruitful song" and the picture of one of Laumeister's camels carrying a rifleman.

ANDREW PARKIN

UNDERSTANDING

ROBERT L. MCDOUGALL, ed., *The Poet and the Critic: A Literary Correspondence between D. C. Scott and E. K. Brown.* Carleton Univ. Press, $12.95.

IN THE MEMOIR that is still perhaps the best introduction to Duncan Campbell Scott and his work, E. K. Brown observes that Scott's correspondence with Pelham Edgar reveals "how excellently they understood each other." The remark is equally appropriate to the dominant impression arising from this collection of one hundred and eighty-one letters exchanged by Scott and Brown. As Professor McDougall notes in his valuable introduction, Brown and Scott were separated in age by more than forty years; yet in the seven-year correspondence that ended with Scott's death in 1947, the two men enjoyed an epistolary friendship distinguished by shared views, mutual respect, and tactful affection.

By the 1940's, Scott was no longer engaged in the wide range of professional, poetic, and personal commitments that frequently serve as the subject of the early letters to Edgar. Now Brown, at the height of his career, is the self-described "bustler," dividing his time among lecture tours, teaching responsibilities, publishing projects, and a growing family. For Scott, far from inactive but increasingly restricted to Ottawa and a familiar circle of friends, the attraction to Brown seems to stem not simply from Brown's attempt to ensure fuller recognition of Scott's work in *On Canadian Poetry* but from his vicarious enjoyment of the energetic, cosmopolitan career being forged by his new friend.

The letters begin with the collaboration of Scott and Brown in the publication of Lampman's *At the Long Sault and Other Poems*, and, as the subtitle of the collection indicates, the concerns of almost all of the letters are predominantly literary. The men find common ground in their distrust of Lorne Pierce ("our national criticism at its worst"), the Ryerson Press, and Canadian Publishers in general as Brown sees *On Canadian Poetry* through the press, translates *Père Goriot* and plans a book on Matthew Arnold. Meanwhile Scott, while often portraying himself as a sedentary provincial, negotiates for the first Canadian edition of *In the Village of Viger*, plans a selection of Lampman's poems and begins to assemble the work that appears in *The Circle of Affection*. For Brown, Scott is an invaluable source of information and anecdote regarding Lampman and Canadian poetry at the turn of the century. For Scott, Brown brings contact with "the cosmopolitan

atmosphere of through traffic and the larger life" sought by Leacock's Mariposans.

As always in such collections, part of the appeal to the reader rests no higher than the attractions of coterie gossip: the shared antagonism to W. E. Collin and Mackenzie King, the suspicion of Ralph Gustafson and A. J. M. Smith as they assemble their first anthologies, dissatisfaction with the studies of Wilfred Campbell and C. G. D. Roberts and C. F. Klinck and Elsie Pomeroy, and Scott's cautious response to Frye's landmark review of *A Book of Canadian Poetry* in *The Canadian Forum*: "I suppose Northrop Frye is a *nom de plume*: if so, who is he?" More significant are the qualifications offered by the editor on Margaret Coulby Whitridge's interpretation of the Lampman/Waddell affair as the unabridged letters reveal Scott's position. Only limited glimpses of Brown's personality emerge as he plays both literary adviser and acolyte, a consequence perhaps of the formality of Scott even when he is being most personal: "Neither Elise nor I belong to the sort of people who begin Christian names at the first cocktail party but we reciprocate the feeling in your last letter." Only in Scott's concern with the arrival and development of Brown's first child does spontaneous warmth overwhelm self-consciousness reticence in personal matters.

Two comments suggest the usefulness of the collection as a source of comment by Scott on his own work. To Brown's request that he write a commemorative sonnet on Lampman, Scott responds: "I would not care to attempt a Sonnet; I don't object to your setting me a task, but I have never cared to use the form and, as you may have noticed, I have made very few." In praising Brown's assessment of his "Indian poems," he directly answers those who see a discontinuity between the understanding displayed in those poems and the actions of the administrator of Indian affairs:

> I had for about twenty years oversight of their development and I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals, but there was the law which I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of severity. One can hardly be sympathetic with the contemporary Sun-dance or Potlatch when one knows that the original spirit has departed and that they are largely the opportunities for debauchery by low white men.

Several of the most interesting of Scott's letters to Brown appear in two collections edited and published by Arthur S. Bourinot in 1959-60: *Some Letters of Duncan Campbell Scott, Archibald Lampman and Others* and *More Letters of Duncan Campbell Scott*. What Professor McDougall's volume offers is a collection more comprehensive not only in its inclusion of both sides of the Scott-Brown correspondence but also in the exhaustive textual apparatus (one-third of the book's length) that makes the collection more useful and reliable for students of both men. Only the brief introductions to the subject matter of each year's letters seem unnecessary, and as the collection reveals new facets of two of the finest writers in our literature, it justifies both the efforts of the editor and his associates and the financial support from those cultural agencies acknowledged on the title page. Bourinot published his volumes privately only after failing to find interest and support elsewhere; the success of *The Poet and the Critic*, following the publication of letters by Carman, Grove, and Lowry, should support future projects dealing with the correspondence of McCulloch, Leacock, Montgomery, de la Roche, Deacon, Knister, and others.

LESLIE MONKMAN

SONGS OF LIFE

JUDITH FITZGERALD, *Beneath the Skin of Paradise: The Piaf Poems.* Black Moss, $6.95.

LLOYD ABBEY, *The Antlered Boy.* Oberon, $9.95.

RECENT BOOKS OF POETRY by Judith Fitzgerald and Lloyd Abbey assure us that two vital branches of Canadian poetry, one very old and the other a more recent growth, continue to flourish. While looking in their own backyards for their subjects, Canadian poets are also reaching further afield for their themes.

In *Beneath the Skin of Paradise: The Piaf Poems of Judith Fitzgerald*, the author looks to the streets of Paris for poetry. Fitzgerald's attempt to convey the fascinating and tragic life of Edith Piaf is an ambitious one which shows the maturing lyric poet's desire to branch out. Viewed more broadly, her choice of subject illustrates the growing openness of Canadian poets to the wider world, an impulse admirably demonstrated in recent volumes of poetry such as MacEwen's *The T. E. Lawrence Poems.*

Like Lawrence's, Piaf's life is, indeed, the stuff of poetry, and Fitzgerald's use of popular song motifs, while sometimes lacking in dramatic intensity, highlights that poetry in the most appropriate way. We experience Piaf's life as she herself might have experienced it, as a never-ending song. Biographical details, the remarks of friends, lines from Piaf's own songs, all serve as touchstones of reality in a varied musical composition that testifies not only to the vitality of Piaf's life, but to Fitzgerald's ability to imagine it.

The songs are typically simple yet subtle in insight. We sense Piaf's fragility; her desperate hunger after love:

> I'm tired of falling in love
> with men who hurt me so
> I'm tired of making love
> with men who'll never know
> that in my dreams I touch them
> and know it'll never be
> it's the dreams that save me
> oh, accidental me.

On the page, however, such oral techniques can wear thin. Some compression of this 74-page volume might intensify the drama of Piaf's life, and emphasize the expressive rhythmic variations and occasional breakdowns which sustain our interest.

The Antlered Boy, Abbey's first collection of poems, is less ambitious than Fitzgerald's. But smaller in scope, it is perhaps more sure in what it attempts. Abbey draws his themes from what he knows intimately, rarely looking much farther than his own backyard. His central persona is an "antlered boy" who is distinguished from "other babies" by his instinctual yearning to merge with the primeval forces of nature. Abbey's most distinctive feature as poet is his ability to become one with animal and vegetable life. His political poems are not deeply enough felt, and his keen powers of observation seem squandered on analyses of the emotional complexities of love relationships.

Whether narrative, dramatic, or imagist, Abbey's "nature" poems are remarkable for the intensity of connection their speakers feel with a preconscious world of sensation — colour, movement, sound, and smell. For the adult looking back in the narrative "Memory from a Past Life," one of the best poems in the volume, these sensations take on a deep symbolic significance. But more often what we get is a poem in the Imagist tradition established so long ago by Knister and Livesay. Always we are struck, often we are uplifted, by the small, obvious beauties of the world around us:

> Snow sprawls
> over fields; tiny water-drops
> cling

to the underside of the ice;
willows
shaken by cardinals
scatter snow on snow;
dead stalks
turn the day;
an old crow
calls through the blue sky;
above me:
the limbs of elms.

In these new volumes of poetry by Fitzgerald and Abbey, we can trace the growth, on the one hand, and see the beginnings, on the other, of two interesting, if not yet startlingly original poetic voices. One sounds melodies exotic and strange. The other sings about what we know and love.

SANDRA HUTCHISON

POLITICAL JUDGMENTS

JOSEF SKVORECKY, *The Engineer of Human Souls*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $19.95.

IT WOULD BE EASY to do a properly Canadian review of this novel. Such would be welcoming of the immigrant, probably ignorant of the ethnic roots, but on the whole, multiculturally accepting. The political squabbles would be deemed strangely deviant from our comfy Grit/Tory/NDP package but "different strokes for different folks" would cover that. It would be similarly easy to be literary. The Canadian reviewer would probably know no Czech (as I do not) but could note that the excellent dialogue *seems* right and that it *seems* like a good translation by Paul Wilson. The structure, bopping back and forth from the Second World War in Czechoslovakia to the present in Canada, with various stops in between, is confusing but appropriate, recalling the discontinuity of the central character's life and also his devotion to jazz. Most characterizations are a bit thin but that can be justified by the first person narrative and the narrator is often fascinating. The only significant literary misjudgment is the length. The novel displays sufficient imagination for only about half of its 571 pages.

But. But. That is not the type of review Skvorecky would want. As he showed in his comments in *Canadian Literature* No. 100, he has had it up to here with Canadians and their apolitical sympathies. And like any good cold warrior he has severe questions about any belle-lettrist approach to literature. So I will attempt to be at least slightly less a genteel Canadian and put my aesthetic sympathies in my pocket. Here are my personal, politically interested, comments on the novel.

In *The Engineer of Human Souls*, we continue our acquaintance with Skvorecky's semi-autobigraphical persona, Dan Smiricky. Like Skvorecky, he left Czechoslovakia in 1968, is a novelist, and now teaches English at a Canadian University, Edenvale College, which is like Skvorecky's own Erindale, in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga. The main difference between Josef and Dan is that the latter is unmarried, but then it is important that Smiricky's anti-feminist sexuality need not cope with a betrayed wife and his individuation need not cope with the socialization that such a significant other might thrust upon him.

It is difficult to avoid the old intentional fallacy in discussing what some feminists have recently taken to calling intentional phallusy. For it appears that we are meant to see Smiricky's sexual activities as either a service to women, as for Margitka, whose husband is in a wheelchair, or simply a reflection of Smiricky's own immaturity and thus more to be pitied than attacked. But then, Smiricky's derisive comments on such matters as feminism and women's studies show where his feelings lie. As do his

portraits of women throughout the novel. That the Czech emigré, Dotty, and the Canadian student, Irene, are shown to be only pseudo-whore and pseudo-virgin respectively at best only slightly diminishes the stereotypes. The fragile tubercular flower, Nadia, does nothing to offend her role as Camille. Veronika is dynamic but never more than a ball of anti-communist energy.

But Smiricky does not limit his anti's to women and communists. He says of the Chinese student: "to pass her with a clear conscience I had to have at least one essay from her in which every second word was not misspelled and there were no such oriental mysteries as 'This novel is a novel. It is a great work, for it is written in the form of a book.' " And the radical Arab: "The voice of Allah. It has the power of great truths. Because they are great, they cannot stand up to microscopic examination." And "The brown Indian girl Jenny Razadharamithan, who drifts into my seminars only very occasionally, says something in an English I cannot understand (and I don't think anyone else in the classroom can either), something that sounds like 'life is a number.' " And "Bellissimmo, son of a Neapolitan labourer. He will never understand even *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but he will become a sharp Italian lawyer supplying his overworked father with a reason to brag and disentangling more than one Mafioso from legal embroilment."

I can see why Smiricky is anti-Arab. Like so many right-wingers he is ardently pro-Israel and, whether they should or not, the two usually go together. But why is he against the Chinese, Indians, and Italians? Besides, these are only individual students, not representative stereotypes. In any case, they are the words of Smiricky, not Skvorecky. To which I reply with a good old WASP word, piffle.

As well as the racial and gender anti's, the novel is also anti-union, anti-Vietnam war draft dodgers, and generally anti-anything which smells of leftism, as in the following delightful little cheap shot: "I read her the bulletin of Camstarve, that organization which, according to its own blurb, exists 'to help eradicate hunger, poverty, injustice and inequality in the world.' " So what is the novel for? To put it somewhat perversely, it is *for* anti-communism. But beyond that, it is for individualism, and against anything which restrains that individualism. The only real individual in the novel is the narrator but praise is allowed for some other individuals, primarily authors. Male authors, of course. One of Smiricky's correspondents notes, "Stream-of-consciousness writing was invented long before Joyce by Dorothy Richardson, but it was she, not Joyce, who fell into obscurity. Why?" I could give one suggestion and it isn't the one offered, that "every art is a mystery."

The authors who dominate the novel and who give their names to the chapters are in general major and American: Poe, Hawthorne, Twain, Crane, Fitzgerald, Conrad, and Lovecraft. Their primary roles are found in the classroom in which Smiricky tries to teach them to his dull-witted students. He himself dismisses the parasitism of literary criticism but the critiques he provides are central to the novel. It is only his interpretation which justifies the presence of the one minor interloper, Lovecraft, and the "foreigner," Conrad. Smiricky admits his "biased" psychoanalysis of *Heart of Darkness*," in which he perceives it as essentially anti-Soviet, but he is by no means sure it is just his prejudice: "Am I taking my own delirium seriously? Conrad's delirium? For such art is delirium. Such an author is merely a sounding board amplifying the dark pulsing powers of bloody experience."

The question of what an author does is raised at the beginning of the novel by the title. Under "Acknowledgements," Skvorecky notes, "The expression 'the engineer of human souls' is held, by many political indoctrinators, to be Stalin's definition of the writer: as an engineer constructs a machine, so must a writer construct the mind of the new man." I presume, and again I beware the intentional fallacy, that this is quoted rather ironically, for the representative author, Smiricky, seems quite unable to control his own life, much less the minds of potential readers. And yet, I think it is as just such an engineer that Skvorecky works.

The racism of the novel and all the pro's and anti's are based on a belief in the constructed minds of certain individuals. Smiricky's anti-Chinese comment does not demonstrate that he hates all Chinese but that he finds this individual Chinese to be inferior and feels no constraint against labelling her as such in a Chinese context. No power of the state has the right to label or slot people but the individual author, ah, that's another story.

At the end of the novel there is a series of deaths as the people who almost matter to Smiricky fall away. And the individual author remains, in "the literary wilderness of Canada," with only the solace of his new anima, a beautiful, devoted, rich, student. Behind him lies a number of brilliantly anti-soviet anecdotes, as when the visiting Russian poet is offered some banned books and immediately stuffs them into his shirt: "It-it's a kind of — old Russian tradition. From czarist times — almost second nature. . . ." But like many other satires, Smiricky's merry attack on the opposition leaves him with little compassion for the innocent bystander. There is a failure of humanity in the book, not unlike that Smiricky rejects elsewhere, but here it is not the failure of the state apparatus but of the vision of that individual author Smiricky loves so much.

I feel a need to search for explanations. Is it just Smiricky's communist experience that makes him fear feminism and cling to a dated American individualism? Is he derisive towards Canada because he is one of the unfortunate immigrants who wound up on the wrong side of the forty-ninth parallel? Like the Irishman in another novel, whose "captain promised him Boston but gave him Baie Comeau?" But such speculation, while it might explain, cannot justify the ideology of the novel. And yet I am afraid that many readers will fail to perceive much of that ideology. I can hear a thousand cheers for the anti-communism but at best a few muted rejections of the anti-feminism, the racism, and the general anti-social character of the novel. One can see the need for Camstarve in the face of this engineer who perpetuates injustice and inequality in the world.

I enjoyed much of *The Engineer of Human Souls* and was greatly entertained by parts of it. But in the end I must judge the novel the way Smiricky — or perhaps Skvorecky — would, on what it says the world is. The book is wrong.

TERRY GOLDIE

SOUTH & NORTH

ELIZABETH SPENCER, *The Salt Line*. Doubleday, $21.50.

JAMES DOYLE, *North of America: Images of Canada in the Literature of the United States, 1775-1900*. ECW, $9.95.

ALTHOUGH ELIZABETH SPENCER has lived for over twenty-five years in Montreal, her imaginative roots are still in the Deep South of the United States. Her perception, her style, her sense of the

structure of human relationships are also distinctively Southern. She is a member of that distinguished band of women writers like Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, Caroline Gordon, and Katherine Anne Porter, who have created a more distinctive literary landscape for that region than any other in the United States. To me, however, her work is more reminiscent of the fiction of Walker Percy, whose many novels have painted a complex series of pictures of the modern South. Like Percy, Elizabeth Spencer is fond of quirky and unpredictable characters and sensuous, colourful prose. Both novelists relish the conflict between old times and new manners, between nouveau flashy riches and elegant poverty. A relatively old and yet quickly modernizing society, the South has been particularly fertile in the production of novels of manners.

The plot of *The Salt Line* is complicated and intricate. It revolves around one man, Arnie Carrington, recently a widower, formerly a professor of English at a Southern college. After a tumultuous career in the troubled 1960's, supporting liberal causes, he has resigned under pressure from his colleagues, while yet in his early fifties. His aim is to complete a book on Byron which has been long in the works. He is, however, too much the Byronic man himself to settle down to write; he is, too, profoundly disoriented by his wife's death from cancer.

He gets involved in trying to restore to some of its original glory the strip of Mississippi Gulfcoast to which he has retired. It has been devastated by a recent hurricane. Pursuing this goal, he has become enmeshed in complicated real-estate deals, in the affairs of a local small-time Mafioso, and in the plans of a much-disliked colleague from his old college who has also decided to retire to the Gulfcoast. Arnie also gets involved with several women. His energies and sympathies are engaged in many directions, so that his emotional life becomes as hopelessly tangled as Byron's ever was.

Before his wife had been stricken by cancer, Arnie had driven her down to the place they were then contemplating settling in. " 'There's a place along the road,' " she had said, " 'where you can smell the Gulf. . . . You could draw the line of that salt on the map, I bet. Have you ever noticed it?' " The salt-line defines the boundaries of this peculiar region which Elizabeth Spencer has recreated brilliantly in the novel. Her prose is rich and image-laden, her eye sharp and penetrating. Below the salt-line, it seems that a subtle and sweet corruption tends to pervade personal relations, business deals, and sexual affairs. The novel is in part a record of the toll of loss and violence caused by this corruption and at the same time of the delight felt in it. Spencer's vision of life is as complex as her plot. She does not judge or condemn, but views life with a kind of tolerant irony, and with an engaging humour that forgives without forgetting. She works within both the realist and the symbolist tradition, so that her pictures of local life are invested with universal significance.

The Salt Line is engrossing because Elizabeth Spencer has that rare gift of making her characters believable and sympathetic, even at their most despicable moments. The novel is told from the point of view of many of them, so that the reader assembles a mosaic of different perceptions that accrete into the total meaning. That meaning cannot readily be summarized discursively; it is rather the aggregate of various destinies worked out from the sum of character and event. The novel begins with a death and ends with a birth. Those incidents are part of the total shape of the whole, so that their ineluctability commands assent and evokes in the reader a deep

satisfaction with an action completed, but not finished.

* * *

James Doyle's study of the images of Canada in the literature of the United States, *North of America*, has entailed a great deal of digging into the obscurer recesses of libraries: into old travel accounts, fading dime novels, and the works of long-forgotten literary artists. He readily admits that Canada has never been at the centre of the American imagination, but has "perennially figured as a vague, peripheral, and ambiguous concept." In Doyle's opinion, only one work on the topic ranks among the masterpieces of American literature. That is Francis Parkman's multi-volume history, *France and England in North America*, which is a greater work of art than it is of history.

Nevertheless, the subject is of great interest to us in Canada; it is central, not peripheral, to all our concerns as a nation. Doyle traces the current of opinion of Americans about Canada from Revolutionary times to the spectacular rise of American power at the end of the nineteenth century. The current changes from an initial widely-held feeling of contempt for Canada's subservience to Britain to the often-expressed wish to annex the country in order to round out America's Manifest Destiny.

In the early years, American interest was often centred on Quebec, whose exoticism of language and religion was both titillating and repulsive to the monolingual Protestants to the south. In fact Doyle has discovered that French Canada figured frequently in cheap American gothic fiction as the setting for the assault on Protestant virginity by lecherous priests assisted by deranged nuns. Dungeons abound and subterranean passages run beneath the streets of Montreal.

The most sensational of these absurdities, *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, which purported to be an autobiography, was actually written by an Anglo-Irish episcopal priest and a professional writer, Theodore Dwight, nephew of the well-known Congregationalist minister, scholar, and poet, Timothy Dwight. The book caused a brief but violent wave of anti-Catholic and anti-Canadian sentiment until it was exposed by a crusading New York journalist.

This picture of popery and pornography was of course not the only view of French Canada at the time. Another was presented in romances about the voyageurs. There were even some admiring accounts of the good order and discipline of the British colonial administration in both Upper and Lower Canada, mainly written by envious New England Brahmins. One of the most distinctive images of Canada emerges after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Laws. Canada became a haven for escaped slaves, and was praised as such by Harriet Beecher Stowe and by fugitive slaves themselves in their escape narratives. The other side of this picture, however, is found in *A North-Side View of Slavery*. This collection of oral testimony made by a Boston abolitionist, Benjamin Drew, reveals how often escaping slaves encountered racial prejudice in Canada.

In the popular theory of Manifest Destiny, the contemplated swallowing-up of Canada took many forms. Whitman's is the best known, but, as Doyle points out, Walt's desire for continental unity was not rooted in political ambition but in "one further image of the transcendental unity that encompasses all elements of creation, all fragments, variations, alternatives, opposites, and antagonisms in one grand, mystic, ideal whole." A less appealing version of the expansionist idea is that found in the writings of some sportsmen, who saw Canada as one huge recreational hunting and fish-

ing ground for Americans seeking escape from cities in the wilderness.

In his conclusion, Doyle remarks that Americans seem even less interested in Canada in the twentieth century than they were in the nineteenth. He theorizes that the reason for this may be that now Americans see little difference between the two countries, whereas in the past Canada served as a reminder of alternatives, "some of which seem wrong, but many of which too often present disturbing possibilities of United States error and failure."

If this is true, then we have more to fear from American indifference than from misplaced concern. Certainly American reaction to Canadian foreign policy seems to bear out Doyle's view. So long as we concur with American objectives abroad, or at least keep quiet about them, the President and the State Department smile benignly upon us, but if we presume to suggest alternatives, however minor, the reaction of the United States is usually that of outraged surprise — as if we had betrayed an implicit pact of unity.

Nevertheless, it would be useful to have a continuation of this kind of study into the twentieth century, if only to see how Americans have managed to delude themselves into the belief that the two countries are really one — a belief anticipated, Doyle points out, as early as 1902 in a book called *The Americanization of Canada*. If such a study is to be written, James Doyle is the man to do it. His thorough and painstaking scholarship, his judicious analyses, and his strong but considered opinions make his book a thoroughly useful and dependable guide to the troubled and troubling subject of American attitudes towards Canada.

PETER BUITENHUIS

EDUCATION & COMPROMISE

IAN A. L. GETTY and ANTOINE S. LUSSIER, eds., *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*. Univ. of British Columbia, $12.50 pa.

UNTIL WORLD WAR II the Department of Indian Affairs, charged with the responsibility of implementing government policy concerning Native Indians, functioned with little public or political input. Department estimates were passed without debate in Parliament, and the number of letters received from interested citizens in any year could be counted on one hand. The strong Native contribution to the war effort aroused various citizen groups to call for a complete revision of the Indian Act and an end to discrimination against Indians, who at that time could not even be citizens. The resulting report spoke in favour of these revisions but also reinforced long-term policies — principally that the role of government was first of all to protect, secondly to civilize, and lastly to assimilate Native Indians.

In 1969, in a White Paper on Indian Affairs, the government announced that it intended to absolve itself from responsibility for Indian Affairs and to eliminate special Indian status and Indian lands. That is, to complete by fiat the process of assimilation. In a climate of global concern for underdeveloped peoples and sensitivity to race relations, the protests of the Indian people were heard in Canada and the White Paper withdrawn. Thus began an acceleration of Native participation in Native issues and the beginning of an examination of some of government's underlying precepts.

One of the several valuable services of *As Long as the Sun Shines* is to take emotive issues, such as landclaims, aboriginal rights, even Louis Riel, into the

cooler climes of scholarship. Thus it is possible to find a firm historical perspective from which to assess these matters. Remarkably, for a book which is a collection of papers from a Native Studies colloquim plus a selection of published articles, the book achieves a rather comprehensive overview of the development of government-Native relations; plus forays into related areas: the Native and the justice system, the cultural context of Inuit modernization, even the Temperance Movement. Of particular interest is the human side of policy, seen in the chapters on bureaucrats Herman Merivale and Lawrence Vankoughnet (with a side glance at Duncan Campbell Scott). Jean Morisset's "La Conquête du Nord-Ouest, 1885-1985" provides a breath of air in the stuffy, overwhelmingly British context of Native matters. Interestingly, and with some justification, he accuses the conquering race of the "intellectual hijacking" of the Indian and Métis soul. In the search for identity the English Canadian usurps and appropriates. John Newlove's poem "The Pride," and some comments of Northrop Frye are cited as instances of this "spiritual abduction."

Still, at the heart of the book (and indeed of Native-government relations in general) is land. There were "three options open to the 'discovery nations' [of North America]: to abandon their so-called discoveries, proceed by armed conquest, or acquire land by negotiation. The first was unfeasible, the second was undesirable; the third was acceptable . . . The Indians were free to sell or not to sell; but in either case they would lose their lands."

The European and eventually Canadian government position on land ownership grew out of the European tradition which held that only nation states could claim sovereignty and hold underlying title to land. Since the Native Peoples were not organized in states along European lines, and since they had not marked off plots of land in a way compatible with European ideas of private property, they had no inherent claim to ownership of the land. The British accepted, however, that the Natives had a right to use the land as they had done "since time immemorial," but that the British Crown was the actual owner and that native "usufructuary" rights could be surrendered to the Crown. It was on this basis — one never accepted by Natives and utterly incompatible with their views — that the government acted to extinguish aboriginal rights through treaties.

Louis Riel's position on the sale of Rupert's Land by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Canadian government is an illustration: the H.B.C. had no right to make such a sale because the land had never belonged to it, and under the " 'law of nations' the rights of Indians and Metis were not qualitatively different from the rights of other nations."

This difference is still at issue and cannot now, I think, be resolved one way or the other. To take a hopeful view, reconciliation will come through education compromise — to which *As Long as the Sun Shines* contributes. And through identification of mutual self-interest between Natives and other Canadians. The inclusion of aboriginal rights in the new constitution may well signify such a process.

MARILYN BOWERING

THEATRAL

ALAIN PONTAUT, *Madame Jocaste*. Leméac, $7.95.

RENE GINGRAS, *Syncope*. Leméac, $7.95.

MICHELLE ALLEN, *La passion de Juliette*. Leméac, $8.95.

THE *Collection théâtre* OF *Les Editions Leméac* has in the last fifteen years been

dedicated to the promotion of French-Canadian drama. The plays came complete with foreword, biographical notes and, very often, with photographs of actual productions. The more than 125 plays in this fine series concentrate on twentieth-century drama — established playwrights like Gélinas, Dubé, Tremblay, Barbeau, Lepage, and Ronfard are well represented. The nineteenth century, however, is haphazardly and inadequately represented by Fréchette and Félicité Angers. Three new plays have recently been added to the series: René Gingras and Michelle Allen make their debut with *Syncope* and *La passion de Juliette* respectively, while Alain Pontaut adds *Madame Jocaste* to several plays already published, most notably *Un bateau qui avait monté et qui flottait comme il pouvait, c'est-à-dire mal.*

In *Madame Jocaste* Pontaut retells the story of Jocaste, mother and wife of Oedipus, who, in this version, does not commit suicide after the discovery of Oedipus's crimes but lives in hiding from her usurping brother Creon. She has invited the young journalist Albert Yoyo to write the *true* story of her family and throughout the play the two protagonists, Jocaste and Yoyo, act out the Oedipus legend, but with a few important changes. Jocaste maintains that her only child died after having been exposed in the wilderness, that her second husband, Oedipus, was a Corinthian prince without any links to her family, and that therefore the Oedipus legend is but a myth invented by Creon to bring about the downfall of the royal family. The new "biography" is meant to be her revenge on Creon. When Yoyo reveals himself to be one of Creon's men sent to kill Jocaste she convinces him that in following the order he would only bring about his own death. They decide to get married "provided that she is not his mother and he not her son."

The novelty of Pontaut's secularized or demythologized version of the Oedipus tragedy is initially attractive especially where it suggests that Creon rather than the gods is the agent of Oedipus's fate. But ultimately the play is a disappointment adding little that is new to the original story and suffering from the stripping away of the rich mythology which gives the Sophoclean *Oedipus* its power. Jocaste's version that Creon is the villain is weakened in that this idea is never dramatized. The theatricality of the play is further weakened by the fact that the educated viewer is given information that he does not need about Oedipus, Jocaste, and Creon, while the uninformed viewer will be confused by the many roles the two protagonists act out — Jocaste, for example, plays Laius, Oedipus, the Sphinx, Tiresias, and Creon without any change of costume or make-up.

The play could have benefited if Pontaut had developed some interesting hints concerning the love relationship between Jocaste and Yoyo. For example, while acting out the first encounter between Oedipus and Jocaste, the protagonists clearly step beyond their roles when the young man, Yoyo, exactly the same age as Oedipus, and Jocaste declare their love for each other. Assuming that Jocaste is correct in believing that her second husband was not her child, are we to understand that Yoyo is her true son? In marrying Yoyo is Jocaste now taking on the role ineluctably predestined for her? The play, however, does not develop these suggestions; "Quelle aventure" is the play's closing line, but one would prefer the terror and purgation offered by the old myth and ritual to the banality of Pontaut's modern love story.

The title of René Gingras's *Syncope*, first presented in Montreal on 7 January 1983, suggests a number of levels on which the play may be understood. If we

define syncopation as the non-coincidence of accent with the metric accent this non-coincidence characterizes the lack of communication among the protagonists of the play. It can also be associated in the medical sense with François's epileptic attacks and also with Pit's musical compositions (the French word *syncope* can be translated as syncope or syncopation). Finally, Gingras has tried to give his audience a syncopated rhythm.

The plot is deceptively simple. Pit is a composer drawn also to science — he doesn't know whether he prefers Einstein or Beethoven. These polarities (which he seems to be able to reconcile) are embodied in Bacon (Francis Bacon?) his landlord, and François, a young homosexual who — so he claims — has murdered his adopted parents. The play consists of a series of encounters between Bacon and Pit and François and Pit leading to a final climactic scene with all three where Bacon and François try to kill each other.

The play suggests that Pit is a figure of power, a mediator or catalyst, who can help both men — Bacon has been abandoned by his wife, his son is a failure; François is a dispossessed character in revolt against his elders. Gingras also suggests that Bacon represents the English of Québec and François the Québécois — that François may be Bacon's son reinforces this analogy.

Jean Cléo Godin has argued in his foreword that the play ends unsatisfactorily with Pit not having come to terms with his problems. But contemporary dramatists, preferring ambiguity and irony, are wary of pat resolutions. Pit is no *deus ex machina* reconciling father and putative son; life is a "huis clos" or, in Gingras's metaphor, "cette bascule de trois personnages dans le cosmos comme s'ils étaient happé par un trou noir." We, the audience, are invited to offer our solution.

The most intriguing of the three plays is Michelle Allen's *La passion de Juliette*, premiered on 24 May 1983 at the École nationale de théâtre. Like René Gingras, Michelle Allen has a solid background in acting and directing and this is reflected in the theatricality of her play.

La passion de Juliette is an exploration of the nature of love which begins in cynicism and culminates in what may best be described as a love that embraces androgyneity. At the beginning, Juliette's "passion" is devoted to her research "sur l'amour en chute libre chez les pigeons." She defines love in a clinical way: "L'AMOUR. C'est toujours un hasard de circonstances, une complimentarité nevrotique des problèmes avec le père, et par-dessus tout un excellent investissement en période de difficultés économiques. Ça occupe les loisirs et ça coûte moins cher que d'aller ou théâtre." Her present lover Vincent is even more cynical; he equates love with sex and sex with instant gratification. Another character, Pauline, represents a possessive love given to her dead son but withheld from the living.

Juliette is introduced to her true passion, Adris, by Esmée who is described as "beaucoup sorcière." She is the most complex character in the play; like Giraudoux' Ondine she suggests that the essence of love consists of Eros and Caritas combined, and that this kind of love will link a couple forever even transcending death. Esmée will give birth to Siamese twins, a boy and a girl joined in the flesh and the spirit who will live eternally, like Juliette and Adris. Allen also suggests that Esmée is in love with Juliette. For example on the back of Adris's vest appear the words: "I love Juliette" while on Esmée's it reads: "ME TOO." The letters on Esmée's vest also hint at her own androgynous nature as does an incident in the scene of the carnival where Juliette searches for her:

"... vous n'auriez pas croisé une personne avec un grand manteau gris et un petit chapeau noir? C'est une jeune femme qui ressemble tellement à un jeune homme qu'on pourrait s'y tromper?"

La passion de Juliette is very complex in its structure, in its symbolism, and especially in its language where the imagery sometimes verges on the surreal: "Je cherche une jeune femme qui porte un grand manteau noir et un petit chapeau gris. Vous auriez pu croire qu'il s'agissait d'un jeune homme portant un petit grand gris et un manteau-chapeau noir," says Juliette in a further attempt to find Esmée, and she continues: "Je cherchais un grand manteau déguisé en femme qui aurait pu avoir l'air d'un petit chapeau gris et noir sur une tête d'homme."

In summary *La passion de Juliette* is the work of a very promising playwright from whom we confidently expect to hear much more.

RENATE BENSON

WEST COAST PUBLISHERS

ROBERT BRINGHURST, *Ocean/Paper/Stone*. William Hoffer, $9.95.

ONLY IN RECENT YEARS has British Columbia become a publishing centre of real importance, but literary publication of a sort dates back well over a century, since the first locally printed book of poems, James Anderson's *Sawney's Letters: or, Cariboo Rhymes*, appeared in Barkerville in 1866. The nineteenth century was poorly represented on the West Coast by any kind of publication except newspapers and mining manuals, and the first half of the present century was hardly better in literary terms; local poets and novelists of any significance published in Toronto or even London or New York, for there were no trade houses here, and while local printers might occasionally publish chapbooks *con amore* or local poets might bring out their own work, the quality of verse, prose, and print was alike mediocre. It was only in the late 1950's and the early 1960's that little presses, literary magazines (*Canadian Literature* one of the first) and eventually viable trade houses began to appear in strength on the Coast at the same time as an abundance of good writers.

The poor beginnings and the rich eventual harvest were demonstrated in an exhibition put together by the poet and book designer Robert Bringhurst and exhibited by Celia Duthie in Vancouver in the spring of 1984. The bookseller William Hoffer, himself an occasional literary publisher, brought out Bringhurst's catalogue, *Ocean/Paper/Stone*. This satisfyingly printed little volume of 110 pages is a model *catalogue raisonné* that will appeal to anyone interested in regional literary movements or in collecting good editions. Bringhurst selected for the exhibition and lists in *Ocean/Paper/Stone* no less than 58 presses and 40 literary magazines; he mentions roughly another forty presses and forty magazines which he did not include. About 90 per cent of the inclusions date from the late 1950's or afterwards, which is a sign how strong a role the West Coast played in the Canadian "verbal explosion" of the 1960's of which Northrop Frye once spoke. The collection — by its absences as much as its inclusions — establishes the importance of British Columbia as a centre of both poetry writing and good book, magazine, and broadside publishing over the past quarter of a century. The works of over a hundred writers and translators — many of them by now names of national standing — are in-

cluded among the 175 individual publications chosen and listed, and the work of some fine typographers and designers is represented, Bringhurst himself among them; they are shadowed over by three figures of paramount importance and ability who helped to shape local traditions in book design and printing: Robert Reid, Takao Tanabe and, above all, Charles Morriss.

Bringhurst has written an excellent historical introduction and notes to each of the selected presses and magazines, so that *Ocean/Paper/Stone* is more than a catalogue of a passing exhibition; it is a real contribution to the history of making books in Canada's Pacific province. It is well illustrated with reproductions of title pages, broadsides, pages of print, and other items. The first illustration struck in me a special note of recognition; it is an extraordinary little woodcut of a dragon coiled upon itself like the Ourobouros which Ben Lim did for me to include in the first issue of *Canadian Literature* in 1959.

1,250 copies of *Ocean/Paper/Stone* were printed, and I imagine that if it is not on sale in bookstores, copies are probably available from William Hoffer, the publisher. Merely as an artifact, it is worth acquiring, and as a piece of regional literary history well worth keeping.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

** PIERRE BERTON, *The Promised Land.* McClelland & Stewart, $24.95. *The Promised Land* is billed as the last book in "Pierre Berton's four-volume saga of the Canadian North West," but it is markedly inferior to either *Klondike* or his two volumes on the building of the CPR. It concerns basically the populating of the prairies and the way land as a commodity became the basis for monstrous political racketeering. But it is too episodic, too much like a group of hastily written appendices for a real flow of history to emerge, and Berton's researchers have been slipping badly. In one stretch of six pages dealing with an area this writer knows well, there are three gross errors. Peter Kropotkin is described as an "escapee from a Siberian cell"; his famous escape was actually from a St. Petersburg hospital. The Mennonites are introduced as "followers of Leo Tolstoy"; they were actually followers of the anabaptist Menno Simon. And we are told that "Tolstoy . . . contributed" to the funds that brought the Doukhobors to Canada "seventeen thousand dollars in royalties from *What Is Art?*"; what he in fact donated were the royalties from his last novel, *Resurrection.* How well has Berton checked the other and more sensational "facts" he offers?

G.W.

**** MICHAEL BLISS, *Banting: A Biography.* McClelland & Stewart, $24.95. Fred Banting, the small city doctor who hit upon one good idea in his life and gained extraordinary fame for it, was one of the most ordinary of celebrated men, dull as a personality and intellectually banal. He would never have carried his method of isolating insulin to fruition if it had not been for the help of trained scientists, whose desire to share credit he resented, and all his life, after insulin brought him instant attention, he was involved in a succession of pointless researches and in keeping up the pretences of a public role supported by the most insubstantial of achievements. A grand biography of him would have been inappropriate, and Michael Bliss, who writes excellent articles in *Saturday Night* as well as being a first-rate professional historian, has provided just the kind of unpretentious life that is appropriate for the career of a man of modest talent who found himself mistaken for a genius. He never falls to the temptation of treating Banting with contempt or making him the figure of fun into which a more malicious writer, intent on showing his own superior wit, might have transformed him. *Banting* is an admirably workmanlike book, but because of the honesty that is combined with its humanity it gives so few reasons for us to interest ourselves in Banting that it may be undeservedly neglected. That would be unfortunate, since it is a model from which those who undertake lives of men of fame and slight achievement may find a great deal to learn.

G.W.

opinions and notes

TEXT AND SUBTEXT

Davies's "World of Wonders" and Robert Houdin's Memoirs

WHEN MAGNUS EISENGRIM (i.e., Paul Dempster) decides to tell the story of his life in Robertson Davies's *World of Wonders*, it will be remembered that he does so to provide a "subtext" to the film, *Un Hommage à Robert-Houdin*, in which he has been acting the part of the well-known nineteenth-century French conjuror. The opening section of this film is based, we are told, on Robert-Houdin's *Confidences d'un prestidigitateur* (1858). Few of Davies's readers are likely to be familiar with that work, and he therefore gives us whatever background he considers we need. To Eisengrim himself, Robert-Houdin is "not a great magician" but "a fine illusionist, . . . a man who depends on a lot of contraptions — mechanical devices, clockwork, mirrors, and such things."[1] Roland Ingestree, the B.B.C. executive producer, offers a more detailed critique:

> The false modesty, the exaggerated humility, the greasy bourgeois assertions of respectability, of good-husband-and-father, of debt-paying worthiness are what make the *Confidences* so hard to swallow. . . . [H]e was concealing something, take my word for it. The whole of the *Confidences* is a gigantic whitewash job, a concealment.

Ingestree wants "a subtext for the autobiography, which seems so delightfully bland and cosy," and this is what Eisengrim ultimately provides. His adventures are anything but "bland and cosy," and the ordinary reader is likely to accept the invitation to see in Eisengrim's narrative a glimpse of the hard work, devotion, good (or bad) luck, and drab sordidity that underlies the superficial glitter of "show business." This is the result of accepting Davies on his own terms. But what if we go beyond *World of Wonders* to Robert-Houdin's memoirs themselves?

Here a very different inter-relation becomes manifest. Ingestree's version of Robert-Houdin, like Eisengrim's, is part of the truth but by no means the whole of it. In addition to the bourgeois respectability, the blandness and cosiness, this is a narrative of surprising adventures, decidedly tall tales, catastrophes and triumphs, a veritable world of wonders that, particularly in the first hundred pages or so, contains all the staples of romantic fiction. Indeed, it is tempting to wonder whether Davies got the idea for *Phantasmata: The Life and Adventures of Magnus Eisengrim*, the imaginative autobiography fabricated by Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business*, from the obviously fictional aspects of this section of Robert-Houdin's *Confidences*. But the connections go deeper than this. If we read Robert-Houdin, we come upon numerous incidents and events that are seemingly reflected and transformed in Eisengrim's story. Like Eisengrim's, Robert-Houdin's adventures begin when, during his apprenticeship to a watchmaker, he visits a local fair (a specific date, 25 July 1828, is given [1, 42]).[2] After returning late to his lodgings, he is accidentally poisoned, almost dies, and later yearns desperately to return to his family. While still weak, he boards a stagecoach, but finds that the jolting increases his illness to the point of delirium: "Unable to endure longer, I opened the door of the compartment, and leaped, at an imminent risk of my life, on to the high road, where I fell in a state of insensibility" (1, 44).

While not immediately obvious, the connections between these events and Eisengrim's story are none the less palpable. On another specific date, 30 August 1918, he "descended into hell" when visiting a fair. Willard's act of sodomy takes the place of the accidental poisoning, but it too results in fainting, and in the traumatic experience of the train-ride from which he eventually emerges as if dead. (While Robert-Houdin's journey is technically towards rather than away from home, in fact it results in extensive wanderings.) These connections might seem somewhat far fetched were it not for the fact that, according to his story, Robert-Houdin is picked up from the road and nursed by a travelling magician. It is from "poor Torrini" (I, 70), whose real name was the Count de Grisy (I, 89) — he is mentioned in passing in *World of Wonders* — that Robert-Houdin receives his first serious lessons in conjuring. After Torrini is injured in a carriage accident six months later, Robert-Houdin is able to perform in his stead — and one thinks of Eisengrim taking over from the ailing Willard the Wizard. Indeed, the whole of Eisengrim's relation with Willard is clearly a demonic version (or subtext) of Robert-Houdin's unlikely but romantic story.

As Judith Skelton Grant has already pointed out,[3] Davies borrows from Robert-Houdin on two later occasions in *World of Wonders*. One involves the rube-defying Abdullah, worked by Eisengrim in the Wanless circus, who is directly modelled upon an automaton chess-player, "a Turk of the natural size, wearing the national costume" (I, 179), that Robert-Houdin saw in 1844 and whose story he tells in some detail. The other is the incident of the mechanical toys that Liesl smashes while a teen-ager and Eisengrim meticulously repairs; these are based on a "componium" or model orchestra which Robert-Houdin himself restored to working order (I, 190-94). A number of other details are borrowed in the course of the Deptford trilogy. Eisengrim's "*Soirée of Illusions*," which gives its name to the final part of *Fifth Business*, is clearly derived from Robert-Houdin's "*Soirées Fantastiques*," which he first performed in Paris in 1845. Not only did the latter include "the orange-tree" and "the pastrycook of the Palais Royal" (I, 284) mentioned in the opening pages of *World of Wonders*, but the trick with which Eisengrim opens his show, the bottle that pours a variety of drinks and is described by Ramsay as "a very old trick,"[4] is one of Robert-Houdin's (see II, 141). And the Inexhaustible Punch Bowl, also mentioned at the opening of *World of Wonders*, is a later elaboration of this (see II, 163-65). Even "the Brazen Head of Friar Bacon" (mentioned, incidentally, in the *Memoirs* [I, 169]) may be indebted to some extent to Robert-Houdin's account of his "second sight" experiment in which one of his sons took part (II, 8-9). Furthermore, the detail and elegance that Robert-Houdin brought to his performances are attributed to Eisengrim and play a large part in his success. Whereas Eisengrim wants us to believe that he is very different from the figure he plays in the film, a reading of the *Memoirs* shows that there are some close comparisons to be made between them.

If this were merely a matter of source-hunting, these details would hardly be worth recording. But the facts that I have presented relate, I believe, to a literary-critical problem of some interest. While there is a lot of talk in Davies's novel about providing "a subtext for Magnus's film about Robert-Houdin," there is a curious sense in which the *Memoirs* function as an interesting subtext for *World of Wonders*. The difficulty here, of course, is that most readers of Davies's novel will be unaware of it.

Yet an answer (of sorts) to this objection has been provided within the text by Eisengrim (and Davies). We are presented with this exchange between Eisengrim and Ramsay:

> "Do you think the circumstances of my own life really form a subtext for this film?"
>
> "God only knows. One thing is certain: unless you choose to tell Lind and his friends about your life, it can't do so."
>
> "You're quite wrong. I would know, and I suppose whatever I do is rooted in what I am, and have been."

And as he is about to begin his story, Eisengrim remarks: "After all, the audience doesn't have to know the subtext, does it?" Perhaps not. But Davies, one feels, is indulging in some intellectual high jinks at this point. Do readers of a novel need a fabricated subtext for an imaginary film that they will never see? And it is worth pointing out that the very idea of a "subtext" is something of a Borgesian joke on Davies's part, not unlike the earlier concept of "Fifth Business." For my part, I am taking the process one step further: do the readers of *World of Wonders* need the subtext of a subtext? Oddly enough, for a full understanding of the complex artifice of Davies's fictive magic, the answer may well be yes.

NOTES

[1] All references to *World of Wonders* are to the first edition (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975).

[2] All references to Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin are to the English translation by Lascelles Wraxall, *Memoirs of Robert-Houdin, Ambassador, Author, and Conjuror*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1859).

[3] See Judith Skelton Grant, *Robertson Davies* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), pp. 44-45.

[4] Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 237.

W. J. KEITH

BIBLE, MYTHES ET FOUS DE BASSAN

LE ROMAN D'ANNE HEBERT, *Les Fous de Bassan* abonde en références de toutes sortes: Bible, mythes classiques, contes pour enfants, symboles traditionnels, dictons populaires, autres oeuvres de l'auteure. Je retiendrai celles qui se rapporent à la Bible d'abord, ensuite, plus brièvement, aux mythes.

L'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament truffent le récit: trente-et-une citations intégrales, en italique, tirées à peu près également des deux livres, vingt-deux passages transformés, adaptés, dont six puisés au premier livre et seize en deuxième, et plus de cinquante renvois à des types, à des motifs, à des thèmes, à des actions, à des situations. C'est dire au delà de cent références aux livres saints.

Les références les plus nombreuses sont faites aux deux premiers livres de l'Ancien Testament, la Genèse et l'Exode, mais plusieurs le sont à l'Evangile et à l'Apocalypse de Jean, et à la première épître aux Corinthiens de Paul. On comprenda mieux éventuellement le pourquoi du choix prédominant de ces textes. Comme il convient, les références abondent dans la partie du roman réservée à la voix du pasteur, vingt-trois des trente citations intégrales, et se retrouvent moins abondantes, et sous un mode parodique, dans les sections réservées à Stevens, le personnage "au coeur mauvais."

Cette multiplication assez exceptionnelle de renvois dans une oeuvre qui n'est pas "religieuse" — il s'agit d'un roman sur le désir, sur l'attraction compulsive entre les deux sexes qui conduit à la violence — n'a pas lieu de nous surprendre outre mesure, pour deux raisons, la première relative à l'auteure elle-même. Celle-ci dans une interview déclare: " . . . la Bible est un livre extraordinaire. C'est peut-être l'oeuvre qui m'a marquée le

plus."[1] La seconde relève de la nature du récit, au milieu où il se déroule, une communauté protestante anglophone, isolée, rassemblée autour de son pasteur. La romancière signalait dans une autre interview que la culture que possèdent ses personnages "leur vient surtout de la fréquentation quotidienne de la Bible; c'est la Bible qui leur fournit un langage très imagé et une sorte de grandeur qui les dépasse."[2] L'usage abondant de la Bible est donc vraisemblable.

Comment ces références investissent-elles le récit? Résumons d'abord l'intrigue pour le bien comprendre.

Stevens Brown, vingt ans, revient, après plusieurs années de voyages à travers l'Amérique, à son village natal, Griffin Creek, concession sur les bords du Saint-Laurent faite en 1782 à un groupe de loyalistes américains. La communauté y mène une vie relativement paisible sous la houlette du pasteur Nicolas Jones. Mais voilà que dans la nuit du 31 août 1936 deux adolescentes, Nora et Olivia Atkins, disparaissent. Que leur est-il arrivé? La mer finira par ramener des indices de leur mort violente et l'enquête policière révélera la culpabilité de Stevens. Le village se désintègre, les habitants se dispersent. Le pasteur vieillira seul au milieu des survivants et Stevens, ayant échappé à la condamnation et s'étant enrôlé, se retrouvera après la guerre, détraqué, dans un hôpital pour vétérans.

Cette histoire nous est présentée de façon polyphonique, en six récits, par différents acteurs du drame qui nous apportent chacun leur point de vue, sous différentes formes. Même le fantôme de Nora viendra témoigner.

A partir de ces six récits nous pouvons reconstituer chronologiquement le drame, en dégager les principales étapes, et relever les références bibliques qui s'y rapportent.

L'histoire remonte "au commencement," selon les termes même de la Genèse, et décrit un espace et un temps primordiaux de façon analogue au récit biblique: "Au commencement, il n'y eut que cette terre de taïga . . . toutes les bêtes à fourrure et à plumes . . . les oiseaux de mer et les poissons dans l'eau s'y multipliaient à l'infini. *Et l'esprit de Dieu planait au dessus des eaux.*"

Cette terre promise à laquelle ont accédé les loyalistes après leur pérégrination, ce jardin d'abondance, a brite deux pommiers, comme au chapitre deux de la Genèse, mais qui donnent ici des pommes acides que les cousines jumelles ont croquées avant leur mort violente. On y trouve également deux personnages qui sont assimilés à l'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal (Gen. 2:8), le pasteur Nicolas Jones et le jeune Stevens Brown, qui convoitent chacun les deux adolescentes désirables, Nora et Olivia. Stephens "ce diable d'homme" ressemble aussi au tentateur, se voit comparer à un serpent et se retrouvera "perdu dans l'enfer de Griffin Creek." Quant au pasteur, aiguillonné par la concupiscence, évoquée par l'apôtre Paul dans sa première épître aux Corinthiens: "mieux vaut se marier que de brûler" (1 Cor. 7:9), il nous ramène aussi à l'époque du nouvel Adam, le Christ, dont lui-même est l'image. C'est à l'origine du Nouveau Testament que nous sommes ici conviés, au Verbe s'incarnant dans le monde, dans les premiers versets et l'Evangile de Jean. Le lien est ici parodique car Nicolas, prédicateur infidèle de la Parole, devient le Verbe qui s'est fait chair, mais dans un sens péjoratif, et il habite désormais parmi le commun des hommes (Jean 1:14).

Dans le jardin de Griffin Creek déambulent les deux femmes de soleil, ci-haut évoquées, Olivia et Nora. Cette dernière se compare elle-même à une Eve nouvelle qui se voit "faite du limon de la terre, comme Adam, et non sortie d'entre les côtes sèches d'Adam, première comme

Adam," conformément au premier récit de la création (Gen. 1:27). A l'exemple de la première Eve, elle est "avide de connaître" de l'arbre défendu, de celui de l'entendement (Gen. 3:6). Olivia éprouve la même tentation. Elle dit de Stevens: "Il est comme l'arbre planté au milieu du paradis terrestre. La science du bien et du mal n'a pas de secret pour lui. Si seulement je voulais bien j'apprendrais tout de lui, d'un seul coup, la vie, la mort, tout. Je ne serais plus jamais une innocente simplette . . . l'amour seul pourrait faire que je devienne femme à part entière et communique avec mes mères et grands-mères . . . du mystère qui me ravage, corps et âme."

Tout est en place pour "la chute." Le fruit à croquer, dans ce drame contemporain, c'est celui du sexe et l'innocence de la nouvelle Eve est ici relative. Elle est pleine de désirs, mais n'a pas encore connu l'expérience. Le jeu de la tentation, pour celle qui est à la fois "désirante et désirée," se déroule dans le regard. Elle a levé les yeux vers l'homme et elle a été "prise dans le regard de Stevens come dans un filet." La rencontre des deux adolescentes avec le garçon sur la grève, le soir du trente-et-un août, débouche sur le sexe, la violence et la mort. Stevens tue d'abord Nora qui, frustrée par l'apparente indifférence de celui-ci, le nargue sur sa virilité, et ensuite Olivia, pour qu'elle ne le dénonce pas, mais après l'avoir pénétrée "comme un bourdon au coeur d'une pivoine."

Tout est parallèle mais aussi analogie entre les actions de Griffin Creek et celles du jardin d'Eden. Le mal, comme signalé ci-haut, ne fait pas son apparition pour une première fois dans cette communauté. Comme le dit le pasteur je "cherche la faute originelle de Griffin Creek. Non ce n'est pas Stevens qui a manqué le premier, quoiqu'il soit le pire de nous tous, le dépositaire de toute la malfaisance secrète de Griffin Creek, amassée au coeur des hommes et des femmes depuis deux siècles." Stevens a agi comme détonateur en franchissant le seuil de "l'intolérable."

A la faute succèdera la punition et le rapport entre la Bible et le roman se poursuit. Maintenant "le jardin de Maureen est envahi par les maivaises herbes," celui du pasteur sent l'ail et le poireau, les épilobes foisonnent dans les champs en friche. L'Eden a perdu de son attrait, la période d'abondance est terminée, les constructions se délabrent et les habitants quittent. "Il a suffi d'un seul été, comme le dit Nicolas, pour que se disperse le peuple élu de Griffin Creek."

Le destin des deux adolescentes trop curieuses est scellé. Le sort qui échoit à Stevens en particulier ressemble à celui de Caïn qui s'était vu dire par Yahvé après son crime: "Sois *maudit* et *chassé* du sol fertile qui a ouvert la bouche pour recevoir de ta main le sang de ton frère" (Gen. 4:11). Lui, meurtrier de ses cousines, affirme dans sa dernière lettre: "Hommes et femmes de Griffin Creek . . . se lèvent pour me *maudire*. Me *chassent* de Griffin Creek."

Le pasteur, vieux et décrépit, songera avec nostalgie à "autrefois lorsque le monde était innocent," et pleurera sur sa faute, comme David, au psaume cinquante, en attendant le Jugement. "Dieu seul pourra me laver de l'ombre de ma faute et toute Griffin Creek avec moi que je traîne dans l'ombre de ma faute." L'ensemble de la collectivité est marquée par "la faute."

Quand le Jugement final viendra, et là l'auteure nous reporte à l'Apocalypse de Jean (8:2-6), l'ange d'apocalypse qui soufflera dans la trompette sera, dans la vision du pasteur, Perceval, l'idiot, l'innocent du village, avec sa tête de chérubin.

En déroulant la trame du récit nous avons pu faire état du parallèle qui courait entre la Bible et ce récit, entre la Genèse d'abord et les événements con-

temporains. Pour important que soient ce parallélisme des actions, des situations, des personnages, l'emprunt des images et des symboles, l'intégration du langage biblique dans le langage quotidien des habitants du village que nous avons signalés jusqu'ici, ils n'épuisent pas les références à la Bible. Celle-ci fournit d'autres modèles: modèles d'action: marche de Jésus sur les eaux et celle de Perceval et d'Olivia; modèles de situation: tentation du Seigneur et celle de Nicolas, pendaison de Judas et celle de l'épouse; modèles encore de type: celui de l'enfant prodigue, de façon parodique ici, pour Stevens; modèle d'image: l'arche de Noé pour Griffin Creek. Les livres saints servent aussi, pour le pasteur en particulier, de norme de comportement ou de paradigme, non sans ironie parfois, si l'on songe au comportement effectif de Nicolas.

Ce que nous voulons surtout souligner, c'est le pattern qu'offre au récit actuel la première partie de la Genèse portant sur la création, la tentation, la chute et la punition. Selon les catégories de John White dans *Mythology in the Modern Novel*[3] qui distingue roman mythique, qui est re-narration d'un mythe, et roman mythologique, nous croyons avoir affaire, dans *Les Fous de Bassan*, à un roman qui serait de type mythologique. Nous trouvons dans le roman non seulement des allusions nombreuses à la Bible, mais celle-ci offre au récit actuel une préfiguration, un modèle de déroulement clairement identifié, un pattern de lecture. L'analogie entre les événements primordiaux et les événements modernes est prolongée et relativement complète, à partir des commencements innocents à la punition. Le récit ancien fournit un schéma fondamental aux principales actions du récit contemporain, sans que le tracé soit nécessairement suivi dans le développement narratif à cause des procédés que l'autere utilise et qui ne permettent pas toujours un ordre chronologique. Le pattern ancien apporte aussi, avec toutes les variantes, les adaptations, les transformations, les transpositions que supposent le récit actuel et la liberté du créateur, une forme d'éclairage à la vision du monde de l'auteure.

Nous avons parlé tantôt d'un roman de type mythologique, mais nous pourrions parler simplement de roman mythologique. Le récit de la Genèse s'inscrit dans l'éventail des nombreux récits mythiques touchant la création, la chute, la punition infligée aux humains pour un comportement fautif quelconque en ce temps-là. Le mythe est une histoire sacrée, celle d'une création, qui veut nous dire comment les choses sont apparues dans les temps primordiaux, récit fait sous un mode imagé, non dialectique.

Si Anne Hébert use de la Bible comme d'un mythe, principalement de la Genèse qui offre le pattern fondamental de son histoire, elle ne manque pas non plus de faire des allusions sporadiques à des mythes classiques et à leur univers symbolique. Le rapport du pasteur avec "sa mère, son amour" a un caractère nettement oedipien. Felicity, qui va se baigner à l'aube avec ses petites filles assimilées à des nymphes, "règne sur la mer," commande, "tonne et foudroie" à l'instar de Téthys, l'épouse d'Océan. Olivia, que le narrateur dénomme sirène, et Nora qu'il qualifie de furie, ont des comportements soit de séduction, soit de fureur vengeresse comme ces divinités. Elles évoquent aussi toute la symbolique de la gémellité. Les éléments de l'eau et de l'air, reliés à une ancienne vision du monde maintenant sécularisée, interviennent avec force et effet dans le roman, sous forme de mer ou sous forme de vent. Comme le dit Stevens: il faut tenir compte dans toute cette histoire du vent, "qui entête et rend fou." Jusqu'au nom de Griffin Creek qui ne semble pas innocent et qui paraît rejoindre la tradition qui fait du griffon

une force cruelle et même, dans une tradition chrétienne, une image du démon.

Mais le mythe classique auquel le récit fait une importante référence, et qui s'inscrit tout naturellement dans la continuité du texte biblique, c'est celui de Prométhée. Les fous de Bassan, qui donnent au roman son titre, jouent, à la toute fin, un rôle analogue à celui de l'aigle qui ronge sans cesse le foie renaissant de Prométhée enchaîné au mont Caucase, puni par les dieux pour avoir volé le feu du ciel. Sur Stevens, confiné depuis trente-sept ans à l'hôpital des vétérans, les oiseaux de mer s'acharnent (c'est là son obsession), "en le visant en pleine poitrine" avec leur bec dur. Ils le réveillent chaque nuit, le "changent en poissonnaille, étripée vivante."

Anne Hébert, dans *Les Fous de Bassan*, s'est donc référée abondamment à la Bible. Le récit de la Genèse en particulier lui a fourni un modèle de transgression avec ses conséquences tragiques. Mais elle a exploité aussi l'ensemble des Ecritures, ramifications du premier livre, en ce qu'elles tentent de relier les humains à Dieu, suite à la brisure initiale. L'auteure procède par analogie, contraste, use des modes ironiques ou parodiques, met sur les lèvres de ces personnages la langue de la Bible qui les a imprégnés. Elle fait appel aux mythes classiques qui sont aussi des histoires sacrées.

Par delà toutes ce références et analogies, elle demeure profondément orignale. L'innocence et le bonheur édéniques ne sont que relatifs dans son récit, le fruit alléchant est devenu celui du sexe, contre lequel mettent les adolescentes en garde toutes les mères et grandsmères de Griffin Creek, parce que sa manducation conduit à la domination de l'homme sur la femme. L'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal, le tentateur, le serpent avec toutes ses connotations sexuelles, sont identifiés à l'homme. Mais le mystère ravageait déjà la femme, corps et âme, selon Olivia.

Si Anne Hébert sait faire état des connaissances reliées à sa propre culture chrétienne et classique, elle sait aussi les transposer comme une véritable créatrice.

NOTES

1 André Vanasse, "L'écriture et l'ambivalence," entrevue avec Anne Hébert, *Voix et Images*, 7, no 3 (printemps 1982), p. 444.

2 Brigitte Morissette, "Lointaine et proche Anne Hébert," *Châtelaine* (février 1983), p. 50.

3 John J. White, *Mythology in the Modern Novel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971).

ANTOINE SIROIS

ON THE VERGE

**** HOWARD WHITE, ed., *Raincoast Chronicles Six/Ten*, Collector's Edition II. Harbour, n.p. In his Foreword to the reprint, Paul St. Pierre refers to the "barnacled impertinence" of Howard White's enterprise. He's right. *Raincoast Chronicles* is full of abrupt surprises, and reading the journal is a little like walking barefoot on the rocky saltwater shoreline: you can't count on the next step being the same as the last one. Full of logging cartoons, of reviews of West Coast books, of pictures by E. J. Hughes (some in colour), of memoirs and anecdotes, of poems and essays and stories by known writers (Woodcock, Birney, Trower, Laurence, Virgo) and unknown writers, the journal reveals White's eclectic imagination, his catholic fascination with all *interesting* stories about his place and its people. There are profiles of Hubert Evans and Wylie Blanchet, memoirs by an Issei born in 1887 and by a retired preacher from a Presbyterian Coast mission, accounts of the forest union and of the prurient interest in the trial of the murderer Ducharme. The stories themselves tell of a living frontier history: they're a reader's pleasure. For formalists, the mode of the journal carries another fascination still; it's a nineteenth-century miscellany for the modern era, shaping the writers and writings in it for readers who choose — for a

moment or more — the leisurely pace of a different time.

W.N.

**** MATTHEW J. BRUCCOLI, *Ross Macdonald*, Academic Press, $19.95. From 1919, when he was four, to 1941, when he left Kitchener for Michigan, California, and his extraordinary success as the mystery writer "Ross Macdonald," Kenneth Millar lived, went to school, and taught in Canada; in 1939 and 1940 he was publishing regularly in *Saturday Night* and Sunday school papers, and stalwartly defending Leacock and his contribution to the "Anglo-Canadian language," against one of his biographers. But in the middle of his Ph.D. course, Millar started writing — and publishing — thrillers. By the standards of his later novels, Bruccoli writes, his early works (full of coincidences, flashbacks, and Nazi transvestites) were "unimpressive." Later in the decade he tried to write a novel about the economic and emotional pressures of his Canadian boyhood, but abandoned it when he couldn't find the "impersonal" form he needed to free himself from what he called "sloppy feelings and groping prose." Completing his doctorate (on Coleridge), he taught creative writing in Santa Barbara (Herbert Harker was one of his students, and it was Millar who entitled Harker's novel *Goldenrod*). But it was as the creator of Lew Archer that he won his uneasy fame. Bruccoli does not probe motive and personality deeply — Millar's "underground man" concept derived from his background, he suggests (and one of Millar's friends notes that he "seethed with restrained violence") — but he accomplishes that most important of biographical tasks: he tells a good story.

W.N.

*** *The Writer and Human Rights.* Lester & Orpen Dennys, $14.95; in aid of Amnesty International. In 1980 a literary congress took place in Toronto; a local Human Rights Arts group invited writers from around the world to speak on political repression and to define strategies of action for artists to take against it. This book is the record of their talks and their arguments: Nadine Gordimer on apartheid and censorship, Jacobo Timerman on the courage of resistance, Gaston Miron on marginality, Mongo Beti on colonialism, Alan Sillitoe opposing ideology, and other writers embracing it. Among the dozen or so Canadian writers who participated — Blais, Woodcock, Salutin, Skvorecky, Atwood, Kogawa, Kattan, Findley, and more — there were questions and contemplations, some talk of exile, and ironies about both the blandness of Canadian life and some people's willingness to attack blandness in Canadian life. The difference is instructive. There are recurrent images of fire and mirrors. And no final strategy for action. For which we should probably be grateful. Among other things — especially in this context of documented repression and documented resistance — it indicates that writers, writing, and society have not yet been reduced to a single option.

W.N.

*** ERIKA RITTER, *Urban Scrawl.* Macmillan, $17.95. If there isn't already a generic term "urban irony," there needs to be one for this book. It's a controlled-caustic glimpse of city mores, in two dozen essays on such subjects as women's attitudes to their purses, the faddishness of riding bicycles as an adult, Grey Cup football, drinks, cats, and language: mostly language. My favourite essays are "Invasion of the Airline Stewardesses," a meditation on the *Stepford Wives* language of airline service, and its creeping, numbing neutralism; and "Guilt," a sociographic analysis of Canadian Guilt by Region and Sex. What makes the humour contagious here is not the topics themselves; it's the fact that Ritter cares enough about people to find a way to deal with Mass Woman, Mass Man, and the plastic aesthetics of Mass Design. The wry wit is a cocky human answer to the doomsayers, a grasp of breath in an airtight room.

W.N.

** STANLEY BRICE FROST, *McGill University: For the Advancement of Learning Volume II 1895-1971.* McGill-Queen's, 1984. $49.50. This official history is too wordy, too mechanical, and too inclined to pretentious diction to be of general interest. Students of Canadian literature may be interested in glimpses of John McCrae and Stephen Leacock, and in notes on the Lande Canadiana collection and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. But I was more distressed than impressed to find that in 470 pages, only a sentence could be devoted to Louis Dudek, or to Hugh MacLennan, and barely a page to the *McGill Fortnightly Review* and its many associates.

L.R.

** LARRY ZOLF, *Just Watch Me: Remembering Pierre Trudeau.* James Lorimer, $19.95. Despite the Trudeauesque slapdash of this popular memoir, there is a little more here than a very large typeface and snapshots with zingy tongue-in-cheek captions. The Jaded Observer who tells the story writes with more fatuous Zolfness than Ellioticity: he can mix more metaphors and pop more puns per line than any other Canadian journalist. Yet the insights are startling and persuasive: "Trudeau's most secret love affair was with Canada's Britophile, John George Diefenbaker." "He was Canada's first socialist prime minister, without ever having . . . compromised *his* socialist principles." "The resplendent treatment of Canadian Jewry by Pierre Elliott Trudeau equally tells us as much or more about our fifteenth prime minister than, say, his handling of War Measures." Zolf is annoyingly glib, but here he's written a protonovel that gives the reader a great deal to ponder.

L.R.

** RICK SALUTIN, *Marginal Notes.* Lester & Orpen Dennys, $12.95. One man's margin is another man's centre. Rick Salutin presents himself in *Marginal Notes* as a challenger of "the mainstream," but the articles included, largely from *This Magazine*, which he edits, show what will in fact seem to western Canadians or Maritimers a distinctly mainstream attitude, nationalist in a centralist way, indifferent to regional trends and almost blind to anything or anyone in Canada outside Ontario and Québec, paying merely token acknowledgement to the native peoples, oriented as obsessively towards New York as any *Globe and Mail* writer, and more concerned over Mozambique than over Newfoundland or the North; that Ottawa may in its own way be an imperial centre never seems to have entered Salutin's head. The fact is that, for all its radical chic, *This Magazine* is as integral a part of the Toronto establishment as *Saturday Night*, with which Salutin enters a combat as ritualized as a mediaeval tournament, and that the "marginalism" of *Marginal Notes* is in fact no more than an expression of rivalries within the Central Canadian cultural establishment. Other Canadians can look on with bored interest. They are neither involved nor recognized.

G.W.

** EILEEN PETTIGREW, *The Silent Enemy.* Western Producer Prairie Books, $17.95. Pettigrew notes that of Canada's 8 million people in 1918, some 60,000 died in the war, and a further 30-50,000 died in the influenza epidemic that raced from one end of the country to another. A third of the people on the Labrador Coast died, and no-one had skills to deal adequately with the epidemic. Old wives' tales abounded: the flu was the fault of the "enemy," they said, and some others blamed electricity, cold weather, and unwrapped bread. A *Globe* advertisement read: "To Avoid the 'Flu' Ride a 'C.C.M.' Bicycle." Pettigrew has ransacked archives and newspapers for memoirs of the plague; she has written a peoples' history as a result — a history in anecdote — which reveals something of the spirit of the time as well as of its random terror.

W.N.

Recent paperback reprints include novels and short stories from Stanké: Pierre Chatillon's *La Mort rousse*, Ringuet's *Fausse Monnaie*, Roch Carrier's *Les Enfants du bonhomme dans la lune*, and Gabrielle Roy's *Les Enfants de ma vie*. James Reaney's Donnelly trilogy — local history transformed into artful drama — is now available in one volume, *The Donnellys* (Porcépic, n.p.); it is a highly usable text edition, with helpful commentary, glossary, and chronology by James Noonan. Other reprints include Roderick Haig-Brown's *Writings & Reflections* (McClelland & Stewart, n.p.), Sid Marty's evocative *Men for the Mountains* (McClelland & Stewart, $9.95), two volumes of poetry (M. T. Kelly's *Country You Can't Walk In*, with seven new poems, and Barker Fairley's *Wild Geese & Other Poems*, both from Penumbra, n.p.), and a representative selection of Norman Levine's stories, under the title *Champagne Barn* (Penguin, $6.95).

Among recent picture books are Sherman Hines' *Québec* (McClelland & Stewart, $29.95), a photographic love affair with snow drifts and raspberries, in red-white-and-blue) and two books on Toronto which offer substantial evidence for claiming Canada's largest city as a national "region" in its own right. Edith G. Firth's *Toronto in Art* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $40.00), a fascinating record, with many colour plates, of 150 years of artists' glimpses of the city, traces both the growth of Toronto (from its incorporation in 1834) and various changes in artistic method and style. Woodcuts and lithographs of cottage country and neoclassic aspiration turn gradually into advertising posters and oil paintings of a commercial, industrial, and neoGothic landscape, and then again into acrylic impressions of street life: skyscrapers, market stalls, amusement parks, Yonge Street. Firth's interest is primarily historic — her concern is to match these paintings with an account of their subject. In *Original Toronto* (Paget, $25.00), Lucy Booth Martyn is even more clearly intent on documenting fact; her book reprints (in black and white) drawings of buildings that date from 1798 to 1838, and provides brief accounts of ownership and construction. She emphasizes the human use of landscape; Firth's book manages to reveal a people that — beset by work and the pressures of cityscape — has also learned how to play.

Several recent anthologies, pop histories, and reference books overlap in function, almost asking us to reinvent the *sampler* as a contemporary generic form. *Heart of Gold* (CBC Enterprises, $14.95) is Martin Melhurst's fast history of 30 years of Canadian pop music — an illustrated guide for nostalgia buffs more than a book for today's fan. Macmillan's *20th Century Fiction* (Gage, $34.50 pa.), with a survey introduction by George Woodcock, is a collection of biobibliographical guides to major modern fiction writers (some Canadians included), of the sort familiar to readers of James Vinson's St. James Press guides: fast surveys, skeleton points, and raw data (no publishers named). *Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Elizabeth Devine et al. (Gale, $75.00) offers fuller data, fewer people, but better value; "thinkers" are people like Russell, Eliot, Fuller, and Binet: it's company for few Canadians, McLuhan being the honourable exception.

W.N.

LAST PAGE

Among recent reprints are several books worth re-examining: David Lodge's *Language of Fiction*, with a new preface, championing the cause of structural and stylistic analysis (Oxford, $14.95), and several novels which call attention to differences between documentary and imaginative form. V. S. Pritchett's *Dead Man Leading* (Oxford, $9.95) is a 1937 novel following the form of quest into the Brazilian jungle; more generally it shapes a history out of the undeclared motivations of the several characters. Earl Lovelace's *While Gods are Falling* (Longman, $4.95) turns the plight of a young Trinidadian worker into a dramatic account of urban social pressure in the Third World. Thomas Keneally's *The Cut-rate Kingdom* (Penguin, A$6.95) takes the 1940's politics of Australia at war and manufactures an imaginative adventure in social criticism out of material that would in other hands lend itself to historical reconstruction. This difference is apparent in the work of Criena Rohan, Margaret Drabble, and Beverley Farmer as well. Rohan's 1963 novel *Down by the Dockside* (Penguin, A$7.95) contrives to report on the particulars of women's experience in Australia during the 1930's and 1940's; Drabble's 1965 *The Millstone* (New American Library, $5.95) uses the historical form of narrative — events in sequence, conversation as documentary record — in order to do something rather different: to contrive a social irony out of the presumed record of the central character's "burdensome" virginity. Farmer's 1980 novel

Alone (Penguin, $6.95) is different again; advertised as a "sensual record," it tells of a woman's (literally) self-destructive passion for her female lover and of her daily dealings with house and family: the "record" — at least in *form* — is that of mundane daily (and vernacular) speech, but the effect of the whole is to evoke the pressures of the love that fires the central character's full-bodied imagination. The novel as a whole, that is, also works as record, closing as it does at the moment of decided death, ceasing as the contrived consciousness ceases, but in so doing it transforms "record" from external event into internal process, animating desire as it undercuts speech.

Two substantial editions offer further comment on these distinctions. Both concern Katherine Mansfield, whose reputation, once in decline, is certain to rise again as the real texts of her writings become available. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, patiently sifting the several manuscript collections, and decoding the author's difficult handwriting, have now produced the first volume (of four) of *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford Clarendon, $38.50), and Antony Alpers caps his biography with a devoted selection of *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford, $49.95) which will serve for some time to come as the new standard text of Mansfield's fiction. The O'Sullivan-Scott book is a model of editorial practice. The letters cover the period 1903-1917, and serve as a kind of formal as well as historical background to the stories: Mansfield wore a number of masks, and these letters of childhood liaisons, mature friendships, and occasional affairs both literary and otherwise (with Bloomsbury, Garsington, Bertrand Russell, and Francis Carco) show off many of them. But they also show the author experimenting with sketch, mime, and character-making: forms from which her stories grew. Alpers' selection documents some of this development, but not all. The collection is full, but it is not complete. Alpers calls it "definitive," but it is not that either: it fastens on historical background to the stories, not on the character of the fiction itself — that is, the editor reads the fiction as a version of fact. As the meticulously-edited letters show, however, Mansfield was an author who frequently read fact as a variety of fiction. There are some inconsistencies in text; but followers of Mansfield will find here the full version of her story "Je ne parle pas français" and a number of alterations in word, phrase, and paragraphing that differentiate these texts severally from the familiar Constable/Penguin editions. For the editorial judgment we must be grateful; but for commentary that takes the character of authorial style into account, we must still look elsewhere.

And as a number of contemporary novels reveal, it is style which shapes much of the difference between story-history and story-invention. David Ireland's *Archimedes and the Seagle* (Viking Penguin, n.p.) is a dream of flight — on the part of the narrator, who is a dog (readers of *Shakespeare's Dog*, take note); the dog records reflection upon observation, until the whole book reads as a kind of encyclopaedia of the dog's eye view of the world. Amanda Lohrey's *The Morality of Gentlemen* (Alternative Publishing Cooperative, A$12.95) turns (comparably) into a kind of scenebook: a collection of indicative moments of action and dialogue, punctuated by epilogues, monologues, speeches by a master-of-ceremonies, and so on. The formal control is in each case deliberate, but it functions obliquely. Ireland's concern is to testify to the power of dream, which he animates by giving it — *as though it were documentary* — to the mind of a creature. Lohrey's concern is political: to present a politically alternative version of the same 1940's history (naming names) that Keneally masks as story and Rohan subsumes in family chronicle. The stories in Michael Gifkins's *After the Revolution and other stories* (Longman Paul, NZ$9.95) try to balance the politics of society against the artifice of art: they adopt a phlegmatic, vernacular mode, to tell of such subjects as the lonely dream of order of a bathhouse cleaner, but they tell most of all, and largely indirectly, of the small self-critical persistence of a writer who makes story out of others' private difficulties. In *All Visitors Ashore* (Collins, NZ $14.95), C. K. Stead is more open about place and person: the scene is 1951, a time of social upheaval in New Zealand; the place is Auckland, with a specific literary community, partly named and partly refabricated as invention; and the subject is youth: its discovery of sex and identity, its discovery of its own talents (and its subsequent need to leave, to be apart, in order to develop them), and its determination *after the fact* — its determination *in memory, in this fiction* — to claim some (however small) role in a time of change. Against a time when the society is embracing a new conservatism, the narrator plaintively asserts (for himself, and for others) his sympathy with his friends: "I waved the red towel." It's

not a distortion of history for this memorist to do so; it's a claim on meaning, or on meaning *something*, as a way of sustaining what he has become.

Roger Milliss offers yet another version of the 1930's and 1940's in Australia in his declared "autobiographical novel," *Serpent's Tooth* (Penguin, A$9.95); it's a powerful story of growing up in a Communist household, of accepting politics without thought, of breaking with his father over Stalinism, of a debilitating psychological split between son and father, and of a lonely rhetorical recognition (too late! too late?) of the value of the man that his father had been: "They won't get me ... Yet even as I spoke it I could feel the sweet, soft suckers of corruption plucking at me tenderly, ... now it would be a long and gradual descent into that hell he fled from of betrayal and compromise, acceptance and compliance, until the demons that pursued him in those last few hours had dragged me lovingly into their clutches even as I tried to beat them off. How could you fight the bastards? Tell me, ... tell me how to fight. ... " Gerald Murnane's *The Plains* (Penguin, A$4.95) addresses the abstract issue that lies behind such a question, lies behind the dramatization of history and personal experience in the first place. *The Plains* is a first-person documentary-form novel, but the world it documents is a bizarre one of social exaggeration and private myth. The centre-continent society it depicts is one which, with more money than talent, hires historians and artists to tell its story, hoping to live in recorded fact and created image in ways that it cannot live for itself. The film-maker/central character, through whom we see this world, however, can ultimately only turn his camera on himself, on his own way of seeing. In love with what he sees, he is animated most by how he sees it. The paradox has much to say about reading itself, and about the problems of shaping fact and fiction to match each other's form.

W.N.