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editorial

SO POCO A POCO ANIMANDO

To BE A TOURIST, a visitor, and a guest, who does not speak the host's language, creates a curiously contradictory ferment: in the midst of leaden exasperation a word or two learned brings absurd exhilaration as if you've learned an entire new language, or seen a new world. To begin without a word of Italian, is necessarily to begin in cliché. (Fortunately, in the world of Umberto Eco, the potential of cliché has found new respectability.) Italian is the language of music. And it is a musical language; when every vowel is pronounced the language seems unimpeded and rich in cavities of resonance. *Vivace.* In these clichés you remember the Italian you didn't know you knew: maestro, solo, opera, Sinatra, soprano, Quilico, bravo. Irving Layton, virtuoso, has published at least four books of poems in the language of music. What stronger affirmation of a cliché? English-speaking Canada's most musical, most passionate poet becomes Italian.

Staccato. Howard O'Hagan lived in Italy for a decade (in silence?). Italian is the language anglophone and francophone Canada have in common. Which one is the regional country struggling for unification? Adele Wiseman became a Canadian writer in Rome. I wish someone would write a study of the uses of opera in Canadian literature. Staccato is the method of playing a note so that it is shortened — and thus "detached" from its successor — by being held for less than its full value. The graphically stunning magazine, *Vice-Versa*, from Montreal, in the two official languages, and *Italian*, orchestrates "literature, social criticism, and the arts" — *con brio.* In 1978 *Roman Candles: An Anthology of Poems by Seventeen Italo-Canadian Poets* was published; in 1979 *Voci Nostre: An Italo-Australian Anthology* appeared. The *Christian Guardian* (founding editor, Egerton Ryerson) hailed Garibaldi in 1859 as the ultimate Protestant hero: "The great leader never drinks wine, and never eats more than two sorts of meat at dinner. At eight o'clock in the evening he goes to bed, and regularly gets up at two o'clock in the morning." According to a Gzowski interview on July 1, Italian fireworks must make a loud noise; the specialty in Canadian fireworks is the white light of magnesium, especially suitable for "willows." *Burning Water* finds

George Vancouver in the streets and trattoria of Trieste (which is Joyce's Italian home), an apparent accident which Eva-Marie Kröller has convinced me is essential to the understanding of the novel. Seven contingents of Zouaves went from Quebec to Rome in 1868 to assist Pope Pius X against Garibaldi; they never got to fight. Staccato playing produces *silence* through most of the written time value of each note.

Non Tanto. In the silence I hear the question of the Canadian Studies boondoggle. Not too much, they say; don't overdo it. J. L. Granatstein and Douglas McCalla asked in the now famous editorial in the *Canadian Historical Review* (March 1984) if Canadian Studies are "too much of a Good Thing?" Their argument, oddly, seems ahistorical. Certainly many academic disciplines, at least in the humanities and social sciences, found their beginnings in thematic generalizations, in lists and catalogues, and tentative maps of the territory. Such a pattern is obvious in the recent development of women's studies, in the study of the Canadian literatures, and, of course, earlier in the century, in the development of English as an academic discipline. Following false leads, mechanically summarizing, testing generalizations that will come to seem trivial and inconsequential, are essential to the development of an area of scholarship — and sometimes it will be necessary to retrace the same steps, in some other linguistic and cultural contexts, to prepare for more serious approaches, more profound analysis, and, in the case of literary studies, for more detailed examination of specific texts. Moreover, the impetus to interdisciplinary approaches under the umbrella of Canadian Studies has virtue well beyond the fleeting modishness in the 1960's — challenging arbitrary disciplinary restriction is essential to the growth and sophistication of any individual discipline within Canada. The international dimension of Canadian studies extends our minds: an Australian, or a Danish, or a Japanese scholar will inevitably examine a Canadian subject in new comparative contexts. Their influence can only be beneficial, especially for literary study, which has frequently been too insular. In turn, Canadians preparing to present Canadian subjects in international forums are impelled to search for those illuminatingly varied international contexts. Which returns me to the exasperating ferment of languages. To talk to Quebec in an international forum is easier: other communities, and languages provide a bridge for our internal solitude. And the examination of some Canadian topic against the backdrop of dialects in France, of Italian subtexts, or of German painting enlivens our own discipline. If we listen to more languages we might hear the *legato*, the languages we unconsciously hide within our own language.

Allegro. I couldn't get used to Rome the first time. It was too cold, too wet, too grey, too closed up, too February. Too many statues, I thought, and too few department stores. Next time, Eric Levy told me, go first to the Tiber: stand on

one of the bridges, and stare into the swirling, turning brown water. Rome's streets, and traffic (maybe even its words, ending in circles of o's), are built on the patterns of that river. The city moves *allegro*. Livelier. On my second trip I found the rivers — brightening.

Ponticello. A little bridge, and then another. Bridges between countries, between languages. More sculpture in the streets, more music in the minds, more soccer, more fireworks. *So poco a poco animando.* In Canada we hear more languages. Little by little things are becoming livelier.

L.R.

ACCENTI/ACCENTS

Joseph Maviglia

We weren't orphans then. Pietro, Vittoria,
Giuseppe, Franca, Caterina.
Mixing hockey with skip-rope, there was always
a place to eat.

The home changed only by our moving. The white-stucco,
tucked beneath the evergreen neighbourhood, remains;
Domenico and Francesca waiting by the window.

What changed us? No hide-and-seek could match the distance,
though we linger with inherited accents,
tongues dumb to the world ahead.

Domenico and Francesca come to the door.
Wise, they seem to know we're always there,
or they are fools to innocent days.

What changed us was a universe, a country
where we reached to invite strangers in,
a way to protect the orphans we've become.

What changed them was our leaving, their waiting:
the love that opens doors,
the hungering of tongues before the door is open,
the world outside mumbling to the one within.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK G. PACI

C. D. Minni

FRANK G. PACI is the most prolific and best-known Canadian writer of Italian origin. He is the author of three novels of the immigrant experience. All of them are set in Sault Ste. Marie, where the men work in the steel plant, and in Toronto, to which some of the children escape. *The Italians* explores the disturbing feelings of ambivalence so typical of immigrants, as the characters re-define their relationship with "the new land" and with one another. The enigmatic *Black Madonna* focuses on the conflicts between parents and children in an immigrant home where the generation gap becomes a canyon because of culture clash. *The Father*, the first novel of a projected trilogy, develops further the themes of the earlier books.

MINNI: To begin, Frank, tell us something about yourself.

PACI: I was born in 1948 in Pesaro on the Adriatic coast in the Marches region of Italy. My family lived in the hinterland, which comprises valleys and hills that are dotted with villages and medieval castles. My mother emigrated when I was four, my father having preceded us. We took up roots in the Italian section of Sault Ste. Marie, close to the steel plant and the Soo canal. The Sault is a small city in Northern Ontario, virtually at the juncture of Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Needless to say, it was very far from what my parents had been used to in Italy.

I led a fairly contented childhood in the working-class neighbourhood. It consisted mainly of playing games, which I was fairly good at. All very unliterary and uneventful. In 1967 I went to the University of Toronto. For four years during the summers I worked in the steel plant in the Sault in various departments. I started to write while at university, took a Creative Writing course with Dave Godfrey, and had the good fortune to have Margaret Laurence as writer-in-residence the same year. Her kind interest kindled the spark. After I came back to Toronto to do more university work, I began writing on the side and found that it was much more exciting writing novels than talking about them in school. So I withdrew from university and wrote with a vengeance. I didn't know what I was actually getting myself into. I took the stance: I'm going to do this or die in the process. For eight years I collected rejection slips. I wanted to be a writer so bad — I had the images, the stories, and the pretensions, but I didn't have the language or the humility.

Eventually I had to bring myself back to the ground. I went back to school, taught high school in Sault Ste. Marie, and got married. *The Italians*, my first published novel, came out in 1978. In 1980 I threw caution to the wind again and went back up in the clouds — *la testa nelle nuvole*, my mother calls it. I tried to write full time. *Black Madonna* came out in 1982, *The Father* in 1984. I'm still trying to be a writer.

MINNI: What brought you to your subject?

PACI: In 1972, twenty years after my family had emigrated, I went back to Italy — my first and only trip back so far. I didn't realize it at the time, but this trip was the catalyst that finally made me see that I had to come to terms with my Italian background before I could write about anything else. Before and after the trip I had written five novels that no one wanted to publish. The trip dramatically impressed upon me the wide gulf between the Canadian and the Italian cultures and the depth of my heritage, which I had been too naïve and stupid to appreciate. The trip also made me appreciate my parents. For the first time I began to see them clearly. Beforehand I had only seen them in the context of Northern Ontario Canada, if you know what I mean. Seeing them from the Italian context completed the picture, so to speak. When I started to write *The Italians* I had in the back of my mind to celebrate my parents and others like them, to thank them for what they had done. This opened up a wealth of deep feeling that I had never handled in the other books.

MINNI: Are you saying that you have a need to write about your Italo-Canadian background, a sense perhaps that things should not be lost, like that of the pioneers who kept diaries for their children to read?

PACI: Yes, there was a need to preserve the accomplishments of my parents, with the accent on "serve." I had the voice which they didn't have. It's this very sense of preserving that acts as a catharsis, because as you're writing the story of your parents you're also coming to terms with your background and defining yourself in a historical context. Also, in the very act of writing fiction — that is, in literally becoming the characters and things you're writing about — you see real-life people and things more as they are. This is the humility I spoke about before — a humility that produces compassion.

MINNI: Writing, then, is a form of catharsis for you. Was your childhood painful?

PACI: I didn't have a painful childhood, but I did have a painful adolescence. My secure and contented world came tumbling down because of certain events that cut me off from everything that had nurtured me. I wouldn't be surprised if most writers have some sort of inner or outer wound that spurs them to engage in such a lonely and financially unrewarding a vocation as writing. Maybe this

phrase from Hegel goes some way in explaining it: "The hand that inflicts the wound is also the hand that heals it." He was speaking of the wound caused by Adam's Fall. Also, of course, we all want to be loved and accepted in our own way.

MINNI: There seems to be a common thread to Italo-Canadian literature. Various writers, working in isolation and unaware of one another, have been saying the same things, even sometimes using similar images and metaphors.

PACI: Only after writing *The Italians* did I see that there were a few others writing about the same themes. I was as isolated as anyone. It was a pleasant surprise, as if I had discovered a few others on the lifeboat with me. But when I met a few of these people I was disappointed to discover that their sensibilities were as foreign to me as anyone else's.

Of course, since vision or metaphor is based on lived experience and there's much that is common to all immigrant experience, there will be some sort of similarity in the images and themes that we use.

MINNI: Is Italo-Canadian literature a form of exile literature, or a native variety?

PACI: I don't think in terms of Italo-Canadian literature, or exile, or native literature. I don't even think in terms of literature. I think in terms of the deep ontological problems of human beings, and of certain characters in certain contexts. I think of the extremely difficult task of making people live, and of creating a concrete, believable world. I think in terms of capturing that indefinable magic that sweeps me along during composition and that comes so rarely. I think in terms of how boring ordinary life is after experiencing the intensity of writing. And, for that matter, how boring writing is in comparison with the joys of real living. Conceptualizations like "Italo-Canadian" literature are all right as handy terms to use after the fact, and I may have used it myself in certain contexts, but I've never seen myself as an Italo-Canadian writer.

MINNI: Your three novels all ask the same question: Who am I? Must Canadians look overseas for the answer, for their identity? There is a strong suggestion of this in *Black Madonna*, especially for the children, Marie and Joey Barone. But the fact seems true for the parents also. In *The Italians*, Alberto Gaetano has ambivalent feelings about his memories "of the other country, of the other life."

PACI: It goes without saying that Canadians of Italian descent should look overseas to get a more complete sense of their identities. Everyone is a historical creature and must look for his identity in the events that have shaped him. It's not only a question of identity. It's an ontological question. In *Black Madonna* Marie tries to deny her Italian past. She feels superior to the peasant ways of her mother. Yet this is ambivalent because, no matter how hard she tries, she really can't

deny the emotional basis of what has nurtured her without being deeply scarred herself. This is the irony. The past, no matter how one tries to deny it intellectually, constitutes the emotional fabric of one's being. Alberto Gaetano's fond memories of his past life in Italy present a striking contrast to his work in the steel plant. But this is his sacrifice. He has left the emotional well-being of Italy for the economic security of the new world — mostly for his children. This is a variation of one of the themes that interests me — the disparity between the head and the heart.

MINNI: Alberto Gaetano in *The Italians* feels "lost outside the confines of his work and his home." The same is true of Assunta in *Black Madonna* and of Oreste Mancuso in *The Father*; his home and his bakery shop are his life.

PACI: Limited in adaptability and intelligence, the parents in the three books try to recreate their old world within a limited environment. They can't internalize the dialectic of the two cultures as readily as their children. It remains external. So they naturally create their own small world, whether it be a home or a place of work, which is like a piece of the old world, so there's a sort of buffer between them and the new world. But what happens is that the buffer can turn into a cocoon. However, even if the parents develop a measure of security inside their cocoons the clash of cultures isn't evaded. Their children, nurtured in ever-renewed intensity — so that it doesn't so much become a conflict between two ways of life as a conflict between parents and children.

MINNI: This conflict leads to an identity crisis, which some characters never resolve. In *The Italians* Lorianna does not know if she is "Italian or Canadian"; her brother Aldo sees his entering the priesthood "as an escape from life in the new country."

PACI: Yes, this ethnic duality or ambiguity starts as an external conflict in the clash of cultures and languages, but is ultimately internalized in some of the characters. So they really can't escape it by going into a seminary, or whatever. In *The Italians* the children only come to partly reconcile their inner conflicts after an act of sacrifice. The father's accident, in a way, demonstrates how self-indulgent they have been. The internal duality can only be reconciled by "getting out of themselves," so to speak, and doing things for other people — just as their parents have done.

MINNI: But don't such parent-sibling conflicts exist in all families, regardless of their background? Just consider, for example, the youth rebellion of the 1960's.

PACI: Conflicts between parents and children do indeed exist in all families, but the ones I'm dealing with have a different twist, wouldn't you say? In *Black Madonna* Marie "feels a foreigner in her own home" not because she's a punk

rocker or a student radical or whatever. It's a basic ontological fact that children have to divorce themselves from their parents to achieve self-identity. In other words, you can't find yourself unless you leave your parents, your hometown, and your country — and these are just geographical departures. The modern youth rebellion in the Western world has been solidified by the popular media into a sub-culture, whose nose is always sniffing for something to rebel against so it can stand out. Someone asks Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* what he's rebelling against. Nonchalantly he says, "What have you got?" But this overall rebelliousness has little to do with *The Italians* and *Black Madonna.* It does, however, play some part in *The Father*, although Michael Mancuso doesn't use rock music so much to rebel against his father as to highlight the *joie de vivre* in his character.

MINNI: "Babbo, you don't understand," says Bill Gaetano in *The Italians.* Other children, in all your novels, share the same sentiment.

PACI: It's simply *la via vecchia* (the old way) which can't understand *la via nuova* (the new way). Unskilled and uneducated parents who emigrate from as foreign a culture as the Italian (especially from the South) find it very difficult to understand or condone the behaviour of their children. It's not any more complex than that, when rendered abstractly. By the same token, the children don't understand the old ways. Let it be understood, however, that I'm speaking about the characters in my work — not about Italians in general.

MINNI: Invariably, parents want to be proud of their children to justify their sacrifices in coming to the new land. Alberto Gaetano's reply that he did it "for his family" is echoed by the first generation throughout Italo-Canadian literature.

PACI: I can't speak for all Canadian families with ethnic backgrounds, but in my books the pressure placed on the children, I suppose, is not only to excel, but to excel according to two conflicting standards. For example, in *The Italians* Bill's success in hockey is never appreciated by his father because for Alberto Gaetano hockey, unlike medicine or law, is nowhere near a serious profession. Hockey is for kids, he says. By the way, one Canadian reviewer didn't understand how an Italian would feel this way about sports since Italians are supposed to be crazy about soccer. In *Black Madonna* Marie, who excels in math and logic in the academic life, isn't appreciated for very different reasons. But this sort of pressure is obviously not only peculiar to Canadians of Italian descent. And it's not necessarily bad. I've seen all kinds of immigrant kids (Chinese, Greek, Japanese, Finns) who've done very well for themselves because they had a greater impetus to prove themselves in some form of endeavour. New blood feels a greater impetus to assert itself, in other words.

MINNI: In *Black Madonna* Marie rejects her mother's background, as symbolized

by the Hope Chest, and in *The Father* Stephen's bread book remains unopened on his shelf "like any other book he has not read." Later, both feel they have lost an inexplicable something. What, and why?

PACI: This is very difficult to answer through my fiction — and therefore much more difficult to answer in abstract terms. At the cost of trying to speak *ex cathedra*, fiction and philosophy are two different ways of trying to get a fix on Reality. I use Reality — big "R" — to mean the dynamic actuality of meaning and truth, whereas reality — small "r" — is the popular conception of what is verifiably true. Fiction must try to fix or grasp Reality in all its paradox and obscurity and inexplicableness. This is why Wittgenstein, at one time, was a good guiding light for my fiction. "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." Images in fiction have to do the work of ideas. Concrete things like the Hope Chest and the bread book have to speak for themselves. I'm not trying to evade the question as much as highlighting it as a good question.

MINNI: Also, despite attempts to escape — Marie through mathematics, Bill through hockey, and Michael through music — each sibling needs to prove himself/herself to parents.

PACI: It's the bond of blood — that no matter how different one becomes from one's parents one still feels that bond strongly. As a character says in the manuscript I've just completed (*First Communion*): "We can't really be ourselves unless we leave our parents, and yet we can't really be anything else unless we return to them."

MINNI: The bond is like an elastic that stretches but never breaks.

PACI: To elaborate on your analogy, I'd say that the connection doesn't break for some of the children but does break for others. For example, it doesn't break for Joey Barone and Michael Mancuso but does for Marie Barone in *Black Madonna* and Stephen Mancuso in *The Father*. Joey and Michael are very close to their respective fathers in sensibility and no amount of cultural differences will sever that bond. But for Marie and Stephen the connection is severed, which produces a wound on both sides — on the children's as well as the parents' side. But the strength of the bond — the strength of blood, if you will — is so strong that eventually a reconciliation is effected which goes a long way in curing that wound. Unfortunately for the parents, the reconciliation occurs at their expense. Marie sees things about her mother only after Assunta has been killed. Stephen becomes aware of his father's true worth only years after Oreste has died. In other words, only a tragedy seems to be able to remove the blinders on the children's eyes.

MINNI: All three novels underscore certain values, especially with regard to family

and to work — values which parents try to transmit to children, though they may no longer be appreciated in current North American society. Could you describe these values, the real Italian heritage?

PACI: I don't know if they represent the real Italian heritage — or whether they're peculiarly Italian. But there are certain values emphasized in my work which are taken from lived experience. The family, obviously, is the bedrock for social and individual harmony. I'm no student of history, but I'd say the family has had to be the bulwark against political chaos and economic scarcity in Italian history, especially in the South. The bonds in the Italian family are usually very strong, sometimes too strong. You are blood of my blood, says Oreste Mancuso to his sons in *The Father*.

After *la famiglia*, I'd say the sense of community, the sense of families sharing a common ground, of meeting others in the piazza or coffee-bar or the street — this is another important part of our heritage. I think an Italian, especially a Southern Italian, finds it harder than most to be an isolated individual. Usually he is defined by his family and his community — and is not as individualistically inclined as people in the other cultures. In my work, the West End in Sault Ste. Marie represents a little of this community atmosphere.

Next, there's the sense of dedication to one's work, which confers self-dignity. It's like a sense of craftsmanship, which has become virtually obsolete because of industrialization and the alienation of labour. My father and his friends on the same street, for example, all enjoyed working with their hands. They all renovated their homes, made basements, installed plumbing, and then for years afterwards fixed this or that. Then they made wine every year, or did carpentry work. You look at a craftsman, someone who has worked with his hands all his life, making cabinets or gloves or bread, and he's done something with his life — he has nothing to be ashamed of. He's put something there that's good and useful that wasn't there before. Then you look at a lot of other types of work — one guy just pushing a commodity along to another guy, the division of labour, hucksterism, bureaucratic upkeep, and so on. If you hate your work, you hate half of your life. I'm not a Marxist, but this part of Marxism seems on the mark. That's why in the western world we need so many diversions. Anyway, these values are much more complex and fluid than I've described them. And they're not peculiarly Italian.

MINNI: Your characters also have a strong sense of continuity. In *The Father* Oreste Mancuso says, "No matter how I turned out, no matter what I do, I know one thing. My father lives inside me. He didn't die."

PACI: The continuity is a form of immortality. Some sons and daughters, despite leading entirely disparate lives, do in fact "become" their parents. This is another

part of the analogy of the blood. We North Americans tend to think of immortality too much in terms of the prolongation of the individual. There's spiritual truth in this. But at an instinctual biological level the individual "lives on" in his family, his clan, his *polis*, and his species. Hegel says, "Death shows the kind (genus) to be the power that rules the immediate individual." The ancients in their ancestor worship certainly knew this. As did the Greeks. Individuals die, but the whole of which they're a part and which nurtures them, lives on. I would suspect that our basic spiritual and metaphysical yearning for immortality springs from this biological fact. We have the potential for immortality in our life-instincts, in Eros.

But just in matter-of-fact everyday terms, haven't we often made gestures in the mirror, or behaved in a certain way, or found ourselves reacting in a certain way, and said: That's my father in me, or my mother in me? No matter how different we as children become from our parents, in a very real sense we are no more than what they are. It's part of the dialectic of historical change. We go beyond them, but we retain them. They're "in us," as simple as that.

MINNI: Let's talk about your metaphors and imagery. They seemed forced in *The Italians*, your first novel; for example, Alberto Gaetano's comparing his children to the blast furnaces, of which he is keeper. Much of the power of *Black Madonna* and *The Father*, however, depends on connotation. Would you like to say something about (a) the Hope Chest in *Black Madonna* and the bread book in *The Father* and the irony implicit in these symbols, (b) Marie's anorexia nervosa as a physical manifestation of her cultural starvation, and (c) Maddelena in *The Father*, almost dying, her legs spread as if she is giving birth?

PACI: I'm very reluctant to talk about symbols and images in an abstract way, because I don't want to be too self-conscious about them. I'm too self-conscious as it is. But obviously these images and symbols have to spring naturally from the context or "world" of the work. Needless to say, a writer walks a thin line between rationality and irrationality, between being awake and dreaming, between earnestness and play, and so on. Reality can't be caught by one's intellectual-analytical faculties, but by the intuitive-rational ones which grasp the dynamic whole rather than the parts. For example, a scientist may understand all the parts of a flower, but a writer must *be* that flower. Images and symbols, if they hit the mark, contribute to the fusion of thinking and being.

I can say briefly that the Hope Chest grew out of real-life situations between mothers and daughters — as did the anorexia nervosa. There's an element of the Holy Grail in the Hope Chest — the analogy that Parsifal is too stupid to ask the right question, as simple and obvious as it is. In a certain sense, no matter how intelligent Marie is, she's kind of stupid too. And, yes, there is irony in the bread book — perhaps too much irony. I'm glad you mention the image of birth as

Maddelena is dying. I like to play with opposites. A is A, but at the same time it's not-A; that is, it's changing. Too often I fall way short of the mark in trying to represent Reality — things aren't smooth, others seem contrived or over-exaggerated, and so on. But that's the job of the critic. My job is try to give things life.

MINNI: Names also seem important in your novels. "Black Madonna" is a symbol for stoic suffering. It is a good description of Assunta Barone. Maddelena, on the other hand, makes one think of her Biblical namesake, the repentant prostitute.

PACI: I never consciously thought of "Black Madonna" signifying stoic suffering, although that's a good description and may have been an unconscious connotation on my part. All I was thinking of was the Italian widow's black mourning clothes and the fact that her motherness is emphasized. But I imagine you can take that further and say, for example, that too many Italian widows carry their mourning to extremes, which is one more indication of her paradoxical passive/active role in the Italian patriarchal society — which, in turn, may have its mythic-instinctual roots in the very ancient Greek conception of the chthonic deities (dark, of the earth, and female-oriented) against the Olympian deities (bright, of sky, and male-oriented). But that's another matter. I'm not saying that I was thinking of such matters when I chose the title, but who really knows how dream and self-consciousness and play all work together in representing something. As for Maddelena, I chose that name by chance.

MINNI: Assunta, as a metaphor for the first generation of immigrants who suffered silently, seems a bit exaggerated; she's a bit too primitive. Maddelena is almost her opposite.

PACI: It's not for me to say whether Assunta is exaggerated or not. But, yes, I did have first-generation immigrants — especially women — in mind. And she is based on real-life women who are trapped, so to speak, by the immigrant experience. Not that they don't want to be here. Assunta came over to the new country voluntarily to have a family — but she paid a dear price. Peasants are attached to their native land (not so much their country as the earth they walk on and sow seeds on) in such a strong way. I mean, it's very difficult for us who live in apartments or who have a small back yard with a lawn to really understand that a peasant's land, no matter how poor, constitutes his very being. This is the sort of difference in sensibilities that I'm dealing with in some of my characters. People from a pre-industrial way of life sort of skip generations and settle into not only a highly industrialized setting, but one that has gone beyond that in subtlety and media complexity.

On the other hand, Maddelena is an entirely different woman. She comes from Rome and is well educated. She adjusts to the new country handily because she's

her own person and she's ingenious, whereas Assunta is more a force of nature. Like Assunta, Maddelena tries to do her best for her family. What she does backfires, but that isn't entirely her fault.

MINNI: In your novels (and most Italo-Canadian writing) the immigrant experience is seen through the distorted viewpoint of the children. The first generation remains silent. Is this intentional, or is it an inability on your part — as the son of immigrants — to write from the parents' viewpoint?

PACI: I wouldn't say that the viewpoint of the children is distorted, a word that is too pejorative. Since the second generation is presenting the story, the perspective of the first generation is presented indirectly, I'd rather say. The first generation doesn't remain silent (except Giulia in *The Italians*), except in the sense that their stories aren't as complete as their children's who tell the story. In other words, the first generation remains more problematic. Is this intentional or does it show an inability on my part? Both. To render a person's story as problematic the author must know a lot of what is not presented on the surface. On the other hand, it's very difficult to get into the minds of the first generation. It would demand a *tour de force*, which perhaps I'm not capable of doing.

MINNI: Your novels have caused a shock of recognition among many readers. Yet I sometimes think that English-Canadian reviewers missed the point.

PACI: *The Italians* sold about 15,000 copies, mostly in the New American Library Signet edition. *Black Madonna* sales, however, have been modest. In a certain sense English-Canadian reviewers have not seen the full story in my books so far, obviously because they lack the emotional groundwork of the immigrant experience. But this experience must be judged on universal grounds — that is, if the novels render the experience well enough anyone should be able to empathize with it. There are some things, of course, that only hold deep resonance for the people who've gone through similar experiences. But, on the other hand, some readers with this experience have told me that the Italians I present are very unlike the Italians they know. Also, the very first review of the first book, *The Italians*, was a scathing insulting piece by an Italo-Canadian truckdriver-poet who expected "literature" and forgot the fundamental law of driving: you have to shift through first to get to the other gears.

MINNI: What is next for Frank Paci?

PACI: *The Father* is actually the first novel of a trilogy, the second of which, *First Communion*, I've just completed. But it's been such a difficult book to write that I don't know if it'll ever see the light of day. You could call *First Communion* a transition novel. It deals with the lives of the same two sons as in *The Father*, but very different in content and form. The novel seeks to move the

development of consciousness through another phase. For consciousness you can read what I call the dynamic interplay of head, heart, and crotch. The Dionysian aspects of consciousness fight the Apollonian ones. I'm interested in describing Reality, in rendering it in as much depth as possible. That means including aspects of the unreal, of the indistinct, of the nebulous, of the fantastic — all in a manner that doesn't negate the life of the characters and that doesn't draw attention to the words or the writer. The question that interests me is: What is real? Which is different from what exists. And I think that the poet more so than the modern philosopher or the scientist, contrary to most widespread belief, can best pose this question.

Autumn 1983

FELLINI

Irving Layton

Like the *guardiacessi* who unlocks her toilet
and is deformed but has a winning face
you show me grossness in earth, in women,
but also the shy soft-hued floweret
among thistles, the ugly rapacious thistles.

Your legends, Federico, I've made my own;
amidst them often lost, often found my way.
Basta! You use my skull to hive your images.
Casanova's mother piggybacks to this day;
your spiritless bird will endure longer than stone.

Master-illusionist you are, every sunrise,
the exploring poet in your own Satyricon
seeking the light of remoter shores
to tell their bronzed surfers the Gods urge on
only the cripples that stumble to Paradise.

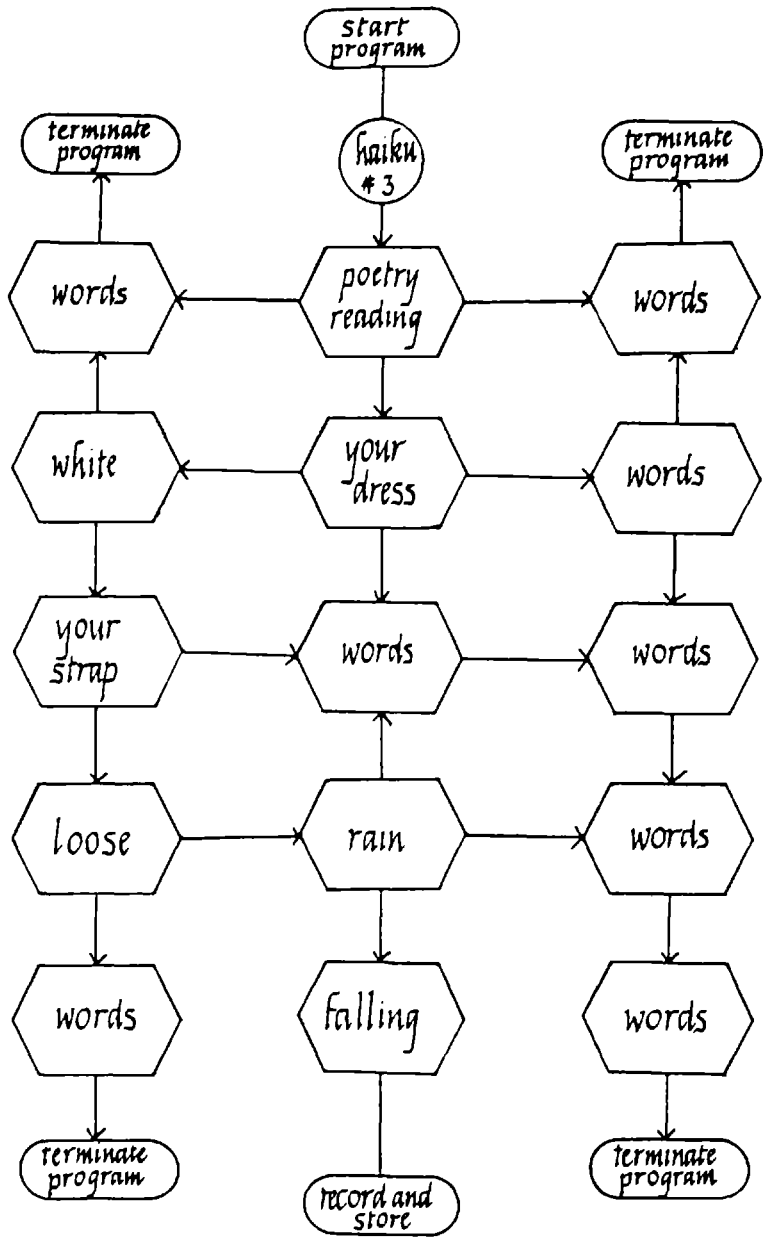
Your felicity, when it comes, is more brief
than the bubbles you loose over these ancient stairs;
perilous is the fate you were meant to bear:
by art alone to modulate human grief
into a cry so sad, so strange, men call it rapture.

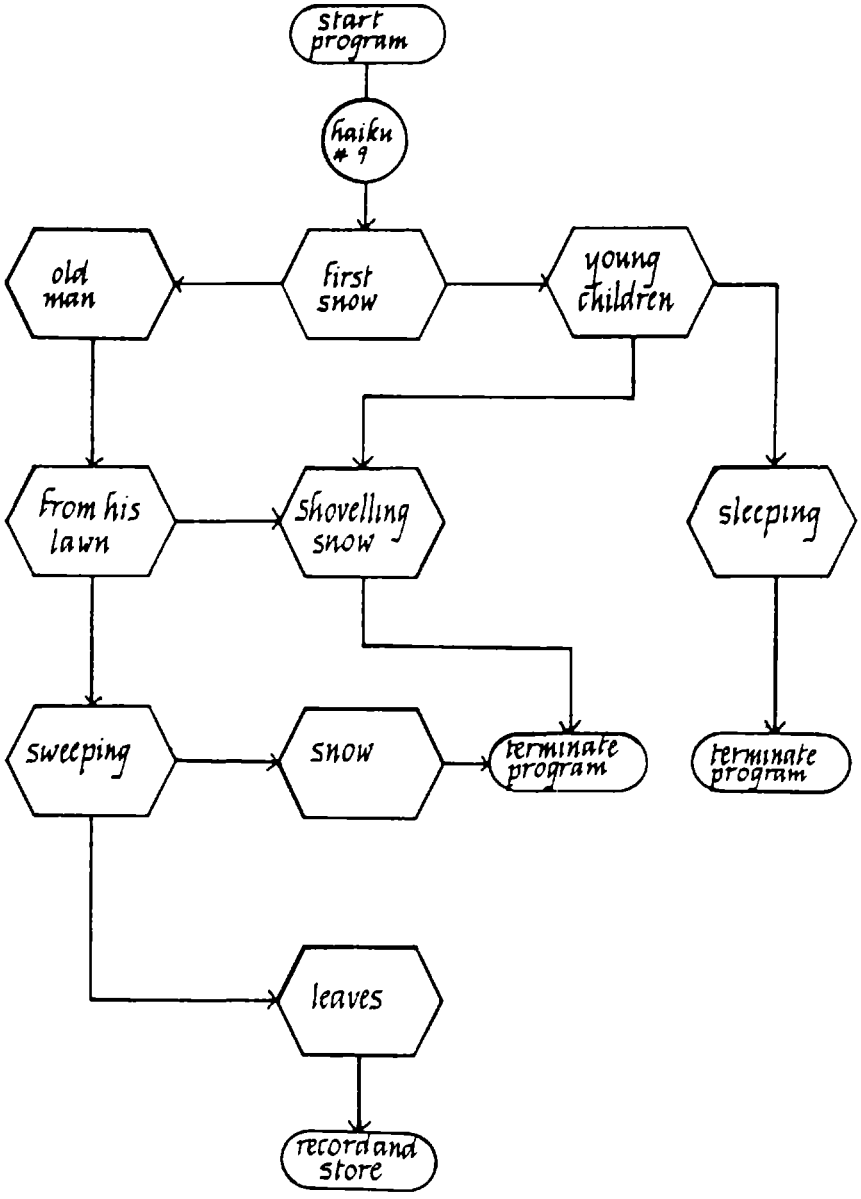
Piazza di Spagna
September 17, 1984

TWO HAIKU

in computer program form

Marco Fraticelli




start program
haiku # 9
old man
first snow
young children
from his lawn
shovelling snow
sleeping
sweeping
snow
terminate program
terminate program
leaves
record and store

MULTICULTURAL BLUES

for Alberto DiGiovanni

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco

Mr. Nicosetti from the Toronto Centrale
Institute of Italian thumbs, is weeping inside
the pages of a notebook he wrote when he was ten
years old under the Italian Alps, and poverty-stricken he
tells me.

His wife is weeping, his house is made of gingerbread
with a madonna for a door-knocker. I am the first to
hear his tears tonight; his politics is something

inescapable. He talks up a storm; he is all pathos
with an eye for antipasto. He is the centre of his
community, he tells me; he has taught children to sing
the alpine songs, because Italian is a beautiful thing

and enriches. Outside, three thousand miles of wind
is bleating against three thousand miles of ocean;

somewhere in a country like a boot, something goes on
that is nothing like "Il Ponte Vecchio," or Gigli,
or Michelangelo. They are building Rome in one

day in Toronto, and it will disappear with
the snows. There is a country the size of

my skull in me; I fill it with loved ones
and three thousand poems. When I go to

heaven I will have a passport made of hairs and a drop
of blood, and no one will ask me the spelling of my
name, and I will be bothered by wild and significant things.

LES POÈTES ITALO-MONTRÉALAIS

Sous le signe du Phénix

Fulvio Caccia

> Il n'y a pas de langue innocente; chacune cristallise et reconduit un rapport de forces historiques. — REGIS DEBRAY

DANS QUELLE LANGUE ÉCRIRE? Tel est le dilemme auquel est confronté le créateur d'origine italienne à Montréal. Entre la ou les "lingue del pane" et la "lingua del cuore," laquelle choisir? Question éternelle. Question de pouvoir d'autant plus délicate qu'elle recouvre la brûlante question de l'identité qui écartèle le Québec et le Canada depuis deux décennies.

Par son brassage multiculturel, Montréal est l'axe géopolitique, le lieu d'articulation de ce binôme linguistique. Là se pose avec acuité le rapport aux cultures et à l'acculturation. Après les poètes québécois des années soixante, et les poétesses féministes, c'est au tour des poètes d'origine italienne de se confronter à cette question.

> No art is more stubbornly national than poetry. A people may have its language taken away from it, suppressed, and another language compelled upon the schools; but unless you teach that people to feel in a new language, you have not eradicated the old one, and it will reappear in poetry, which is the vehicle of feeling.

Cette très belle réflexion de T. S. Eliot s'applique bien aujourd'hui aux poètes d'origine italienne à Montréal. Car, sans le vouloir ou le savoir, ils rendent compte des Aléas du choc culturel qu'ils ont subi et continuent de subir. Leurs oeuvres, bien qu'encore jeunes, se présentent donc comme un oscillogramme de l'acculturation dans le contexte bilingue montréalais.

La culture du pays-hôte, on le sait, n'est jamais innocente. Son baiser d'accueil est un baiser de mort. Mort culturelle où l'immigrant meurt lentement à sa culture d'origine pour renaître à celle de l'autre. Cela ne se fait pas sans combat, colère, désespoir. Le présent article essaie modestement de saisir ce passage, et ce,

à travers la récurrence des styles poétiques, des influences et des langues d'expression des créateurs d'origine italienne au sein de la société d'ici. A l'arrière-plan, un vestige se profile, la poésie écrite en italien ou en dialecte régional. Rescapée du naufrage de l'acculturation, elle témoigne inéluctablement d'un attachement "al paese," paese signifiant indifféremment l'entité nationale ou la région natale. Car les Italiens ont très tôt été sensibilisés à l'hégémonie linguistique de l'italien normatif.[1]

Ceux qui pratiquent cette poésie sont venus ici *adultes*, il y a plus de vingt ans. Ils appartiennent en grande majorité à la première génération d'immigrants de l'après-guerre établie à Montréal entre 1950 et 1963. Ils exercent un travail d'animation culturelle au sein de la communauté tant dans les media que dans les centres culturels. "L'assurance de la survie" demeure toutefois leur préoccupation majeure, comme le rappelle Tonino Cattichio dans l'avant-propos d'une récente anthologie de la poésie italienne intitulée *La poesia italiana nel Quebec* (1983). Cette préoccupation de la survie explique en bonne partie le caractère fragmenté, inachevé, de cette poésie dont l'évolution s'est trouvée freinée, sinon arrêtée, par le choc culturel de l'immigration. Etrangère aux influences des mouvements poétiques locaux, elle a continué à s'alimenter aux échos littéraires de son pays d'origine. Poésie de la survivance, c'est aussi la seule qui peut revendiquer pleinement le statut de "poésie italienne" puisqu'elle est écrite dans la langue d'origine par une vingtaine de "poètes à temps perdu."

QUE NOUS DIT-ELLE AU JUSTE? Sur un ton qui emprunte les voies du néo-romantisme et du didactisme, elle nous parle, simplement, de la mémoire blessée, de la nostalgie de l'Italie, de la dernière guerre encore présente, tel l'attachant poème de T. Cattichio "Via Frattina 123":

> rientrai a Roma . . . giunsi a Via Frattina . . .
> bussai . . . me tremavano le mano!
> "L'hanno ammazzata qui, proprio qui drento,
> disse er portiere . . . e pe' sarvatta a te!"
> Com'era freddo que l'appartamento
> de Via Frattina centroventitré![2]

Augusto Tomasini nous amène dans un style presque franciscain du côté de la mémoire maternelle à jamais perdue. Deux de ses poèmes y font implicitement référence:

> E il tuo dolore è mio.
> In monotoni silenzi
> l'anima sospesa nel vuoto
> accecante
> s'apre al mormorio del tempo.[3]

Ce rapport à la mère est assurément un des thèmes récurrents de la poésie italienne, tant celle de la première que de la deuxième génération. On pourrait avancer que cette thématique s'oppose à celle de la quête du père, prédominante dans la poésie québécoise de la révolution tranquille. Corrado Mastropasqua, lui, reporte cette passion sur la "femmena," la femme, en y mettant toute l'ardeur et l'inflexion du chant napolitain:

> Femmena.
> Tu me turmiente 'a vita,
> Tu me consume 'e carne,
> tu sulo me cunsoele,
> sulo tu.[4]

Pour sa part, Filippo Salvatore témoigne plus amplement de sa "vita d'esule" (vie d'exil) dans son premier recueil *Tufo e Gramigna* (Edizione Simposium, 1977) paru ensuite en édition bilingue sous le titre *Suns of Darkness* (Guernica, 1980). D'entrée, Salvatore écarte le formalisme poétique "gongorinos de formas" et invite les avant-gardes "myopes" "des deux continents" à apprendre du "poète-paysan," qui a pour unique richesse le soleil, la douleur et le souvenir de cette nature champêtre innocente et maternelle. Elégiaque, virgilienne, la poésie de Salvatore se fait volontiers descriptive:

> Sono le vostre, le nostre piccole gioie,
> affanni, debelezze, qualità
> che amo ed odio tanto
> gente, gente mia
> gente a me più cara
> dell'anima stessa mia.[5]

Cette identification à son peuple est une rémission. La culpabilité de l'immigration est rachetée. Le poète est désormais prêt à assumer la conscience de l'acculturation. Seul.

"Bagliore di Folgore" marque ce passage. Constatant qu'il n'a plus "les mains calleuses" comme ses compatriotes, il cherche à oublier le regret "nulla significa rammarico!" pour découvrir "l'intangible réalité" de sa condition de "héros de la défaite." Cette défaite est bien celle de l'immigrant, obligé de ravaler "l'amère salive de la honte," de baisser l'échine sous les fourches caudines d'une autre culture, d'une autre langue. Car c'est d'une guerre dont il s'agit, une guerre sourde, âpre, silencieuse, la guerre contre la mort. Le poème "La Mia Guerra" recherche la dignité perdue. Cette quête rapproche le poète des réprouvés de la terre: les Vietnamiens, les Basques, et notamment les poètes québécois. Ce n'est pas par hasard s'il dédie un poème "Nous les rapaillés" au plus représentatif d'entre eux, Gaston Miron.

Salvatore reconnaît en lui un frère, "un héros de la défaite." Car l'immigration est cette colonisation à l'envers, que des études européennes ont démontrée. Mais aussitôt reconnue, voilà que Salvatore cherche à se distancier de la douleur contenue dans les poèmes de Miron. Celui qui a perdu son pays se trouve à rebours de celui qui en cherche un. Pareil à l'image inversée du miroir, l'émigré comme le colonisé s'identifient en s'opposant. Leurs trajectoires se croisent pour mieux s'opposer. Depuis l'auteur a étendu ses préoccupations à la terre entière et à l'écologie, à cause du péril atomique qui nous menace. "E fu l'Apocalisse," poème paru dans *I Quaterni Culturali*, reflète cette évolution. Par son ton épique et sa thématique, il est clair que *Tufo e Gramigna* se situe à la croisée de deux générations, de deux langues, l'italien et l'anglais. Salvatore reprend en l'amplifiant ce que ses aînés n'avaient pu accomplir tout en faisant le lien avec les poètes qui ont choisi d'écrire en anglais. La seconde édition bilingue, traduite en anglais par Salvatore lui-même, confirme la situation médiatique de son premier recueil dans le champ restreint des poètes d'origine italienne.

Avec LES POÈTES ITALIENS de la maison Guernica, nous quittons la poésie d'expression italienne pour nous engager dans la poésie canadienne anglaise de sensibilité italienne. Car comment qualifier autrement ce courant qui irrigue et transforme d'abord et surtout la poétique de la langue anglaise. Dans leur poésie, la frontière linguistique s'est estompée. L'acculturation a accompli son travail. Pour ces poètes, de langue anglaise, mais de sensibilité latine, entourés d'une majorité francophone, elle-même minoritaire au sein du Canada et de l'Amérique du Nord, la situation est riche de contradictions. Ce contexte transculturel n'est pas sans évoquer celui de Kafka dans la Prague du début du siècle. Ce genre de milieu, traversé d'influences, est propice à la création pour peu qu'on dépasse les contradictions comme l'ont fait d'ailleurs les poètes juifs de Montréal des années cinquante et soixante.

Le poète Antonio D'Alfonso est au coeur de cette triangulation de la culture. C'est en bonne partie grâce à son travail perspicace d'éditeur de la maison Guernica que la poésie de sensibilité italienne a pu se manifester aussi vigoureusement ces quatre dernières années à Montréal. Dans sa poésie, D'Alfonso porte à son degré d'incandescence le mal du déracinement. Mais cela n'est pas visible comme chez Salvatore. Non. Son cri se module comme un lamento amoureux dont *Queror* (1979), son premier recueil, porte les stigmates:

> It's over, Dad
> my resemblance to you
> it's over
> I disfigured myself

Oedipe défiguré, il chante la vanité de la drague nocturne, les petits matins insomniaques et la blessure de l'innocence.

> Sweeping the wounds
> left by innocence
> I let grow
> my hatred for children

La passion amoureuse lui sert de révélateur. Le ton est haletant. Sensuel. D'Alfonso est avide d'expérimenter cette langue nouvelle. Les sonorités s'entrechoquent. Sa poésie est solaire, flamboyante, jeune. On est loin de l'épure froidement contrôlée à laquelle nous a habitué une certaine poésie anglaise.

Black Tongue (1983) pousse plus loin cette recherche à la fois formelle et thématique. Le "Foco d'Amore" de Dante lui sert de flambeau dans cette descente à travers la douleur de la rupture amoureuse. Mais cette chute est également une tentative de se réapproprier la langue noire "black tongue, desert of broken bones, tarnished." Cette langue avilie, interdite, de l'émigrant que la confrontation avec l'être aimé révèle dans toute son acuité. "To emigrate is possessing the soul of sadness, is to smother the power of the heart." Ou, c'est en reparcourant le chemin inverse de l'émigrant que D'Alfonso revit la situation de l'émigrant:

> Sun of Olmecs!
> Must we constantly emigrate?
> Kill his children? Couple with
> tigers? Change sex?

Cet itinéraire christique culminera dans la crucifixion de la vie avec la mort et son dépassement:

> Life like a cross, like the heart's first concealed
> splendour, noble rustic celebration
> in dead of stern.

D'Alfonso opère ainsi un nécessaire recentrement de sa condition de fils d'immigrant. Sa langue est celle d'un ogre qui n'est pas sans rappeler dans son appétit de repossession celle de "La Marche à l'amour de Miron." Ce n'est pas fortuit. A la différence des jeunes poètes canadiens-anglais, qui préfèrent la poésie diaphane de St-Denys-Garneau ou d'Anne Hébert, celle de Miron toute prégnante et terrestre possède un attrait particulier pour ces fils de paysans: c'est le resouvenir du pays perdu.

Avec *Instants* (1979) et *Night Coach* (1983) de Marco Fraticelli, la poésie de sensibilité italienne change de cap. Elle se fait minimale, lunaire, orientale et rappelle par moments les hermétistes italiens de l'avant-

guerre. Car au foisonnement baroque de son collègue Molison, Fraticelli a préféré le dépouillement du haiku japonais auquel il injecte cependant une sensualité bien latine:

> Your bare shoulder
> framed by the open window
> outside . . . the full moon

L'automne et la mort qu'elle annonce est certainement un thème récurrent chez Fraticelli:

> I'm embarrassed by
> autumn stumps
>
> We are the streets
> leafless
> and silent to the wind
>
> We stand on this autumn hillside.

Pas étonnant qu'une section du recueil s'intitule justement "Still Life." Là, il laisse cours à sa verve ironique: "Your smile is a beggar's cup." Avec *Night Coach*, Fraticelli poursuit cette démarche irradiée par la clarté blafarde de la pleine lune. Il en accentue l'érotisme, les motifs de la mort, en superposant des images d'une violence vipérine:

> Rattle of the night coach
> My hand trembles beneath your blouse
> The moon does not move.

La mort s'inscrit dans le quotidien sous le motif banalisé des funérailles de novembre. Il l'exercise par la juxtaposition d'images saugrenues qui nous la rendent finalement attachante: "Funeral sermon / in my wedding suit / falling asleep." Mais cette opération de trompe-la-mort n'est que temporaire. De fait, l'anxiété resurgit de plus belle. Elle imprègne le recueil de son silence hivernal qu'illumine soudain une touche d'érotisme. Mais cette conscience de la mort n'est-elle pas une conscience plus haute de la vie et du jeu de l'écriture dont elle est le reflet? Son dernier haiku porte à le croire:

> Sun and moon
> in the morning sky
> in the puddle . . . my reflection

Entre le tercet du haiku et la logique binaire de l'ordinateur, il n'y a qu'un pas. Fraticelli le franchit ce printemps en proposant pour l'écran cathodique deux programmes de haiku (en français et en anglais) intitulés "Déjà vu."

Changement de registre avec Mary Melfi. De lapidaire, la poésie de sensibilité italienne se fait surréelle, ironique. Avec *A Queen is Holding a Mummified Cat*

(1982) nous plongeons d'emblée dans un univers d'une cruauté rabelaisienne. Les fantasmes y ont la complexité bizarre des "machines célibataires" de Marcel Duchamp. Car la fantasmagorie de Melfi participe d'un machinisme, d'une cybernétique de l'angoisse propre au surréalisme. Le poème "The Head" en cela est très évacateur. Partant d'une image anodine, "His head is sticking out of the river," l'auteur construit autour un réseau de métaphores étranges ("his head looks like the head of a rhinoceros") qui brusquement fait basculer le poème vers la mort et la décapitation: "Please don't move farther away from me! I'm alone with a picture of death."

Dans ce poème tout imprégné de réminiscences du mythe de Diane Chasseresse tuant son amant, le procédé rappelle celui de l'anamorphose. Cette technique utilisée par certains peintres du seizième siècle, Melfi s'en sert à loisir pour imprimer une torsion particulière à sa syntaxe. Le temps, l'espace se confondent alors dans un tourbillon d'images biscournues reliées entre elles par une logique qui n'est plus celle du langage mais celle de l'inconscient débridé. Voilà pourquoi sa poésie balance en équilibre instable entre l'apparence et l'hallucination pure.

Cette démarche inductive n'est pas nouvelle. Elle s'inscrit à la suite de celle de Rimbaud qui la codifiait dans sa fameuse lettre du voyant. Dans la voyance, Melfi trouve son régistre propre qui lui permet d'exorciser sa violence de femme. Elle emprunte pour se faire la voie de la parodie. Dans "An old musical," elle campe le décor d'une comédie musicale pour se moquer des stéréotypes de la femme soumise. Mais à la différence de ses consoeurs francophones dont la poésie déconstruit le discours mâle par le biais du structuralisme, Melfi surenchérit sur le cliché:

> I'm ready. I'm ready to disintegrate. I'm ready to please all of my nine friends. Hurry. I'm ready to give myself up. Yes, squeeze me and I'll cry. Open my legs and I'll laugh, yes, open and close my eyes.

Cette accentuation de la femme-objet, passive, dominée, provoque un retournement qui est aussi un éclatement. En ce sens, son cri acéré d'ironie porte écho à celui de ses consoeurs. La rapport au corps désiré/honni revient comme un leitmotif avec son cortège de fantasmes et de métamorphoses kafkaesques:

> Three women, three insignificant victims, three specimens of infertility, of hope and of *rigor mortis* are also in the room with me. They're beautifully bandaged in foreign flags. . . . I won't be a lady.

Ce refus de sa condition de femme l'amène à interroger ses rapports à sa mère et à sa maternité future. Questionnement qui rejoint celui de Christine Olivier dans *Les enfants de Jocaste*:

> I will allow a tiny stranger to turn my own flesh
> and blood inside out.
> Why do I dare? Why do I insist

on showing the world the insides of my body?
Why mummy?

Dans "An Exile," Melfi se mesure à sa condition émigrante, seule référence d'ailleurs à son origine allophone dans tout le recueil. L'acculturation devient l'enjeu de deux dieux cannibales: celui de l'est et celui de l'ouest. Dans une langue allégorique trempée dans l'ironie, elle renvoie dos à dos les deux nationalismes tant canadien anglais que québécois francophone.

So bring me a mountain climber. Quick
English or French. Black and White. Who cares?
Let him force life out of my fear.
I'm hungry. I'm cold. Rock me. Oh God.

Ce courant surréaliste, Mario Campo le reprend en français dans *Coma Laudanum* (L'Hexagone, 1979). Le titre évoque déjà la mort, son immobilité soporifique. Tandis que la citation d'Antonin Artaud en exergue, nous propose un voie de lecture.[6] Mais dès le premier vers, Campo brouille les cartes. Il nous "jette la poésie aux yeux" qui éclate, "effarée devant sa propre mort." Sous la pression de "la solitude spectrale," la syntaxe se pulvérise. Brusquement nous pénétrons dans "le cauchemar Penthiobarbitol" de l'angoisse de la psychose et de la culpabilité. Mais l'auteur ne tarde pas à dire l'origine de ces "aphasies hallucinatoires":

Le complexe automatiste
du cordon coupé
la mère d'oedipe amère
subrepticement
dans l'impasse aménonorrhée.

C'est bien de l'impasse oedipienne qui l'amène à la folie "muselé maternellement, je hurle originellement coupable." "Infernement," titre de la seconde partie, est une relation hallucinée de cet univers. Dans la dernière partie, Campo dénonce "la récupération et la mort de la poésie." Au hasard de cette démarche claudicante surgissent des images aux accents rimbaldiens "La voie lactée pave mes aubes éthiliques." Chez lui, pas de traces des origines. "Je vis en futurama . . . je suis un chien sans collier." La négation du passé, vécue comme "automutilation anamèse" éjecte le poète hors de l'Histoire dans une errance qui n'est pas sans évoquer une autre acculturation: celle de la contre-culture des années 1968-1975. Tributaire de ce puissant courant qui a bouleversé le sous-sol des sociétés occidentales, l'itinéraire de Campo reflète ce double refus qui est aussi un sursaut de vie "quand on ne veut plus crever."

Avec François d'Apollonia, on retourne à une poésie orale. Dans *Parfums de fulgurance* (Préambule, 1977), l'auteur célèbre la mer et l'amante dans un style proche de St-John Perse. L'absence du souvenir n'est qu'apparent. Dès les premiers vers, l'auteur nous confie: "J'étais d'une autre mémoire, d'une ancienne marée qui m'allait devancer sur les sables." Cette image de l'exil resurgira un peu plus loin comme une épave qui refait surface au hasard de la quête amoureuse: "Une ancienne mémoire était dilapidée comme un bouleveresement d'île à une journée d'oubli de mer." La transformation, on le voit, est consacrée ici dans l'abandon de l'étreinte amoureuse. Cette démarche, ce plaisir du langage rappellent l'itinéraire du poète D'Alfonso.

La boucle est bouclée. Bien que modeste, la contribution des poètes de sensibilité italienne présente autant en français qu'en anglais une affinité de genres et de thèmes dont les plus significatifs sont le rapport à la mère et à la mort. Car à la différence du poète canadien-anglais qui veut se démarquer de la puissante culture américaine pour s'approprier la sienne, et du poète québécois qui veut préserver sa langue, le poète d'origine italienne a perdu l'une et l'autre. Il ne lui reste plus qu'à être un médiateur. Antonio D'Alfonso écrit:

> Useless poet
> not white, not black, but in between
> black and white, more black by nature
> and love of black

Cette méditation n'est pas dépourvue d'ambiguité dans le contexte bilingue montréalais car elle reconduit dans leur champ linguistique respectif les rapports de force qui ont écartelé les deux peuples fondateurs.

NOTES

[1] L'unité linguistique et culturelle en Italie s'est faite beaucoup plus tard que l'unité politique dont l'avénement en 1891 devait provoquer les grands mouvements migratoires de la fin du siècle dernier. Cette dialectique du pouvoir a rendu l'Italien immigrant sceptique à l'égard de l'Etat et de sa langue normative.

[2] "123, rue Frattina"

> revenu à Rome . . . Via Frattina
> j'ai frappé, frappé . . . qu'elles tremblaient mes mains!
> "Ils l'ont tué là, abattue froidement"
> me dit le concierge, "pour te sauver . . . toi!"
> Comme il était froid cet appartement
> au cent vingt-trois, via Frattina!

[3] "Souvenirs"

> Et ta douleur c'est la mienne
> Dans des silences monotones
> l'âme suspendue dans le vide
> aveuglant
> s'ouvre au murmure du temps . . . (extrait de "Memorie")

[4] "Femme"

Tu hantes ma vie
tu consumes ma chair
tu es mon seul baume
toi seule. (extrait de "Femmena")

[5] "Mon peuple"

Ce sont nos petites joies, nos souffrances,
nos faiblesses, nos qualités que je hais et aime
tant, peuple, mon peuple,
peuple à moi plus cher
que ma propre âme. (extrait de "Gente mia")

[6] "Là où d'autres proposent des oeuvres, je ne prétends pas autre chose que de montrer mon esprit." Antonin Artaud.

MOVING EAST

Pasquale Verdicchio

— well-settled shallow soil; highway sinks
into small towns till it can rise no more.
The distance waits for you.
Desolation can be held at arm's length
on a map where the route is outlined,
but once eyes have reached their destination
arms serve no purpose.
The distance waits;
cactus sting the air.

Excerpts from

THE WIND IS MY CANVAS

(The Journal of Jesus Christ)

Marco Fraticelli

1

This they will not understand: that I have seen your body and not sinned. That I have faced my fear and tasted your tears and known you in ways yet unknown to them.

Mary Magdalen, there are those who say it is an interesting coincidence that you and my mother have the same name, but I will show them coincidences that will cause them to look closer to home.

They cannot look at the earth and try to imagine the rain without thinking of mud. They stare at the sun only to go blind, while I have wandered 40 days through your eyes and survived.

2

Night is the same as day, only darker. So too is day the same as night. There is no time when night is not day, nor any place where day is not also night. Only in the mind of man are these things separate. It is a paradox that man who fears loneliness above all things insists on separating himself from everything of which he is a part.

3

Only man looks into the water to see who he is not. If a man were only his reflection, there would be nothing for him but to grow old. Each person has a river within and it is there that we must look to see our reflection.

The silver jewelry that a man wears is not the man, but the silver water in which a man swims at night is the man.

4

Only predators thrive at night. Man with his false light, and certain animals who must hunt at night to survive, are the only ones

about at this time. But even at night there is a beautiful music to be heard if one dares and is careful.

There are those who must fill the darkness with light and loud noises. It is better just to listen to the darkness if one must be about at this time. If a man cannot sleep at night, he tries to escape the night the way he would a wild animal; but as with a wild animal, the best escape is often in stillness.

At night we close our eyes and go to another night. A double night. A double darkness. In sleep, all time is now and every place is here. If there were more of the dream in our waking world, there would be less of the world in our dreams.

5

There will come a time when all of this will have decayed. My pain will be locked in poses like the paid model of a sculptor, and it will be bought and sold in the streets like vegetables and cheap wine.

Someday, monuments will spring from the ground like weeds, and all that will be left of me will be loud bells and sunlight on gold.

They will castrate young boys to sing praise to me and they will sell jewelry to paupers in my name . . . for this I am about to die.

A BAND OF HAIR BENEATH THE VEIL

(St. Peter's Square, 1981)

Will Garrett-Petts

Faith you can touch Seventy tons of Bernini
Stone caskets of priests underfoot
Peter poured into bronze his right toes
  worn away by the kisses of the faithful
Only the blessed Mother
  and her child
  elude you here separate
  protected now from maniacs

There is no doubt says a nun from New Zealand
It is Peter who is buried there
You want to believe this woman
  this nun
I stop on the street
  when I see she is carrying an English guidebook
She is no zealot
I don't know what the hell they think
  they're looking at
  waving her hand benignly in the direction
  of a passing
  Italian couple
It must be the way I'm dressed Their nuns
  are so rigid but they do look beautiful
  don't they all in black to the ground
I'd never look that good

The nun from New Zealand
  is not dressed for bending
Her blue habit stops
  slightly
below her knees and she shows a band of hair beneath
  her veil
When she walks with me out of the square
  a young Italian eyes her calves and whistles
He does not think she hears him missing
  the sledgehammer stare
It is the custom here
But she turns away unhappy
Like the Pieta behind glass
  she remains always at arm's length

LANGUE ET PAROLE DANS L'OEUVRE POÉTIQUE D'ALEXANDRE AMPRIMOZ

Kenneth W. Meadwell

DEPUIS UN CERTAIN NOMBRE D'ANNÉES, un jeune écrivain polyglotte se taille une place dans notre littérature. L'activité scripturale d'Alexandre Amprimoz s'inscrit dans le cadre de divers domaines littéraires. Né à Rome en 1948, Amprimoz contribue à la vie culturelle du Canada tant par la richesse de ses ouvrages de création — poésie et prose — que par la perspicacité de ses traductions et de ses articles critiques. Ceux-ci examinent des sujets aussi variés que la poésie symboliste française, la sémiotique et la littérature canadienne.[1] Aussi les côtés créateur et savant de son oeuvre se complètent-ils de telle sorte qu'il s'en dégage l'image d'un individu passionné de connaissances, un individu qui perçoit l'existence à travers la loupe du littéraire et celle du philosophe. Toujours est-il que dans sa poésie il ne se détourne pas pour autant de la vie immédiate. Car, comme un Francis Ponge, il sait éminemment bien qu':

> . . . une perle
> rose
> frissonne
> écoute et comprend[2]

Force est de noter que dans *Chant solaire*, par exemple, le poète tend à privilégier l'abstrait au concret. D'où un certain hermétisme, qui ne rend cependant pas le texte inaccessible. Par contre, les récueils de poèmes anglais d'Amprimoz, tels *Selected Poems*, *Ice Sculptures* ou encore *Fragments of Dreams*, s'inspirent, il me semble, du vécu, et plus précisément d'un sentiment de dépaysement. Il est question, en effet, de textes qui évoquent l'identité ambiguë du poète: Italien, Français ou Canadien? Voilà, en gros, le dilemme que l'écrivain tente de résoudre, tout en sachant qu'il est en perpétuel devenir.

Dans la présente étude je tâcherai de dévoiler les grandes lignes de la poésie d'Amprimoz avec le but de définir la parole poétique en fonction de la langue de rédaction. Afin de mener à bien cette analyse, je juge bon d'adopter la distinction

langue/parole entrevue par Ferdinand de Saussure. Dans son *Cours de linguistique générale*, le linguiste définit la première expression ainsi:

> La langue existe dans la collectivité sous la forme d'une somme d'empreintes déposées dans chaque cerveau, à peu près comme un dictionnaire dont tous les exemplaires, identiques, seraient répartis entre les individus . . . C'est donc quelque chose qui est dans chacun d'eux, tout en étant commun à tous et placé en dehors de la volonté des dépositaires.

Ainsi, grâce à la parole, le sujet parlant s'introduit dans un système linguistique car, elle est, au contraire de celui-ci, "un acte individuel de volonté et d'intelligence."[3] Dans un article sur la littérature italo-canadienne Joseph Pivato affirme au sujet de l'oeuvre poétique d'Amprimoz:

> The English poems are recognizably those of an Italian-Canadian; they are full of references to Canadian and Italian art, literature, history and society. The French poems are abstract, modern works, bare of any references to Canadian or ethnic culture.[4]

Il serait intéressant, je crois, d'analyser la poésie d'Amprimoz à la lumière de ce commentaire. S'agit-il, en effet, d'une parole abstraite — créant l'illusion littéraire dans les textes français — qui, en anglais, s'avère concrète, se prêtant ainsi à une écriture mimétique?

Déjà *Chant solaire* présente les intérêts ésotériques du poète. Composé de huit chants, le poème est une longue méditation — sous forme d'apostrophe au dieu solaire de l'Egypte pharaonique — sur "le savoir des morts."[5] Vu à travers l'optique de l'homme moderne, le Soleil incarne "l'antique sagesse" fondée sur une conception cyclique de l'univers. Dans un premier mouvement Amprimoz présente le Soleil qui monte dans sa barque le matin afin d'accomplir son voyage diurne au ciel d'Egypte; dans un deuxième mouvement, le poète évoque la succession du temps à partir de l'antiquité jusqu'à l'époque moderne en se servant d'une structure anaphorique:

> entre le sablier et la marée
> longues méditations
> volées aux mondes des lèvres
> . . . . . .
> entre le sablier et la marée
> pour éviter la page vierge
> j'ai rêvé d'une autre histoire universelle
> . . . . . .
> entre le sablier et la pendule
> elle est venue me relancer
> . . . . . .
> entre le sablier et l'horloge

elle est venue brûler
les fleurs artificielles.

Tempus fugit donc, et peu importe la manière que l'on utilise pour en indiquer le passage. Et pourtant, l'on ne peut que constater que les termes dont se sert le poète pour exprimer la fuite du temps — "sablier," "marée," "pendule" et "horloge" — ne s'excluent pas mutuellement. Car n'est-il pas vrai que "sablier" suggère "sable," et que "marée," "pendule" (astronomique) et "horloge" (solaire) indiquent l'influence des corps célestes?

Ces termes rallument ainsi l'image centrale du poème dans l'esprit du lecteur:

une lumière aux tremblements salés
bronzée de significations parmi le peuple d'ostensoirs
palpite comme une chair
au saint niveau du sable.

Révélateurs de l'unicité du poème, "sable" et "soleil" constituent des eléments générateurs du texte. Mais, d'autant plus, ils représentent aux yeux du poète une vie primordiale dont la beauté et la simplicité s'opposent à la fadeur de la vie contemporaine. En effet, selon Amprimoz, ses contemporains "décorent leurs maisons avec des plantes / en plastique"; "il n'y a plus que la télévision / qui soit en couleurs." Dans *Chant solaire* la parole libératrice de la littérature, même s'il s'agit de l'illusion littéraire, aide Amprimoz non pas à se dissimuler derrière une vision éthérée de l'existence, mais plutôt, à se rendre compte que la Muse d'une époque lointaine peut venir à tout moment habiter les songes de l'homme moderne. C'est donc à travers la parole poétique qu'Amprimoz rejoint l'antiquité égyptienne, source d'une sagesse tant recherchée.

LA VOIX DU POÈTE se prolonge dans *Changements de tons*, et demeure sensiblement la même que celle du texte précédent. Marilyn Kidd affirme que *Changements de tons* "indicates a definite maturation of . . . technical prowess and a new sureness of touch."[6] Il n'en demeure cependant pas moins vrai que *Chant solaire* se caractérise déjà par un raffinement stylistique. Le recueil en question regroupe des poèmes qui s'inspirent du décalage entre le virtuel et le vécu. Là où *Chant solaire* se base sur un savoir antique, *Changements de tons* fait appel à l'absolu grâce à l'intermédiaire du poète. Si le dieu solaire est remplacé par l'écrivain, c'est justement parce que ce dernier sait amener le virtuel à l'existence. Les préoccupations d'Amprimoz semblent se cristalliser dans une dialectique entre le monde spirituel et le monde incarné.

Tour à tour les deux possibilités tentent et rebutent l'homme. La parole n'est pas toujours une arme toute puissante:

et ces vaines tumeurs
dans la parole
me font rêver
d'un silence laineux

Et la vie immédiate n'offre pas non plus de perfection éternelle:

et toute cette vie
n'est que pourriture
arbres
grands frères des champignons
hautes moisissures

Mais Amprimoz n'y renonce pas pour autant: la dignité de la pensée humaine est à préserver à tout prix.

> A l'ombre de nos arbres morts la meilleure révolution n'est autre que le travail sur le savoir.
>
> Au fond tu regardes l'horizon où les papillons se promènent parmi les tigres. Tu te le dis: c'est la fréquentation de la pensée qui sera difficile à instaurer en ce nouveau monde.

Devant la tâche qu'il endosse, le poète ne peut que sentir la présence de la folie. Il est à noter que les thèmes du suicide et de la démence occupent une place prépondérante dans les vers français d'Amprimoz. Et ceci, pour mieux communiquer l'angoisse qu'il ressent lorsqu'il tente de réconcilier les mots et les choses:

Mes lèvres ont effleuré
le front de la folie
et sur la parvis
j'ai baisé l'image
des sages suicidés

L'ambiguité du dernier vers mériterait que l'on s'y attarde. S'agit-il ici de savants suicidés, ou d'individus avisés qui se sont donné la mort en connaissance de cause? Comme l'on verra dans *Conseils aux suicidés*, Amprimoz ne nous offre nullement une apologie de ceux qui mettent volontairement un terme à leur vie; il dépeint, au contraire, les tourments spirituels des "savants suicidés," qui ne voient autour d'eux que l'abêtissement progressif de l'être humain.

Loin de promouvoir un élitisme intellectuel, le poète croit sincèrement à la nécessité de ne pas laisser les vicissitudes de la vie abattre le pouvoir de la raison:

> Etre, même si ce n'est plus tellement à la mode. Pouvoir vivre ses impressions. Dire comment la neige caresse les futurs champs de tournesols. Etre l'artisan du texte. Respirer la satisfaction de l'oeuvre finie.

On est sensible à la tentative chez Amprimoz de réaffirmer la dignité humaine et, en ce faisant, de ranimer dans le coeur du lecteur l'enthousiasme pour la littérature.

Si AMPRIMOZ A TROUVÉ le changement de ton, privilège du poète, la teneur de ses textes français ne semble cependant guère varier. On y trouve deux tendances: un premier élan vers la sagesse, un second vers la folie. Cette opposition domine *Conseils aux suicidés*. Entre la clarté de la raison et l'obscurité de la folie réside une certaine complexité que le poète traduit le plus souvent par des images surréalistes:

> folle de lavande
> cette carte crie
> la cime du savoir
>
> et les boulots aveugles
> n'osent traverser la route[7]

ou encore:

> pendant le ricochet des songes
> laissez-moi vomir
> une couronne de fraises
> à l'ombre des sapotiers.

Plus les préoccupations esthétiques d'Amprimoz tendent vers le surréel, plus l'image de l'écrivain s'avère floue:

> . . . je me revis
> dans le miroir
> autre et inaccessible.

L'une des rares évocations en français d'un portrait du poète, ces vers témoignent de son identité insaisissable.

Comme je viens de le montrer, *Conseils aux suicidés* est, en dernière analyse, non pas un éloge du suicide ni de la démence, mais un appel à la vie. Un appel des plus singuliers puisqu'il s'entend à travers la voix d'un individu convaincu que l'engagement littéraire offre l'un des seuls moyens d'apprivoiser la mort. Ce recueil, ainsi que *Chant solaire* et *Changements de tons*, est doué d'une parole intellectualisante, et se situe au niveau de la littérature universelle.

La POÉSIE ANGLAISE d'Amprimoz s'établit, au contraire, sur le plan de l'expérience personnelle. Dès la première page, *Against the Cold* exprime le désenchantement intellectuel du savant:

> When I met the university village
> I regretted the water-fall of carefree genius.
> The coffee was bitter to my tongue,
> Forced to drink at humanistic sewers.[8]

Le regard parfois exalté qu'Amprimoz jette sur le monde dans sa poésie française devient désabusé dans les ouvrages anglais. Non sans truculence, il parle d'un savant qui:

> . . . doesn't even have
> the joy of sandblasting
> a conversation

Et quant aux critiques, ils:

> . . . can outrun zebras
> and be with each other
> as kind as mating scorpions.

Il faut avouer que ce recueil communique une certaine amertume née de la carence des intellectuels. Encore faudrait-il être certain qu'il ne s'agisse pas là de boutades ironiques derrière lesquelles le poète s'efface.

Il est paradoxal que là où l'écrivain couche par écrit l'ambiguité de son identité, il le fait sans arrière-pensée apparente, sans vouloir échapper aux rapprochements inévitables et, peut-être, trop hâtifs. Il n'en demeure cependant pas moins que *Selected Poems* présente le poète comme un exilé:

> These are not the things I want to say,
> my syllables are not the same without espresso:
> I live in Windsor
> and pose as a Frenchman,
> the accent is Celtic,
> the "ths" perfect
> . . . . . .
> the heartbeat, Roman.[9]

Les souvenirs italiens du poète viennent colorer son attitude envers la vie qu'il mène actuellement:

> for the past ten years now
> my body has longed for my soul
> lost somewhere
> around the rotonde

Chez Amprimoz, les allusions fréquentes à l'Italie servent à étoffer son sentiment de dépaysement. Certaines images font revivre dans la mémoire du poète des souvenirs tels "La Naissance de Vénus" de Botticelli, "il Colosseo," Castel Sant'Angelo, Villa Borghese ou encore "La Pietà." On a l'impression qu'à force de décrire un passé qui le hante, le poète se donne à une introspection plus attentive qu'impressionniste.

Plus douloureux encore est ce regard intérieur qui se traduit en une image saisissante:

As a retarded child
trying to kiss
his own image
in a dirty pond
the poet began to weep

Narcisse donc dans un monde à rebours, le poète-enfant — thème cher à Amprimoz — exprime, peut-être le mieux, les trois mouvements de la parole poétique telle qu'elle se manifeste dans ses vers anglais. C'est l'enfant dénaturé — aspirant à l'impossible — qui reflète la tentative chez Amprimoz de faire revivre le temps perdu.

Ice Sculptures et *Fragments of Dreams* abordent le même conflit personnel à la différence près que le lecteur s'y retrouve non pas à Rome ou devant une oeuvre d'art italienne, mais plutôt au milieu des prairies canadiennes. *Ice Sculptures*, titre bien choisi pour souligner l'état d'âme de l'individu qui est loin de son pays natal, accentue l'idée d'une terre d'exil:

But I walk along wider streets
carved in ice and snow
and my fountainless piazzas
leave me thirsty.[10]

Comme *Ice Sculptures*, l'indication titrologique de *Fragments of Dreams* en dit long sur ce qui semble être maintenant la préoccupation majeure d'Amprimoz: rêves qui se désintègrent dans un vide.

Les motifs de la neige et du froid qui paraissent en filigrane dans l'avant-dernier recueil cèdent la place à une imagerie caractérisée par un mouvement aérien:

Since I've been here
memories of better landscapes
fold their wings
within me.[11]

Encore une fois, le poète "scorched by silence" se lamente sur son sort, sur le fait que "no one dreamed of wax wings." Pour Amprimoz, Icare représente celui qui a osé mettre à l'épreuve les croyances de son époque, et, en conséquence, mérite l'admiration de l'humanité. Le poète a déjà exprimé une idée semblable dans *Selected Poems*:

i am so tired of bringing
our caged fire
to new tribes.

Ou sont donc les Icare et les Prométhée de jadis?

La quête irréalisée du poète prend fin pour l'instant dans un lieu silencieux où l'idéal spirituel qu'il recherche est remplacé par les intérêts de la vie matérielle.

Ainsi la boucle est-elle bouclée. Car c'est au niveau de la culture que les textes français et anglais d'Amprimoz se rejoignent sous l'influence d'une parole à la fois différente et semblable.

Ce parcours rapide de l'oeuvre poétique d'Alexandre Amprimoz sert, je l'espère, à démontrer l'unité thématique d'un ensemble constant dans sa nature et variable dans ses apparences. Les deux voix que l'on a entendues dans les poèmes — l'une s'inspirant de la vie de l'esprit l'autre de la vie immédiate — s'unissent en créant une auto-référentialité. En parlant du texte poétique, Michael Riffaterre dit: "S'il y a référence externe, ce n'est pas au réel — loin de là. Il n'y a de référence externe qu'à d'autres textes."[12] En examinant les poèmes d'Amprimoz en fonction de la langue de rédaction, l'on voit malgré la divergence de la parole que son oeuvre ne se divise pas en deux parties distinctes l'une de l'autre. Ceci dit, il reste à faire une analyse de son oeuvre sous l'angle de la littérarité, instrument par lequel l'écrivain atteint l'unité littéraire. Mais ce serait là toute une autre étude.

NOTES

[1] Voir Alexandre Amprimoz, *In Rome* (Toronto: Three Trees, 1980), en prose; et à titre d'exemple, la traduction, Cécile Cloutier, *Springtime of Spoken Words* (Toronto: Hounslow, 1979) ; et les études suivantes de l'auteur: *Germain Nouveau dit Humilis: Etude biographique* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1983) ; *La Poésie érotique de Germain Nouveau* (Stanford: Stanford French and Italian Studies, 1983).

[2] Amprimoz, *Changements de tons* (Saint-Boniface: Editions des Plaines, 1981), p. 20.

[3] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1981), pp. 38, 30.

[4] Joseph Pivato, "The Arrival of Italian-Canadian Writing," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 14, no. 1 (1982), p. 33.

[5] Amprimoz, *Chant solaire suivi de vers ce logocentre* (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1978), p. 8.

[6] Marilyn Kidd, "Other Francophones," *Canadian Literature* no. 96 (Spring 1983), p. 142.

[7] Amprimoz, *Conseils aux suicidés* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 1983), p. 9.

[8] Amprimoz, *Against the Cold* (Fredericton: Fiddlehead, 1978), p. 7.

[9] Amprimoz, *Selected Poems* (Toronto: Hounslow, 1979), p. 11.

[10] Amprimoz, *Ice Sculptures* (Toronto: Three Trees, 1981), p. 21.

[11] Amprimoz, *Fragments of Dreams* (Toronto: Three Trees, 1982), p. 7.

[12] Michael Riffaterre, "L'Illusion référentielle," in *Littérature et réalité*, eds. G. Genette et T. Todorov (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), p. 118.

DREAM

Len Gasparini

In my dream, I clung to a broken spar,
shipwrecked, naked, and weary —
as helpless as that terrapin I saw in Yucatan,
overturned and bleeding on the beach.

A tropic sun beat down, outstaring its own reflection
in a sea that was barely breathing ripples.
Was it a mirage,
or did my despair and fear of drowning

project the fiery shape of a tiger swimming?
A tiger swimming round in circles.
What fabulous beast, what sea-born sphinx
was this before me? What strange omen?

The tiger swam and turned until its panic
found a different focus; then it swam,
or rather glided towards me like a spirit.
No growl broke the silence. We sensed

each other's fear; but our sense of fate was stronger
when the tiger grasped the spar.
I swear I saw the human in its eyes.
Perhaps it saw the wild animal in mine.

PER PIER GIORGIO DI CICCO

Antonio D'Alfonso

I'm balancing from one position to another. Outside I see only the blur of the passing landscape, lights shining in the horizon. The silence of wheels on steel tracks.

Fiumi e selve sappian di che tempre sia la mia vita, ch'è celata altrui.

Nothing in my head except the shadow of a weeping woman, the verses of Francesco Petrarca.

"I want to burn my plane ticket in the Piazza Giordano Bruno."

Zia Graziella tells me not to spit on Canada, not to say such things in public, though I may think them.

Wind inside a tunnel.

Entering the city whose guides say Romans are not brothers but distant relatives. The war between people who refuse unity.

There is no such thing as a unified country.

I lift my glass to you, Pier Giorgio. Walk beside me along the crowded streets of Rome, let us drink the water that unites our energies and desires.

I think of you sitting at that café in Arezzo, drinking your fifth espresso of the day, telling me you need it because your blood is as black as coffee beans.

I lift my glass to you and think of exile and emigration, and whatever it is that makes us tear our passports and run like shamans across the sky.

I drink from your cup and hope for a loving community that will make blunt the prick scratching inside our brain.

Rain splashing against our foreheads. Nothing without a system, contradiction with its own logic. The geometry of rain.

What is it that keeps our bones glued together, when the earth shakes in an epileptic fit?

How many pages are needed to contain the immobile moment between confusion and taking a decision?

"Se tu puoi, se tu vuoi, io pure lo posso e lo voglio."

Train to Firenze, 15 maggio 1984

FOR LOUIS DUDEK

Antonio D'Alfonso

The deeper you go into memory, the deeper you go into language. And language belongs to origins. No, origins are not useless, but a source of personal identity. If "everyone you meet is a distant family relation," why have we built this Tower of Babel? What is useless is the vanity you might entertain on becoming *you*.

What makes you different from others, different from what others think you are, different from what you yourself believe you are?

When I look back I don't look behind me. The past isn't a house I have left behind. It isn't behind me I will find my origins. Origins are all around me like skin, inside me like the pigment of my skin.

How do you acquire taste? The taste of becoming someone else? One morning, why do you wake up and feel obliged to move from one state of being to another, and then another still. Emigration, once it begins, never ends. Nomadicity.

"Don't expect a country to be built by emigrants. All an emigrant can do is help in the construction of railways, airplanes, roads, houses, hotels. You may convince an emigrant or two to invest, nothing more. The only country an emigrant fights for is the country of his heart and family."

This isn't Utopia. This isn't a base for a nuclear missile. An emigrant knows nothing of such fantasies. His country is the mother-tongue he wants his kids to learn, kids who can only scorn whatever it is that makes him what he is.

When I say *I*, I speak of a social environment inside and outside me. *I* is never alone. A family, a people, a dual nationality which in time of war suddenly becomes important. If I can search for what I am, it is because I never lost my self.

Sono quello che sono. I am what I am. A difference imposed on me by history. A way of living up to the standards imposed on myself by myself. Poetry, poetry, poetry . . . like the mechanical drills that bore holes in the soil of my history.

Guglionesi, 6 giugno 1984

THE GENERATION RACE

Alexandre L. Amprimoz

malakoff
café cosmos
parisian poets
used to come here
to court communist muses

two young arabs
stand at the counter

you want to know
what they're saying
they're not talking
of Michelangelo

one of them
punctuates
with *merde*
in perfect french

they are algerian
in france
they haven't got a chance

see how the world
is very much
like a university
where to be born at all
you must be born old

HE MUST EXIST A LITTLE

Alexandre L. Amprimoz

doubts are
like sports cars
for young men only

at the end
of the last century
god died
and so did
that philosopher
for having once kissed
a horse
in milan

but did he really die

what do you see
in the splendid eyes
of agnostic women

PAESANI

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco

premier davis comes to a small italian town
& steps onto a podium. clotheslines of
lightbulbs ring the crowd. this is for night.
now it is day, the time of siesta. he speaks into
microphones in cowed english how pleasant it is
to be there, how there are many of italian names
in toronto, how they build tall skyscrapers, & mount
rush hour buses to put down a mortgage. how it is
possible to do that. a band of children stand by to
sing o canada, meaning where their brothers &
cousins are. even as far as italy, this man comes,
& he talks meaning there is more to life than the
fields, than the milking of goats, than the knocking
of figs from trees. there is the
dollar.

footnote:

the dollar can be milked the canadian way,
or the italian way,
or both,
making it cultural.

THE NTH ADAM

Dante in Klein's "The Second Scroll"

Richard Cavell

No; Canada has produced no Dante . . .
WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON, *Pens and Pirates*

A. M. KLEIN, LIKE MANY OF HIS MODERNIST contemporaries, was profoundly influenced by the example of Dante.[1] Dante provided one of the central models for the modernist sensibility because, in his choice of Virgil as spiritual and literary guide, he had proclaimed his debt to antiquity while in his choice of the vernacular as the language of his *Commedia*, he at the same time announced his break with that tradition. A commitment to the purest elements of his native speech reconciled these motives, so that the universality of Latin would be constantly renewed in the refinement of the vernacular. That Dante's agent of innovation is the *past*, has a particular relevance to writers of the New World, who are confronted by a vast literary patrimony out of which they must articulate their newness, using a language that lacks the authority of tradition.

When Dante made Virgil his literary father, he asserted the predominance of literary relations over historical ones, for the son, here, generates the father. In the same way, the pilgrim's history is the prelude to the poem's writing, so that the goal is the quest discovered in language. On these levels of language and affiliation Klein and his fellow modernists engaged with Dante. Thus we find T. S. Eliot stating in his 1929 monograph on Dante that his importance lies in the creation of a language at once popular and universal, an idea which Eliot, translating Mallarmé, rendered in the *terza rima* of "Little Gidding" by the phrase "To purify the dialect of the tribe." He reiterated this point twenty years later in his essay "What Dante Means to Me," positing a connection between the elaboration of such a language and literary affiliation: "To pass on to posterity," he wrote, "one's own language, more highly developed, more refined, and more precise than it was before one wrote it, that is the highest possible achievement of the poet as poet."[2] With regard to the nature of that language, Samuel Beckett wrote in his 1929 essay on Joyce that "he who would write in the vulgar must assemble the purest elements from each dialect and construct

a synthetic language that would at least possess more than a circumscribed local interest."[3] Through the explicit comparison with Dante, Beckett sought to justify the language of *Finnegans Wake*; Joyce himself expressed his relationship to Dante "in the consistent association of the poet with the paternal image."[4] This form of indebtedness was in turn appropriated by Klein in *The Second Scroll.*

Other examples could be cited to indicate the persistence with which the modernists incorporated Dante into their poetics. Of particular concern here, however, is the relation which those poetics bear to New World, and specifically Canadian, literature.[5] A historical overview of Dante's presence in Canadian literature reveals an interest less in poetics than in "the man who hath been down in hell," as Robert Norwood referred to Dante in his poem *The Modernists* (1918). There we find Dante on his deathbed, expounding to Cavalcanti (anachronistically) a variety of anti-Catholic sentiments. These were the terms on which Dante was admitted to the Protestant sensibility, as Dunstan Ramsay makes clear in Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business*:

> I was a Presbyterian child and I knew a good deal about damnation. We had a Dante's *Inferno* among my father's books, with the illustrations by Doré, such books were common in rural districts at that time, and probably none of us was really aware that Dante was an R.C.

Even in Lampman's clearly Dantesque "City of the End of Things," the infernal elements are mediated through the politically and religiously more appropriate Milton. From the more frequent allusions in Québec literature emerges a necromantic Dante, as in Crémazie's "Les Morts," Nelligan's "Sur un Portrait du Dante," Choquette's "Muse Intellectuelle," and Morin's "Alighieri." However, contemporary references to Dante in both literatures reveal a shift away from isolated allusions toward instances of a more sustained engagement with Dante. The *Commedia* has served as a literary model in such diverse works as Hubert Aquin's *Trou de mémoire*, in Davies' Deptford trilogy (itself mediated through Lowry's Dantean "Voyage That Never Ends") and Irving Layton's *The Gucci Bag*, which, he claims, "is [his] Divine Comedy."[6] This shift from poet to poetics, facilitated largely by the modernist concern with form, is exemplified in the work of A. M. Klein.

KLEIN'S WORK ILLUSTRATES DANTE'S major relevance to Canadian literature as poet of exile. As W. E. Collin wrote in his 1936 essay "The Spirit's Palestine," Klein's highly eclectic style, whereby "a sweet singer of the lineage of David has tried to recapture the 'dolce stil nuovo' for Canadian poetry," was a function of Klein's status as spiritual and literary exile. The importance of Dante to this style lies in the centrality of the metaphor of exodus to

the *Commedia*, which provides a precedent for the belief in the typological possibility of Eden on earth, a belief which the pilgrim Dante learns in the Earthly Paradise to be a function of the poet's craft:

> 'Quelli ch'anticamente poetaro
> l'età de l'oro e suo stato felice,
> forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.'
> *Purgatorio* 28.139-41
>
> ('Those ancients who sang of the Golden
> Age, and its happiness, perhaps dreamt
> in Parnassus of this place.')

Insofar as Dante's journey to Eden (which he located at the top of Mount Purgatory) is presented as a journey to the new land in the West, it becomes accessible to a New World mythology of exodus and promised land. Hence the appropriateness that Dante, when he has successfully navigated the Purgatorial waters, should compare himself to the unfortunate Ulysses, who perishes on his westward journey when in sight of the Mountain: "'ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque / e percosse del legno il primo canto'" (*Inf.* 26.136-38: "'for [says Ulysses] a tempest arose from the new land and wrecked our ship'"). The pattern implied here occurs readily in Canadian literature, as in William Kirby's *The Golden Dog*, where Dante's poem provides one of the central metaphors through which New France is projected as the Edenic counterpart of Old,[7] or in Kirby's poem *The U.E.*, where the Virgilian metaphor he employs suggests that the Colonies are the burning Troy and that Canada is Latium, the Empire restored. *The Second Scroll* incorporates the Latin idea of empire within the Hebraic concept whereby, as Northrop Frye puts it, the "conquest of a promised land" is read as the "oracle of a future."[8]

Klein alluded to or quoted from Dante throughout his literary career. Dante is alluded to in "Christian Poet and Hebrew Maid," where the verse "The vulgate and the scroll are twin" anticipates "Gloss Gimel" of Klein's novel. "My Literati Friends in Restaurants" quotes the last line of the *Paradiso*, and Collin hears echoes of the same canticle in "Letters to One Absent," and of the *Vita Nuova* in "Sonnet XIX"; the reference to the *Vita Nuova* is significant as well in that it provides a structural analogue to *The Second Scroll* in its mingling of forms within an "autobiographical" framework. Klein makes ironic reference to the "subterranean dantesque" in "Les Vespasiennes," and in one of the last of the *Collected Poems*, "Cantabile: A Review of the Cantos of Ezra Pound," appear both Dante's name, and his epithet for Arnaut Daniel, "'miglior fabbro'" ("'better craftsman [of the mother tongue]'"), which had acquired contemporary fame as T. S. Eliot's dedication of *The Waste Land* to Pound.[9]

These scattered references come together in *The Second Scroll*, where Klein makes systematic use of Dante.[10] In *The Second Scroll*, Klein is concerned with

a quest which is at once spiritual and literary. As a Canadian of Jewish heritage writing in English within a French enclave, Klein was acutely aware of having to find his own voice while endeavouring to speak through a tradition. What made this tradition relevant to him was not Paris or London or Jerusalem so much as the Roman *imperium*, with the proviso that for Klein, Aeneas was the contemporary of David: "had not Jerusalem been holy, Rome would not have been sacred."[11] In his poetry and his fiction, Klein advanced a peculiarly Canadian poetics, whereby nationalism is given the paradoxical expression of internationalism, of a synchronicity in which, to quote Milton Wilson, "all the things that couldn't happen when they should have happened keep happening all the time."[12] Dante is the great exemplar of this process, for in choosing Virgil as his literary father he implied that literary tradition is as much the creation of the poet as his inheritance.

Through the Dantean pattern of a journey into hell and up the purgatorial mountain, Klein defines in *The Second Scroll* the poetics for a place which is at once New Jerusalem and new found land. He achieves this amalgam by conflating his unnamed narrator's search for his Uncle Melech with the mission to find the poetry of the new state of Israel and translate it to Canadian shores. The pattern that can be perceived here, with its Dantesque overtones, together with the Hebrew/Catholic duality and the thematic and formal concern with affiliation, derives most immediately from Joyce's *Ulysses*.[13] Yet, as Malcolm Ross has remarked, "perhaps because of the clear, unequivocal religious affirmation of the novel, one is reminded not so much of Joyce, as of Dante. The inferno of pogrom gives way in turn to purgatorial quest, to a realization of the Earthly Paradise of the New Jerusalem, even to a prospect of the universal and eternal."[14] Klein's concern with the universal has, as well, a formal dimension, and to this aspect of Klein's novel Dante is likewise central.

WHEN KLEIN'S NARRATOR RECEIVES his order to go to Israel, he finds that the way is not easy; there are "'wild beasts that lie in wait,'" and "not only the ravenous ones of the forest." Here we have the essential elements of the opening canto of the *Inferno*: the difficult way, the fierce beasts, the forest. Like the pilgrim Dante, Klein's narrator travels under the sign of the number nine which his passport bears, the number associated with Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*. The role of Virgil (Dante's guide through Hell and Purgatory) is announced by the letter which arrives from Uncle Melech "like a voice from the beyond." Melech's letter tells of a descent into a great pit from which he views a "horizon . . . dark with smoke, streamered here and there with tongues of flame." Having, like Virgil, made the *descensus Averno*, Melech is qualified to be his

nephew's guide, and from this point Melech's journey and that of his nephew converge, much as in *Ulysses* both Stephen and Bloom are figures of the exiled Dante, even though Bloom appears most often in the guise of father/Virgil to Stephen's Dante.[15] As Klein's narrator writes,

> the distance between incognito uncle and nephew unmet had, during these years, disappeared. . . . Was he not, in a sense, responsible for my pilgrimage? Had it not been his name that had encouraged me forward from the first twisted aleph of my schoolbook to the latest neologism of Hebrew poetry?

Here, as elsewhere, Melech is associated with the process of learning a new language, in which the child's act of naming creates the world anew for him, as it did for Adam. In this Klein found the essential poetic activity, writing in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" that the poet is "The nth Adam taking a green inventory / in a world but scarcely uttered, naming, praising." There is an insistence, here, on the recreative function of poetry, as well as on the idea that every act of poesis duplicates the journey toward the Earthly Paradise, the purgatorial journey which dramatizes 'before' and 'after' and is fundamentally elegiac, able to accommodate the story of vast human suffering, but also of regeneration — dismembering and re-membering — told in *The Second Scroll*.[16] By superimposing the quest for Melech and the journey to Israel on the search for a new language and a new poetry, Klein transforms all history into the history of language. That combined quest is associated from the outset with Rome and with Dante, and particularly with "the ghetto where the wonderful Immanuel, Dante's friend . . . had written his re-echoing *Tophet and Eden*." The allusion to Immanuel of Rome is most apt, for in his adaptation of the *Vita Nuova* and his adherence to Dante's "sweet new style," Immanuel personifies that fusion of traditions at which Klein's novel aims.[17]

The hellish landscape of the Ratno pogrom leads to Rome, and to an encounter with Satan/Settano, an encounter which, although it has a Miltonic structure, Klein imbues analeptically with Dantesque overtones in the description of the movie *Shoe Shine* (De Sica's *Sciuscià*), with its "more than dantesque catharsis," its "inferno . . . filled with children." These children recall the scene of pogrom just described, and also the Ugolino episode of *Inferno* 32-33, where, as John Freccero has demonstrated, the "sacrifice of a son in the presence of a father who only half understands the gesture is inevitably to recall, if only by contrast, the moment of the foundation of Israel in the story of Abraham and Isaac."[18] The Ugolino episode figures a sundering of filiation, and Klein describes this situation in specifically Dantesque terms in the Casablancan mellah, the descent into which concludes the infernal journey. There, the narrator is "reminded of those drawings illustrative of Dante's *Inferno* in which the despair of its denizens is shown rising from the depths in a digitation and frenzy of hands."

To the inferno of the mellah, its unspeakability, the new state of Israel provides the Edenic counterpart. It is reached through the purgatorial ascent alluded to in "Gloss Gimel," where Melech describes the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. His account begins with a reference to "the beatific door," which alludes to the one leading to the first cornice of Purgatory, where the Proud are purged. Once inside the chapel, Melech views the ceiling while "circling the chapel," writing later that "this heaven breaks even the necks of the proud." The marble wall of the cornice is carved with sculptures — the "white statuary of that ghostly gantlet" — which include scenes from Hebrew and Roman antiquity, a juxtaposition seen also in the ceiling.

Melech sees the ceiling as the incarnation of a language, citing its "flesh majuscule," its "conjugation of cherubim," its "dialogue of being." His description, which will become "the first of the translations of [the narrator's] anthology," brings together the thematic and formal aspects of affiliation in its vision of universal brotherhood (reiterated in Gloss Dalid), which is described in a text combining Hebrew and Latin. The combination itself reflects the alternation of Sybils and Prophets on the ceiling, and that alternation is in turn based on a similar juxtaposition in the sculptures of the first cornice.[19] Thus Klein boldly enacts the thought in his early poem that "The vulgate and the scroll are twin." To such a vision Melech's life has led, as the narrator learns when he "climb[s] up the staircase of [his] hotel," an action which recalls the ascent up the *escalina* of the Mountain. Only then does the narrator learn that his Uncle has perished in fire, like those on the Mountain's last cornice. At this point the narrator is ready to encounter the Earthly Paradise to which Melech has guided him, where he is to complete his quest for the new poetry of Israel. Repelled by the "insularity" of this poetry and faced with the impossibility of finding "a completely underivative poet," he finally realizes that "in adamic intimacy the poets had returned to nature." The poetry for which the narrator has been searching is not, like his Uncle, to be found in any one place but among the "fashioning folk, anonymous and unobserved, creating word by word, phrase by phrase, the total work that when completed would stand as epic revealed!" This language, which gives "new life to the antique speech," is analagous to Dante's illustrious vulgar, in which the sacred language of Hebrew — the language, according to Dante, spoken by Adam — has been refashioned to accommodate contemporary usage; Uncle Melech's description of the Sistine Chapel, written in the languages of scripture and empire, comprises its poetics — necessarily artificial, as Klein remarked, if they were, finally, to be universal.[20]

The problem of continuity between New World and Old is resolved here through a language which is popular and yet faithful to a noble predecessor. Cul-

turally, this resolution is explicated in terms of the topos *translatio studii*, a transference of learning which parallels the renewal of empire.[21] The ultimate version of this topos is the association of the New World with the westward course of empire, a *translatio* perhaps first envisioned in Ulysses' westward voyage in the *Inferno*, the failure of Ulysses' journey mirrored (in Klein's novel) in the failure to find Melech, the success of Dante's navigation seen in the narrator's achievement of his anthology. Having had his vision of the "fabled city" in "Space's vapors and Time's haze" (Gloss Aleph), the narrator completes a journey which, like Dante's, is circular. The last vision, in both cases (as Freccero remarks of Dante), is "the point of transition between the pilgrim who was and the poet who *is*, at once the point of departure and the point of arrival of the poem which we read."[22] For the narrator must now translate the poetry he has brought to Canadian shores, thereby recreating and renewing it. The relation between pilgrim and poet, Uncle and nephew, could also be described, then, in terms of the affiliation inherent between first and second scrolls, between novel and glosses, between the story of Melech and the story of the narrator: that of one book having one author.

NOTES

[1] My major references are to A. M. Klein, *The Second Scroll* (New York: Knopf, 1951), and *Collected Poems*, ed. M. Waddington (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974); Dante Alighieri, *La Commedia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975); Frank Kermode, *The Classic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975); W. E. Collin, *The White Savannahs* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936); Usher Caplan, *Like One That Dreamed* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982); Dennis Duffy, *Gardens, Covenants, Exiles* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982). A version of this paper was read to the Canadian Comparative Literature Association, Vancouver, 3 June 1983.

[2] T. S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," *To Criticize the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 157.

[3] Samuel Beckett, "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (1929; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 18.

[4] Mary T. Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), p. 34.

[5] Among the early disseminators of Italian literary culture in Canada were James Forneri, James De Mille, A. A. Nobile (whose novella *An Anonymous Letter / Una Lettera Anonima* [1885] is perhaps the earliest example of Italian-Canadian writing), and Thomas O'Hagan.

[6] See Layton's "Foreword" to *The Gucci Bag* (Oakville: Mosaic, 1983); the reference to Dante is omitted from the McClelland & Stewart edition of these poems.

[7] Kirby also uses the *Commedia* as a vehicle for his irony. In "Dante and *The Golden Dog*," *Canadian Literature* no. 86 (Autumn 1980), pp. 49-58, Joy Kuropatwa argues for the centrality of *Inferno* 5 to the novel's theme of "corrupt love," though her argument relies on Kirby's translation of a line from canto 5

which differs critically according to which edition of *TGD* one reads. On the reception of Italian literature, including Dante, in nineteenth-century Canada, see Eva Marie Kröller, "George Eliot in Canada: *Romola* and *The Golden Dog*," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 14, no. 3 (1984), pp. 312-21.

[8] Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 224.

[9] Klein also used this phrase in a letter to A. J. M. Smith (5 November 1943); he comments on the poets included in Smith's *A Book of Canadian Poetry*, referring to Smith as "The impeccable artist. Il fabbro miglior." Quoted in Seymour Mayne, ed., *The A. M. Klein Symposium* (Ottawa: Univ. Press, 1975), p. 8; cf. Caplan, p. 101.

[10] The extraordinary complexity of *The Second Scroll* is itself a reflection of Dante's art; that this aspect of Dante strongly influenced Pound and Eliot is argued by Marshall McLuhan in *The Possum and the Midwife* (Idaho Univ. Press, 1978).

[11] Klein, "Notebook of a Journey," in *Beyond Sambation*, ed. M. W. Steinberg and U. Caplan (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 378. Klein long remembered his high school teacher of Latin, "'who in the high company of the man from Mantua first opened for me the magic casements of English literature.'" Quoted by Caplan, pp. 34-35.

[12] Milton Wilson, quoted by N. Frye in "Haunted by Lack of Ghosts," *The Canadian Imagination*, ed. David Staines (Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), p. 45.

[13] See Lorraine Weir, "Portrait of the Poet as Joyce Scholar," *Canadian Literature* no. 76 (Spring 1978), pp. 47-55. Contemporaneously with the writing of *The Second Scroll*, Klein was assisting in the preparation of Stanislaus Joyce's translation of Italo Svevo's 1927 essay *James Joyce* (1950; rpt. San Francisco: City Lights, 1969), in which Joyce is twice compared to Dante.

[14] Malcolm Ross, "Review of *The Second Scroll*," in Tom Marshall, ed., *A. M. Klein* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 90; reprinted from *Canadian Forum* 31 (1952).

[15] See Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante*, p. 123, and Margaret Broad, "Art and the Artist: Klein's Unpublished Novella," *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 30 (1980), pp. 115-16. Note also Patricia Merivale, "The Biographical Compulsion: Elegiac Romances in Canadian Fiction," *Journal of Modern Literature* 8, no. 1 (1980), pp. 139-52.

[16] See E. D. Blodgett, "Dante's *Purgatorio* as Elegy," in *The Rarer Action*, ed. A. Cheuse and R. Koffler (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1970), pp. 151-78. The elegiac thrust of *The Second Scroll* is made clear in the "Elegy" which comprises "Gloss Beth"; there, Dante's famous "E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace" (*Para.* 3.85) is echoed in "of Thy will our peace."

[17] See the *Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, ed. T. Carmi (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 119; 421-22. I am indebted to Michael Wex for calling my attention to this book.

[18] John Freccero, "Bestial Sign and Bread of Angels," *Yale Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1977), p. 57.

[19] See Charles De Tolnay, *The Sistine Ceiling* (1945; rpt. Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 152n, 171n, 181n; Arturo Farinelli, *Michelangelo e Dante* (Torino: Bocca, 1918), pp. 156-217; and Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (1939; rev. New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 178-79.

[20] "Our Language," in *Beyond Sambation*, p. 9.

[21] See Kermode, *passim*, who notes the presence of this topos in Milton's *Areopagitica*, from which Klein takes an epigraph.

[22] Freccero, "Introduction" to *Dante: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 6.

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAD

Mary Melfi

Man's favorite means of communication
is violence.

To fully appreciate the language's nuances
one need only read tombstones as textbooks.

TO THE BROAD-HIPPED ITALIAN WOMAN

Anna Pottier

Leaving the departure lounge
you walk sideways up the ramp
of the plane

I notice your generous hips
solid, not yet gone to fat

You turn your face
wave farewell to your aging lover
and I see your cheeks
are broad as your hips

As though time had rubbed
his hands over your olive skin
as though time had smoothed it
gathering the oil onto his dry palms.

THE MACHINE

Antonio D'Alfonso

Are they going to live on Mars? Or take off to some further star? This is no illusion. Somebody wears an astronaut's outfit and is waiting for the blast-off. His hands are on a computer keyboard, and out comes music. He loves his machine more than his wife. This is good. Give him the money he needs and he will find a better world. Machine is not a synonym for war. It has its own soul and feels oppressed when mistreated. What rule has the poet broken now? He goes down on his machine and makes it come. This too is love. The centre of gravity is not up in the clouds. Give the machine land and it will grow tomatoes and zucchini, a world resembling very much our own. The corners of the square have been rounded off to a circumference. No law is natural, no nature is law.

8 June 1983

LEOPARDI IN MONTREAL

Irving Layton

1 A woman's fair face enchants. What's there more to say?
I ravish the husk and throw the kernels away.

2 Poets tag it love and moralists, lust.
I call it man's eternal war with dust.

3 We can't get enough of you, shrilled Nature's crones
as they pulled the flesh off the dead soldier's bones.

4 Since the joys of killing grow more intense
What man will doubt our Maker's providence
That gave to men both appetite and means
To tear apart each other at the seams
And further blessed them with riotous seed
To supply fresh limbs for their greatest need?

5 The philosopher and the poet
both surmise what this life's about.
The first interrogates his awe,
The other erupts with a grateful shout.

TRANSLATED WORLD

Mary di Michele

My daughter before she knows
she is human
might be content
to nest with birds,
or feel in the likeness
of her blush to peaches,
the fruit itself plumping her cheek,

knows the languages of other animals:
chimpanzees and their kennings,
parrot talk like poetic refrain,

knows our garden and its flowers
without their name of tulips
that I announce,

Revels in the lawn, under the sky.
I ask what's blue, what's green?

CANADA VS. ITALY

Mary Melfi

The storm won't postpone Alitalia Flight C-L200
but it will cause the pilot and co-pilot
to be a touch touchier than usual.

Canada is one storm after another
(bad for your health),
suggests the pilot (pro sunny Italy)
to the co-pilot (pro hockey Canada).

The co-pilot, of course, disagrees.
Canada, he has been taught to believe,
is "the best." What's buried
underneath its arenas of snow and ice
is something fantastic (cheer cheer).

The ensuing game in the heavens
makes the two men icy as hell towards each other
and towards their fans in the passenger seats
(made in U.S.),

possibly because both national teams
are full of hot air.

SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY

The theatre of Marco Micone

Sherry Simon

THE EXISTENCE OF A MINORITY or ethnic voice at the heart of Québécois literature is rather new. Until recently, the fundamental cleft between "nous autres" et "les autres" seemed to preclude the possibility of defining the Quebec population and its consciousness in other than dualist terms. Quebec literature, like Quebec scholarly writing, saw only French versus English and hardly recognized the specific existence of the ethnic communities.

If for a very long time the only immigrant culture in Quebec to have produced a significant body of literature was the Jewish community (and it was written of course in English), this situation is now changing. The Italian and Haitian communities especially, but other groups as well, are beginning to produce works in French which define themselves explicitly within the context of Quebec literature and Quebec society. This process of self-definition accompanies a sudden spurt of interest on the part of Quebec academics (principally sociologists) in the "third constituency" of Quebec society.[1] Such a new perspective will perhaps mark a shift in the rôle which the "other" communities of Quebec have traditionally been asked to play politically: to neutralize their aligning themselves strictly with one or the other major group in the province.[2] For many, the increasing visibility and prominence of Quebec's cultural communities promises an end to what has become a sterile stand-off between majority (Francophone) and minority (Anglophone) populations.

Italian writers in Quebec are currently the most visible and active community to emerge during this new phase of cultural readjustment. The recent publication of an anthology of Italian writing in French, *Quêtes* (Guernica, 1983), and the dynamic trans-cultural review *Vice-Versa* (a trilingual cultural magazine edited by Italian writers) are indicators of the significant activity of the Italo-québécois writer in the cultural life of Quebec.

The work of Marco Micone, playwright and essayist, is of particular interest in this context because of its very explicit social and political focus. Though the representational and somewhat didactic nature of Micone's work sets it apart from much of the writing of other Italo-québécois writers (most of whom stay

away from explicit references to social and national questions), Micone shares the concern for language which characterizes much contemporary Québécois writing.[3] Micone, however, formulates his concern for language within a political universe, a dramatic world informed at all levels by power relationships. Language becomes an instrument and a manifestation of authority. To master language (and this involves mastering particular languages) is to be able to impose one's interpretation of reality.

Micone has written two plays, *Gens du Silence* (translated into English as *Voiceless People*) and *Addolorata*.[4] Both have been successfully produced for Montreal audiences and these plays — along with several essays on immigrant culture — have made Micone the unofficial spokesperson on "minority issues" for the Quebec writer's community. *Voiceless People* is an ambitious fresco which attempts to embrace through the experience of one family the social, political, and psychological realities of immigration. Through the story of Antonio (his "expulsion" from his native village, his lonely arrival, his difficult readjustment with his wife and children, his exploitation as a labourer, his steadfast reverence for Authority) and his subsequent conflicts with his wife and daughter, the spectator is given a mass of ideas and opinions about the phenomenon of immigration. The symbolic characters, stylized acting, humour and other Brechtian devices provoke a "distancing effect" and introduce mythological elements into the play. Micone's second play *Addolorata* also uses such devices, but the play focuses particularly on the second-generation immigrants and especially on the relationship between father and daughter, husband and wife. The Authorities which were referred to explicitly in *Voiceless People* (the Church, the Politicians, the Boss) are represented in *Addolorata* mainly through their impact on the power which exercises itself in family relationships.

Though Micone's plays in many ways invite the kind of sociological criticism that ethnic literature has always received, there emerges through the problematic of power and expression a specific nexus of issues. Here the "psychological landscape of ethnic culture" sketched by Eli Mandel receives its linguistic underpinnings.[5] Certainly one of the principal characteristics of ethnic writing is the sense of linguistic relativity which Daphne Marlatt describes as characteristic of the world of the immigrant or outsider: "The sensation of having your world turned upside down or inverted also, i think, leads to a sense of the relativity of both language and reality, as much as it leads to a curiosity about other people's realities. It leads to an interest in and curiosity about language, a sense of how language shapes the reality you live in, an understanding of how language is both idiosyncratic (private) and shared (public), and the essential duplicity of language, its capacity to mean several things at once, its figurative and transformational powers."[6] In Micone's plays, this kind of sensitivity is linked on the one hand to the status of specific languages (French, English, Italian) within Quebec

society and on the other hand with the question of the authority of personal expression. Who has the right to speak and what authority will their words have? Before discussing the dynamics of language and authority in Micone's works, we will situate these same dynamics as they relate to the author's choice of a language of expression.

THE NOTION OF A NATURAL LANGUAGE of expression, dictated only by overwhelming strength of feeling, is a vestige of the Romantic illusion of immediacy. All writers must choose from among the various vernaculars or literary idioms which are offered by their mother tongue. Some writers (members of minority groups or of "minor literatures") will, however, opt for a natural language which is not their own, often because this second language will give them access to a greater readership. Multilingualism has always been treated as a deviation by institutions of criticism, generally formed along national lines. The few odd deviants who have transgressed national barriers and written in second languages (Nabokov, Beckett, Conrad) are treated as singular linguistic acrobats, capable of feats of prowess totally inaccessible to ordinary writers.

Writers themselves have been important in reinforcing the notion that there is an exclusive allegiance to the mother tongue. Psychoanalysis, psycho- and sociolinguistics have investigated and documented the extremely emotional and exclusive bond between the speaker and his native tongue. But the idea that there is necessarily a mystical union between the writer and a single, native language is clearly false. We have only to consider the huge gap which often existed between the literary language and the vernacular in many cultures. Certain historical eras have sometimes demanded multilingualism for writers: Leonard Forster suggests that during the Renaissance, for example, multilingualism for writers was the rule rather than the exception.[7] Some subjects, for instance, were treated only in specific languages (for example, love poems in Italian).

In cases where there is the possibility of choice, the use of a particular language for literary expression constitutes what, in the vocabulary of speech-art theory, we could call "appropriateness conditions" for authorship.[8] An author's work will fall into a particular category of discursive practice in part because of the very language (as well of course as the level of language) which has been chosen. One could conceive of the case of a work which conforms in all other ways to the norms of the literary canon of the time, but which would be excluded from the critical arena because of the inappropriateness of its language.

The case of Yiddish in nineteenth-century Europe offers a paradigm for a study of appropriateness conditions relating to the "authorship" of literature.[9] The Jewish writer, generally trilingual, had to choose between Hebrew (the

sacred language of the Return to Zion), Yiddish (the "impure jargon" associated with the values of a secular society), and the language of the non-Jewish community. The choice of the writer carried implications which were not only esthetic but also political and social. Before 1830 the term "Yiddish writer" was in fact impossible: Yiddish was considered an unworthy tongue for serious writing, improper for literature. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Yiddish was the language of a dynamic and modernist literature.

The situation of the Italo-québécois writer in Quebec offers some similarities to that of the nineteenth-century Jewish writer. For the Italo-Québécois, Italian is the language of an only partially familiar country and culture. English is the language of a continent, a powerful and omnipresent trading language. And French? the language of a people whose relationship to the outsider has yet to be defined. In choosing one of these three languages for literary expression, the writer makes a choice which carries social implications.

In the prefaces to his plays, in the various essays he has written, and in his plays themselves, Micone has stated the reasons which led him to choose French as his language of expression.[10] His reasons were cultural and political. "We must replace the culture of silence by immigrant culture so that the peasant within us stands tall, so that the immigrant within us remembers, and so that the Québécois within us comes to life. . . . You can write what you wish, but only if you write in French will we have a chance of being understood and respected for what we are. It's now or never."[11] It is certain that Micone's plays would not have had the same considerable impact or cultural message had they been written in English.

Micone was then confronted with an unusual problem, however. How to represent the French spoken by Italians when there is no existing, general model to imitate? Micone explains in an interview (*Vice-Versa*, février 1984) that after rejecting the idea of a standard, international French and having decided that a popular idiom would not necessarily ridicule his characters, he opted for a hybrid language. This language, he suggests, represents the street language which Italians will speak in about twenty years from now in Quebec. It is a popular language and includes, for example, words like "Sacrimente," the Italian version of the popular Quebec swear-word "Sacrament."

The somewhat artificially popular, sometimes stylized, nature of language in Micone's plays is one of the elements which sets up a central tension: the conflict between their nature as realistic artifacts (representations of a pre-existing reality) and their nature as interpretation (the play through its very organization imposes on the spectators the "correct" analysis of its contents). By questioning the authority of interpretation of its characters, *Voiceless People* and *Addolorata* lead us to question the authority of the playwright himself. Micone's plays unfold through a dialectic of interpretations, opinion confronting opinion like the clang of crossed swords. Underlying this conflict we sense the playwright's desire to

master a complex reality, to use the differing attitudes of the characters to construct a large and complete understanding of Italian immigration in Quebec society. In this endeavour, the language of the playwright — like the words of his characters — is an act whose authority will be "felicitous" because the appropriate conditions have been met.

THE TITLE OF MICONE'S FIRST PLAY, *Gens du Silence*, translated as *Voiceless People*, at first seems eminently paradoxical: all of the characters in Micone's plays talk a lot. They talk too much in fact, and their very volubility becomes suspect as the play proceeds. Too many words can begin to sound like silence when we realize that words can be used not only to convey information or to express emotion but also to indicate self-importance — or to mask the fear of nothingness.

But words are also interpretations of reality and the talking matches in Micone's plays are jousts, conflicting versions of reality which confront one another in mutual incomprehension. There are basically three voices in these discussions: that of the dominant male (Antonio, Giovanni) who represents the traditional, conservative view; that of the subordinate but lucid female (Anna, Nancy, Addolorata) perhaps on her way to emancipation; that of the symbolic character, Zio in *Voiceless People* and the announcer in *Addolorata*. The male-female voices confront one another in dialectic; the symbolic characters introduce a third voice, a synthesis giving the play larger dimensions. We see language operating as an instrument of power within the family (who speaks, what authority do his/her words have) and also as an indicator of social status. Because languages in Quebec are identified with different social constituencies, we are given an often humorous version of the immigrant's perception of these associations.

For Antonio, English is the language of the bosses and therefore the language which inspires respect. Antonio insists therefore that his children go to school in English. "Ya, the English not only have all the right cards, they know how to play them too. That's why they win. It's important to understand that. Not for us, it's too late for us . . . But for the children. They have to learn how to win. That's why we have to send them to English school." Nancy will retort at the end of the play, however: "It's not the language that makes the boss."

Antonio's son Mario, who was born in Quebec and who did indeed go to English school, speaks half-French and half-English and copiously punctuates the resulting mixture with "fuck." Antonio is proud that Mario can speak three languages, but Mario's unsure grip on language is a reflection of his inability to obtain social advancement (he will go to work in the same factory as his father). He is consoled by the marvellous roar of his Trans-Am. Lolita, the young fiancée

in *Addolorata*, sees only advantages in multilingualism. Her "four languages" are a precious asset for "marriageability" and the good life: "With my four languages I can watch the soap operas in English, read the T.V. Hebdo in French and the photo-novellas in Italian, and sing Guantanamera."

Satire here reveals the link between a profusion of languages and cultural poverty. Possessing language is not only manipulating a code correctly (and in many cases of multilingualism, especially among immigrants, this level of mastery is often not attained). Language and culture are the means through which individuals interpret their past and their present. The incapacity to master language becomes, in *Voiceless People*, the inability to understand one's reality. Nancy: "I teach adolescents who have Italian names and whose only culture is that of silence. Silence on the peasant origins of their parents. Silence on the reasons which led their parents to emigrate. Silence on the manipulations of which they are victims. Silence on the country in which they live and on the reasons for this silence."

The counterpart to these silences are the certainties of Antonio, the convictions he uses to protect himself from nothingness. Antonio is for authority, against the separatists, for his wife staying at home, for the English, for the Church and its processions. Antonio believes that French-Canadians are lazy, and that hard work must be accompanied by respect for those who command. "Here we only need strong men to defend what we have and to protect respect for authority."

Antonio's knowledge has been gathered through suffering and work. When his ideas are challenged, he maintains that his view of reality is the only valid one because it is supported on this foundation. Nancy articulates the relationship between authorized opinion and status when she says sarcastically: "You can understand because you're neither young nor a woman." Antonio has dedicated his life to the building of this edifice of conviction just as he has sacrificed himself for the acquisition of a house. This house, detested by Mario as a useless museum and by Nancy as the symbol of all the privations the children have suffered because of it, is for Antonio tangible compensation for the loss he has suffered as an immigrant. "Here I have no ancestors to protect me / Here I have no hills to surround me / For an immigrant, the house is more than a house."

In *Addolorata* JOHNNY/GIOVANNI also attempts to impose his vision of reality on his wife. Johnny and Lolita are second-generation immigrants (or they have immigrated at an early age). Johnny differs from Antonio in his more complex and radical view of immigration. This difference is economically justified in the play by the fact that Johnny has refused to work for a boss, choosing instead to run a pool room. (His clients are "educated people," "on our

side.") Giovanni's critiques of capitalist economy are radical: "If emigration were a good thing, it would not have been left to poor people like us and our parents"; "In a country where the rich and the bosses lead the government by the nose, all the poor, all the workers are immigrants, even if their names are Tremblay or Smith."

But in *Addolorata* the historical and economic explanations of the immigrant condition begin to sound like rhetoric. Giovanni does not hear Addolorata when she says that she does not want to have a boss either and that she is leaving him. Giovanni is convinced that Addolorata understands nothing. "You think that the only cause of all your unhappiness is me. . . . That's why you want to leave me just like you left your father. Me, I think that the cause of our misery is not to be found here. Everything must change. Everything." But Addolorata refuses the political argument and returns to the personal: "I can't change everything, Giovanni. But I will change whatever I can."

In Micone's plays, then, male rhetoric is an active agent in the oppression of women. In the dialectic of power/powerlessness which characterizes the particular situation of the male immigrant (source of authority within the family, powerless outside the home) rhetoric — whether it be from the right or the left — becomes an almost concrete manifestation of selfhood. Conflicting interpretations, as presented by Nancy and by Addolorata, are quite simply unacceptable within the context of the family and the couple. Their words do not carry the necessary weight. Though Gino, Nancy's comrade in agitation, can remain within "Chiuso" (the Italian community) to pursue his goals, Nancy cannot. She must attempt to find some place "outside" where she might perhaps find words which will be heard.

If Micone the playwright can choose from among various languages of expression the one most appropriate to his needs, his characters have little choice. Although Antonio lives the illusion of control, he shows himself to be a victim of language. Antonio remains trapped within a net of illusion which keeps him from the authenticity associated with his daughter Nancy. But is this authenticity also an illusion? Do Nancy and Addolorata have a privileged relationship to language precisely because of their very powerlessness? This indeed seems to be the dialectic presented by Micone: the language of authenticity is accessible only to those excluded from the possibilities of both power (economic power) and authority (the limited power exercised by the head of the family). Because they are "doubly immigrant," women have no access to and no stake in the rhetoric of authority. By adopting the family as his particular area of investigation, by shattering questions of language and power into a dynamic configuration of interrelated fragments, Micone shows finally that the "immigrant question" is simply a variant on the theme of powerlessness. Here is a subject, suggests Micone, on which women speak with authority.

NOTES

[1] Both *Sociologie et sociétés* 15, no. 2 (October 1983) and *Recherches sociographiques* (February 1985) have recently brought out issues on ethnicity in Quebec. The Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture has made the question of ethnicity one of its priority areas of research and has produced an impressive number of publications over the last few years, for example: *Les juifs du Québec* (bibliographie rétrospective annotée), comp. David Rome et al. (1981); Tina Ioannou, *La communauté grecque du Québec* (1984). See also *Spirale* (décembre 1983) for a dossier on "Ecriture et minorités au Québec."

[2] "The only choice we've been given is to make what we are 'converge' with what they are, the better to be suffocated by the weight of the majority." Marco Micone, *Gens du Silence* (Montreal: Québec/Amérique, 1982), p. 95. The translations are mine as the English version of the play was not available at the time of writing.

[3] See Fulvio Caccia's article in this issue.

[4] *Gens du Silence* published in English translation as *Voiceless People*, tr. Maurizia Binda (Montreal: Guernica, 1984). *Addolorata* (Montreal: Guernica, 1984). *Addolorata* also published in part in *Quêtes* (Montreal: Guernica, 1983). "Propos d'enfants," *Dérives* nos. 17-18 (1979), pp. 20-25. "La culture immigrée," *Dérives* nos. 29-30 (1981), pp. 87-93.

[5] Eli Mandel, "The Ethnic Voice in Canadian writing," *Another Time* (Press Porcepic: 1977), p. 92.

[6] Daphne Marlatt, "Entering In: The immigrant imagination," *Canadian Literature* no. 100 (Spring 1984), pp. 219-23.

[7] Leonard Forster, *The Poet's tongues. Multilingualism in literature* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970).

[8] For the questions of authorship and appropriateness conditions, see: Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Cornell Univ. Press, 1977); and Mary Louise Pratt, *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1971).

[9] Régine Robin's *L'amour du yiddish: écriture et sentiment de la langue, 1830-1930* (Paris: Editions du Sorbier, 1983) is an excellent source of information on this question.

[10] See note 2. It is interesting that Micone, like many new immigrants in the 1950's, was refused entry to French school. Paradoxically he learned French at McGill. One of the major consequences of Bill 101 in Quebec has been that one out of five children at French school now is of other than French-Canadian origin. Of the eighteen writers published in *Quêtes*, all but seven of the contributions were originally written in French.

[11] *Gens du Silence*, pp. 94-96.

THE GRAMMAR OF SILENCE

Narrative Pattern in Ethnic Writing

Robert Kroetsch

WHAT I AM SETTING OUT TO DO here is simply this: I want to ask if there is a characteristic narrative of the ethnic experience.[1] More exactly, I am asking, is there, at the point where literature and ethnicity meet, a characteristic narrative structure? Assuming that such a structure does exist, what are some of its elements? Or, as I prefer to put it, what is the *grammar* of the narrative of ethnic experience?

Behind this specific intention, I am asking for a theory of ethnicity, a theory which I would locate in the idea of narrative. There is, possibly, a story that repeats itself, with significant variations of course, whether we are describing and exploring the ethnic experience as sociologists, as psychologists, as novelists and poets, or as literary critics. Not only am I limiting myself to the literary expression of that narrative — I am, outrageously perhaps, working explicitly out of two literary texts.

Frederick Philip Grove is perhaps the most complex and most instructive ethnic writer yet to appear on the Canadian literary scene. As you know, he was a writer who arrived in Canada in the early part of this century and who gave the impression that he was a Swedish aristocrat who had fallen on hard times while visiting in Toronto. He went out to the prairies and set about becoming a Canadian writer, working in English, and by the time of his death in 1948 he had succeeded to a remarkable degree, though, as we shall see, he insisted throughout his career on calling himself a failure. Only in recent years have we discovered that Frederick Philip Grove was not a Swede but rather a German writer of bourgeois background, Felix Paul Greve, who faked his suicide and migrated to Canada and became, under his assumed name, a central figure in Canadian writing.

I am going to work with two of his numerous texts. In his novel, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925),[2] a novel that he began in German and finished in English, he tells the story of a Swedish immigrant, Niels Lindstedt, who goes to the frontier in Manitoba to make a new home. The story is a love triangle. Niels falls in love with a Swedish girl, Ellen Amundsen, who has sworn an oath not to marry, because of the horrible example of her parents' marriage. Niels then marries a

Canadian widow, Clara Vogel, and ends up murdering her. After a period in prison, he returns to his community and marries Ellen.

In his "autobiography," *In Search of Myself* (1946),[3] Grove purports to give an account of how he himself left Sweden and came to North America and, while living in Manitoba, set about establishing his career as a teacher and writer, after years of working as a farm labourer. He marries a Canadian woman, a teacher from a Mennonite background, and sets about his heroic effort to establish himself as a writer, against what seem to be impossible odds of poverty, poor health, and publishers' indifference.

WE HAVE HERE, THAT IS, two narratives of the ethnic experience, one using the conventions of the novel, the other using the conventions of autobiography (and I might add that the chapters of *Search* are titled, "Childhood," "Youth," "Manhood," and "And After"). What is interesting is the elements that occur in both. Both are stories about the migrating generation. The experience of the migrating generation, it seems to me, is granted privileged status in this literature (even while those same immigrants might have experienced a violent silence in actual life). The migrating generation is often seen in heroic terms by the later generations. Importantly, here, in the writings of Grove, we have narratives written by the person who experienced the migration.

Grove's principal characters in *Settlers*, Niels and one of the two women to whom he is attracted, Ellen, are from backgrounds that came close to making them serfs in Sweden. The hero of *Search*, on the other hand, perceivable as Frederick Grove himself, comes from a background of extreme wealth; he might indeed have become master of the kind of estate on which his fictional characters were potentially serfs. Grove imagines these two extreme possibilities, and yet both Niels and Phil (the hero's name in *Search*) come to the same narrative predicaments, often seen in binary patterns. Let me list a few of them.

There is an extreme tension between ideas of success and ideas of failure. Niels labours for years to build a large house that he believes is the emblem of success. Yet, in that same house, he discovers how totally he has failed in the new world: his wife, Clara, becomes a figure of death, haunting that house, and reminding him constantly of the failure of what he calls his vision.

Writing *Search* twenty-one years later, Grove is even more obsessive about the idea of failure. At one point, in speaking of his literary career, he says, "I tried; and I shall shortly discuss why I was bound to fail, as I had failed in everything that I had ever undertaken with an economic aim in view; this book is the record of a failure; and its explanation: a double failure, an economic and a spiritual one, for ultimately the one involved the other." It seems apparent, after awhile

(and the word failure is used obsessively in the second half of the book), that the idea of failure has become a generative force in the narrative and in Grove's own life.

The immensity of his failure becomes a measure of his success. His very failure is not only his own; it becomes a measure of and a criticism of the society into which he has entered. Like that supreme master of creative failure, Malcolm Lowry, Grove is able to force himself into heroic bouts of writing by meditating on his failure, by recording it carefully, by listing the titles of failed manuscripts and the growing total of rejections. And, like Lowry, he goes on imagining for himself ever more ambitious projects.

Where the appearance of failure might be an act of rebellion or a naturalistic element in traditional Canadian writing, for the ethnic writer it harbours darker and more complex and possibly more exciting possibilities. As in the case of Grove, it becomes the single word by which he judges both himself and the society into which he has entered. That word can be or is made, at times, to lose its traditional meaning and come to signify success.

ANOTHER ESSENTIAL AND related binary is that of ideas of inferiority and ideas of superiority. Neils Lindstedt, from the opening page of *Settlers*, is paired with a kind of double, a fellow immigrant, Lars Nelson, a giant of a man who with ease makes a good marriage and becomes a successful farmer. Nelson has succeeded by the standards of the materialistic society around him, but it is obvious that he is, for Grove, morally and spiritually the inferior of Niels Lindstedt. Lindstedt is the superior man who brings to bear on experience the possibilities of and demands for relevance and meaning. He confronts the idea of signification. And yet it is he who commits a murder.

Phil Grove, in *Search*, represents the pinnacle of European culture. He has been everywhere, he has studied everything, he has met everyone of artistic consequence in Europe. Then he begins his years of work as a farm labourer on the Great Plains of North America. He tells at some length of pairing up with a Pole who like him looked disreputable but who, like him also, "spoke half a dozen European languages." At one point they begin to discuss French poetry while pitching bundles into a threshing machine. "It was done ostentatiously, with the pointed intention of making the other hoboes open their mouths. He [the Pole] even dropped his perfect American speech and changed to French; and in doing so, he adopted what, in these raw surroundings, might have passed for aristocratic society manners, handling his pitch-fork with the nonchalance of a fop, parodying that nonchalance by its very exaggeration."

European culture has been reduced to a parody of itself, and that largely by means of language acts. Grove and his friend are at once superior and inferior. And on this occasion they are shortly hauled in by the local police and fleeced of all their cash, in the final carnivalization of what they and their values represent in this new world.

Thirty pages later Grove can write, "I wanted to be in touch with the finest and highest thought of my age. Instead, I was being rubbed the wrong way, day in, day out, by those who, for the moment, were my social equals — whom others would have called the scum of the earth. . . ." Half a page later he can write, "I was no longer a 'good European'; let Europe take care of her own troubles; I was rapidly becoming extra-European, partly because on account of my failure to take a sixth trip to Europe. Europe, to me, had suddenly ceased to exist."

By the end of the book this arrogant extra-European can say, "As I have said, I was suffering from an inferiority complex." The tension between superiority and inferiority must either destroy him or make him write. Grove, moving from class-conscious Europe into the North American ideal or illusion of democracy, is *unsettled*. Again, in a situation where signified and signifier do not cohere, he might be totally destroyed, or he might become the truly creative individual.

THERE ARE OTHER BINARY patterns that Grove establishes as basic to the ethnic experience: revelation and concealment, integration and resistance, forgetting and remembering. But behind all these is the basic tension between signifier and signified. In a painfully moving passage Grove observes "That the artist is not a hunter constitutes him a cripple, physical or mental, and therefore an object of contempt as well as, paradoxically, of a reluctant admiration. For his work partakes of the nature of a miracle . . . the work of art becomes a fetish endowed with the functions of magic."

In the new world, the magic seems to falter. For the heroes of *Search* and *Settlers* it becomes difficult, even impossible, to tell failure from success, to tell superiority from inferiority. A gap opens between word and object. In the Europe of their past — as Grove's characters remember it — it was possible to define and locate connections. In the abrupt change to this new world, a chasm opens.

Niels Lindstedt believes he can attach the right woman to the word "wife." The Canadian widow, Clara Vogel, is in his perception seductive and evil. The immigrant girl, Ellen Amundsen, is innocent and desirable. He brings with him a paradigm that makes of women whores and virgins. Somehow he manages to set a trap for Ellen and get caught by Clara. He stumbles into an immense chasm

between word and object, and compounds the space by becoming a murderer, not the farmer, the nurturing man, he wants to be.

The gap in *Search* is equally catastrophic. The single-minded hero of that autobiography that might be fiction and might be fact (another threatening binary in the ethnic experience) confesses a few pages from the end of the book, "I have often doubted whether there is anything that I can legitimately call 'I'." This narrator, completing an autobiography, confesses that he cannot locate the "I" that is the subject of the book. The gap between signifier and signified has become the subject itself, a question mark over what it is we mean by the act of writing. Grove (or Greve), the bourgeois man from Germany, in writing the autobiography of the Swede, Phil Grove of Manitoba, announces a contemporary predicament and grounds it in the narrative of ethnicity.

How do these patterns of binary opposition get turned into narrative? How do we avoid a kind of paralysis with characters caught between two worlds — caught, if you will, in silence. If we take departure and return as the basic or archetypal design of the journey, then the ethnic story immediately becomes problematic in that the traveller buys a one-way ticket.

If the elements in the binaries are the nouns in the grammatical set, what are the verbs that set things in motion? How de we articulate the silence?

A principal way to establish or re-establish narrative coherence in the face of the gap between signifier and signified is through a re-telling of stories. In ethnic writing there is often an attempt at healing by the rewriting of myths. The myth most often retold, at least on the surface of ethnic writing, is the garden story. Niels Lindstedt is obviously in search of a new version of Eden. Two major scenes take place in a garden or bower. The garden is set in contrast to the house. And further, the image of the garden recalls the question of naming that is so central to the Genesis story. I want to conclude, later, by looking at those two scenes.

Phil Grove in *Search* is also aware of this model. When he finds himself feeling like an exile in North America, he does not dream of a return to Europe. Rather, he explains, "A new nostalgia arose . . . I would build a shack on some hillside overlooking a stream and the woods." He even decides on the location of this edenic place: ". . . it was in the Pembina Mountains, on the Canadian side, not very far from the little town of Manitou in Manitoba."

In his choice of place he is able to unite the Indian spirit of place, or at least of the place-name, with his dream of paradise. In actual fact, of course, as Grove establishes so vividly in the prologue to *Search*, he struggled in vain toward that

paradise, and ended up trying to run a dairy farm in rural Ontario. That prologue begins: "It was a dismal November day, with a raw wind blowing from the north-west and cold, iron-grey clouds flying low — one of those Ontario days which, on the lake-shores or in a country of rock and swamp, seem to bring visions of an ageless time after the emergence of the earth from chaos, or a forebodying of the end of a world about to die from entropy."

Grove, on his way by car to pick up a girl to work as "a household drudge," is painfully aware that there is only one thing you do in this paradise — and that is work. And work, in this new world, is another version of silence. Grove is remarkable in his portrayal of the silencing effect of work. Even the obsessive writer, in *Search*, seems to be silenced by his own heroic efforts. He writes and he writes, and his very effort cuts him off from all chance of being heard. And, not inappropriately, he himself begins to be afflicted with deafness.

And yet this silence is enclosed in a larger silence. Grove's travelling heroes are caught between the "silenced" old version of the garden (European in this case) and the not-yet-speaking new one. And, it seems to me, behind the not-yet-spoken garden, there is another myth trying to speak itself.

While the garden myth is often present on the surface of a narration of the ethnic experience, I suspect the concealed story is that of the necessary death — the death, that is, out of one culture, with the hope that it will lead to rebirth in another.

Grove faked his own death. And yet in a symbolic way there was nothing fake about it: he died out of one culture and into another.

DEATH AND REBIRTH is a recurring pattern in *Search*. Phil Grove is ill to the point of death and wonders if it wouldn't have been better if he had died, because in that case his manuscripts would have been destroyed and the struggle to write would have been over. But the most moving and ironic death is that of his young daughter, May. A few sentences after reporting her death, Phil Grove remarks, "And now, as if we had at least paid our dues to the fates, break after break seemed to come for me."

Niels Lindstedt, after shooting and killing his wife Clara, goes to his barn and kills a gelding in a curious scene that can only invite symbolic interpretation: the death of the horse is the symbolic death of the unmanned man, Niels Lindstedt. His process of rebirth is startling in its effect. After six and a half years in prison, Lindstedt emerges a man reborn. Grove himself had served a prison term. The threat of another led to his "suicide" and his movement from German into English as a writer. Perhaps the death in ethnic narrative is, explicitly, a death

out of one language into another. (And this, beyond the example of Grove, would seem to hold true even for the person who moves with apparent convenience from an English-speaking place to an English-speaking place.)

Another way to bring signifier and signified back into conjunctions is through a change of story model.

In the opening of *Settlers* the two men, Lindstedt and Nelson, are struggling blindly through a November snowstorm, moving from the edge of civilization, into the Big Marsh. As they struggle the narrative voice says, "Both would have liked to talk, to tell and to listen to stories of danger, of being lost, of hairbreadth escapes: the influence of the prairie snowstorm made itself felt. But whenever one of them spoke, the wind snatched his word from his lips and threw it aloft."

It is as if the old story forms are no longer adequate to the new experience. Silence has reasserted itself. Grove himself spoke of the "tragedy" of Niels Lindstedt, attempting to assert the appropriateness of a traditional mode. Yet he gives his story a happy ending that surprises many readers — an ending that many readers protest but that few would change. It turns out that we allow the tragedy to transform itself into something approaching comedy, in the name of a revisioning of the novel itself as form.

Grove's *Search* sets out to be an autobiography. By the end it too has become something else, with the author commenting in the middle of the book, "I felt an exile. I was an exile. I did not live among people of my own kind; among people who, metaphorically, spoke my language . . ." In the next sentence he adds, "The only sort of what, with a stretch of the imagination, could be called literary art with which I ever came into living contact, consisted of the 'tall' tales of the west; and they stood out in flagrant contradiction to the squalid reality I saw all about."

The offended Mr. Grove, in *Search*, has written one of the finest tall tales in the literary history of the west. If Mark Twain admitted to stretching the story a little, Frederick Philip Grove could be said to stretch it just about as much, while admitting nothing. He explains that at one time he was sending out as many as a dozen unpublished works, each one "copied out in six copies of fine, copperplate handwriting. Let me say that there were twelve volumes in all; then there were seventy-two manuscripts; and each of them had been sent out and received back at least three times, more likely five times a year. So that I had made, on an average, three hundred and sixty shipments a year, or one a day." And this, he adds, has gone on for sixteen years.

Grove, in the course of that stretching, found a story model that enabled him to speak, eloquently and validly, of what he had experienced. Language had become that literal and that isolated for him. He had transformed himself into a great hoard of repeating and circulating and unread manuscripts.

IF THERE IS A GAP between word and object, the final question is language itself, and the question of naming. Perhaps the completion of the narrative is made possible, not primarily by the surface story, but rather by a narrative movement that entails a changed sense of language, a movement from the old language, through silence (a silence that might be imagined even as a death) into a new language.

Grove says, in *Search*: "Thus, in the attempt to set down my vision, I realized that I had at bottom no language which was peculiarly my own. In a way this was an advantage to me; I had half a dozen instead. But in another way, it was a disadvantage and even a misfortune: I lacked that limitation which is best for the profound penetration of the soul of a language. I ground my teeth in my struggles; and, for the moment, all my struggles were with words."

The turning point in Phil Grove's life comes when he is seen in a railway station by a French priest in North Dakota reading a copy of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*. Of the priest Grove says, "He was an immigrant himself; he was French, not, as I had supposed, French-Canadian." This European priest talks to Grove of his circumstances and says to him, "Why didn't you teach?" The priest, shortly thereafter, is killed in a railway accident — he is another double and a representative of European civilization and he dies the necessary death. Grove goes to Manitoba to begin his long and hellish struggle with story and language. He is ready to unname himself as European and to struggle to rename himself as Canadian.

This erasure of names is a part of the experience of migrating peoples, and part of the narrative of that experience. And that erasure becomes palimpsest, it leaves its trace — as it did when Greve changed his name to Grove, at once concealing and changing who he was and leaving a trace that would enable us to complete the task of renaming that he had initiated.

That moment of unnaming with its potential for renaming occurs twice in *Settlers*, and this in the marshland itself, that unshaped, unmapped, unnamed space. In paired scenes, one in the middle of *Settlers*, one at the end, the two adults, Niels and Ellen, are transformed into "boy" and "girl," and the story's past tense gives way to present tense. In both scenes the nameless "children" approach a schoolhouse and pass it up for the natural world of berry bushes and singing birds. Both scenes end with awkward and painful attempts at naming.

At the end of the first, Niels realizes that Ellen is going to refuse marriage:

> The realization of a bottomless abyss shakes him.
> "Ellen," he calls with an almost breaking voice.
> The girl slowly rises. "I know," she says. "Don't speak."

He speaks with a *breaking* voice. She speaks to command silence — "Don't speak." Having been named herself, she then goes on to name the man in return: "Oh Niels, I am going to hurt you deeply." It is as if the speaking of a name is, at this point in the story, the breaking of a taboo. That breaking of the taboo brings about tragedy.

Ellen refuses to marry Niels. We move immediately to a death scene. We see old man Sigurdsen dying: "Sigurdsen lay in his clothes, not on the bed, but on the floor, his head reversed, his legs curved back, sprawling. . . ." Niels watches the man die in what is a grotesque parody of sexual fulfilment and the narrative reports of Niels: "Quietly he got up and drew a blanket over it that had been he."

Niels has entered into his death journey. He is *fooled* into marriage with Clara Vogel — the Canadian woman. He is unable to understand her — he cannot understand any of her names — as Clara Vogel, as widow, as district whore, as victim of frontier morality, as an experienced woman whose dimensions mock his own fatal innocence — and now, in an explosive reversal of convention, it is the European who is innocent, the Canadian who is experienced. The paradise Niels presumed to locate by building a house turns into hell. He completes his journey into silence by murdering his wife.

Niels Lindstedt goes to prison and in that version of silence earns (too easily for some readers) a kind of redemption. But Grove is not interested here in recording the literal prison experience. Prison has been a theme since the book opened. Grove is interested, rather, in Niels' return from the prisonhouse of silence to the world of speech.

At the end of the book Niels earns parole and returns to his farm and goes to meet Ellen. Again they meet, as they did in the middle of the novel, in "that natural bower in the fringe of the bush." This scene is at once a repetition and a reversal of the scene in the middle of the novel. Again the narrative moves into present tense and again the two figures become nameless — they become simply the man and the woman. Again, he speaks her name, his voice almost failing him. Again she says, "I know. . . . Don't speak."

But now she wants Niels to be quiet so that she can speak. Speech, finally, is possible. At this point the old names have been stripped of all prior meaning. They can be spoken now as new names, as a beginning. Ellen, at last, can foreswear her oath not to marry.

The repetition of the two scenes suggests a ritual unnaming and a renaming into new lives in a new world. And the paradox here is that the new names are exact homonyms for the old ones. The signifier sounds as it always sounded.

But the signified has shifted radically. Now it can be joined again with its signifier; name and object come together, the new life is possible.

A genuine settling is not so much described as proposed at the end of this narrative. In the last line of the text, a paragraph that is a single, short sentence, a "vision" arises between the two lovers, and this time it is "shared by both." A grammar of the narrative of ethnic experience has begun to assert itself. The silence is finding a way to transform itself into voice.

NOTES

[1] This talk was delivered as the introductory lecture in a series, "Ethnicity and Literature: Canadian Perspectives on Language, Silence, and Translation," University of British Columbia, 26 September 1984.

[2] Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966). All quotations are from this edition.

[3] Grove, *In Search of Myself* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1946). All quotations are from this edition.

FORMENTERA

Pasquale Verdicchio

This is only one
of many attempts at cactus
dry grass and mediterranean pine.

Only one blinding reflection
off whitewashed walls
and cool interiors.

Only one of countless walks
across cicada songs
to the sea.

Tracks are not lost in repetition,
pitch keeps its memory alive in flow.
And sudden desires to remain
renew the return.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION — 85

Dorina Michelutti

Since each beginning, she has lived like a pearl: swallowing
her secret in luster.
No matter how much I'd beg, cry
or beat my breast
she wouldn't tell me what her name was. Wouldn't tell.
It took me years to spit her out and feel
lonely.

This time I'll take my food from light and declare myself
a pine tree. Jack. 100 meters tall. I'll grow such cones,
enough to fill all previous valleys with incandescence.

And on this sea I'll march on Rome. I'll be
an offering; the eighth hill; a meridian raining birth.

It will be enough that light describe me, enough
that the fleshing out in darkness be but a soft bed of needles
and a way to experience time.

GOING BACK

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco

The scene here is lonely. Come and bail
me out. There is no passion in my left palm.
The artichoke, my brain has been sitting out
in the sun for days. I am swinging my arms around
me to impress my grave in the air. The word "friend"
sticks like dull medallions to my eyes.
I want to swim all the way home. There is so much
love in me, my little man my grandfather, wake up,
step out of the hillside and arrange my bones under a cafe,
where birds peck at the right arm of the
country side, where grandmother can see me from the
window, and bellow her peasant reproofs, echoing into
her bones the dark lineage, lovers of sun, implanters
of the blood relic, three thousand years of
men climbing up slowly to my eyes to cry.

from

THE FALL OF ROME

A Traveller's Guide

Anne Carson

There is a wonderful lot
of talk in Rome.
I walk about in it,
moving zigzag,
parting it like a comb,
hearing it coil
together
behind me.
Entrada.
Uscita.

"Uccidi! flagella! brucia!"
I beg you.
"This Roman water!"
What is the problem?
"Shuts itself off whenever it likes!"
What is the reason?
"There is no reason!"
Shall we notify someone?
"There is no one to notify!"
What can we do?
"There is nothing we can do!"

I have brought with me to Rome,
as you advised,
Helpful Phrases for Travellers
in the pocket
Italian
edition.
Helpful phrases come to mind.
Please show me to the lifeboat.

A stranger is someone who walks in
and for an instant
I don't know it is you
— an instant
almost as troubling as death,
or so
some
believe, for example
Proust:

. . . c'est admettre que ce qui était ici, l'être qu'on se rappelle n'est plus, et que ce qui y est, c'est un être qu'on ne connaissait pas; c'est avoir à penser un mystère presque aussi troublant que celui de la mort dont il est, du reste, comme la préface et l'annonciateur.

Now Proust
spent no time in Rome.
And he has a complex way
of understanding what a stranger is
(he gets it inside-out)
which would not stand up
to Roman scrutiny.
Nonetheless,
his piercing eyes open wide
on what the real trouble is.

It is that voice behind you.

For, if you think about it,
all first hatred of strangers
contains this idea of death,
of your death which will one day walk up to you
in just such a fashion.
Buon giorno, death will say.

Besides the cathedral,
at Orvieto there is
a second tourist attraction.
It is a well.
The Pozzo di San Patrizio
was built by Pope Clement VII
to supply the town with water
in case of a siege.
It is over 62 metres deep.
There are 248 comfortable steps
from the top to the bottom of the well;
248 spiral back up.

They are not the same steps.

Designed concentrically,
the 2 staircases fit
one within the other,
like a jack-knife blade
within a jack-knife,
so that 2 people,
one coming up,
the other going down,
can never meet.

Last meeting.
Anna Maria is at my hotel very early,
dressed in red.
It is important to strike a positive note,
towards the end.
I (we) have had a top-notch time.
Italian has proven a beautiful language,
and also very difficult.
On this, my first visit to Rome,
I have mastered a few words
(entrada, uscita)
and suppressed others
(villano, morte).
You have been most kind,
in speaking slowly
and inviting me in for Nescafé.
Although tongue-tied myself,
your conversation has led me to uncover
certain false answers to life's basic questions
(that stranger was myself, etc.).
Once or twice we spoke our hearts:
cet immense désir de connaître la vie,
as Proust so simply calls it.
Please summon a porter.
It is time to go.

books in review

ITALIAN IDENTITY

FRANK PACI, *The Father*. Oberon, $14.95.

IN *The Father* FRANK PACI continues his analysis of second generation Italians which he began in *The Italians* (1978) and *Black Madonna* (1982). All three novels create a mosaic of the Italian identity structured around the family and the conflict between the two generations, a conflict which is extended to brothers and sisters throughout their opposite approaches to integration in the Canadian community.

Paci's trilogy is given organic cohesion through the presence of recurring character traits and similar approaches to life in some of the members of the various families. Stephen in *The Father* and Marie in *Black Madonna* are assimilated into Canadian culture through their studies and university life. Stephen's brother Michael rejects studying and his Italianism by listening to pop music and finally touring in a pop group. In this he is paralleled by Bill in *The Italians* who fulfills himself in hockey, another cultural myth of the New World. These opposite ways of identifying with the values of Canadian society find a correspondence in *The Father*, with the older generation's approach to the ethos of work. Oreste, who remains the most human and Italian character in the novel, says that he makes bread for people as individuals and finds fulfilment in the love and pride which he puts into kneading the loaves with his hands, using the methods and the recipe of a breadmaker whom he used to work for when he was a child in the Abbruzzi. His wife Maddalena, instead, understands that greater profits can be made through mechanization and expansion, and her clear business sense finally ruins Oreste, not only financially, but also by destroying his values. In the end she pressures her family to move out of the Italian district which Oreste loved so much, wishing to annul a past and an Italian background she no longer wishes to identify with. This brings Oreste to alcoholism and failure, as he understands that his family has not taken up his beliefs.

Through Oreste, Paci gives a detailed description of the Italian district, revealing its close-knit nature and warmth, and paralleling its eventual disappearance with Oreste's downfall. In 1962, at the height of his success, Oreste, after having delivered bread to the shops, would go round to the private homes where his children were fussed over, where he was offered wine and "talked pleasantries with the customers. Most of the talk was about the future of the neighbourhood and the erection of the International bridge. . . . The conversations got so animated that Oreste would invariably forget about the time." Only six years later, when Oreste has separated from his family and is running his own small Italian-style bakery, Paci shows the decline of the neighbourhood through the disappearance of the shopping area in James Street: "The West End was a neighbourhood with the heart ripped out of it."

Part of Paci's success in the novel lies in his ability to manoeuvre the reader's sympathies for certain characters and for what they stand for; at the same time Paci's characters never become mere mouthpieces for the author's ideas but are fully drawn people who exist in their own right. If Oreste is the character whom the reader most easily loves and respects, Stephen is the one from whom he takes a critical distance, as a result of his total attachment to the intellectual

world, his rejection of emotions, and his turning his back on his Italian background. Paci invites the reader to take this critical distance through two other main characters, Anna Kozak and John di Marco, whose points of view place Stephen in an unfavourable light. They are very near Stephen but ultimately they reject him. John is a university friend of Italian origin who finally accuses him of being a traitor to his ethnic background: "You should read where you came from —Dante, Tasso, Verga, Pirandello, Pavese. That way you'd find out who you really are." Anna, his Ukrainian girlfriend, is proud of her roots which she has investigated by reading all the major Ukrainian authors. Stephen's exclusive interest in philosophers and the classics comes under fire, as does his intellectual approach to life. Anna in the end leaves him because he can not, or will not, express his emotions: "You're going to spend your life reflecting and not doing anything. Everything you do imitates spontaneity." Anna reproaches him for this two years after she had seen a glimmer of hope that he might change: "Maybe you're feeling instead of thinking so much." But if his growth is stunted in this sense, the novel does reveal a different type of progression in his character when, in the last chapter, we see Stephen whistling and making some loaves of bread on which he put the initials "of his father, his mother, and his brother — Oreste, Maddalena, and Michael. That was his family."

Just as at the end of *Black Madonna* Marie flies back to her parents' native village in search of the cultural roots she has so strongly rejected all her life, so in *The Father* Stephen finally comes to accept his father and his values which he had denied in favour of his academic career. In his description of Stephen in the bakery, Paci echoes the way Oreste used to work so cheerfully and wholeheartedly. Through the temporal structure of the novel, Paci has shown the growth of his characters and the life and death of the Italian West End district. *The Father* is divided into 24 short chapters, each of which is headed with a date, and spans a period of 27 years. The pace of the novel is thus quite fast, and is supported by a language which is clear and concise without ever sacrificing vivid detailed descriptions. By tracing Stephen's character in terms of values and identity, and by highlighting particularly the rebirth of Oreste in Stephen, just as Oreste had told Stephen how his father lived in him, Paci optimistically concludes his well-written novel focusing on the birth of a new consciousness.

GIOVANNI BONANNO

TRIANGULATION

FULVIO CACCIA & ANTONIO D'ALFONSO, *eds.*, *Quêtes: Textes d'auteurs italo-québécois.* Guernica, n.p.

CETTE ANTHOLOGIE RASSEMBLE des textes de 18 romanciers, dramaturges, poètes, et cinéastes italo-québécois. Dans ce recueil, une brève note biographique précède les oeuvres de chaque auteur, tandis que l'ensemble des textes est précédé par une introduction éclairante bien que concise, dans laquelle les éditeurs s'interrogent sur les tendances actuelles de la culture des immigrants italiens.

Si "rassembler dans un même recueil dix-huit auteurs de langue, de style et de disciplines différentes, n'ayant de commun que leur origine italienne" peut sembler au premier abord un non-sens, l'intérêt de cette publication tient justement, nous semble-t-il, à la volonté de créer un lieu de rencontre pour ces auteurs qui, par leurs oeuvres, donnent un témoignage à la fois du rapport complexe que l'écrivain d'origine italienne

entretient avec la culture et les langues anglaises et françaises, et de la transformation qui "travaille" la culture des immigrants italiens au Canada.

En effet, à la recherche d'une propre place dans la mosaïque canadienne, continuellement exposée à l'assimilation des valeurs du pays-hôte, l'immigrant experimente l'appauvrissement du patrimoine culturel de ses origines et par conséquent l'ébranlement de son identité. Ces thèmes, auxquels se rattachent une malaise spirituel, un sens de dépaysement et une incapacité d'établir un rapport harmonieux avec le monde, sont présents dans de nombreuses pages du recueil et trouvent leur pleine expression dans des personnages comme Giovanna/Jeanne Rossi ou dans des entités comme le "je" de la poésie "Babel." Jeanne Rossi, fille d'émigrants italiens, comme l'indique le prénom Giovanna qu'elle s'empresse de franciser, démontre, à travers l'affirmation: "A Montréal, on me dit que je suis Italienne; en Italie, on me dit que je suis Canadienne, moi je dis que je ne suis rien," l'impossibilité de s'identifier et d'être identifiée soit aux Italiens soit aux Canadiens. Le "je" de la poésie "Babel," en vivant à cheval sur quatre cultures et autant de langues (l'italien, le français, l'anglais, l'espagnol), éprouve, lui aussi comme Giovanna Rossi, un malaise spirituel que l'angoissante question: "Dio where shall I be demain" exprime parfaitement grâce au mélange linguistique.

Toutefois, cette anthologie n'est pas une simple réflexion sur le processus d'acculturation, elle est aussi et surtout une mise à jour des recherches d'une nouvelle identité. En effet, dans beaucoup de textes on remarque la conscience que les traditions du pays natal, bien que perpétuées au Canada, sont en train de perdre ou ont déjà perdu leur signification et que même le patrimoine linguistique, menacé par l'anglais et le français, est en train de s'appauvrir, phénomène qu'on peut constater d'ailleurs dans les oeuvres des auteurs d'origine italienne qui écrivent de moins en moins dans la langue de leurs pères.

Cette prise de conscience devient le point de départ d'une quête. Quête qui, excluant le repli sur son passé aussi bien que l'acceptation inconditionelle du "modus vivendi" du pays hôte, s'oriente vers la participation à la culture canadienne, non plus pour en accueillir les formes et les contenus, mais pour marquer, à travers la confrontation, ses caractéristiques, donc son identité par rapport à l'altérité.

C'est grâce à ce recueil, qui témoigne de l'existence au Canada de la culture d'une minorité italienne dotée d'une propre identité, que Fulvio Caccia et Antonio D'Alfonso proposent une "triangulation de cultures" que depasse la dualité traditionelle.

MILENA MANTOVANI

EMARGINATION

MARCO MICONE, *Addolorata*. Guernica, n.p.

MALHEUREUSE DESTINEE que celle d'Addolorata, la jeune femme que Micone érige à symbole de la condition féminine immigrante, dans sa pièce homonyme. Marquée dès la naissance d'un prénom encombrant: Addolorata, prénom très commun dans l'Italie du Sud et qui désigne Notre-Dame des Douleurs, elle aimerait s'en débarasser pour le plus exotique et frivole "Lolita." Arrivée au Québec à l'âge de neuf ans, Addolorata suivra l'itinéraire classique des filles d'immigrants: quelques années d'école, le mariage, et l'usine. Ses études lui permettent de s'exprimer en quatre langues, mais elle en envisage un usage très restreint: "Je peux regarder les soap-operas en anglais, lire le T. V. Hébdo en français, les photoromans en italien et chan-

ter Guantanamera [en espagnol]." Elle rêve de faire le tour du monde, mais elle ne sort jamais de son quartier. Ses conceptions de la vie sont d'une simplicité et d'une superficialité étonnantes jusqu'à frôler, quelquefois, la niaiserie complète: "Ils devraient faire la même chose [donner des recettes de cuisine] au téléjournal de Radio-Canada au lieu de parler toujours de politique."

Addolorata se marie à dix-neuf ans avec Johnny (Giovanni de son vrai nom) lui aussi fils d'immigrant; c'est un mariage d'amour, certainement, mais pour elle c'est surtout une "voie de sortie" pour échapper à l'autoritarisme d'un père qui veut exercer en famille le même pouvoir que le "boss" dans son usine. "On ne va pas vivre comme nos parents, eh Johnny?" c'est son appel presque déchirant, même dans son ton dépouillé. L'imagination nourie de photoromans, la jeune fille fonde son mariage sur des bases assez fragiles, mais ses châteaux en Espagne s'écroulent dès le banquet de noces sous les coups des propositions désobligéantes de Johnny qui se révèle très semblable à son beaupère. Du joug paternel au joug conjugal, la situation d'Addolorata ne change guère: dix ans après elle est une femme prématurément vieillie, usée par le travail à l'usine et les tâches ménagères, tout à fait désabusée.

La mort de sa mère, la faisant réfléchir sur sa condition, lui donnera l'élan pour sortir du carcan familial à la recherche de son émancipation: "Je veux plus être comme vous" proclame-t-elle à l'adresse des femmes immigrantes qui se tuent à la tâche pour mener sur deux fronts travail à l'extérieur et travail à la maison. Les pensées de révolte d'Addolorata sont interrompues (comme plusieurs fois dans le récit) par l'odeur de la sauce tomate qui va brûler, cette sauce tomate qui semble ici réprésenter toute la vie familiale italienne et qui doit être préparée avec des soins très précis: "ni trop sûre, ni trop sucrée, ni trop brune, ni trop rouge, ni trop épaisse, ni trop liquide" un vrai miracle d'équilibre donc, à l'image des efforts féminins pour assûrer le bien-etre de la famille. Quand sa femme lui annonce son départ Giovanni restera incrédule, puis il tentera de la retenir en lui opposant maints arguments: ce n'est pas lui le résponsable des malheurs d'Addolorata, il faut s'en prendre à la société qui margine et exploite les immigrants. Il arrivera jusqu'à oublier son orgueil masculin pour lui avouer sa détresse, sa peur de la solitude, mais c'est trop tard: Addolorata ne veut pas rater sa dernière chance, elle partira.

Dans le drame individuel de cette jeune femme l'auteur exprime le drame de toute une communauté dont il brosse un portrait très frappant, sans ceder à la tentation de le réhausser d'un trop facile folklore. A travers les paroles de la protagoniste et de Giovanni, nous aperçevons les doutes et les problèmes de ces immigrants, brusquement transplantés de leurs petits villages de l'Italie du Sud au milieu de la metropole québécoise. Le passage d'une vie qui se déroulait encore suivant les rythmes agricoles et patriarchaux à la vie très moderne d'une civilisation industrielle a ébranlé leurs valeurs culturelles. Plusieurs immigrants ont réagi en se cramponnant aux traditions, même dans leurs formes les plus stéréotypées et en se répliant dans les cellules familiales, ce qui a aggravé leur margination. Marco Micone dénonce l'absurdité de cette situation qui empechê la communauté italienne de se tailler une place à soi dans la complexe réalité socio-culturelle du Québec. Le départ d'Addolorata symbolise la recherche d'une nouvelle identité dont les contours, toutefois, sont encore indéfinissables. Traiter des arguments pareils sans tomber dans la rhéthorique et la platitude était un pari difficile, Micone l'a gagné

brillament avec son style captivant et agile.

LORENZA FORNI

VOICE REGISTERS

CAROLINE MORGAN DI GIOVANNI, ed., *Italian Canadian Voices: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (1946-1983)*. Mosaic & The Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education, $10.00.

MARCO MICONE, *Voiceless People*. Trans. Maurizia Binda. Guernica, $7.95.

MARY MELFI, *A Bride in Three Acts*. Guernica, $7.95.

ITALIAN IMMIGRATION into Canada began during the late nineteenth century and peaked toward the end of the Second World War. In her Introduction to *Italian Canadian Voices* Di Giovanni notes that the paucity of literary works from this period is attributable in part to the loss of a number of early works, but chiefly to the instability that characterized the immigrant's daily life. During the 1890's and early 1900's most Italian immigrants were sojourner-labourers who lacked the education and time needed to write literature; and while Italian-language newspapers thrived during the 1920's and 1930's in cities where non-sojourning immigrants had settled, these activities were silenced during the war when journalists were frequently harassed and many immigrants were interned. Today, the proliferation of Italian-Canadian writing "seems to parallel the development of a national attitude which supports and encourages multiculturalism." The chronology of the selections in the anthology traces the growth of Italian-Canadian literature from its difficult beginnings to its present flowering.

Di Giovanni has assembled novelists, poets, and short-story writers, all of whom are "children of immigrant families" and whose work explores the dynamics of immigrant life. With the exception of the skilful English translations which appear for the first time in the anthology, only reprinted material is included. In addition to Di Giovanni's Introduction, a useful Preface by Joseph Pivato explores the literary context of the selections. Pivato also provides a Selected Bibliography of Italian-Canadian authors and a Reference section listing recent critical and historical studies.

Chapter One brings together three early voices, beginning with an excerpt from Mario Duliani's novel *La Ville sans Femmes* describing the social and psychological effects of internment (Dubliani was interned in 1940). The selection is followed by Gianni Grohovaz's elegy for Bruno Mesaglio, who after the war struggled to found the Piccolo Teatro Italiano. Subtly weaving instances of personal affliction and social oppression, Grohovaz pays tribute to the endurance of art in a fragmented world. A chapter from Giuseppe Ricci's autobiographical novel *L'Orfano di Padre* chronicles with pathos and humour the frustration and delays attending Ricci's application for citizenship in 1930. While the purpose of this section is to provide a cursory glance at the nature and quality of the early work, no mention is made of equally representative texts such as the novels of Giose Rimanelli and Elena Albani, or the autobiographies of I. Rader and Camillo Lauriente.

Di Giovanni's principal concern is with contemporary poetry and fiction. In recognition of poet and editor Pier Giorgio Di Cicco's contributions to Italian-Canadian culture, Chapter Two consists of poetry from *Roman Candles* (1978). Di Giovanni has selected ten poets from the original seventeen, noting that the "tensions betwen an old way of life and a new world emerge regularly" in their work. The uprooted self's search for

equilibrium is the thematic thread linking these poems to those in Chapter Five, which includes poetry by some of the same writers and others whose work has been published since *Roman Candles*. A number of the later poems, however, incline toward nostalgia and sentiment. In his panegyric "Gente Mia/My People" Filippo Salvatore announces his kinship with and detachment from the "Rough-faced people, / dark-dressed plumpy women, / men with patched-up trousers" who are "content by easy / pleasures and volatile emotions." The poet is unabashedly "touched like a sentimental fool" by the "joys, sufferings, / weaknesses" of those whose lives he celebrates.

Four writers from different regions of Canada are represented in the short-story section (Chapter Three). C. D. Minni's "Roots," Alexander Amprimoz's "Preludes," and Caterina Edwards' "Island of the Nightingales" deal with the immigrant experience as it affects memory, particularly in the context of the self's connectedness to disparate cultures, while Giovanni Bartocci's "Encounter with Belfagor" uses an allegorical framework to obliterate commonplace distinctions between reality and fantasy. The narrator, a poor immigrant seeking employment in England, has a dream-like encounter with the elusive Belfagor, the archdevil in a tale by Machiavelli, from whom he learns that "even Eternity, though motionless and changeless, transforms those who are immersed in it just as Time does."

In Chapter Four excerpts from recent novels, Maria Ardizzi's *Made in Italy*, Caterina Edwards' *The Lion's Mouth*, Frank Paci's *Black Madonna*, and Matilde Torres's *La Dottoressa di Cappadocia*, reveal a shared concern with the inner life of the immigrant woman. Ardizzi's central character and Paci's Assunta are first-generation immigrants who never transcend their physical and emotional isolation. In Paci, Assunta's daughter Maria is finally capable of reconciling past and present through an understanding of her mother's limitations. Edwards' young heroine must learn self-affirmation both as an immigrant and a writer. Torres's character, on the other hand, expresses only ambiguous optimism about her decision to emigrate: flying above "a barrier of clouds which obscured the earth," she looks forward to her life in Canada "with hope in my heart that beyond the ocean I would find liberty, justice, peace and the happiness I dreamed of." While the selections impel one to read the novels in their entirety, their fragmentary nature makes it difficult to appreciate fully the authors' achievements. The reader would benefit from a more detailed introduction to each excerpt explaining its relationship to the rest of the novel. As the first of its kind, however, the anthology is timely and valuable.

The effects of dislocation are more stridently explored in Marco Micone's *Voiceless People*. Originally written in French (*Gens du silence*), the play challenges smug assumptions about immigrant life: "If emigration could have helped the working class to emancipate itself," declares Micone in the epigraph, "it would never have existed." While Micone forcefully unveils the myths surrounding immigrant life, he too frequently sacrifices complexity for polemic.

The play traces the Rossi family's prototypical emigration in 1959 from a "sunbleached stonehouse village" situated "on a hill in Southern Italy" to a working-class section of Montreal squeezed in "between three cement quarries and the Metropolitan Boulevard." Antonio, the father, arrives first, taking work on a construction site. He renounces small pleasures in order to send money home, and endures the abuse of French-

Canadian workers threatened by the importation of cheap labour and critical of the Italian labourers' eager servility. Antonio's wife and daughter Annunziata (later called Nancy) join him four years later. Anna immediately takes her place at the sewing machine where she spends long hours doing piece work for less than five dollars a day, resenting her Greek neighbours who do similar work for less pay. Antonio quickly becomes obsessed with the need to be accepted by the official culture — English, sexist, authoritarian. Opposed to Antonio's submissiveness is the rebelliousness of the younger generation represented by Nancy and her friend Gino, a politically engaged artist. Their responsibility is to "break the wall of silence" surrounding their parents' lives:

> NANCY: We have to take care of the young people. We have to find the ways the ghetto-keepers haven't used yet. We must replace the culture of silence by immigrant culture, so that the peasant in us stands up, so that the Québecois in us can start to live.

Although during the early scenes I was absorbed in Antonio's struggle against alienation, exploitation, and self-deception, I quickly tired of Nancy's and Gino's declamatory speeches which dominate the second half of the play. A more compelling voice is that of Anna, whose gradual distancing from her husband's values leads to a moving rejection of the ideology of sacrifice:

> Some of the things we did, Antonio, were not right . . . We worked too hard for nothing . . . I'm afraid, Antonio, I'm afraid of only living just long enough to finish paying off the house, like Christina, like Rosa or like Antonietta.

Such moments, however, are too rare to rescue the play from Micone's ponderous didacticism.

In *A Bride in Three Acts*, Mary Melfi's third book of poetry, we enter a fragmented, whimsical, high-tech world where civilization "can be reduced to a menu," where "Love-and-death is only a peekaboo game," and where the future is "an unknown soldier, sometimes." Images of our technological obsessions explode on every page, delineating a pattern of stilted rituals and displaced desire.

The futility of modern life is crystallized in the marriage code. The opening poem, "La Demi-Vierge," establishes the equation between the mechanics of the marriage ceremony and deadly notions of progress. The bride is

> an inconspicuous hand grenade
> (with a life span of 'who knows')
> made to order for an inconspicuous/
> conspicuous
> computerized war (process).

The poems which follow fulfill the promise of "La Demi-Vierge" in a sequence of starkly satirical perceptions. We learn that the "wedding photographer's camera has a radioactive lens" so that "One won't see the scars left on one's body for years." Wedding rings are dangerous high-tech gadgets, "little computers, satellites / where all the actions of the couple are recorded, conversations taped." Yet to cancel the wedding vows, the couple need only remove the rings and annul the insurance policy. The language bristles with caustic phrases and grim humour.

In "I Remember" there is a welcome moment of quiet release when the poet, suddenly distracted from the time-lapse world of daily life, wistfully recalls the grace and humanity of her grandmother, "the woman who gave me a lovely sense of myself and Italian history." The reverie, however, only ambiguously effaces the deadness of the present, for in the final poem, "Act One," the smile on the face of the bride/poet "is an acrobat, / ready to please the twentieth century."

VIVIANA COMENSOLI

QUESTIONS OF LANGUAGE

The Old World and the New: Literary Perspectives of German-speaking Canadians, ed. by Walter E. Riedel. Univ. of Toronto Press, $19.95.

GERMAN-SPEAKING CANADIANS from various national and cultural backgrounds — German, Austrian, Swiss, Mennonite — make up the third largest ethnic group in Canada, we are reminded by the jacket blurb of *The Old World and the New*, which goes on to claim that the present collection of essays is the first book to explore the contribution of men and women in this group to the Canadian literary tradition. The collection, the work of nine professional Germanists at Canadian universities, consists of an informative introductory essay by Walter E. Riedel on "Canada's Cultural Mosaic and the Literature of the German-speaking Canadians," eight essays on individual German-Canadian authors, and an essay on Canadian-Mennonite literature.

Rodney Symington examines the life and work of Else Seel, who exchanged the bustle of Berlin of the 1920's for the solitude of life as a trapper's wife in the Ootsa Lake region of British Columbia. By focusing on the themes of survival, assimilation, and alienation in her writing, Symington attempts to establish her work as a paradigmatic expression of the immigrant experience. The European roots of that experience are examined from quite different standpoints in the next two essays, Anthony W. Riley's study of the pre-Canadian work of Felix Paul Greve, and Günter Hess's examination of the burden of recent European history in the life and work of Walter Bauer. The theme of the Old World versus the New is universalized as the postlapsarian longing for a lost homeland in Harry Loewen's account of the development of Canadian-Mennonite writing in German and English, while Karin Gürttler focuses on the formal consequences of the experience of exile in the novels of Henry Kreisel. Carl Weiselberger and Charles Wassermann, both of whom like Kreisel came to Canada as wartime internees, are seen as important cultural intermediaries between Canada and Europe in essays by Walter E. Riedel and Helfried Seliger. Peter Liddell attempts a first assessment of the work of Ulfrich Schaffer, a younger writer who came to Canada as a small child, all of whose prolific output (seventeen volumes, mostly of poetry) has appeared in Germany over the last twenty years, and who, as Liddell argues, transcends the immigrant experience in drawing intensely on both Canada and Germany in his poems of religious exploration. The collection concludes with an examination by Armin Arnold of the creative work of the well-known Germanist Hermann Böschenstein, who in his published and unpublished work demonstrated a fascination with the dual experience of someone leaving one's native country and then, later, returning to it. German-Canadian writing Walter E. Riedel argues in his introduction, "contains a remarkable thematic unity that relates to Canadian literature in general." This unity is based on the experience of exile, and the search for identity, whether personal or national, geographical or existential. "The literary perspective incorporating both the Old and the New World," seen here as the primary archetype of German-Canadian writing, can indeed, as Riedel aptly observes, "be considered as a variation of what Friedrich Schiller termed the elegiac mode, the contrast between then and now, or there and here."

The individual contributors were obviously largely given their head as to how they handled their particular author —

for the emphasis in the collection as a whole is clearly on authors rather than on texts. One is struck, for example, by the number of poems quoted only in an English translation. This is not the place to rehearse old disputes as to the merits of "extrinsic" versus "intrinsic" approaches to literary studies, but if the purpose of the volume under review is to demonstrate something of the perceived *literary* quality of the German-Canadian contribution to Canadian literature, then those essays which in one way or another give the reader some direct access to the literary *texts* involved are clearly doing their job more effectively. The essays I found most useful in this respect were (in order of appearance) those of Riley on Greve, Hess on Bauer (though Bauer's poems are quoted throughout in translation, albeit a good one), Gürttler on Kreisel, Liddell on Schaffer, and Arnold on Böschenstein. Particularly useful were the few attempts to compare authors with other, non-Canadian, authors: Riley's comparison of Greve and Döblin, Liddell's discussion of Kafkan echoes in Schaffer, Arnold's remarks on the younger Böschenstein's relationship to German Expressionism. The remaining essays fall quite clearly into a different category, essentially historical rather than critical: Loewen's very useful survey of Mennonite writing, Riedel on Weiselberger, Seliger on Wassermann, Symington on Seel. The emphasis here is much more on scholarship (very capably executed) stressing the biographical, coupled with a certain defensiveness about literary quality.

Two related questions are provoked by this division, questions which are not adequately answered by Riedel's volume. The first: Is German-Canadian literature *interesting*, and if so, to whom? The second: Who is the intended readership of this collection? With regard to the first, Symington's essay on Seel has an epigraph quoted from Northrop Frye: "Even when it is literature in its orthodox genres of poetry and fiction, it is more significantly studied as a part of Canadian life than as part of an autonomous world of literature." In a similar vein, Harry Loewen observes that "the value of any artistic work must not be measured according to standards that do not apply to it. Literary works of a period, tradition, or a particular people must be evaluated on their own terms and not be judged on the basis of how they measure up against established literary norms of other periods, traditions, or people." I fully support the thrust of both of the statements quoted. However, if German-Canadian writing is indeed to have any significance, as Frye puts it, beyond the narrow circle of the already enthusiastic, then it must indeed *be* evaluated on its own terms — which means that these terms have first to be defined. Riedel's book goes some of the way towards suggesting what these terms may be, but it does not go far enough. The intention is good: reference is made in the introduction already to "unique structural elements," but with very few exceptions (notably Gürttler on Kreisel) this line of questioning is not pursued. If this challenge is not taken up, however, then German-Canadian literary studies will have little or nothing to contribute to the wider field of Canadian literary studies, and German-Canadian writing will be studied only as an exercise in ethno-literary *pietas*. The question of language is surely a major case in point here, but one very largely neglected in this collection — only in a suggestion from Riley and throughout Liddell's essay is the fact that all of these writers wrote and thought in German seen as anything more than a peripheral biographical fact.

As to the intended audience the introduction states that the purpose of this collection is "to deal with the main figures

of what is loosely referred to as German-Canadian literature," while the jacket, I have already noted, claims that this is the first book to explore the German-Canadian contribution to Canadian literature as a whole. One might thus justifiably expect some sort of introductory manual, but the collection is in fact, as we have seen, structured by the theme of the immigrant experience. The numerous plot-summaries, translations, and references to autobiographical detail seem to be aimed at the neophyte, but only in Arnold's essay on Böschenstein will the novice find the appropriate biographical and, more importantly, bibliographical information systematically presented. As an introduction to German-Canadian literature, presumably aimed at least partly at persuading the not already convinced that the subject warrants further investigation, the collection founders on the lack of a consistent methodology. As a study of a particular theme in German-Canadian writing the collection is more successful, but suffers from diffuseness and an unfortunate tendency to equate literature and biography. This is not to deny that the collection is a timely and an important one, potentially even a very important one, in its capacity to attract the attention of students of Canadian literature to an area often overlooked; it is a matter for regret, however, that for just such an audience the volume could quite easily have been so much more useful.

PATRICK O'NEILL

A KIND OF HERO

DAVID G. PITT, *E. J. Pratt: The Truant Years 1882-1927*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $14.95.

THIS SYMPATHETIC AND readable biography, the first volume in a projected two-volume set, does indeed fulfil the ambitious claims made for it on the book's cover. Not only does it present an interesting and well-documented account of the first forty-five years of one of the major figures of our literature, but it succeeds in creating a convincing portrait of a complex individual and an emerging poet, a portrait which is much more satisfying in its wholeness than all the earlier partial sketches and wealth of anecdotal caricatures. The author does not hesitate to probe the psychological nature of his subject, but his interpretation of the poet's character and development are enlightening rather than obscuring, and one of the greatest strengths of this very good book.

While the biographer Professor Emeritus at Memorial University of Newfoundland, first encountered E. J. Pratt when he was a young graduate student at the University of Toronto in 1946, the idea for the project really began to take shape in the 1950's in conversations with the poet's brother, Calvert, a Newfoundland businessman. The idea met with the subject's approval on the understanding that the work appear posthumously; at any rate there was time for only one valuable interview before the poet's death in 1964. The biography has had a long gestation with, however, the beneficial result that for some fifteen years Pitt must have been turning over in his mind the puzzle that was Edwin John Pratt. The first installment provides plenty of evidence of reflection as well as of careful research and clear exposition.

This volume begins with a survey of Pratt's ancestry among Yorkshire lead-

miners and early Methodist converts and extends to 1926, date of the publication of *Titans* and of the death of his mother. Pitt argues that these last two events marked a turning point since they coincide with the finding of a new poetic voice and the severing of most of the chains which held him to the past. Throughout, the material is clearly organized in fairly short chapters grouped together in four books. The years in Newfoundland, the quest for learning as a student in Toronto, the disenchantment with his studies in psychology and the first gropings as a poet, all receive careful attention, but the last book, entitled "The New Voice," treats the years 1923-1927 in the most detail.

Pitt has met and surmounted three central problems facing Pratt's biographer: relatively little manuscript material relates to the life, Pratt's public legend is often distractingly inaccurate public legend, and the poet adjusts the facts about his own past. Apart from the poetry and some professional writing, there was little written by Pratt which could be used as source material: there was no diary, nor journal, nor copies of correspondence. His letters to his mother were destroyed after her death, and, according to a story told to me by one of his younger colleagues, the poet himself was also responsible, in the days before his own death, for the disposal of private papers stored in a large tin trunk under his bed. For crucial personal experiences, such as the broken engagement to Lydia Trimble (thought to have happened by the spring of 1912) and her rapid decline and death from tuberculosis (June 1912), the long delayed ordination as a Methodist minister (1913), and the polio of his daughter Claire (1925), we have no records of the poet's emotions. Pratt's tendency to bury what touched him most deeply Pitt treats, effectively, as revealing in itself.

The public image of the poet is still promoted by his surviving acquaintances, supported by numerous newspaper articles of the 1920's. This tradition began with an article published by Pratt's friend Arthur Phelps in the Methodist Church's *Guardian* in 1923, but whereas Phelps' anecdotal account also discussed Pratt's poetic development to that date, the journalistic pieces chose to emphasize his "golfomania," his impracticality, and his eccentricities and thus obscured much of Pratt's real nature. The poet himself, in part to resist classification as the very type of stuffy academic or repressed puritan whom he detested, encouraged the growth of this legend and would embroider some of the details of his earlier life. Thus his rebellion as an adolescent schoolboy at Fortune was recalled, Pitt concludes, "in more dramatic if not lurid colours than the bare facts warranted." Moreover, the poet, consciously or unconsciously, changed facts about his past. He ruefully recalled "the lost three years" (1897-1900) as a shop clerk in St. John's as necessary to earn his way through college, when the facts suggest either he refused to go on with his schooling or, more likely, that his father, ambitious Rev. John Pratt, disgusted with his son's lacklustre performance in school as a young teen-ager, ordered him to earn his own living. Much later on, the poet would tell a story about the publication of *The Witches' Brew* which implied that, much to Pratt's surprise, it gained an easy acceptance by a London publisher. In fact, Pitt demonstrates that Pratt lobbied hard for Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press to find an English publisher for the high-spirited extravaganza, and when this failed he made his only trip to Great Britain to advance the cause himself. Even then the work was turned down by several publishers before Selwyn and Blount agreed to accept it. Equally significant, in a different way, was Pratt's

remark to a friend who was preparing an account of the poet, that he visited his mother every summer from the time he left Newfoundland in 1907 to the time of her death in 1926. Again Pitt quietly corrects the record: Pratt went in 1916 and then again in 1925 and she visited once in Toronto during this period. It should perhaps be pointed out that these "corrections" of the record are never done in the indignant, high-handed fashion of a biographer glad to have caught his subject in some kind of deceit. Pitt is always interested in what these actions reveal about the essential nature of the man; he is the biographer as sympathetic interpreter and not as scandalmonger. His Pratt, then, is a man who liked retrospectively to emphasize his non-conformist or "truant" tendencies, who felt obliged to hide the deep, almost fatherly, attachment and ambitions he had for his poetic creations, and one who valued old family attachments, even if he could maintain them only in the imagination.

A literary biography requires skill in handling a variety of source materials and competence in different kinds of writing. The intriguing account of the poet's Yorkshire antecedents and the Newfoundland boy relies on archival work, on family records and memories, and on Pitt's own first-hand knowledge of the life of the son of a Newfoundland parson. Later sections of the book attempt dating of early lyrics and display mastery of the minutiae of publication arrangements concerned with *Newfoundland Verse*, *The Witches' Brew*, *The Cachalot*, and *The Great Feud*, as well as thorough analysis of the critical reception of the poetry both in Canada and (quite usefully) abroad. But Pitt is also adept at working with broader strokes so that Pratt's development is displayed within the context of his times through clear and necessary explanations of the state of Canadian poetry in the century's teens, of the dominance of Wundtian psychology at the University of Toronto during this period and Pratt's growing attraction to other rival schools of thought, and of the origins and repercussions of the Bliss Carman controversy of 1925. Brief biographical sketches of some of Pratt's contemporaries — teachers, writers, and publishers — appear too. His friend Arthur Phelps; the stubborn editor of *Saturday Night*, Arthur Deacon; and Deacon's candidate for Canadian poetic laurels, Wilson MacDonald; as well as the publishers, Lorne Pierce and Hughie Eayrs, all play their part. So too does the man credited with giving Pratt at last a satisfying profession as a teacher of English at Victoria college and, through his informal poetry class, continuing encouragement to become a poet — Pelham Edgar. Pratt's marriage to Viola Whitney Pratt in 1918 at the age of 36 was a tremendous stabilizer in a life that was threatening to drift. But in this volume Viola Pratt remains a shadowy figure, a source of valuable insights about her husband but not a fully drawn character herself. Perhaps she will be given a more prominent role in the volume to come. Pitt's literary interpretation begins with discussions of early influences on Pratt's "juvenilia," and extends through the full and interesting chapter devoted to the experimental "Clay," to scholarly matters like the sudden excisions from the original draft of *The Witches' Brew*. Passages of psychological exploration identify several unifying threads in Pratt's personality.

The boyhood years indicate that, whether because of real or perceived delicacy, "Eddie" was regarded as "the odd one," the sickly child in the family, the one for whom indoor rather than outdoor pursuits were more suitable; as a consequence, he may have been coddled by his mother, Fanny Pratt, and have been linked to her by particularly strong emo-

tional ties. It seems to have been her fondest hope, as well as his father's growing ambition (when his brothers found other careers) that he enter the Methodist ministry. This path, along which Pratt started reluctantly (probably even allowing himself to be "blackmailed" to do so by his parents so that he could further his schooling at the Methodist College in St. John's after the dead-end shop clerk's job), gave him increasing misgivings as he grew older. Still, he seems to have been unable to betray his mother's trust and, long after his father's death, Pitt asserts that "a strong compulsion to please her, respect her wishes, live up to her expectations" was "to hinder the shaping of an emotionally secure and independent personality of his own."

Certainly, as children, all the young Pratts were under the shadow of the poet's father, the Rev. John Pratt, stern Methodist preacher, known on the island as Boanerges, son of thunder. Pitt attributes to his influence Pratt's lasting distaste for anything that smacked of Puritanism, though this aspect of his personality — and part of what Pitt labels the "truant" streak — took a long time to surface. As with the other personal relationships which touched him deeply, Pratt was circumspect in recording his mixed felings about his parents, but his brother Cal hinted that he was capable of rebellion within the family (seen perhaps in the academic failures of his early teens and the later hints that he would like to have gone to sea) even if he chose to repress the tendency most of the time for the sake of his mother.

The perceived weakness, combined with the determination to conceal it, is seen as explaining much in the poet's character and creative work. As compensation for weakness he set out in life to master whatever he found difficult, even fearsome, from swimming and diving in the outports to public speaking and debating at university. The sensitive, even sentimental self, which those close to him found an essential part of his nature, frightened him as a sign of weakness. Small wonder then that the crucial personal experiences of his life often remained buried deep in his heart, instead of being confided to journal or to poem. Tragedy, much as the death of Lydia or the illness of Claire, was to be borne without whimper, even to be disguised by high spirits.

The biographer finds the same tendency to discipline and control emotion in the development of the young poet. In the "juvenilia" the false notes are not only the result of over-elaborate diction, but of sentimentality. Effective lyric verse eluded him for some years until he found "objective correlatives" for his emotions. Not surprisingly, then, he was attracted to the more impersonal style of the storyteller, and so his growing skill as a narrative poet was an outgrowth of his nature as well as the result of his upbringing in an oral culture and his belief that poetry was essentially public art and not private confessional. A desire to compensate for weakness can also be detected in his poetry. Just as Pratt's lifelong enchantment with the sport of boxing is linked to the vicarious childhood excitement of watching more vigorous and less inhibited comrades from the sidelines, so the admiration discernible in his poetry for practically anything that exhibited strength, good health, or abundant energy, is traced to the enduring desire to share through literature in uplifting and heroic action. Thus the poet identified himself directly with the struggle of the Cachalot because "it was an excellent way of releasing repressions" and it gave him a chance to "express my Irish love of a fight without bodily injury to myself."

Pitt also traces Pratt's desire for surrogate brothers to replace the close frater-

nal comradeship he enjoyed in his youth. Once established in Toronto, he surrounded himself with a large circle of acquaintances, whose company he not only relished but needed as relief from the heartaches of the private man and the solitude of the poet. Here Pitt is most convincing on the psychological needs fulfilled by Pratt's role as host of festive dinners and famous stag parties. They were not only opportunities for relaxation in conversation and good humour, but they seemed to be in some way secular recreations of the cheery congregational suppers in Newfoundland outports where his father played such a dominant role. Most important, though, they were a way to "assume the outward characteristics of a kind of hero, larger than life, a focal figure, very male and very brave, without the least risk to himself or to his delicate sensibilities."

But many of the company who attended these functions were kept at a distance; throughout his life Pratt had very few intimate friends and these he seemed to regard as brothers. Since Arthur Phelps was one of these, it seems appropriate, as Pitt does, to attach some importance to his analysis of the "allegro" and "penseroso" sides of the poet's character. Lorne Pierce, a stern ascetic, who at times condemned Pratt for frivolity, saw the duality as "Appollonian" and "Dionysian," while the poet's wife discerned a combination of several different kinds of personalities. Pitt himself seems to settle on the metaphor of the actor who wore a variety of masks.

Students of Pratt's work will find plenty of interesting suggestions about the sources of Pratt's creativity. The author is adept at using Pratt's PhD thesis, his few papers on scholarly topics in psychology and literature, and his early comic essays as guides to charting intellectual and literary development. He suggests too that the poet's fondness for the cinema explains his predilection for large-scale adventures recorded by an omniscient spectator. Certainly there was a close relationship between the 1924 film version of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* and the writing of the *The Great Feud*. Two good examples are given of the poet's readiness to incorporate the suggestions of respected readers into his work. John Masefield, who had been sent a copy of *The Cachalot*, advised more emphasis on the final conflict, and so eight strong lines were added to the poem before publication. Later Laurence Binyon objected to two passages in *The Great Feud* and Pratt, convinced that he was right, made dramatic excisions (revealed in comparison of the 1926 version with that in *Collected Poems* (1944)). Pitt is less happy about the results of the rigorous pruning of *The Witches' Brew*. He discusses at length Hardy's influence (particularly of *The Dynasts*) on Pratt's philosophy and poetry.

In the Preface, an unidentified friend of the poet is quoted as saying that E. J. Pratt had an interesting enough life to warrant a biography, even if he had not made any other contribution, poetic or otherwise. Understandably, perhaps, Pitt hedges a bit but it seems clear that the claim is unsupportable. The Newfoundland youth makes for intriguing reading, as do such experiences as Pratt's active involvement in early intelligence testing and the first days of the Canadian mental health movement, but surely the really interesting questions are the ones Pitt addresses so well. By what strange and circuitous route did Pratt become a poet? How did he, always a late bloomer, become such a good poet in such a relatively short time? When this volume ends he had been writing seriously for only five or six years, yet he was in the front rank of Canadian poets. In answering these questions David G. Pitt has pro-

duced an excellent literary biography; we await the further delight of the second volume.

CATHERINE MC KINNON PFAFF

NO WOMAN IS AN ISLAND

AUDREY THOMAS, *Intertidal Life*, Stoddart, $19.95.

THIS IS THE STORY OF Alice Hoyle, divorced mother and novelist (and all three designations are significant to the novel), who returns with her youngest daughter, Flora, to live on a small Edenic island (in the Gulf Islands, British Columbia) on which the entire family had lived — both with and without the father/husband — a decade before. Alice has returned to get her house and soul in order before undergoing major surgery. She relives, sorts out, exorcises the emotions she felt when her husband left her: self-recrimination, vengeful anger, constant hope, realizing in the end: "I am a good woman . . . I let myself be persuaded that I wasn't, that I was, in my personal relations anyway, a failure." This is a novel about marriage, about its expectations, its rituals, its failings. It is also about the difference between the love (affection and respect over time) that Alice believes in, in spite of and because of experience, and the passion of the moment, the glamour, intensity, and romance that Peter, her husband, desires, a passion or fiction asociated with the clichéd Harlequin novels young Flora likes to read. In the background of the novel is an entire "era" — the sixties and seventies: hippies with their drugs, their gentleness and meditation, masking what Alice sees as a need for authority (gurus) and much hidden aggression and pain. Alice has little patience for the Kahlil Gibran-quoting, inarticulate, humourless, and narcissistic "takers" who know not how to give. Their "flabbiness of spirit" offends her as much as her husband's attraction to a freer, "alternate life-style," though the two are not unrelated. For Alice, it is a major trivialization of life and love to want to revert to playing at being a child, Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. As both mother and writer, nurturer and creator, Alice is offended by this passive rejection of both responsibility and creativity: "Somebody's got to be the parent."

This is clearly also a novel about women and woman — but perhaps no more or no less so than *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* is about men and man. This is the portrait of the artist as mother, of woman as creatrix. For biological and social reasons, women have had a different relationship to creation and to being an artist than men. Women create under the auspices of the moon, not the moon as "Chaste Diana," but rather as that which determines her bodily rhythms as surely as it does the tides: "Men are related to the sun. The sun never changes its shape. Sisters of the Moon we are, shape shifters, but oh so predictable in our shifting. We hold the waters of the world in our nets."

Clearly, "intertidal life" is female life. Alice and Flora plan to study the island's "seaweeds and intertidal creatures," but, through memory, it is the female and human creatures of that island that take up her attention. Here, women are associated with water — with the sea, but also with tears, cups of tea, menstrual blood, and the waters that break at birth. In her particular geographical locality, of course, water is also what men have used as a means of exploring, of getting somewhere, of finding a land to conquer: the epigraphs of the three sections of the novel are from a book Alice reads, *A Spanish Voyage to Vancouver*. These two seemingly different associations of water

are not unrelated, as Alice sees: "Babies drop out of us from our most secret places through channels the fathers have charted and laid claim to. Rivers of pain and blood." On another level, the exploration theme is linked to that of creation, as Alice argues that the early ages of maritime discovery which inspired the language of John Donne (maps, new lands, compasses) are now finding their modern equivalent (and hence, the maritime imagery in her own — and Thomas' — writing about human relations): "what's happening to men and women today is just as exciting and terrifying as the discovery that the earth was round, not flat."

But the ages of exploration were the ages of imperialism, and Alice knows that it is only women who can put an end to the age of male imperialism, for they have consented to their own conquering: "Women have *let* men define them, taken their *names* even, with marriage, just like a conquered or newly settled region, *British* Columbia . . . *New* France." Could women ever themselves become the explorers, the namers? Whether real or metaphorical, the voyages of women would never be like those of men: "one went on a true quest alone. . . . One didn't bring along three kids, a lame dog and a spiteful cat." The epigraph to the final section of the novel suggests, according to one reading, a victory of the female moon and waters, the "intertidal life": "We put out our oars, endeavouring with them to counteract the current, but alas the efforts of the sailors were in vain."

Yet the "Moon ladies" of the novel all revolve around the male sun, Peter. Nevertheless, it is women and the friendship of women that offer a way for Alice to deal with the pain and to survive the "great tidal wave . . . of hatred" that engulfed her when Peter left. Through her daughters and her female friends on the island, Alice learns about herself and about women. She explores the articulations of the female stereotypes in our culture: its clichés that she herself mouths, its popular songs, its magazine images, its religion, its education, its law, and its family structures that women, as mothers, help to enforce. Alice does not spare our literature from this examination, from serious to popular forms. The Harlequin romances that Flora (and Alice) read on the island, with their stereotyped and stereotyping male and female roles, are more guilty, or perhaps just more overtly guilty, of conditioning their female readers' expectations about life and love. Alice consoles herself with the thought of Flora's other reading, *Madame Bovary*, a good antidote to Harlequin novels — the tale of the woman whose reading of such romances brought about her death, for she mistakenly believed that the events of books were "out there" in life, waiting for her. Alice also explores the acceptance of these secondary roles by women themselves, mercilessly studying her own and other women's needs to define themselves in terms of their men, their yearning to get stability, security and guidance from men, rather than from themselves.

It is largely because Alice is a writer that she can (realistically) articulate both her emotions and this kind of analysis. This characterization device and the plot structure of a frame and an interrupted journal are Thomas' structural tools. With them, she can help the reader put together the fragments of the puzzle "Alice Hoyle: 1,000 Interlocking Pieces." In the same way she can articulate her emotions and her critique of the role of women in society, Alice can write about writing. A mixture of a *Künstlerroman* and metafiction, the novel presents us with the product of her journal writing and a first- and third-person commentary on the fact of her writing, on the

problems of being a writer and a mother, a writer and a woman (who is expected to put people before her work). Writing is an ambivalent activity for Alice: it is both important, though "lonely work . . . trying to see," and it is also what women do when they wish to lay blame (her own mother's letters, Selene's mother's letters that provoke asthma in the receiver). Alice learns to write and to see, not to blame.

As writer, Alice is a namer and names are of obvious significance to the novel, both in their symbolic echoing and in their relation to things. Alice composes a list of "Household Words," of people who gave their names to things: "M. Guillotin . . . Mr. Hoyle." Later, it is clear that Mrs. Hoyle is a thing, a "household word" too, a fate Alice once accepted with pleasure. Peter changes in the novel from "Peter the Rock" to "Peter Pan," as he peters out. He is also "Peter Peter pumpkin eater / Had a wife and couldn't keep her." Alice is the Alice of Wonderland who cannot understand the new world — without a man — into which she has fallen.

Alice is a writer obsessed with language. It is a family joke that she always has her dictionary in hand, searching etymologies and meanings. These are given to the reader in three different forms. Sometimes they are just given in their factual bareness as dictionary entries, but their context provides the irony. In bed, missing and desiring her absent husband, Alice offers: "*Pudendum*, n. (usu. in pl. *-da*) / Privy parts — (*L. pudere*, to be ashamed." Other examples provide a commentary on the word and its derivation, either for the benefit of herself or others: "Stoned. Such an interesting word. As compared to 'sloshed' or 'smashed' or 'pissed," for example. A hard word, 'stoned.' Who had thought it up? From astonish, probably, so it must have been a professor unless a happy accident." Even more often though, puns, verbal play, or personal word associations are part of the normal fabric of Alice's language: "I could hear the 'end' in 'friend,' I could see the 'rust' in 'trust.' "

Alice perceives her verbal side as her intellectual strength. But this is only one part of the creatrix. The other is perhaps less intellectual than visceral. Writing in the novel is overtly connected with pregnancy and birth. And this Alice is always linked to her cat, Tabby, by more than a reference to the Cheshire Cat: appropriately they are overtly drawn together by sexual play on the word "pussy," and both are always associated with their offspring. As novelist as well as mother, though, Alice knows the pains and pleasure of birth. Like Tabby, she has had her children alone, just as she must write alone. Moon-like, she cannot reject pregnancy and motherhood, as Stella, the star (with echoes of Tennessee Williams' Stella), can and does, but at the price of creativity. In the real world, "After the Immaculate Conception, the maculate delivery." In other words, these female functions — pregnancy, giving birth, mothering — are ambivalent functions for the female artist. A matter of worry and skill, motherhood is both the consequence and the reward of creation. It is both Alice's identity and the threat to her identity: "Who can see the 'other' in mother?" It is the cause of the loss of her boy-husband's love, not only because of his immaturity and Oedipal problems, but because the mother and novelist parts of her took up most of her energies. While motherhood brings with it pain, it also wields power (positive and negative), and gives strength.

Despite the constant theme, albeit ambivalent, of creation and creativity, death haunts the novel. However, there is none of the obsessive association of sex and death with creativity that one finds in

the recent novels of Canadian male novelists, in *Alibi*, *My Lovely Enemy*, or *Lusts*. Here death frames the novel — both figuratively (the death of the marriage) and literally, as Alice awaits and fears her death in surgery. From the start the island is tainted with death through the mention of the suicide of the lighthouse keeper's wife. But from this moment on, the reader becomes aware that this is a very *literary* (and thus implicitly eternalized, creative) death. In fact, all the death references in the novel are directly related to some other literary work or figure. The (self-) drowned Virginia Woolf, as we shall see, is perhaps the most present. Alice contemplates her suicide and her novels hover in the background: *The Waves* with its water motif and absent male figure lamented by all, and *To the Lighthouse*, with its two women — the artist, Lily, and the mother and wife, Mrs. Ramsay. But there are other literary echoes as well: Alice calls the West the "land of the dead," recalling for the reader her own earlier reference to Joyce's story "The Dead." Joyce's wife, however, has an even more symbolic function in the intertidal life of women: "N. Barnacle, God's holy name for us all." Other intertextual references are just as overt. While contemplating the possibility of being buried in and nourishing her beloved garden, Alice cites T. S. Eliot: "the corpse you buried in your garden / has it begun to sprout."

But perhaps the most extended set of echoes is to Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man* with its similar symbolic time setting of Hallowe'en and all the verbal play — in general (here much more extensive, however) and in particular (Atwood's Elizabeth, mother of daughters, plays on "*Mummy*. A dried corpse in a guilded cage. *Mum*, silent. *Mama*, short for mammary gland" in much the same way that Alice does. Certain scenes are directly echoed: Elizabeth reads in the bathtub a child's riddle book with a saying about an hourglass that she relates directly to her sister's death by drowning and to her own demise, and here Alice cites a joke in her daughter's book, "Q. What does a Baby Ghost call his parents?" to which the reply is "Dead and Mummy." Of course, both are novels about marriage disintegration, human relations, and how women cope with solitude and parental responsibility. Also, the opting of Atwood's Lesje (Alice) for creative birth instead of a life in the past of fantasy and museum relics, finds its echoes in Thomas's novel, for "intertidal life" is, in a sense, "life before man."

This is, therefore, a very "literary" novel, and not only because its protagonist is a novelist. And it is also very Canadian in its particular literary echoes. George Bowering's *Burning Water* with its metafictional concern for writing and exploring (and for George Vancouver) is always in the background. Lowry is directly quoted. But it is not just references to British Columbia that point to Canadian literary contexts. The trunk label, "NOT WANTED ON VOYAGE" may be an accidental nod to Timothy Findley, but the reference both to the Book of Daniel's "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" and to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor do suggest (in their themes of judgment, abdication of responsibility, and divorce) a connection with *Famous Last Words*, another book about writing.

Other direct references to works of literature are those to books about women (*Justine*, *Women in Love*, Tolstoy's repeated line that happy women have no histories) or by women (Radcliffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* and Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* — Alice always writes on the kitchen table, for she never gets that room of her own). Other intertextual echoes are directly related to central themes. The most obvious configuration of echoes is that of the drowned

woman: the adulteress of myth, Ophelia, Virginia Woolf. As in *The Waste Land,* water is an ambivalent image: it is both the source of life (intertidal too) and purification, but it is also the cause of death.

But the ending of the novel is also ambivalent. The positive reading of the epigraph offered earlier could also be inverted and seen as a negative, as a surrender to the currents of danger and death. Although her garden has flourished after years of care, and although her daughters (one is, after all, called Flora) flourish as well, Alice does not feel her life is in order. Does the novel about creation and birth end with death? Certainly the echoes of *To the Lighthouse* are ominous: Flora and Peter in the rowboat suggest James and Mr. Ramsay finally rowing to the lighthouse — after Mrs. Ramsay's death. But the final words of the novel are those of the female artist figure, as they are here. Lily Briscoe and Virginia Woolf, like Audrey Thomas, finish their works of art as the novel we read ends and they do so with the words of the creatrix: "I have had my vision." So too have we.

LINDA HUTCHEON

OTHER WORLDS

PAULINE GEDGE, *The Twelfth Transforming.* Macmillan, $22.95.

LIKE HER BEST-SELLING *Child of the Morning,* Pauline Gedge's latest work is about ancient Egypt, particularly, about King Tut's immediate ancestors during the Seventeenth Dynasty (fourteenth century B.C.). For anyone with only a hazy knowledge of the subject, and perhaps the privilege of having seen the contents of King Tut's tomb, *The Twelfth Transforming* is a surprising education and an indulgently amusing read. This is one of those anyone-can-enjoy and everyone-over-twelve-will-appreciate books that satisfies best-seller criteria, which is not to disparage it. Historical novels are popular when they successfully reinvent a past we think we already know. To do this they must be clever. They must satisfy the reader's desire to be entranced, to be drawn into the world of the story without effort or suspicion. *The Twelfth Transforming* tells its story well.

What strikes one first about this novel is its old-fashioned dramatic structure and its almost quaint disregard for narrative gimmickry. These days, the alert book reviewer must be prepared for the first sign of self-reflexive prose. One is armed from the start against the assault of multiple narrative voices, recessive stories, buried myths, deliberate anachronisms, labyrinthine plots — the required fictional devices of post-Derrida fiction/history/myth/story-telling. But Gedge is either completely unaware of current literary interests, or defiantly unmoved by such critical trends, since *The Twelfth Transforming* is as straightforwardly episodic and structurally uncomplicated as is respectably possible. The most radical departure from the omniscient historical story-telling that Walter Scott invented consists of italicized passages reflecting the central characters' private thoughts. In other words, *The Twelfth Transforming* seems to have been written in a social vacuum. The surprise is that one is urged to surrender to the unilateral superficiality of this historical re-telling, for its own sake. After a while, the reader must abandon the project of discovering elaborately wrought literary games in order to yield to the persistent narrative movement of the text. This is an oddly refreshing exercise — as if one needed to be reminded that they don't write novels like they used to.

This is not to say, however, that *The Twelfth Transforming* lacks design or intelligence. Gedge has obviously researched Egyptian antiquity so scrupulously that only a devoted Egyptologist could detect an inaccuracy, if one exists. Notable historical figures are granted hearts and appetites, flesh and feelings, as they share in a world as mysteriously remote and exotically barbarous as any culture lost to us through time and misunderstanding. The attraction of ancient Egypt itself is as obvious and compelling as Mayan or Minoan civilizations. Ruined cities haunt our planet as barely decipherable reminders of the powerful glory of earlier worlds. In Egypt, the monumental achievements of the past — the pyramids, the temples at Karnak, the Valley of the Kings — bear the solemn weight of an old paradox: great cultures thrive and then die, and yet their ruins persist, casting shadows over our own dreams of immortality. Like the Ozymandias of Shelley's sonnet, the great kings vainly challenged time itself. And yet, like Shelley's poem itself, something remains to tease us into believing that the challenge can be met.

The reader shares Gedge's obsession to know the glorious past of Egypt — to know it as intimately as we know our present. If *The Twelfth Transforming* fails to satisfy our hunger for such intimacy, it is because of the impossibility of knowing, and not because of Gedge's efforts. In fact, *The Twelfth Transforming* increases our desire to know more about these strangely distant, strangely familiar people. At the centre of the book is a woman, the Empress Tiye, who was a commoner by birth. Her marriage to the pharoah Amunhotep III (1386-1349 B.C.) broke with custom, since the strict rules of succession necessitated marriage to only the most legitimate royal heiress, such as one's sister. *The Twelfth Transforming* begins at the moment of Amunhotep's declining health, when Tiye herself, one of the most powerful women in antiquity, is approaching middle age. In addition to their other children, Tiye and Amunhotep produce a son, the fledgling pharaoh Amunhotep IV. When Amunhotep III finally dies, the son assumes the divine status of emperor of Egypt and marries his mother, Tiye, in a surprising but not altogether unacceptable gesture of familial and political bonding. At first Tiye is reluctant to be the wife of her son, a rather deformed and sickly son at that, but she gradually learns to enjoy her son-husband's carnal attention — and the accompanying power — and bears him several children, one of whom becomes King Tutankhamun.

This summary merely headlines the major relationship of the novel. The incestuous bondings become so numerous, and the various issues of these incestuous palace relations become so common that it is difficult to remember just where one family ends and another begins. Sisters and brothers, cousins, fathers, daughters, and mothers breed among themselves with astonishing enthusiasm. Any attempt at a genealogical chart fails to sketch more than a tangle of overlapping branches. But the subject of incest is what makes *The Twelfth Transforming* so compelling. The narrative chronicler of Gedge's invention records these turbulent relations with a matter-of-factness that barely masks the boiling passions and curious sexual preferences of these powerful, even noble figures. The result is a historical novel that affects detachment to chronicle a sordidly delicious list of human depravities: a wretchedly ill, half-mad pharoah seduces his reluctant younger brother; Nefertiti (Empress Tiye's niece) arranges the drowning of her nubile cousin, a potential rival to the throne; Nefertiti's gorgeous half-sister walks through the book cracking a bull-

whip at her two terrified dancing dwarves; Tiye's son-husband beds his sickly daughter who dies bearing his stillborn child. Any one of these situations would be the centre of a popular romance but all of these are found in this one work; moreover, historical evidence suggests that most of the material in *The Twelfth Transforming* did occur. This work gives the impression that Gedge merely let the facts speak for themselves.

It took the skills of imaginative recreation, of course, to humanize historical phantoms, and to provide them with convincing motivations and feelings. While the book may skimp, perhaps necessarily, on psychological truth, it persuades us through its investigation of private lives set against the formidable backdrop of social changes. We know, for example, that Tiye's son-husband, Amunhotep IV, managed to institute religious reform of a sweeping nature. He selected one god, the sun god, to be the sole object of his veneration. In so doing, he transferred the ancient seat of power from Thebes to Amarna, renamed himself Akhetaten, preached a new "Teaching" — a radical theology emphasizing the natural unity of the divine — fostered a more naturalistic form of artistic expression, shut down the temples of the old gods all over Egypt, and practised pacifist politics. The book's centre of consciousness rests with Tiye, but the object of her fears and attentions is her son, Amunhotep/Akhetaten, who remains as mysterious to her as he does to us: partly irresponsible and childish, partly deranged and visionary. Akhetaten was as powerful and strange a ruler as any great historical figure and Gedge prefers to leave the mystery of his personal strength and recurrent psychic breakdowns unresolved. How could one explain a grotesquely formed leader who slept with his mother and then with all of their children, who celebrated harmony and religious unity and then brought his country to the brink of catastrophe?

Gedge does provide her own theories of what really happened during the obviously turbulent Seventeenth Dynasty and the curious reader will be amused to match Gedge's plot against several acceptable modern interpretations of events: the current belief, for example, that Nefertiti adopted the trappings of kingship and ruled as a man during the last years of Akhetaten's reign. Gedge provides a rather different, and convincing, explanation of historical material. It is also fun to discover how Gedge provides incidental allusions to some of the objects that were found in King Tut's tomb. One of the measures of the book's success is that it encourages curiosity, so that one is invited to seek authenticity in maps and histories of Egypt. And one is apt to realize that *The Twelfth Transforming* is as reliable a history as any credible account of antiquity.

For nearly four hundred pages one is drawn into the sensuous summer heat of the Nile valley. The landscape, which Gedge describes in weighty detail, submits to the steady glare of the solar god while flies buzz lazily, snakes crawl indifferently, and monkeys chatter aggressively in the palace rooms. Under the merciless sun, the royal families glide from one incestuous bed to another, draped in linens and gold, their eyes kohl-lined, their bodies oil-rubbed, moving through history like heat-drugged victims of an obscure destiny. It is hard to image how Pauline Gedge found the inspiration to write so convincingly of near-suffocating heat while living in Alberta; Canadians should read this novel during the winter, to remind them not only that there are other worlds but also that there are other climates.

NOREEN GOLFMAN

MOTHERING REDOUBLED

NICOLE BROSSARD, *Journal Intime*. Les Herbes Rouges, n.p.

MARGUERITE ANDERSEN, *L'autrement pareille*. Prise de Parole, $8.95.

THESE NEW BOOKS by Nicole Brossard and Marguerite Andersen make a natural pair. In their reciprocal relationship they exemplify the "same difference," the paradox which gives its title to Andersen's serial poem and is at the heart of Brossard's project of feminist deconstruction, bodied forth here in a parodic diary. The oxymoron elaborates on the difference, the deferral and doubling of writing, underlining the disruptive, decentring nature of this particular feminist aesthetic. It also explicitly refers in Andersen's text, and in Brossard's feminist trilogy — *L'Amèr* (*These Our Mothers*), *Un sens apparent*, *Amantes* (*Lovhers*) — to the embrace of women lovers, characteristic of the complex formation of the female subject, which constitutes the fundamental challenge to a symbolic order ruled by binary logic and the law of non-contradiction. A feminist challenge to the reigning conventions is grounded in this matrilineal tradition.

Journal intime and *L'autrement pareille* are written from such a loving embrace. Brossard, the younger woman, is the more established writer. Andersen, the older woman, is the literary daughter. Brossard's earlier writings are the palimpsestic texts in *L'autrement pareille*. From *L'Amèr* there are echoes of a meditation on the difference of mother/daughter relations and a celebration of the love between two women. While Brossard's mother drinks beer with her, Andersen's is dead in Germany long ago. The narrative thrust of the long poem is to find this dead mother. In the second section, "Voyage d'été," her presence lingers in the linen press of her house. Andersen's memories are the fictions of love that fill the gap caused by death and allow her to realize her "rêve d'une appartenance mater-filliale." She recognizes that she has inherited her mother's tremendous energy and that it was her mother who encouraged her to leave Germany where her imagination was suffocating. Even in absence, then, Andersen remains close to the mother.

In this section and the next, "La recherche," where the persona is carrying out research (at the Université de Grenoble) on the imagination, the searches are doubled by another voice remembering the embrace of her "pareille," her woman lover on another continent. In the framing of the sequence as love poems, as dialogue with a distant beloved encountered through letters and the texts she writes, we hear echoes of Brossard's *Amantes* and its reflection on writing as reading activated by desire. The spiral of women's texts is extended through the quotation of a letter from Mme de Sévigné to her daughter discussing her compulsive desire to write as evidence of a preference for the daughter's absence. By implication, Andersen's writing too is the presence of absence. Brossard's absent presence is figured in extended meditations on the vertigo of the modern concrete city — Grenoble here and not New York — in the language — "mère/fille/*amantes*" — and the litany of beloved women writers, though this one includes many famous German women to mark the difference in the resemblance. Thanks are explicitly offered to Nicole as an apostrophe in the meditation on the city, while the quotation of a passage from *Picture Theory* on Sarah Dérive Stein underlines the textual strategy of drifting derivation that Andersen has borrowed from Brossard for her self-reflexive text. In the final section, "Finale et prélude,"

the intertextual play on *L'Amèr* is resumed. Here the problem of the first section, "Demeter démente," (mad, belied) a "maîtresse sans maîtrise," is countered by a view of the père as "perfide," "perturbation." The end and the beginning are predicted in a new order for women. Utopian dreams of the future in "irréalité," are contrasted with the "réalité," work in a home for battered women. The new order will come forth in "la chorale des femmes autrement pareilles," in the multiple voices of women who will have become different, in the future perfect of revolutions of perspective, to be reached through fictions.

In Andersen's writing, we rediscover Brossard's word play and neologisms (Mère merverse je verse dans la drame spectaculaire") language which foregrounds itself as the means of constructing reality. Through the echoes of "dé/lire," and "dé/raison," we are caught up in the "discours répétif à l'infini," the recursive paradigm of the feminine spiral. The danger, of course, is that we may have reached the vanishing point, so faint has become the echo. The strong emotion in Andersen's memories of her mother and in her description of battered women assures that this book has not yet reached that point of ceasing to speak to us. However, the great number of parodic repetitions in her work points out the danger of the spiralling movement of intersecting texts becoming rigidified in convention, where difference is narrowed to identity. This is especially clear when one looks at Brossard's reworkings of Adrienne Rich and Gertrude Stein, radical misreadings where the drift is more evident than the derivation.

This is evident in Brossard's *Journal intime*, which in its attention to daily life would seem to mark a radical departure in the direction of her writing. While the diary form might seem to introduce the referent into her work, since, in the generic contract autobiography establishes between writer and reader, the protagonist and the narrator and the author are all signified by the same proper noun that appears on the title page, *Journal intime* breaks this pact. There is little *bio*, except the remembered birth of Brossard's daughter in 1975; there is some *auto*, but of the Brossardian self-reflexive text which comments on its own production; and there is much *graph*. In this text, the doubling of the self is both subject and method. In its play on the life/art boundaries, in its underlining the artifice of any life plot, of the way it is constructed through reading and narration, Brossard's text becomes a strong misreading of Andersen's first book, *De mèmoire de femme* and of the long tradition of women's autobiographical fiction from which it derives. Where the emphasis there was on the failure of fiction to adequately account for the realities of women's lives, thus inviting a compensatory focus on the personal and on everyday life, Brossard's book is a fictive journal about the fictions governing our perception of the real. *Journal intime* is a parody of a diary, challenging all the conventions of the genre. Its characteristic fragmentary form alone remains intact.

What characterizes this form of private writing, and distinguishes it from memoirs and autobiographies, is the diary's insistence on the present tense. Dated, written from day to day, it deals with events that have just happened. While Brossard's *Journal* is written in the present tense, its entries range from past to future. That for 19 March 1983 relates a memory of a day in New York in 1975, while the following entry, dated 27 November 1975, tells us this is "my" birthday, and I am in Paris continuing the work begun on that film in New York. The gap between is covered by words, for both begin with virtually the same sen-

tence — "Hier, il s'est agi de refaire le monde" — which is also the opening sentence for 18 March. Past, present and future coexist in the act of writing; the present tense of writing, which makes connections possible, is the subject of this diary. Such repetition emphasizes the sameness of the entries, the artificial nature of their divisions, even as it marks the breaks and draws attention to the difference of their contexts. Elsewhere, Brossard mocks the instantaneity of the diary by making several headings for entries on January 26 which record the time taken in composition. "D'un instant à l'autre, suis-je train de m'inventer comme ce matin," we read as "Ten o'clock twenty-one seconds," is succeeded by "Ten fifty." Later, the text redoubles on itself to comment on this power of the writer to slow down the act of writing in order to learn to identify the mechanisms of thinking. These, we read, are the blanks represented by white paper, an observation that comments also on Brossard's characteristic writing in her other books.

Conventionally, the diary is a record of travels, or of an illness, the story of the growth or change of a person, story of the construction of an identity. *Journal intime* challenges this convention also, for there is no "plot" to this diary: its limits are arbitrarily fixed by a contract from the CBC to be broadcast in a series of writers' diaries. It was written from 26 January to 28 March 1983 and broadcast for a week in August. In this public format and in its reticence about personal details, the *Journal* again contrasts with the generic diary. The mother of a friend dies and is mourned, another friend sends a post card commenting on the criticism of Brossard's work, she spends a day reading over the translation of her book. These events concern Brossard's writing life, not her domestic life, and only fleetingly her passions. Self-reflexively, the diary comments on its definition of intimate in which "my life, my text" are interwoven. There are no boundaries, just as there is no progress, because there is no origin — only writing. Brossard underlines this proposition with her entry: "le mouvement perpétuel c'est entre vivre et écrire. A vrai dire, c'est peut-être entre écrire et écrire. Vie privée, vie d'écriture. 'Elle vivait de mots.' " The writer constructs herself in her text: a writer lives only in her text. In writing herself Brossard has eliminated the referent to a much greater degree than has Andersen.

But in insisting thus on the "I" as word-being, the book is also ironically marked as a writer's diary and parodies this sub-genre as well. Readers of Anaïs Nin and Virginia Woolf are familiar with this convention of layered fictions, diaries, journals, notebooks, each presenting a different stratification of experience and a different mask to the world. Through her allusions to these and other diary-writing novelists Brossard places her *Journal* in dialogue with these conventions of multiplying personae, recursive structures. From their private papers we learn more about the psychic and social origins of their "fictions," while from Brossard's *Journal* we learn that depth and revelation are suspect. There is only the counterfeiting, as the anamorphic picture of Brossard on the cover announces.

This critique of representation offers a challenge to social as well as literary conventions. For the "personal is political" is a feminist slogan that Brossard has made much of in *L'Amèr* where she advocates women writing themselves out of the private sphere into history. *Journal intime* advances this project by suppressing the biographical element and focusing on the graph, the trace in history. Moreover, the whole question of an original and a reproduction becomes prepos-

terous in face of the intertwining embrace of these two texts. However, in doubling Brossard's text, Andersen paradoxically sets up a hierarchy in the very act of overturning it. For her selection of the Brossard text as intertext grants it, albeit temporarily, the authority of determining a major direction in contemporary feminist writing, a fact confirmed by the presence of such lively offspring.

BARBARA GODARD

EMPIRE & BUMBLE-PUPPY

SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN, *The Pool in the Desert*. Penguin, $5.95.

The Pool in the Desert was recently reviewed, along with three other volumes in the new Penguin Short Fiction Series, in a column titled "Three hits and a miss," it being the miss. If a failure to connect describes Duncan's group of four stories, the misfortune lies less in the author's actual talents than in her inability to draw a crowd because of her anomalous position in the outfield of international English literature. As an admirer and occasional imitator of Henry James, she is obscured by the master. As a chronicler of Anglo-India, she is lost in the shadow of E. M. Forster. Canadians are interested primarily in her few works relating to her native Canada (of which this is not one), and her moderate feminism has yet to catch the eye of mainstream British and American feminist critics, whose interest in pre-World War One colonial writers usually stops at Olive Schreiner.

Set entirely in India, *The Pool in the Desert* appears to have been written immediately after *The Imperialist* (although it was published a year earlier, in 1903), and the two books present the poles of Duncan's life and work. In comparison to India, the Elgin of *The Imperialist* is a fertile pond, characterized by social flexibility and a vision of the future, while in relation to Canada, Anglo-India is an arid, stifling desert. Paradoxically, its most sterile region is Simla, "where deodars and scandals grow," the comfortable mountain retreat of the English administration during their annual escape from Calcutta in the hot season: "set on the top of a hill, years and miles away from literature, music, pictures, politics, existing like a harem on the gossip of the Viceroy's intentions, and depending for amusement on tennis and bumble-puppy."

From the lofty heights of Simla, the setting of the two longer stories, Duncan's characters venture only occasional glances at "the real India, lying beyond the outer ranges, flat and blue and pictured with forests and rivers like a map." Moreover, they prefer a view unmarred by reality; "sensitive people," Duncan sardonically notes, "liked it better when the heat mists veiled [the plains] and it was possible to look abroad without a sudden painful thought of contrasting temperatures." In her introduction to this edition, Rosemary Sullivan comments that "the social context of Indian poverty and suffering is virtually absent from [Duncan's] stories." This absence may be partly accounted for by Duncan's preference for first-person narrators who themselves seem to have chosen to exclude "the real India" from their consciousness. The narrator of "An Impossible Ideal," perhaps the most profound story of the group, is a senior administrator unable to devote as much time as he would like to a certain young lady because of his pressing duties, but all we learn of his work is that he shuffles copious files and must take a journey "through the famine district." Not a jot more appears about the famine. This is, however, a story about art, love,

and society in which native India is used symbolically. The refusal of native princes to pay for commissioned portraits because the artist has not stooped to flattery, and the awarding of the Viceroy's gold medal to an uninspired, "conscientiously painted" piece of local colour, both serve as parables of the fragility of the artist's integrity in a Philistine environment. True art is represented by Ingersoll Armour, an American-born, Paris-trained Bohemian who rather unaccountably drifts into Simla, and eventually musters the strength to save his soul and leave, resisting the temptations of a good marriage and a cushy job as director of the Calcutta School of Art.

Duncan's genre here is social comedy, not tragedy, and the abandoned fiancée is quickly supplied with an eminently more suitable (if less interesting) husband in the form of the narrator himself. While all four stories end happily — or at least tidily — the maintenance of decorum scarcely implies fulfilment, especially for the women. These stories can easily be read as glimpses into social history, showing the life of ornamental boredom to which the wives and daughters of higher officials were condemned. Denied even traditional maternal activities because their children have been sent to England, or the routine of attending meetings, rearranging files, and angling for promotion which occupies the men, the women are reduced to a trivializing whirl of teas, dinners, gymkhanas, and flirtations. The true (male) artist is able to get out before he sells out, but no greater escape is available to the women than the precarious wit of the narrator of the first story, "A Mother In India."

Here the irony begins with the title, for Helena Farnham's term of motherhood in India lasts exactly five weeks, after which her daughter is sent back to be raised by her English relatives. When Ceciley returns to her parents after twenty-one years "in the society of pussies and vicars and elderly ladies," she is so utterly provincial that she can scarcely arouse her mother's sympathy; affinity is out of the question. Yet by her meddling in her daughter's first courting, Helena inadvertently dooms herself to Cecily's company for the rest of her life, her only refuge a keen sense of irony which few can appreciate.

The plight of the gifted woman trapped in an unappreciative environment is also the substance of the title story, which concludes the book. Similar to the way Duncan goes against the grain of traditional sexual stereotyping by depicting a non-maternal mother in the first story, she challenges social convention by sympathetically recounting a mature woman's love for a younger man who is also the son of her best friend. Some of this story's subtlety is lost in its overwrought style, as Duncan tries too hard to capture the special quailities of her heroine.

The welcome republication of this book, with an insightful and informative introduction by Rosemary Sullivan, will treat readers of *The Imperialist* to a sense of the breadth of its author's experiences and concerns. While Duncan's Canada vibrates with youthful vigour and promise, it is also naive and innocent; the decadence of Anglo-India, on the other hand, gives her the opportunity to explore sexual intrigues and unconventional attitudes which would be inconceivable in Elgin and would astonish even the open mind of Advena Murchison. Intriguing discoveries might lie in speculating on the effect of this Anglo-India on the idealistic Imperialism of Lorne Murchison.

CAROLE GERSON

EN SE DÉFAISANT

MONIQUE LAROUCHE-THIBAULT, *Quelle douleur!* Boréal Express, $9.95.

FRANCOIS CHARRON, *François.* Les Herbes rouges, $9.95.

IL N'EST PLUS QUESTION aujourd'hui que les ouvrages féministes et les oeuvres publiées aux Herbes rouges visent à faire éclater les normes de l'écriture traditionnelle. Que ceci se fasse par le questionnement de la littérature ou de la société patriarcale, il n'en reste pas moins que certains écrivains québécois sont engagés dans une "entreprise déconstructive" qui nous fascine et nous déroute en même temps. "Ecrire dans le plaisir m'assure-t-il — moi, écrivain — du plaisir de mon lecteur? Nullement. Ce lecteur, il faut que je le cherche . . . Ce n'est pas la 'personne' de l'autre qui m'est nécessaire, c'est l'espace: la possibilité d'une dialectique du désir, d'une *imprévision* de la jouissance: que les jeux ne soient pas faits, qu'il y ait un jeu," écrit Roland Barthes. Jeu il y a dans les deux oeuvres discutées ici mais chacune engage le lecteur dans une opération distincte.

Quelle douleur!, premier roman de Monique Larouche-Thibault s'insère dans une tradition féministe à laquelle participent des écrivaines aussi différentes que Michèle Mailhot et Claudette Charbonneau-Tissot, une tradition d'écriture où l'état d'aliénation de l'individue qui cesse de s'appartenir se déroule dans un contexte psychologique ou sociologique. L'être aliéné s'évade dans un autisme qui lui permet de se détacher de la réalité extérieure et, pendant, un certain temps, de vivre une vie intérieure très intense. Si la trame événementielle de *Quelle douleur!* consiste d'une histoire bien connue parce que trop souvent vécue, l'auteure provoque le désir chez sa lectrice par une narration vive et pleine d'humour.

Ayant elle-même souffert l'abandon physique (mère) et psychologique (famille adoptive), Simone à son tour prive sa fille Rita de ses soins et de son amour maternels. Bien que sa soeur Anabella, belle enfant choyée, meure jeune, Rita continue de vivre à l'ombre de celle-ci, d'être méprisée de ses parents (Simon-Simone). Violée par un amoureux, Rita sombre dans le mutisme, se détache de la vie pour enfin être expulsée du foyer maternel. Accueillie par sa grand-mère et sa tante Gabrielle, elle reçoit pour la première fois de sa vie les soins d'une mère. Ce séjour, qui représente l'enfance où, en pleine sécurité, l'être se forge une identité, se termine subitement sur le chemin des Virages essentiels par la mort de Rita.

Il n'est jamais question d'intégration sociale normale pour Rita bien que sa mère tente de s'en débarrasser par la seule avenue possible à l'époque — le mariage. C'est précisément l'échec de cette "chasse au mari," se culminant par le viol de Rita, qui lui permet d'abandonner la vie extérieure pour l'intériorisation totale. La violence la libère symboliquement des attentes sociales et lui permet de forger avec les vieilles femmes des liens durables: "Toi et moi . . . c'est du béton, à la vie à la mort!" Les petits plaisirs redonnent à Rita le désir d'exister et elle retrouve, "sur le chemin de la liberté," non seulement la parole mais son amour propre: de dire "je me sens comme une femme avortée qui serait avortée d'elle-même! Je me sens pas née" à affirmer "je me veux, moi," il y a tout un chemin à parcourir. Ce roman qui commence par une naissance réelle mais ratée finit par une naissance symbolique acquise dans la douleur psychologique.

Le vrai plaisir de la lecture ne se trouve pas dans cette trame événementielle assez commune mais dans la perspective et le style. Bien que tous les indicateurs de situation laissent comprendre

que la narratrice est externe aux événements, la restriction dans le choix d'objets focalisés laissent plutôt entendre une narratrice autodiégétique (qui raconte l'histoire dont elle est le personnage principal) qui se sert d'une "elle" distanciateur d'événements traumatisants. Cette perspective expliquerait la décélération dans la diégèse et la perspective particulière d'où certains événements sont présentés: "Quant à Rita, qu'une innocence naturelle eût dû prédisposer au sommeil, elle ne dormit pas du tout. Hé, avec une morte à proximité!" et "Cet intermède, durant lequel Simone donna son meilleur spectacle, dura bien cinq minutes," ainsi que les souvenirs sèchement démarquées par l'âge: "A quatorze ans, Rita eut l'effarante révélation de sa nature de femme" et "A dix-huit ans, une paire de magistrales claques la réveillèrent."

Ces enchaînements brusques de temporalité et d'événements quotidiens sont marqués, surtout au début du roman, par une économie d'expression: "des seins houlala," "Vvvvvvv! hurlait le vent et Shhhhhh! sifflaient les branches." Grâce à ces onomatopées ainsi qu'à de nombreuses déviations syntaxiques, le monde représenté s'insère beaucoup plus directement et vivement: "Ah! délices, au début, que leurs scènes de ménage! Disputer, injurier, crier les pires insultes, en venir aux coups." Devant un sujet souvent traumatique pour la narratrice, elle adopte un style qui lui permet d'alléger le plus pénible; le viol de Rita est présenté ainsi: "Message reçu, *over*! Il se servit, François, abondamment, de Rita, la viola, et . . . dans sa tête à elle, ce jour-là, tout bascula." Ce n'est qu'à mesure que Rita se retrouve en sombrant dans son for intérieur que les événements sont présentés à une vitesse réduite et que le détail et la syntaxe "se font chair."

Dans *François*, son vingt et unième recueil, François Charron ajoute la poétique du vide aux motifs fondamentaux de ses oeuvres antérieures, corps, matière, écriture, rêve: "Happés, désarmés, il faut l'inscrire dans le désir, dans le songe qui s'accouple au songe, accomplissant l'acte physique pour aller à travers les mots, la bave, jusqu'à l'intelligence précise du rien." Ces mots, qui paraissent vers la fin du recueil, résument "l'histoire inconcevable" de François où s'affrontent la parole poétique et le doute rongeur. L'écriture et l'existence se rencontrent non en ennemies mais en couple. Cependant, le doute revient à maintes reprises pour être ensuite chassé par des réponses chancelantes, interrompues ou défaites comme un flot constant: "Un bercement sans fin crée l'idée qui se dénoue."

Quand on cherche à donner voix au vide, comment s'y prend-on? C'est précisément ce que tente Charron dans cette prose poétique en trois parties où le lecteur perdra constamment l'équilibre, comme tous les acteurs d'ailleurs. Le narrateur va à la rencontre de ce qui est au-delà des mots: "L'utilisation présumé des mots ne correspond qu'à des hypothèses." Le langage deviendra, sinon traître, du moins déformateur, rendant le monde "extrêmement difficile, voire impossible, de dire," et déplaçant le discours ailleurs: "On doit penser que l'on voit avec les formes." De nombreux dialogues sont générés entre un être narrant (parfois nommé François) et une femme qui prend tous les noms. L'être masculin, représentant du discours poétique, observe surtout l'être féminin multiple, génératrice du discours prosaïque. Cette alternance laisse supposer que, comme il est difficile de rassembler la condition séparée de l'être, le discours dans sa totalité est aussi impossible à engendrer car il se dissout au moment de l'articulation.

Le lecteur, assoiffé de points de repères, ne manquera pas de relever les fragments représentatifs des grands poètes québécois, que ce soit le "faucon assis sur mon poing," les cubes et les

angles, la "boîte" à jouets, "l'énigme des îles," ou l'acte de nommer. Ces fragments insérés dans un discours en dissolution constante servent à engendrer la parodie devenue caractéristique de l'oeuvre poétique de Charron. Le discours emprunté s'insère dans l'indicible et perd sa matérialité.

Oeuvre poétique ou en prose? Prose poétique à la recherche de sa propre forme? Le lecteur n'est certain que d'une chose: "L'instant de la communication se déroule sur la p[l]age réellement là. Ailleurs il n'y a rien."

ESTELLE DANSEREAU

TRANSLITERATURE

CAMILLE LA BOSSIERE, ed., *Translation in Canadian Literature*. Ottawa Univ. Press, $7.95.

BARBARA BELYEA & ESTELLE DANSEREAU, eds., *Driving Home: A Dialogue Between Writers and Readers*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, $7.50.

GILLES ARCHAMBAULT, *The Man With a Flower In His Mouth*. Trans. David Lobdell. Oberon, $9.95.

"TRADUTTORE, TRADITORE": the history of literary translation has distanced itself from the concept of the translator as a betrayer of an original meaning by accepting, paradoxically, the full implications of the accusation. Thus we find Philip Stratford, one of Canada's premier translators, comparing himself to a "smuggler," a passer of contraband, someone who leads a double life. Stratford's remarks come in an article recounting his translating of Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (in *Translation in Canadian Literature*). As a translator in Canada, Stratford finds himself among a small company; as he points out, Canada ranks between Albania and Iceland in the number of translations it produces. This is all the more ironic when one considers the multilingualism of the Canadian mosaic.

Literary translation in Canada began as early as 1764, with the announcement by the *Quebec Gazette* that it would publish in English and French. As David Hayne goes on to point out in his survey of literary translation in nineteenth-century Canada, translation in both English and French Canada was intermittent until mid-century, with more translations from English to French than vice-versa. Topicality remained the prime criterion for selection; poetry and fiction provided the translator's staples, rather than drama and the essay.

This situation has reversed itself, in part, in contemporary letters, as essays by Richard Giguère and Ray Ellenwood demonstrate. Ellenwood tabulates statistical data showing that there are now more translations from French into English than vice-versa. His data also reveal that the Canada Council tends to support the translation of non-fiction — indeed "the publication of Canadian literature in translation, with the exception of children's literature (which has nowhere to go but up), has decreased alarmingly." Giguère's observations tend to confirm Ellenwood's. The heyday of literary translation in English Canada was from 1965 to 1975, and while translations from French to English continue to be made, there are few from English to French because "les Québécois en général n'ont pas encore découvert, reconnu, admis la possibilité d'une culture et d'une littérature canadiennes."

Yet the situation is more complex than this, as essays by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Basil Kingstone suggest. Goetz-Stankiewicz's essay on the translation — by Paul Wilson — from the Czech of Joseph Skvorecky's *The Engineer of Human Souls* illustrates how the novel is "suspended between two cultures," Czech and Canadian, and how its translator, to

be faithful to both, must, in a sense, betray both by arriving at "a new non-English Canadian text."

Kingstone's essay on Jean Ethier-Blais's "translation" of Rubén Darío in his short story "Le Manteau de Rubén Darío" expands on George Steiner's theory that all communication is translation. In Blais's translation, the "original" is the life and work of Darío, a "source text" which will allow very little variance, yet out of which Blais attempts to make something new. The paradox is that the translation need not be servile to its original in order to be faithful to it. In any case, the passage is not simply from one language to another. As Stratford notes, even the passage from French to English is immensely complex, since neither of these languages is univocal. His problem with *Pélagie* was not simply to translate it into English, but to find a language into which he could translate Maillet's strange linguistic amalgam, not Acadian at all but "Antoninais or Mailletois." Insofar as Maillet had created the language of her novel, Stratford was able to maintain fidelity to her example precisely by doing the same thing, by translating her text into Stratfordese.

Stratford was faithful not to a language but to a poetics. "To translate," as Mark Madoff observes in his essay on A. M. Klein, "is to carry across in two directions: towards the obscure language, the translator carries a hermeneutics; towards the familiar language, a poetics." Klein's career appears tailor-made to illustrate the secondary status traditionally conferred on the translator. Although Klein spent thirteen years on one of his translations from the Yiddish, although the protagonist of his novel is a translator, Klein's own translations were excluded from his *Collected Poems*. In practice, Klein as translator sought out anything but a secondary status; his translations, in fact, could be more obscure than the original. Madoff cites M. W. Steinberg to remind us that for Klein, translation tended to work in reverse, the strangeness of the original language permeating the target language, and making it stranger and stranger.

The theoretical underpinnings of these various observations are provided in E. D. Blodgett's essay. Citing Schleiermacher's observation that the translation must be aligned with either the source language or the target language, Blodgett proposes a third possibility: that the translation emphasize the in-betweenness of the process, thereby preserving the differences, not annihilating them (a view echoed by Larry Shouldice in his essay examining the political implications of translation in Canada). This would have the further advantage of responding to Canada's heteroglot nature — that its languages are not two but many; that even its two languages are many.

That the concerns of these writers extend beyond translation, that they represent a commonality of critical interest, is demonstrated by *Driving Home*. As the editors point out in their foreword, they were confronted with translating pronoun gender in bringing the book to press, a problem they "succeeded in resolving . . . only by returning to traditional usage." This is a translation problem that arises not only among languages but within a language as well. It is also a problem whose ideological implications neither book explores — that women must constantly translate themselevs out of a male-oriented idiom.

The essays in *Driving Home* argue almost exclusively for a shift in the focus of Canadian criticism from theme to form. In these terms, D. G. Jones' essay on "The Mythology of Identity" is the straw man, its obsession with literary identity clearly violating this volume's *parti pris*. Jones' observation that Charles Taylor's *Six Journeys* illustrates the need

of Canadians to look toward the values of established civilizations in order to affirm their identity is more representative of the book's thrust. E. D. Blodgett makes a similar observation, but in formal terms: just as Dante's *Commedia* is a translation of Virgil's poem, so Atwood's *Journals* translate Moodie's texts. In both cases, diachrony gives way to synchronicity, and writing becomes rewriting, a finding again, as Christopher Wiseman would have it. Aritha Van Herk echoes this in her assertion that "Writing is a way of remembering the future."

Reading is likewise an act of translation. It is the reader's role, suggests Myrna Kostash, "to democratize literary experience"; she must "liberate it from the elitist confines of academic and literary cliques." On a more practical level, Richard Giguère examines the relationship between the Quebec writer and his public, finding that while sixty per cent of the members of the *Union des écrivains québécois* did not believe in the efficacy of direct contact with the public, the Quebec writer, nevertheless, is beginning to emerge from the ivory tower. This isolationism is viewed on another level by Peter Stevens, who decries Canadian literature's "narrow factionalism" and its "regionalism." Comparing Canadian literature with the state of the art in general, he finds our contemporary effusions to be lacking, and relates this to our refusal to speak through the many voices which our literatures command. Jacques Brault echoes this in his insistence that "le concept même de littérature nationale est anti-littéraire."

David Lobdell's translation of Gilles Archambault's *La fleur aux dents* grounds a number of these critical *apperçus*. Archambault's novel was published in 1971, re-isued in 1980, and then filmed by Pierre Turgeon. It was finally translated, for Oberon, in 1983. Other than a few words which are more English than English-Canadian — "swain," "humbug," "tinker" — the translation gives little sense of being a translation at all. This is perhaps a disadvantage, since the language of the original is very rich, moving rapidly among various levels of diction. Furthermore, Archambault foregrounds language in his novel by casting its protagonist, Georges Lamontagne, as a technician for the Montreal radio station CVMN. Lamontagne is tired of merely pushing the buttons, of being merely a vehicle for the many voices which pass through him. What he wants is to become a radio journalist, to assume his own voice, to go on the air and deliver his pet project: a half-hour monologue on the Quiet Revolution. Interspersed with these flash-forwards are flashbacks to Lamontagne's youth, and scenes of his present domestic crises: his daughter's unwanted pregnancy, his wife's infidelity, and his own.

What sustains interest in the novel, and what contributes to its wry humour, is that it threatens at every moment to turn into an allegory of Quebec's recent political past. That this thrust toward the absolute is continually undercut places the reader in the position of translator from one realm to the other, the story going on completely at neither level, but somewhere in between.

Lamontagne's desire for monologue is finally thwarted through the interference of a colleague who reports his surreptitious attempts to record his program. Dismissed from the station, Lamontagne decides to open a grocery store, hoping that his grandson (child of Marie-France and an itinerant G.I.) will realize his dreams. Thus are the old myths renewed, and in the process of articulating them, Archambault's novel provides yet another translation of "Canadian."

RICHARD A. CAVELL

CREEDS

POLLY FLECK, *Polychronicon*. Wolsak & Wynn, $7.00.

DAVID WEST, *Trenchmist*. blewointment, $5.95.

GEORGE WHIPPLE, *Life Cycle: Selected Poems of George Whipple*. Hounslow, $10.95.

IN POLYCHRONICON, POLLY FLECK tackles two of the perplexities of contemporary poetry, the search for an adequate subject and the need for appropriate form in the absence of any metaphysical or prosodic creed. Her ironic "How Not to Write a Poem" sets out the problem:

> Editors want 'reader's voice' poets
> 'home' spun into words
> craftily under-articulated.
> .....
> Readers like to relate to the experience.

Although she says, "Editors know there is no Egyptian / god-king in the Canadian psyche," Fleck knows there *is*, and she sees beyond the mundane whether her fictive editors approve or not. While her own poems may begin with "Grating carrots at the sink," they move through the trivial toward the universal. Even a poem as apparently confessional as "I Lie" expresses something human, not just personal, about love, becoming a "reader's voice" poem without presuming to speak for the reader. Fleck has invented a way of constructing poetry, described in "A Poem is Not Left-Hand Aligned," which she practises so vigorously that little in her poetry is wasted: no form without content, no content without streamlined form. She creates confusion by explaining her self-explanatory title, but even so, *Polychronicon* expresses Fleck's insights into human nature as the poet works out solutions to her technical problems.

David West finds an adequate subject for poetry in his reconstruction of his father's memories of World War I, and he looks beyond his own theorizing for suitable technique. In chronological order, *Trenchmist* tells the story of seven major and many minor characters, all soldiers. Emphatically Canadian, they achieve a separation from Britain even while they fight on Britain's behalf. The most important — and loneliest — of these soldiers is Renny, a wagon driver in the signal corps. In "Signal," Renny reflects:

> the rhythm that is beaten out
> or blinked
> conveys some important affirmation
> that adds
> almost imperceptibly
> to the chance
> of our eventual victory

This key to Renny's role may also be read as a thematic and technical key to *Trenchmist*. West draws on Celtic narrative tradition for the structure of his book; for some of his rhythms, especially in "Prologue," he reworks Old English metres; his subjects and themes recall "The Battle of Maldon" as well as Great War poetry; and "Attar of Death" alludes to Charles G. D. Roberts' poem "Going Over." Reverberations from the past, and the daydream-memory of the speaking voice as it echoes through the decades, work together to catch the reader up in the book's emotional and spiritual progress. West has the rare ability to write terse long poems, and these work with the shorter poems toward a varied but unified book. *Trenchmist* might be called another "polychronicon": without a plain, literal narrative, West finds a way to say much about what it means to be a son, a friend, a spiritual heir, a Canadian, and a poet.

Life Cycle: Selected Poems of George Whipple follows a soul's progress from infancy to the maturity that can contemplate its own end. Whipple writes gripping poetry on such unpromising topics as God, serial music, and the writing of poetry, and his poems about the fleshly

urges are actually sexy. "Colloquy" shows the unity of sacred and profane love, a connection that stands behind almost all of Whipple's poetry and gives spiritual significance to everything that comes under his eye. There is no "dissociation of sensibility" here. A master of prosody, Whipple plays with interlocking rhyme schemes, parentheses, and placement of voltas to give new life to the sonnet form. He uses blank verse effectively, too, and in long poems such as "15 Oakdale, 1940" and "The Anniversary" the technical restrictions of assonance, rhythm patterns, and intermittent rhyme compress and intensify the poem's content. Whipple also pays attention to the unvoiced, unwritten component of poetry, what in "Graffiti" he calls "the loud / White silences (between the lines)." In "Time Warp," "Blues," and "Four Ballets," he manipulates silence like a musician. Even a bravura performance such as "Tone Rows (Schoenberg)" is alive with multiple rhythms, meanings, and emotions. His poems shaped like Christmas trees and other objects, though perhaps his least successful, are not the silly excursions that often result from this whimsy, and "Fountains" shows what a real poet can do with lines of between two and six syllables. *Life Cycle* is both satisfying and tantalizing. It is a substantial selection of Whipple's poetry to date, but it whets one's appetite for more.

LAUREL BOONE

SLEIGHT OF TONGUE

MIKE DOYLE, *A Steady Hand.* Porcupine's Quill, $6.95.

JANE URQUHART, *False Shuffles.* Porcépic. $6.95.

GEOFFREY URSELL, *Trap Lines.* Turnstone, n.p.

JAN ZWICKY, *Where Have We Been.* Brick Books, n.p.

"A GENUINE ARTISTIC CREATION," writes Hans-Georg Gadamer in *The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem*, "stands within a particular community, and such a community is always distinguishable from the cultured society that is informed and terrorized by art criticism." The reviewer-critic is *prima facie* guilty of acculturation but tries to mediate between a particular community and cultured society. In the hope of producing information, not terror, I will comment on the particular communities of these four books of poetry.

In each case, one immensely important constitutive community is other texts. Mike Doyle's collection *A Steady Hand* takes shape in dialogue with the texts of other poets and artists (for example, Anna Akhmatova, Max Ernst, Cesar Vellejo, W. S. Merwin), with diaries, journals, biographies, and pieces by and about painters — particularly Klee. *A Steady Hand* tends to converse internationally. If that sounds very general, the particularity of this poet's community is that it is so literary/artistic; it is not easy to assign it any other sense (e.g., geographic) of community. One gets the strong sense of language itself being his home and native land. *False Shuffles* belongs to a less cosmopolitan community of family records and local lore, so that it gives a much stronger sense of specific locale ("particular community" in *that* sense). But *False Shuffles* also grows up in sly conversation with a deck of cards, not to mention a slightly shady foreigner, *Blackstone's Tricks Anyone Can Do*, a New Yorker of 1940's vintage. Geoffrey Ursell's *Trap Lines* is in two parts, "Love of Beaver" and "The Art of Pulling Hearts"; the first, in particular, is very much at home with various documents about the beaver; it is in sardonic conversation with such diverse items of castoriana as *There is nothing so worthy in this beaste as his stones* — Castor and

Bollocks as it were — and a papal edict permitting the meat of beaver tail to qualify as fish. To help fashion its love chronicle, Jan Zwicky's *Where Have We Been* converses quite deliberately, in a number of its subtitles, with an older literary discourse of sentimental, even slightly melodramatic romance: "After the Party," "The Other Woman," "She Considers Her Position," "She is Apprenticed."

As with all intertextualities, the ones I have just sketched are more than a matter of influence and/or allusion. If modernist literature and art "influence" *A Steady Hand* it is in the sense of making possible the escape from personality into text that was characteristic of so much modernist theorizing about poetry. I mean nothing pejorative by "modernist"; Doyle's text powerfully affirms its line of descent, happily free of autochthonous posturing and assertions of self-begetting. The relations between *A Steady Hand* and precursor texts range from the simpler forms of intertextuality, such as transposition of a pictorial statement into a verbal one, or one mode of verbal statement into another, through the greater complexities of giving a reading of a reading — as when Birney's "El Greco: Espolio" gives a reading of El Greco's reading of the crucifixion narrative — to the quite complex sea-changes of "Brotherhood," which celebrates both its own filiation and also its own thematic and rhetorical transformations of the parent poem; it enacts a swerve, and the process of that swerve, away from its precursor text.

One very fine effect of the intertextualities at play in *False Shuffles* (among cards/book of tricks/Urquhart's poems) is the witty problematization of a three-generation history: grandmother, mother, narrating daughter. The interleaved lexicon — of false shuffle: transparent swizzle stick: magician: sleight: tricks — genially but persistently interrogates our shaky everyday equilibriums between narration and what is narrated, between verbal signs and their purported herstorical referents. Consider this gem from *Blackstone's Tricks* which Urquhart deals in just before the section on "False Shuffles": "This is a real false shuffle. It will require considerable practice to render it deceptive"; in their earlier site these remarks are straight; here, in their later site, they undergo a deep intertextual seachange and glow with gorgeous multiple equivocations. The semiotics of *False Shuffles* is very subtle; as a sign system this deck of texts offers not only citations that function simultaneously as thematic epigraphs, equivocating commentary, and *caveat lectors*, but also the bonus of Tony Urquhart's visual representations of playing cards, including a delicious 9 of Clubs in which signifiers for clubs also signify trees in a suitably enigmatic landscape. Documents and documentations, too, are extremely important in the weave of this text. Old documents, scraps of family or district records, bits of local lore are, as it were, edited — recovered, ordered, and re-narrated as an equivocal but indispensable context, or pretext, of the narrator's own life story. She documents her own brief career as a failed barmaid; the reason she fails is precisely because she is a documenter; her colleagues who stay and make it can do so because "they were living it / just living it / documenting nothing."

The section "False Shuffles" is all the more interesting in that the relationship the teller is trying to recount actively resists even the compromised certainties of documentation — as well it might, being a surreal relationship to a shape-changer, a spellbinding, illusionist-magician. The shouted injunction at the end of "Party Game," "remember these objects / AND WRITE THEM ALL DOWN," is a major pretext for this

whole collection. This writer-down has a very nice sense of all the sleights endemic to remembering and writing, her calibrations of that slightest of twists between a genuine shuffle and a false one.

Trap Lines opens with a series of old texts that, functioning as found poems, initiate a record of the misinterpretations, misconceptions, mistreatments, and vulgarizations of beaver. As in *False Shuffles*, documents and documentations are vital. One major project of the text is to arrange documents, recipes, instructions into a "documentary" narrative for the record. This record is not a happy one: it is one of men's will to power and profit over beaver and other furbearers. And since "beaver" is also slang for female pubic hair/pudena women, too, are victimized by the male, trapped in his pornographic gaze and subject to his will to strip, unclothe, denude. *Trap Lines* is thus a potent sign of the power in male discourse to degrade women, who suffer a linguistic slide, a demotion in the male hierarchy of semantic values. By the end of part one ("beaver?"), the beaver, not surprisingly, are properly confused: in magazines promising "lots of beaver!!!" they see not themselves but only "humans / who must have lost their pelts." When the maimed imagination's lexicon assigns your name and sign elsewhere and edits you out, you are in bad shape; you are, as they succinctly put it in Latin America, disappeared. In *Trap Lines*, a gentle little underwater pastoral ("Winter") or a mini-legend about a sort of beaverman ("love of beaver") only serve to highlight the various pornographies of this record. The shift in the stance of the speaker is instructive. At first he often just lets his documents speak for him. Then he begins to resemble a Swiftian persona who, in his detached stance, is unaware of how far he is implicated in the savageries he so blandly and "objectively" describes. Finally, toward the end of the text there emerges a speaker who is sensitive both to the record's pornographies and to his own complicities in them. One quibble: if what I've been saying is in the least bit to the purpose then "beaver love" doesn't belong in this collection. It's out of context and, tiny though it is, it ruptures the text, leaving this reader to edge in some bewilderment around a small but definite hole. But for the rest, perhaps some sort of medal is in order; it takes uncommon valour, after Chapter XII of George Bowering's *A Short Sad Story*, for a Canadian author to treat of beavers.

It seems appropriate to engage one of Iris Murdoch's dicta, that "love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real," with Jan Zwicky's *Where Have We Been*, which is so entirely a lover's chronicle or calendar. There is a two-stage meaning, for Zwicky's text, to the phrase "difficult realization." First is the difficulty of comprehending — of breaking out of a solipsistic, self-absorbed condition. In terms of this meaning the intertextual functioning of Zwicky's already mentioned subtitles (such as "She Considers Her Position") is vital; these subtitles provide the speaker with some contextual elbow room, some possible, necessary distance from herself, some narrative space in which to imagine and inscribe herself in relation to another. Second, there is the realization, now understood as the full undergoing, of the difficulties attendant upon having comprehended, having entered into relation with the reality of the Other and fallen in love. If this two-stage realization makes the Other real, and love possible, it also makes the lover vulnerable; the space around her now has plenty of room for various pains as well as pleasures. *Where Have We Been* is a detailed chronicle of the intensities of real encounter, encounter whose reality

or substance is proven as much in absences as in being together. Being in close touch is not necessarily unambiguous bliss. Two of the most explicitly coital/post-coital poems, "Pieces" and the title poem, are fierce with evisceration, chunks gouged out of each other, bodily disintegrations and maimings — disturbing enough in a text whose most generative lexical set is touch:hand:hold. For the most part "in touch" is as intense a situation as "out of touch." The text manages these intensities in three ways, and by "manages" I mean not tames or domesticates, but renders speakable and livable. First, it is a tissue of clichés or commonplace idioms. This is not as pejorative as it sounds (cf. Pinter's plays or Riffaterre, who argues that such linguistic orts are the very matrices of poetry). These little summaries of human needs, perceptions, and strategies do not deflate intensities so much as naturalize them, making them livable from day to day. Some of Zwicky's clichés remain inert. Often, though, her commonplaces manage to animate their surrounding texts which then, in turn, redeem the commonplaces, so that we get a sense of genuine intensities made manageable and enunciable in an ordinary tongue. Then the most successful pieces are those which enact a submerged, implied cliché/idiom; for example, "release," a truly chilling metamorphic poem that enacts at least two covert cliché-matrices: "solitary confinement" (this in sharp ironic collision with the poem's title) and "armours herself against adversity." Oscillating intensities are managed, in the second place, by the speaker's being so closely and continuously in touch with the seasons and their attendant weathers. Hence my earlier use of the term "calendar." Such sensitivity to season and weather provides an almost ritual context in which to situate the speaker's experience and render the condition of love habitable. Finally, there is the matter of closure: Zwicky has arranged things so that the text ends, in "After Autumn," with the lovers poised, perhaps content, between extremes. Endings are very nice matters and it is easier to begin than to know how to have done, as Spenser's Colin Clout grumbles during his homecoming recital. In the case of *Where Have We Been*, I do not think the text has been sweet-talked into a they-lived-happily-ever-after ending. But a degree of grace is being imparted and enjoyed; the reality of each lover to the other might remain open, speakable, livable.

IAN SOWTON

JOURNEYS

CARROLL BISHOP, *The Devil's Diamond*. Temenos, $12.95.

MONICA HUGHES, *My Name is Paula Popowich!* James Lorimer, $5.95.

BERNADETTE RENAUD, *The Cat in the Cathedral*. Porcépic, $6.95.

THESE THREE BOOKS are for children of different ages, but they share a common feature — the use of the journey motif. This theme is ubiquitous in children's literature for good reason: not only does it furnish a structure for the narrative excitement which children's literature demands, but also it provides the means and the metaphor for the protagonist's widening experience of self and life.

In *The Devil's Diamond*, a picture story-book for younger children, Carroll Bishop writes of the eternal struggle between good and evil. She sets this conflict within the context of a story of a fairy-tale-princess who seeks the nicest present in the world for her parents. This she wants to give them, on her own birthday, to show her appreciation for their having brought her into life. Tricked by the Devil, who provides her with a diamond

of incomparable beauty for this gift, Princess Sally ends up nearly destroying both her parents and their happy kingdom. In order to break the horrible spell she has brought on them, she must travel back in time to see the Christ Child; his love and smile break the evil spell contained in the Devil's diamond. Happiness then returns to her parents' land. Anna Maria Gruda's full-page illustrations, in black/white line drawings, are Pre-Raphaelite in style, and fit the text nicely, except for one surprising oversight: the Princess in the *story* is eight years old, while the Princess in the *pictures* looks between ten and twenty-five, depending on the individual illustration. Furthermore, she is beautiful in some, and ugly in others. Children like consistent pictures which fit the details in the text.

Bernadette Renaud's *The Cat in the Cathedral* joins a growing group of extremely vibrant children's books from Quebec which have been translated for English Canadians. This book, too, is about the power of love. The tale of a friendship which develops between a young organist and a kitten, the action begins in a cathedral's organ loft when a stray kitten invades the organist's space. A series of episodes depicts how the organist is first annoyed by the impertinent, demanding kitten, but then humanized by its antics and need for affection. The cat teaches him the power of humour, as well as another language than music for the communication of feelings. The young man's skill as an organist increases until he wins a scholarship for study abroad. Left to be cared for by someone else, the cat dies of a broken heart: being only a cat, "he didn't understand that you never die from love; you live for it." The book is told simply, for younger children, and has poetic resonances which will give continued pleasure with each rereading. The coloured illustrations are appropriately charming.

The third novel, by Monica Hughes, is for older children. The two books already discussed are set in locations outside a contemporary child's normal habitats (a medieval kingdom and a choir loft), but this novel takes us into the thick of current social problems: poverty, dislocation, emotional isolation, alienation, and a special set of miseries engendered by a single-parent mother who denies her daughter access to her father's ethnic and personal heritage. The heroine is sixth-grade Paula, a rather plain dark-haired girl, who lives with her fair and pretty mother, a hairdresser in Toronto's Leaside district. Life is lonely for Paula — her mother refuses to discuss either Paula's maternal grandmother or her father. Paula and her mother live in poverty, without relatives, until her maternal grandmother dies, leaving them an old run-down house in Edmonton. After moving back, Paula unravels the mystery surrounding her father (who died after deserting them); she locates her father's mother (a gentle woman with the dark Ukrainian features that Paula herself has); and she learns to accept her mother's new fiancé (a fat German VW service-manager) who can offer them financial security and is, moreover, very nice. Monica Hughes is a writer of much skill, and the assorted problems presented in this novel coalesce into a credible, interesting story. Hughes is particularly adept at catching the perverse way that children under stress choose negative ways of self-assertion. The dialogue is lively, and the illustrations by Leoung O'Young are few but excellent. Many children today will identify strongly with phases of Paula's experiences.

None of the books, fortunately, is hobbled by the moralistic or didactic. Each of them presents effectively crucial passages in the child's journey to adult-

hood: learning how to identify evil in its various guises; learning how love can enrich lonely, stunted lives; and learning how to cope with problems inflicted by external social conditions.

MARY RUBIO

ADOLESCENT EXPOSURE

ELIZABETH BROCHMANN, *Nobody Asked Me.* James Lorimer, $5.95.

MARY-ELLEN LANG COLLURA, *Winners.* Western Producer, $7.95.

BILL FREEMAN, *Harbour Thieves.* James Lorimer, $5.95.

GORDON KORMAN, *No Coins, Please.* North Winds, $10.95.

KEVIN MAJOR, *Thirty-six Exposures.* Delacorte, $14.95.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE young adult novel, its occasional strengths and more common weaknesses, are demonstrated in the publication of these five novels, which together provide a kaleidoscope of adolescent images, pictures that are of particular value in the two novels that deliberately use the camera as a metaphor for the changes that adolescence involves. In the other novels the pictures are somewhat predictable; in *Nobody Asked Me* and *Thirty-six Exposures*, even when the subject matter is familiar, the camera angle makes it different.

Gordon Korman also uses a camera in *No Coins, Please*, but there the camera simply records various silly tourist moments as the first Canadian van in Juniortours crosses America. Driven by two girl-desperate counsellors, the van has six eleven-year-old stock characters, all quite predictable except for the mysterious Artie Geller. Periodically, in New York, Coney Island, Washington, Ogallala Nebraska, Denver, and of course Reno, Artie disappears, takes on a disguise, and proceeds to hoodwink every adult in sight. Until the FBI catches up with him winning tremendously at blackjack, he seems both unbeatable and unflappable. With his slick comic style, Korman, author of ten novels at age twenty, has another book that is sure to please the very young.

His satire touches on all our recent fads and concerns: Attack Jelly to deter burglars; a No-Frills Milk Store Time-Sharing Program to appeal to nostalgic urban romantics; The Pretzel, a one night discotheque wonder to impress the stylish. Korman's counsellors are the essence of the well-meaning incompetent adolescents that populate children's mythology; his Americans are typically ignorant of Canada (the executive tour director welcomes the campers by referring to Vancouver, "wherever that is"). The tour director is another stereotype: he hates children and at appropriate times turns purple with rage. But the major satire centres on Korman's inversion of the innocent child. Artie looks so sweet; his mother seems so concerned about him; when he first disappears, his counsellor worries about the innocent lost in New York. But what innocent always clutches a locked briefcase, runs a racing casino on Capitol Hill, gets people to pay for the privilege of milking cows, and breezes in as a factory closes to convince the depressed staff to work for him? *No Coins, Please* is a child's tall tale, a parody of American enterprise (note the setting) and American culture. Among the guests at the discotheque are Fifi Latour, TV Star in *Mademoiselle Schwartz*, Malcolm Lloyd whose last film was *Confessions of a Closet Philatelist*, and Mike Banshee, lead singer of Sheep Dip. Its adolescents are the adolescents of American sit-com, temporarily amusing, quickly forgotten, never convincing.

Winners is a much more serious first

novel about a fifteen-year-old Blackfoot Indian and his return to a southern Alberta reserve after eight years in foster homes. Jordy Threebears' parents are dead, his mother as the consequence of a racist attack. His grandfather has since served time for killing the man he judged responsible for his daughter's death. Jordy's reunion with his grandfather is the result of a new Indian Affairs policy. But while the government officials and social workers seem initially the butt of conventional satire, in this case the ploy works. Collura takes a stock romantic image of freedom, a cowboy on a horse, and shows how, for this particular adolescent, the image becomes meaningful. Both father and grandfather worked the rodeo circuit. Lost in a snowstorm, Jordy has a vision of a silent rider who leads him to safety. At the end of the book, Jordy names his horse Siksika, the name for Blackfoot, but he has really named and found himself.

Like most young adult fiction, *Winners* does rely heavily on stereotypes: the wicked racist ranch foreman; the sensitive, blind, rich white girl; the caring school teacher ("I taught your mother"); the wise Indian who has rejected both white and Indian society. In a story about stereotyping, this may be inevitable, indeed necessary. The fantasy ending, where Jordy proves himself by winning a hundred-mile endurance race against rich, experienced competitors, and charitably rejects the impulse to let his enemy slip to his death, seems less inevitable. Is racism so pervasive that happy endings must be contrived and melodramatic?

Harbour Thieves portrays the adolescent in another setting, Toronto, 1875. The fifth in Bill Freeman's series on twelve-year-old Jamie and fourteen-year-old Meg Bains, *Harbour Thieves* is part of the Adventures in Canadian History Series. In this novel, the adolescent is the Toronto Newsboy, "not one of your sucking Apostles." The Bains children arrive in Toronto looking for work, and immediately have their carpet bag stolen by a newsboy. They still must settle for selling newspapers until Meg becomes a stock clerk's helper. Jamie meanwhile innocently slips into criminal activity mainly from fear of reprisals by the gang leader, an illiterate, resentful sixteen-year-old. Jamie seems headed for the standard cautionary tale ending, which Freeman avoids by having Jamie trap the adult mastermind behind the crimes. It is another child versus adult fantasy, only slightly more realistic than *No Coins, Please*. The poverty is real, the historical circumstances in which delinquent boys resort to theft are real, but again the ending seems contrived.

Only *Thirty-six Exposures* and *Nobody Asked Me* move beyond the simple child-adult opposition. The male protagonist in *Thirty-six Exposures* is troubled in his relationships with his parents and teachers, but this trouble is part of a larger confusion. Lorne is an adolescent graduating from high school, and in the process of working out what his new status means. He is hesitant, shy, angry, frightened — a mixture of states conveyed by the narrative technique. The novel consists of thirty-six exposures, moments that reveal a picture whose meaning we must determine. The technique reflects the boy's hobby. Through his camera he distances himself, prevents involvement, pretends detachment is a superior choice. The opening poem introduces the camera metaphor:

> I am best photographed from a distance.
> From there I could look average.
> But as I come closer some becomes
> apparent.

The book challenges us to make sense of the pictures just as Lorne must. He is accustomed to his power as a picture-taker, but as early as the third exposure,

where his camera gets in the way of a sexual encounter, he learns that the camera can also cut him off from life.

The camera metaphor is constantly developed. In one scene, Lorne shows his girl friend a picture of a salmon. He is interested in how the camera has created a meaning, making the salmon look "unreal. . . . Out of place?" She is more interested in history than aesthetics, and wants to know who caught the fish. Her question, as well as the students' involvement in a local history project, alerts us to a major implication of the camera metaphor, Lorne's need to value and accept history and story, to become part of the picture. In repeated incidents, Lorne learns that pictures do not reveal everything. After a friend dies in a car accident, he thinks that the newspaper photograph is a distortion: "He stared at it and saw that it lied. It could show nothing of what had happened. The photographer had taken someone's misfortune and blown it into a warning." He throws his camera away. Yet the book does not simply reject the visual in favour of verbal art; that very art continues to use the visual metaphor and the book ends with a visual image of Lorne running alone into his future. It also concludes with another poem:

> He's gone to make his picture too
> It's his own life
> to do what he must do
> "Press the button," they said, "we'll do the rest."
> But "if only" is a lonely portrait nonetheless
> at sixty-five.

Such bleak words give us neither the fantasy ending of much young adult fiction, nor the alternate, almost as common, depths-of-despair ending. Lorne's story is not finished so why pretend that we have seen the final shot?

In many ways Lorne's story is the familiar story of sensitive, adolescent male angst: he worries about his mortality and virginity; fights with his parents; writes poetry. In one exposure alone, he writes a poem, masturbates, squeezes a pimple, and reads Yevtushenko. But what makes Major's novel exceptional is its Canadian context, its Newfoundland setting, its innovative narrative technique, and its attempt to move away from the stereotyping found in so much young adult fiction.

Elizabeth Brochmann's *Nobody Asked Me* is also commendable for its refusal to be content with stereotypes and its willingness to use an open ending. If *Thirty-six Exposures* presents a male myth of adolescence, Brochmann's novel explores the equivalent female myth. Seventeen-year-old Lorne wants to lose his virginity; thirteen-year-old Rachel wonders what love means. Lorne finally does make love to a girl; Rachel finally is kissed. Yet Rachel's story is not strictly a return to traditional female stories of sexual passivity. Having spent her childhood on an isolated forestry station on Vancouver Island, Rachel is forced to spend one summer in a small town where her innocence and the stereotypes that inform her imagination are tested. The summer is very frustrating for her as she keeps trying to fit people into stereotypes and learns that they won't fit. She deliberately uses her camera to distort reality, but learns that it is easier to make a picture in which Uncle Sharky and Aunt Ev look like a bride and groom than to make them marry. As she overcomes her fear of this new world, she recognizes the limitations of her old life, the dominance of her father, the submission of her mother. She learns how difficult it can be to talk to a boy. She also learns a lesson similar to Lorne's, that she is using her camera to hide behind. As she becomes more involved with a boy, she becomes conscious of becoming part of the picture: "She saw them as if she were the photographer standing back and taking

their picture and it was sort of odd because she knew that as a photographer it would have given her pleasure to see this boy and girl . . . enjoying each other." Both *Nobody Asked Me* and *Thirty-six Exposures* explore adolescence in terms of our relationship to the camera; the pictures they provide are well worth attention.

ADRIENNE KERTZER

TRACKING

BETTY KELLER, *Black Wolf: The Life of Ernest Thompson Seton.* Douglas & McIntyre, $19.95.

WHEN HE WAS NEARLY twenty-one, Ernest Thompson Seton wrote out a "Plan of My Life," which projected fame as an artist and naturalist, marriage to a blue-eyed Englishwoman, three children, fortune, a knighthood, and further avoidance of his immediate family. *Black Wolf*, his first full-length biography, shows how closely Seton came to his goals. As an artist, he painted fur, paws, and feathers with accuracy and flair, as may be seen in the sumptuous coffee-table book Alfred Knopf published in 1976. With scant formal scientific training, he won the respect of naturalists with his volumes on northern wildlife, and was among the first to popularize notions of ecology. In literature, Seton invented the animal biography, in which the psychology of real animals, *sans* clothes and grammar, is dramatized through documentary fiction. He was an early champion of the Indian and founded the Woodcraft Movement, which laid the groundwork for the Boy Scouts. In private life, he married an American feminist and writer, divorcing her at seventy-eight for a woman some thirty years younger. He had two daughters, one adopted, the other the best-selling novelist Anya Seton (*Dragonwyck*, *Katherine*, *Green Darkness*). He successfully eluded his relatives. When he died at eighty-six, twenty-two years later than predicted, he had missed a few items on "The Plan of My Life," but by most lights it had been a very brave try indeed.

Seton was a complex personality, and the title Betty Keller has chosen from one of his nicknames suggests some of the versions of himself Seton maintained: Indian, expert in fauna, a performer who could imitate the wild animals he had known, yipping and howling on the lecture platform, his own drawings used as lantern slides. He changed roles at least as often as he changed his name — variously Ernest Evan Thompson, Seton-Thompson, Thompson-Seton, with or without the hyphen, a bane to bibliography — and one of the strengths of this book is its range of pictures showing the artist as, among others, Byronic rebel, raffish bohemian, wilderness scout, ink-stained journalist, learned professor, white Indian, and friend to the animals (patting a skunk). Even his houses start to look like stage sets for the dramatic actor, from the modest Manitoba shanty of his youth to the mock-baronial manse in Connecticut ("Wyndygoul") to the final, imperial pueblo in New Mexico, designed as an Institute of Indian Lore, with courses in pottery, porcupine quill work, dance, and Indian philosophy, now the national historic landmark, Seton Castle, Seton Village. He had always wanted to restore the family name.

It was a colourful career, and Seton could not resist telling his version of it in his 1941 memoir, edited by Max Perkins, *Trail of an Artist-Naturalist*; entertaining, opinionated, it reads like a Canadian *künstlerroman*, in which the sensitive young artist suffers, starves, and bird-watches. Autobiographies are doubtful gifts to the biographer, and Keller ap-

proaches the source with caution, checking contemporary witnesses for a clear bead on the truth. For example, she is wary of Seton's version of the "Nature faker" incident, in which naturalist John Burroughs accused Seton of sentimentality and weak science; Burroughs recanted, but, as Keller shows, hardly with the tears of conversion Seton remembered. She is astringent with Seton's claim that his father was "the most selfish man in history," a brute who could present his son with an itemized bill for birthing and upkeep. She gives us a thorough study of the family tree to prove that Seton's romantic faith in his noble lineage was misguided, although the reader may want to skip quickly through the underbrush, a full chapter on fertile Scots gentry and deaths without issue.

More important, Keller accurately guides us into the wilderness of Seton's dealings with the Boy Scouts, an episode, Seton himself never had the heart to write down in full. In 1906, Seton sent his *Birch-Bark Roll*, the manual for his Woodcraft Indians, to Robert Baden-Powell, who blithely cribbed the work in his own *Scouting for Boys*. Seton's request for proper acknowledgement met with polite, slippery evasion. When the Boy Scouts of America was organized, Seton was taken on as a chief scout, but soon found himself unpopular, for ideas which Teddy Roosevelt found "pacifist" and "sissy." Seton rightly told the press that he had started scouting, but he was doomed for his very Canadian vision of a movement based on wilderness survival and Indian traditions; Roosevelt and Baden-Powell saw the scouts as the seedbed for military training. Using his foreign citizenship against him, the Scouts cleanly, thriftily and obediently edged Seton out.

It's a disturbing story, offering much about the times and the men, and the incident has been used in a recent study of the ambiguities of American innocence, in David E. Shi's *The Simple Life*. But although Keller gives us a clear picture of the action, she shies firmly away from interpretation. In the "Preface," she stakes out her territory: since others have explored Seton as a naturalist (John Wadland) and as a writer (Margaret Atwood), she will stick to "an intimate look at the private life of a creative genius." Yet Wadland and Atwood have hardly said the last word, and what is the man without his work? In any event, the "intimate look" too often amounts to bald, homespun announcements. Seton is awarded a "persecution complex"; his hatred of his father is "distinctly aberrant"; he has the "persona of a martyr." Yet little evidence is presented for these dark afflictions, and no sustained theory of Seton's personality is carried through. Did this blighted father-son relationship affect his dealings with men in later life? If, as Keller insists, Seton's mother was a strong force, how did her hold manifest itself in Seton's romances, especially his stormy first marriage? Sudden, startling remarks about sexuality pop in and out of the text like rabbits: neither Seton nor his wife had been "entirely faithful," we hear out of nowhere, although this was common "within their social set." *What* infidelities, what depraved social set? The "intimate look" goes by the boards in the last chapter, when the prose seems rather rushed and sketched-in. What was Seton like in his old age? Crusty? Bitter? Serene? Whose eyes watch us from the photographs?

Betty Keller has taught non-fiction writing at U.B.C. and I wanted her to take this book through another rewrite to knit its many excellences together. A more reflective look at the patterns in Seton's life, private, public and creative, would give the inquiry more weight. I think it was a great mistake to stay away

from Seton's achievements in paint and print, which in themselves might have said a lot about martyrs and persecution. Since Keller has also done a biography of Pauline Johnson, I was surprised that she did nothing with Seton as a cultural archetype, for he was not the only Canadian to embrace the wilds, know the animals, write, paint, publicize, perform, and get snubbed by Brits and Yanks. Keller is an intelligent writer and a crack researcher, but I wish she'd gone further as a critic and interpreter to make *Black Wolf* the big, definitive biography Seton deserves. Still, it's a valuable beginning. The notes, bibliography and index are good. The publisher's design is especially apt and handsome. This is a useful, welcome book, but somewhere in the thicket, the wolf got away.

JAMES POLK

NO MOUNTIE IN SIGHT

BRIAN DOYLE, *Angel Square*. Groundwood, $6.95.

WELWYN WILTON KATZ, *Witchery Hill*. Groundwood, $7.95.

FLORENCE MCNEIL, *All Kinds of Magic*. Groundwood, $6.95.

MARY RAZZELL, *Snow Apples*. Groundwood, $7.95.

BETTY WATERTON, *Quincy Rumpel*. Groundwood, $5.95.

A FEW YEARS AGO, the only way writers could get books for children published in this country was to write about experiences that were distinctly and undeniably Canadian — that is, experiences quite unlike the ones described in the flood of American children's books that still dominate the market, and inevitably cost less than books published in Canada; in order to warrant their extra expense, Canadian children's books had to offer something different. In other words, they had to have lots of trees and lots of Mounties. And that meant, inevitably, that Canadian children's books were quite unlikely to describe anything much like the lives of most Canadian children, which are in fact much like the lives of most American children.

In recent years, though, publishers like Annick, Lorimer, and above all, Groundwood, the children's division of Douglas and McIntyre, have found the courage to produce Canadian children's books that do not drip maple syrup, books that actually mirror the lives of Canadian children. All five of these novels from Groundwood do that, and that is as much a cause for celebration as is the astonishing fact that Groundwood now has, not just the courage, but also the expertise (and even the money) to publish all five of them at the same time. For the first time, we have a genuine, serious, competent children's publishing house in this country; Groundwood publishes good books, publishes lots of them, and manages to sell them.

Which is not to say that all five of these books are masterpieces. In fact, they represent the coming of age of Canadian publishing for children simply because they are *not* all masterpieces. Most of them are the sort of competent, ordinary children's books that Canadian publishers never used to publish, just because they are exactly the sort of books that American publishers have been producing for decades — books about ordinary, middle class, urban children in familiar situations, the sort of books that children (or maybe children's librarians) recognize and like, and that sell well enough to allow their publishers to take a flyer on those few rare and unusual books that may turn out to be important.

Three of these novels are merely competent versions of standard American forms of children's fiction. Betty Waterton's *Quincy Rumpel* is a slightly up-

dated version of our typical batty family story, and Florence McNeil's *All Kinds of Magic* is the sort of half ghost story, half problem novel that can be found by the hundreds in any good children's library. The only thing that distinguishes these novels as Canadian is that their young urban protagonists come from Vancouver instead of Madison, Wisconsin; a few years ago, that would have made them unpublishable.

Young Mike of Welwyn Wilton Katz's *Witchery Hill* does come from Madison, Wisconsin, even though Katz herself lives in London, Ontario; while this oddity is rather like those awful movies in which all the cars on the recognizable streets of Toronto have American licenses, it does point out how blurry are the distinctions between the lives of most Canadian children and most American ones. And Mike might as well hail from Madison, since the book takes place in Guernsey; like many fine American children's novels, *Witchery Hill* is about an American child who goes to England, encounters mysterious remnants of the past, and learns something about himself as a result. The American publisher Atheneum specializes in this sort of well-written but not necessarily unique fantasy; and Atheneum has co-published *Witchery Hill* in the States, where perceptive readers are bound to recognize it as a good novel not just because it *is* a good novel but because it is such an easily recognizable kind of good novel.

But do these competent American children's novels that these Canadian children's novels so completely ape actually mirror the lives of real American or Canadian children? Superficially, of course, the lives of children in Madison and Atlanta and Seattle are the same — and so are the lives of children in Vancouver and London, Ontario. It's that superficial similarity that these books describe. But writing that transcends mere competence also transcends sameness, and truly Canadian children's books will have to be like truly Canadian books for adults — the ordinary Canadians they describe will be much like Americans but clearly not Americans. I'm happy to report that two of these Groundwood books do embody the difference.

Mary Razzell's *Snow Apple* clearly evokes the special feeling of a small village in British Columbia, and the book has a rawness, a believable energy that I have not encountered in similar American books for children; Razzell's heroine learns more about the potential darkness of the human heart than do most characters in most children's novels. *Snow Apples* takes place during the Second World War — a time different enough from our own to need careful evoking; Razzell does evoke it, and in doing so, she creates a distinctive atmosphere.

So does Brian Doyle in *Angel Square* — also set during World War II, also energetic, also filled with insights into human inadequacy — but so totally different a book that its publication by the same house signals an admirable breadth of taste. *Angel Square* describes how a young boy besotted by the radio programme *The Shadow* encounters the evil that lurks in the hearts of men, during the weeks before Christmas in wartime Bytown. But that summary totally misrepresents the book. In addition to being as serious and as wise a children's book as has been published in this country, *Angel Square* is also one of the funniest (the other equally funny one is *Up to Low*, an earlier novel by Doyle about some of the same characters). The people of *Angel Square* include a teacher whose head pivots through 360 degrees as he writes at the board, and a fellow who can't wash his feet because he can't get his socks off: "The blue mold has sealed his socks right to his skin." I don't see how Doyle gets away with stuff like

that in a book as profoundly and as convincingly realistic as this one is; but he assuredly does.

Angel Square is both a fine children's novel and an utterly Canadian one; so is *Snow Apples*. And there isn't a single Mountie in either of them.

PERRY NODELMAN

COMPLEXE DU MOTEUR

ROCH CARRIER, *De l'amour dans la ferraille*. Stanké, n.p.

> C'est quand on fait des chemins dans le monde, qu'on apprend ce qu'est la vie, parce que la vie suit les chemins. Et les chemins suivent les rêves des hommes.

"LA VIE EST UN VOYAGE en automobile," a écrit je ne sais plus qui, sans doute un Américain. J'aime ces phrases lapidaires capables de contenir un roman ou une civilisation. L' "hénaurme" livre de Roch Carrier repose sur cette image-mère, à la fois fruit et noyau de son récit, métaphore englobante et interminable, filée en quelque 550 pages. Il est superflu de répéter que l'auteur connaît parfaitement son métier, qu'il le pratique avec une liberté qui suppose l'amour de conter et la capacité de renouveler l'étonnement à chaque page. Mais il y a plus que du savoir-faire dans l'art de construire avec des mots une histoire, ce chemin qui ne mène nulle part.

De l'amour dans la ferraille, c'est la chronique du village de Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints dans les Appalaches. La petite localité rurale est isolée dans le repli séculaire de ses habitudes qui s'appellent des traditions. A l'époque où le romancier a choisi de situer son récit, ces traditions sont en train de subir une mutation en passant de la sphère religieuse à la sphère politique. Le centre du monde n'est plus le clocher de l'église paroissiale de Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints, bien que certains épisodes solennels de la vie sociale y restent attachés. Les habitants de la petite localité sont tournés vers la Capitale, siège du gouvernement du Bon Parti et de son redoutable Cheuf qui s'entend à distribuer faveurs et menaces en temps utile à sa réélection. Les moeurs d'un tel régime démocratique sont certes hautes en couleurs et inspirées par la légende, comme l'explique hardiment le robuste procule Ponton: "Tout ce qu'on raconte est légende. Personne n'en sait assez pour raconter quelque chose de vrai. Tout le monde raconte des légendes." Ou, si l'on préfère, comme aime à dire un autre personnage: "Tout ce qu'on sait, c'est qu'on peut pas savoir."

Que se passe-t-il à Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints? La première phrase du premier chapitre est à ce sujet péremptoire: "Ici, il ne se passerait rien." L'événement a lieu ailleurs, c'est-à-dire dans la salle où est réuni le conseil des ministres autour du Cheuf qui vient de décider de faire des élections. Entre le village et la Capitale, les "grands de cette province" ont tissé le réseau serré de leur organisation et à Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints, comme d'ailleurs dans des centaines d'autres villages en même temps semblables et non semblables à lui, mais hors du monde fictif; donc à Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints, rien d'étrange à ce que l'on voie les conséquences pratiques de la politique du Cheuf qui déclare, non sans avoir auparavant frappé la table "du plat de la main":

> Honorables ministres, pour récolter, il faut semer; pour récolter des votes, il faut semer des chemins. Vous allez me saupoudrer la province d'une pluie de bouts de chemins. Il faut que chaque électeur du Bon Parti ait son bout de chemin neuf avant le jour de la votation. Il faut que chaque malheureux qui a envie de donner son vote à l'Opposition voit un bout de chemin.

Pendant ce temps-là, Innocent Loiseau

a quitté le collège d'où il vient d'être renvoyé avec ses malles dans une brouette et il vit une sorte de cauchemar éveillé en poussant péniblement son fardeau sur le chemin désert, jusqu'à la prochaine maison où l'accueille une veuve folle, solitaire et lubrique qui ouvre ainsi dire la série des initiations dont le texte compose l'une des trames de son nombreux récit. A suivre cet héros résolument prosaïque en dépit, sinon à cause de son éducation religieuse, il y a roman d'apprentissage. Innocent Loiseau, Téton Lachapelle, Jeannot Tremblay et avec eux, mais à des degrés divers et dans des situations infiniment différentes, presque tous les personnages sont aux prises avec la difficulté de comprendre l'amour. Téton Lachapelle incarne probablement un type fondamental de notre psyché, un archétype aussi important que le coureur de bois. Dans l'histoire cruelle, drôle et bouleversante que Roch Carrier titre magnifiquement: "Ecoutez l'histoire d'une femme qui mangeait du chocolat," Téton Lachapelle meurt en laissant sur la banquette du camion dans lequel il vient de s'écraser contre le tronc d'un érable, le message suivant: "Je pars parce que je suis incapable d'aimer." Ce camionneur représente ce que je proposerais d'appeler le complexe québécois du moteur qui est une forme inédite de la volonté de puissance malheureuse, c'est-à-dire la plus pure recherche de l'autodestruction passionnée. Ne serait-ce que pour cette seule raison (mais il y en a tant d'autres), je prétends qu'il faut lire ce roman. Il y a des personnages de cette fresque pour lesquels on éprouve un attrait particulier. On est heureux de les retrouver et de les suivre au détour d'un échevau d'épisodes. Cette comédie humaine nous concerne comme un album de famille et nous blesse parfois comme un souvenir. Mais revenons aux événements de Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints.

Il y a donc octroi du contrat de construction de ce que les gens du pays apellent "le chemin neu." C'est en fait la trame principale du fil très noueux de cette intrigue. Le député du comté, le ministre des chemins et des ponts, l'entrepreneur Verrachio, quelques habitants expropriés et toute la population locale qui vote pour le Bon Parti, tous ces gens deviennent les acteurs, les victimes ou, mais plus rarement, les bénéficiaires du véritable train de catastrophes qu'inaugure le chantier du nouveau chemin en construction. D'abord, ce chemin ne mène nulle part. Sa seule fonctionnalité étant la rétribution du Bon Parti au Bon Peuple pour son vote, il ne faut pas s'étonner que ce tronçon soit privé de toute liaison à un circuit routier. La communication est avant tout politique. La géométrie et la géographie lui sont étrangères. Il faudrait remarquer à propos de ce symbole routier qu'il rejoint quelque chose du mythe fondamental de l'Amérique (on songe au Kérouac de *On The Road* et, plus récemment, à *Volkswagen Blues* de Jacques Poulin). Les chemins électoraux font écho dans la mémoire des pionniers aux premiers chemins des défricheurs, non sans qu'en retournement du sens de l'histoire s'effectue sous leurs yeux:

> Quand ils étaient venus, il n'y avait pas d'autre chemin que celui qu'ils taillaient à coup de hache dans cette forêt qui était telle qu'elle avait poussé depuis la création du monde. . . . Aujourd'hui, le chemin neuf servirait peut-être à leurs enfants à fuir ce lieu vers où le bon Dieu les avait guidés. La faiblesse de la jeunesse, c'était d'avoir devant elle des chemins ouverts. . . . Le village se dressait avec ses maisons peintes sur des pelouses égales, avec des rubans de fleurs. La route passait devant; ils pouvaient filer comme des poissons dans l'eau.

Lecture que prolonge et contredit à la fois celle du ministre:

> Il était un homme qui bâtissait le chemin dans lequel il avançait. Ses ancêtres avaient taillé à la hache des passages pour leurs

> voitures et leurs animaux. . . . Les ancêtres étaient disparus; mais restaient leurs villages et leurs champs. Le ministre disparaîtrait mais tous ses chemins resteraient derrière lui. Ils seraient sa signature sur la terre.

Parmi toutes les raisons qui rendent la lecture de ce livre captivante, il y a évidemment son humour, sa fantaisie et pardessus tout sa légèreté, sa faculté de rire du plus grave et de faire affleurer la profondeur que recouvre partout l'anecdote. Le roman est ici constamment débordé par le conte et ses personnages sont plus près du mythe que d'une réalité réduite à ses seules dimensions rationalisées. C'est peut-être la formule de son art poétique que le romancier confie à la verve de Charlemagne St-Ours qui déclare: "Dans la vie . . . tout s'envole. Y a rien que le rêve qui reste. Si les écrits restent, c'est parce que c'est du rêve."

REJEAN BEAUDOIN

FLY-TYING

W. O. MITCHELL, *Since Daisy Creek*. Macmillan, $19.95.

COLIN DOBBS' DAUGHTER Annie, to her mother's disgust, shares her father's fondness for fly-fishing and fly-tying. As she explains to her father:

> Fish don't see all that clearly and that's why the nymphs won't work — won't fool them — if they have all the exact detail and form that makes them look more clear than a fish would see them, and all that does is to tip the fish off that the nymph isn't really real . . . Just tie flies that are small or medium or large, short or long, grey or black or blue dun or brown or green. Just *suggest* they might be some kind of nymph. Let the trout do some guessing.

Since Daisy Creek is just such a fat-bodied fly made of frazzles of muskrat fur, and the reader is the trout who is left to do some guessing. On the surface, the book is a fuzz of clichés about a character, subspecies university professor, in the throes of male menopause. This climacteric has a rather substantial physical element: near Daisy Creek Professor Dobbs has been mauled, almost killed, by a huge female grizzly bear. The novel begins with Dobbs in the hospital, recovered enough so that the thought of his pretty nurse gives him his first erection since the mauling. The action continues as Annie comes home to rescue her father from the hospital and to set up housekeeping with him, but the narrative also progresses backward, as Dobbs remembers his marriage, and particularly his divorce, and relives the circumstances of the fateful bear hunt. As Dobbs recovers, he returns to teaching creative writing amidst the power struggles of his university, and he replaces his quest for grizzly with a quest for the hide of the particular bear that mauled him, a remarkable trophy that the unscrupulous taxidermist has apparently sold to another hunter. As he recreates his past, he focuses on the wife who misunderstood him and the wolfishly ambitious female colleague who seduced him. Both the remembered past and the unrolling present are predictable combinations of macho ambition, destructive females, spunky but essentially submissive females, male self-importance and self-pity, and even a native guru, Archie Nicotine, full of irreverent wisdom.

Unlike Robertson Davies, who subverted the clichés of the male academic's menopause brilliantly if outrageously in *Rebel Angels*, Mitchell does not overtly challenge the fuzziness of his story, and I, at least, am left wondering, as I was in *The Vanishing Point*, how much of this to take seriously and how much to dismiss as the characters' fuzzy thinking. The stereotypes, particularly those of the females, ursine or human, who threaten Dr. Dobbs, are too pervasive for comfort. Yet Annie points out all that is vicious

and self-serving in the bear hunt, and Mitchell provides inset stories to challenge the clichés.

The tale of the ill-fated dachshund Polly is a small, brilliant farce that undercuts both the self-pity in Dobbs' recollections of his wife and also the seriousness of Dobbs' quest for the mounted hide of "his" grizzly. Dobbs had blithely volunteered to board the elderly and beloved dog of his mentor, who was going on sabbatical. Polly, of course, turned out to be incontinent and flatulent, and her presence strained Dobbs' already shaky marriage past its limits. Mrs. Dobbs banned the dachshund from the house, so Dobbs built an insulated dog house, complete with electric heating pad. Polly electrocuted herself by chewing through the cord. Thwarted by frozen ground from burying the dachshund on the site her master had chosen, Dobbs stowed her body under the porch. When spring came, her master had changed his mind — he wanted his pet stuffed. Dobbs moved the body to the household freezer where Mrs. Dobbs, intent on beef Wellington, found the dead dog underneath the tenderloin. No reader, no matter how fond of dogs, can fail to notice the incongruity of a marriage failing over an electrocuted and frozen pet. Poor Polly is at least as funny as she is tragic, deflating all of Dobbs' carefully marshalled self-pity. The impulse to stuff Polly also undercuts Dobbs' relentless attempt to reclaim the skin of his grizzly bear. The taxidermist proudly states "We do no pets," but nothing convinces the reader that it is inherently more noble to stuff a bear than to stuff a dachshund, especially as Polly's memorial proceeds from love, while Dobbs' quest for his grizzly skin proceeds from vengeance and pride.

A novel of deflated stereotypes, however, is scarcely more satisfying than one in which the stereotypes purport to be real characters. The alternative to the clichés comes when Dobbs decides to abandon his quest for the grizzly bear skin. He has brought the taxidermist to court, in the process subjecting his Indian guide and friend, Archie Nicotine, to the attention of a lawyer and judge who dislike Indians. Worse, Dobbs has forced the old and honourable taxidermist to perjure himself rather than to admit in public that his grandson-partner is a sneak and a thief. Dobbs learns that even his great macho moment was not his. Archie Nicotine killed the bear, which Dobbs had mortally wounded, but which still had the strength to kill a man. For Nicotine to kill the bear, however, violates the oath not to kill he had made to the Powers in exchange for the recovery of his own daughter. Having forced these men who act out of love to forswear themselves, Dobbs can no longer pursue his own foolish and vindictive quest. The book ends with Dobbs apparently ready to return to his own writing, which he had forsaken for bear-hunting when his marriage went bad. Through the series of paintings of him that Annie has done and through a chance meeting with a woman who has undergone a mastectomy, Dobbs has learned to accept his disfigurement. Through the sacrifices of the old man and of Archie Nicotine, Dobbs has learned to re-evaluate his past and, without repudiating it, to move beyond it and also to possess it as a material for his writing.

Since Daisy Creek is not technically innovative and it scarcely surmounts its own clichés. Yet, as we would expect from Mitchell, it is a tender book, written out of fondness for the characters and for all the human folk they more or less resemble.

FRANCES W. KAYE

OUT OF TIME

ROCH CARRIER, *Lady with Chains*, tr. Sheila Fischman. Anansi, $8.95.

FEW HISTORIANS — certainly none in Quebec — would quarrel with Michel Brunet's assertion that "It is the task of the historian . . . to aid his contemporaries to assume fully the past, that they drag along with them, if they wish to liberate themselves from it, in order to correct the present and to prepare the future with clarity." In claiming for history a didactic function, Brunet is only expressing an idea put more concisely by Louis B. Namier: the historian must "imagine the past and remember the future." But until the 1950's, the dominant theme of Quebec historians was not liberation; rather, they sought to ratify past values deemed essential to national survival. The mystique of rural life, the divine mission of French Canadians to preserve the spiritual ideals of the *ancien régime*, and the purity of the Catholic faith — these themes were played repeatedly against the ground bass of *La Survivance*.

In the last three decades the traditional view of Quebec history has been swept aside. But to "assume fully the past" is not merely to reject it in favour of a different *parti pris*. As Christopher Lasch remarks, "There is history that remembers and history that originates in a need to forget." Liberation from the past can be accomplished only through a process which includes both demystification and recuperation. It is this task which continues to engage the novelists and playwrights of French Canada.

Among the many writers to emerge after the Quiet Revolution, Roch Carrier has been one of the most accessible to English readers. "Carrier's total effort," writes Georges-V. Fournier, "is directed to the recapture of a past reality which traditional writing and criticism had whitewashed and deformed for paraliterary purposes, ideological, political or moral." In his latest novel, *Lady with Chains*, Carrier fixes his gaze on "la solitude des pionniers" — a solitude "qui devait être absolument terrible." He adds, "je ne suis pas persuadé qu'on ai perdu toute cette solitude qui a été vécue. Je pense que notre âme est encore marquée par cette sorte de solitude que nos ancêtres ont vécue."

Carrier describes *Lady with Chains* as a novel of love and death in which nature plays a very active role. In outline the tale is slight. Victor meets Virginie. They marry. After the wedding Victor goes off to build a cabin in the wilderness, returning to conduct Virginie and their first-born son to their new home. On the way they are overwhelmed by a blizzard. Victor and Virginie are rescued by monks whose monastery is the only other habitation in the forest, but the child dies, abandoned by Victor in the snow. Virginie, obsessed by her belief that Victor is guilty of murdering the child, sinks into a silent, hallucinatory identification with the Lady with Chains, a legendary poisoner. She carries out her plan to kill Victor by poisoning his food, confesses to the horrified monks, and is carted off to the city in chains. Her execution is delayed because she is pregnant, and before the child is born Victor reappears, still very much alive. He, too, is in chains, for convinced of his wife's innocence and enraged at the monks' treatment of her, he has set fire to the monastery. Happily, with the birth of the second child Virginie recovers her senses and, absolved of sin and pardoned by the law, the reconstituted family is freed to return to the wilderness.

What is the reader to make of this fairytale? Humourless, apparently devoid of irony or ambiguity, Carrier's text is so obsessive in its concern for *vraisemblance*

it seems thematically empty. Victor, the *défricheur*, is a woodcut lifted from the pages of Hémon. His head is filled with the carrots, the chickens, and the children he plans to raise on his as-yet-uncleared land. But in spite of his unflagging energy and optimism — his incessant babble about the good Lord — Victor is anything but victorious. Like his mute wife, who conceals her homicidal intentions under a submissive silence, he is the victim not only of a hostile nature, but also of a complete inability to separate myth from reality. While Virginie is totally absorbed in imagining the past, Victor "talks endlessly" about the future; "he doesn't remember the past, there is only the future, for him there is no more winter."

If this were a first novel it would be easy to dismiss these two incredible characters along with the naive resolution of the conflict which has led both French and English reviewers to speak sardonically of the "happy end" — a phrase for which there is evidently no French equivalent. But Carrier is no novice. A writer for twenty-five years, he has shown himself capable of irony, ambiguity, and symbolic complexity. Is there not something suspect in the innocence of the narrative, a hint of parody in the very names of the characters, a contradiction between the "magical charm" of the style — "oneiric," "incantatory," "masterful," to quote some of the words used by reviewers — and the seemingly simplistic content of *Lady with Chains*? Surely this most recent work, into which Carrier claims to have put everything he knows about writing, requires a second look?

From the outset *Lady with Chains* recalls legends and customs which are woven into the culture of French Canada. There are references to Rose La Tulippe and the *chasse galerie*. The Lady with Chains is no doubt a variant of La Corriveau, hanged in chains for the murder of her husband, whose dangling skeleton, enclosed in an iron cage, is exhibited at the crossroads as a warning to all who pass by. But Carrier's Lady has little in common with the sinister figure familiar to readers of Phillipe Aubert de Gaspé or *The Golden Dog*. She seems instead to signify the oppression and the suffering of women. She is linked in Virginie's mind with the embroidered tablecloth in whose knots and loops are stitched "the patience of her mother" — a testament to the "life of penitence and submission" which is the destiny of the female. "A prisoner of her parents, condemned to forced household labour," Virginie has nothing to do but dream. Like a true historian, she reinvents the past in her imagination. After her child's death, the damp straw of the Lady's cell, the ship with its tall masts, the sea waves that carry the Lady to freedom but which can never dissolve past memories — these are more real to Virginie than the windowless cabin she inhabits with Victor, a cabin surrounded by strange trees and unfathomable snow where, "in the silence the Lady who is dragging her chains, joins past and future together." Victor, too, possessed of the three magical gifts that signify his masculinity — life, land, and the hand of Virginie — is imprisoned in myth, totally caught up in the delusion of a divine destiny. "Man's fate is written by the hand of God," he explains to Virginie's father, "and my fate is to go back and cultivate the land." After the child's death he tells Virginie,

> "We must forget the winter, Virginie. All the trees around us have forgotten the winter. If the good Lord has put a memory in men's souls, it's as much for forgetting as for remembering. If men always remembered everything, they'd be the unhappiest creatures in God's creation. We've suffered as much as a catastrophe can make a man and woman suffer. You, you suffer and

> you're silent; me, I suffer and I talk as if I felt no pain."

Carrier's purpose, like the Lady's, is to join the past and the future in the present. He at first invites the reader to approach his text as a tragedy, as a means "of recovering human misery, of subsuming and thereby justifying it in the form of a necessity, a wisdom, or a purification" (Roland Barthes). But at the same time he admits into his narrative elements of parody and fable which break through the tragic surface, disrupting the process of recuperation and permitting the escape into a "happy end." When the dead Victor comes back to life, when the dead child is replaced by another, when the reunited couple are released from their separate cells, when the priest pardons their sins and the judge their crimes, then it is impossible to read Victor's concluding speech as anything but ironic:

> "Cry, Virginie, cry. I wish I could cry like you, like a river of sorrow and joy. But me, I can't cry because I can't believe what's happened to us. We're resurrected, Virginie, like our Lord Jesus Christ: resurrected! But now we have to hurry. We mustn't let the weeds and brushwood get away from us. Hurry, Virginie, we have to go to our land! How I'd love it, Virginie, if we could go to our new world, you and me and the child, on a great ship with sails!"

Those who forget their history are indeed doomed to repeat it! But Marx's formulation is doubly true: the first time it is tragedy, the second, farce.

In a reading at UBC in 1984, Carrier told his audience, "Look at your own experience until it becomes very special." The proliferation of detail does produce in *Lady with Chains* an appearance of thematic emptiness, but it also makes very special the obsessive world of solitude and silence which the characters inhabit, and through the process of defamiliarization and renewal of perception it also demystifies the past. It seems at least as wise to withhold judgement of Carrier's novel, as to dismiss it as a "sort of classic comics *Kamouraska* with . . . no touch of irony" (P. Merivale). As Jonathan Culler suggests, "in calling a text ironic we indicate our desire to avoid premature foreclosure, to allow the text to work on us as fully as it can, to give it the benefit of the doubt by allowing it to contain whatever doubts come to mind in reading it." But, he adds, paradoxically "Irony is the ultimate form of recuperation and naturalization." The seeming transparency of Carrier's text may offer a clue to its double purpose: to give a sympathetic voice to a past which has been not so much silent as distorted by noises in the system, and at the same time to effect a liberation from it.

HILDA L. THOMAS

THE JEW OF TOLEDO

MATT COHEN, *The Spanish Doctor*. McClelland & Stewart, $19.95.

HALFWAY THROUGH Matt Cohen's new novel I was reminded of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. I was searching for a title for this review, but, more than that, I wondered if the two works had anything in common. I remembered that Marlowe's Barabas is a Machiavellian of a crude but classic type, compulsively driven by greed and revenge to deeds of horror. The Elizabethan's play is certainly energetic, propelled by relentlessly logical scene shifts to its grisly conclusion. But its language is graceless. There is only one memorable line of dialogue in it, and that, when Barabas speaks of fornication — "but that was in another country; / And besides, the wench is dead" — seems incongruously out of character, perhaps because Marlowe could not resist turning the knife of his

anti-semitic portrayal still more sharply. Yet, just as Barabas has his troubles with the Christians of Malta, so Avram Halevi, the Toledo-born Jew of *The Spanish Doctor* must suffer the bigotry of Catholic Spain in the years preceding the Inquisition. However, there the comparison ends. Cohen's hero is a much more fully realized character than Barabas, though no Machiavellian; and the language of the novel has a scope and texture far richer than Marlowe's play. Finally, the only anti-semitism in Cohen's work is organic to his adventurous plot and, moreover, is countered effectively in his characterizations of Jews.

Set against a world of late medieval superstition, periodic pogroms, and the scourge of the dreaded plague, the novel follows Avram's ambitious progress from the foul streets of Toledo's ghetto into the courts of power of Spain, France, and Italy. Recognized for his phenomenal skills as a surgeon and for the mysterious powders he concocts to salve his patients' pains, Avram hopes to use his knowledge for humanistic goals. But, as a Marrano Jew, he is distrusted as much by his own people as by Catholics. Thus he must tread a perilous path between the gratitude of his wealthy clients and the all-too-sudden changes of fortune which threaten to destroy him and his fellow Jews. Along the way he makes influential friends, among them Juan Velasquez, a merchant, whose wife Avram saves in childbirth. Juan's brother, the scheming Cardinal Rodrigo, seeks to eliminate his rivals in his pursuit of the papacy; eventually, he and Avram become bitter enemies. The doctor, ironically, kills Antonio, his brave cohort in the struggle to preserve Spanish Judaism, in order to save him from further torture at the hands of Rodrigo's henchmen. More murders follow as Avram finds that he must wield his scalpel as a sword to defend himself from death or capture. Finally he does kill Rodrigo, but is subsequently imprisoned for nine years before making his escape to Russia. The remainder of his life is spent in Kiev, where he rises to prominence among the Jewish refugees from many European countries who have fled the terrors of religious persecution. And there, too, Avram begins to accept his Jewish heritage and to recover his long-lost faith.

In an epic tale such as this, the "love angle" is important. Among Avram's lusty conquests is the beautiful Jeanne de Peyre; by marrying her he is able to forward his career in medicine at the university in Montpellier, France. But the love of his life is Gabriela, a slim Jewess from Toledo who builds a successful career for herself in Juan Velasquez' mercantile empire. She envisages Avram as a latter-day Judas Maccabee — an extravagant hope, given Avram's nature — but she loyally follows him to Russia and nurtures his return to Judaism.

Despite what I have said, however, the character of Avram is not as fully realized as one would like. Too often he simply gets lost amongst the violence and passionate love-making. We know something of his motives; but how does he grow, intellectually, emotionally? By comparison, Yuri Zhivago, in Pasternak's historical romance of the Soviet Revolution, is a much more consistently developed — and sympathetic — figure.

Certainly Cohen has fashioned an exciting page-turner, which will delight readers. But some may well ask: what on earth is he doing by deserting the familiar territory of his southern Ontario or Salem Quartet novels? An answer might be that Cohen is seeking a larger audience. Indeed, one can easily imagine that a vigorous tele-series or screenplay could be made out of the popular ingredients of the story. But one can also see in the novel the further proof of his

serious, continuing concern with the nature of tradition and its magnetic pull on the lives of his characters. In creating Avram — a very reluctant hero — Cohen may have three interrelated purposes: to defend Judaism in an age when religious warfare is once more a vital issue; to explore his own ancestral roots and the problems of European Jewry; and to show the dilemmas a man of science experiences as he wrestles, inwardly and outwardly, with the demons of ignorance and fratricidal slaughter which undermine faith, community, and human progress. Read with these several levels of meaning in mind, *The Spanish Doctor* is a novel of absorbing interest: easily a match for *The Jew of Malta* in vitality of action, it is clearly superior in the complexity of its themes, and in its care with language.

ERIC THOMPSON

CLOUDS OF WONDER

FARLEY MOWAT, *Sea of Slaughter*. McClelland & Stewart, $24.95.

WHEN THE ANCESTORS of Homo Sapiens first came skittering nervously down from the trees they were — presumably — vegetarians. They were also equipped with opposable thumbs, or developed them shortly thereafter; and started in on terrestrial life on the right foot, picking off grubs and worms for the quick energy provided by protein food. Later on they became toolmakers, and used throwing sticks, arrows, spears, and volleys of stones to kill loveable wild creatures of the forest and plain, feasting enormously on the delicious protein these beasts reluctantly provided.

At least that's the way I understand what happened — up to five million years ago, according to anthropologists-geologists Louis and Mary Leakey and their successors in South Africa's Olduvai Gorge. Australopithecus, and latterly Homo Sapiens, developed a strong appetite for red meat and on occasion, fowl. And as their toolmaking abilities increased, especially in this last century — guns, bombs and the like added to their arsenal — beasts and birds had little chance against them. Sometimes they also killed for love of killing, as well as for food and various by-products of their victims' bodies. They also justified what had become, in many cases, animal genocide with such casuistries as: "the death of any animal or species which contributes thereby to the satisfaction of human desires is not only justifiable but somehow tinged with a kind of nobility."

Which is what this Farley Mowat book is about: the depredations of man on animal species of the world, but principally those on the northeast coast of North America. It is, of course, a "viewing with alarm" book, an indignant recapitulation of animal murder that has been going on for many centuries, and may result in man himself (both genders) becoming the only remaining animal in God's universe.

Returning from the last war in 1945 on a Liberty ship, Mowat and the captain delighted in spotting sea life on the voyage west. It became a game between them, a small triumph to be first to spot and identify whales, porpoises, swordfish, eider ducks, etc. They were there in astonishing numbers. The world was blossoming with its creatures after the great slaughter in Europe, and there was a paradisiacal feeling about it for the future writer.

(My own equivalent of this natural ocean paradise was a visit to the Galapagos Islands in 1980, where the protected wild life very nearly ate out of your hand. You were intruders in their kingdom, but not unwelcome; these

creatures, who spoke a different language, lived a different life in different and more interesting bodies.)

Over the last two hundred years the killing has increased to such a tempo that some animal species are gravely depleted, and some are disappearing altogether. The great auk or spearbill is the classic example of extinctions in which disappearing species (as the great auks became scarce they also became much more valuable) are hunted down remorselessly for museums and institutions. The last two alive were killed on a lonely Icelandic island in 1844.

Nascopie Indians of Ungava named a bird we know as the Eskimo curlew the *swiftwing*. When these birds migrated from northeastern Canada to the tip of South America, Patagonians called them *cloud of wonder*. The curlew weighed "no more than a pound," and was a foot high. In Patagonia sheer numbers of them darkened the sky at century's turn. At Bathurst Inlet in the Canadian Arctic, its whistle sounded like *pi-pi-piuk*, and it was called that by the Eskimos. Their numbers were like a moving cloud by day, and clouds of bullets killed them: there are no more *swiftwings*. They were citizens of the world.

Polar bears have been killed off by hunters and sportsmen for many years. Mowat says the number of "kills" probably reached 2,000 in 1968, out of a total world population of somewhat more than 15,000. And since the female polar bear gives birth only every third year, there is real danger of final extinction. The bear's magnificent white overcoat is the trophy and prize: Mowat says a good polar bear skin fetched $1,000 in 1964. By contrast, I was offered one for $100 by Jim Cumming of the Hudson's Bay Company at Pangnirtung on Baffin Island in that same year. (However, it was a small skin; I didn't buy it.) The price has now reached as much as $5,000 "for an especially good one." Poor citizen of the Arctic!

It is a ghastly parade, blood, slaughter, stink, and the deaths of entire populations. Victims include whales, walrus, seals, and dozens of bird species, in such numbers that human slaughter of humans seems miniscule by comparison. Mowat documents it all in a mixture of legend, hearsay, speculation and definite recorded fact, one sometimes indistinguishable from the other. His quotations of historical sources range from George Cartwright in eighteenth-century Labrador to the contemporary Smithsonian Institution.

Presumably the book took five years to write, since the date of Mowat's last book was 1979. Its more than 400 pages certainly demonstrate such long-term labour. Mowat calls it his "most important book." "Important" is an interesting distinction from "best," which term I think belongs to his moving and completely unpretentious evocation of World War Two, *And No Birds Sang*. But I agree, the book is important.

I am troubled by other considerations, however. Despite Northrop Frye's dictum, I think a reviewer has to make value judgements, inasmuch as he is able. Mowat has undertaken and accomplished an enormous and valuable task in this book. I admire his own extensive personal knowledge and research, the gut feeling he has woven into his narrative that such horrible slaughter should cease. And his good flexible prose abilities, learned by matching the word to the thing itself, the primitive excelling the so-called civilized, as in *swiftwing* and *cloud of wonder*.

However, wading through more than 400 pages of slaughter grows tiresome and monotonous, despite Mowat's undoubted abilities. His thesis, I agree with completely: save the animals. I also think motherhood is a very good thing, no

matter what the species. Therefore I can read this book in sections, half an hour or so at a time, with great interest; whereas longer than that is tiresome.

It seems to me that the only thing that can save the animal species of the world from animal humans is human emotion. Not statistics, not body count and numbers, but a feeling that they too are with us as part of the crew of this stone ship sailing through nowhere into the void. And I think emotion is best evoked in fiction; and if so, what a paradox that the non-real best portrays reality? I mean, go back to Thornton Burgess and the Brer Rabbit people even, go back to Thompson Seton and Charles G. D. Roberts, and the child following his eyes and sinking past the printed word into the fictional-real-world where our bodies loved and our minds made magic.

But that's unjust to Mowat: this is a worthy and "important" book. It documents and describes the very real danger that we shall soon have exterminated every species but ourselves, and shall be living alone in the universe without God. And He will be next, since we're responsible for his birth in the first place.

AL PURDY

PRAIRIE MAGIC

GARY HYLAND, *Street of Dreams*. Coteau Books, $7.00.

IT WOULD TAKE A churlish reader to resist the ingratiating charm of Gary Hyland's poetry. A large part of this charm lies in Hyland's tactful sense of the relation between the poet and his subject, as in "There Are Many Poems of This Sort," about Art and Don, the poet's "dead students," one killed when he overturned a stolen bulldozer on a muddy hillside, the other, high on LSD, who died by crashing his motorcycle into "a sleepy herd / of highway-crossing cattle":

> Alive, you would laugh at this,
> the irony that each
> needed the other's vehicle:
> the Harley to shoot the slope
> the tractor used at last
> as befits its name.
>
> With what we called warped humour
> you would be laughing still
> if you saw me here at 2 a.m.,
> my work undone, surprised
> at being a teacher
> who writes about dead students.

The shift of focus from the subject to the writer is always tricky, but Hyland uses it to strike one of his best and most characteristic notes, created by means of colloquial language and a humour tied to a specific place and time of life (a poetry about adolescence, and of adolescence: a repeated emphasis in this volume is point of view and attitude as determined by age and by residence in the small town). This is the poet as ordinary man, chronicling the surprising wonder of ordinary life, or the poet as high school teacher — and what provides a more authoritative experience of the ordinary than school teaching?

> Never mind if the choir flattens
> "The Big Rock Candy Mountain."
> This is the day the grass is cut.

. . . . . .
Never mind the casualties
on Mrs. Powers' math test.
Today we trim each nervy sprout.
This is the day the grass is cut.

If this succeeds (and to this reader it does) it is because of Hyland's personal, earned realism (in the tradition of small town realism), part sentiment and part irony, and a poetic modesty that settles for an apprehension of the subject at just the right level.

The title of this volume is ambiguous, as the excerpt from the popular song from which it is taken indicates: "Dreams broken in two / Can be made like new / On the Street of Dreams." Hyland's emphasis is different from that of the American song, however: for him, Home Street is the place where dreams originate, where they are broken and lost, and, sometimes, where they are remade. The importance of dreams and the living in and by means of dreams is of course traditional for the literature of small towns: we remember Jefferson Thorpe, in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, Mariposa's poet of high finance. Hyland declares his choice of the local subject, or the local version of the big-time thing, in the opening poem of his volume, "I Was Going to Write," which provides thumbnail sketches of famous people and events from the great world (that is, for people in Moose Jaw, the United States), while declaring the poet's preference for the local hero, "a grinning Nazi Miller / the best clarinetist on Home Street." This praise reminds one of Leacock's Mr. Smith, "one of the best minds in the hotel business," and Hyland, like Leacock (but with less edge) is aware of the uses of such a subject both for sentiment and for satire. Like Leacock, too, Hyland implies that the local can be defined only with reference to the great world, which has penetrated life on Home Street through the communications media and especially TV, that creator of a worldwide suburbia (hence Hyland's poems on the assassination of Kennedy and the burning child in Vietnam, as these were seen on Home Street, and strangely became a part of growing up there).

Hyland's fundamental structure is the story or anecdote, a traditional device for recovering and preserving the past. The organizing structure of this volume is a series of loosely connected sketches, with lyric interludes, and a more or less continuous cast of characters. Hyland's stories are a type of local history, and as a poet he is a type of realist. Much of the interest of the poems of childhood, in the first two sections of the volume, depends on the tension between fact and imagination or, as Hyland presents it, on fact as a basis for imaginative construction. In "Crazy Dave," the loony's antics are seen as fabulous by the children, but the adult knows things actually happened this way ("biting the breast of a live pigeon / a mouthful of bloodied feathers for a dollar"); the mystery of Dave is only cleared up after childhood gives way to an adulthood more accurate in its knowledge but less certain in its judgements:

Only later when I learned it was a
birthmark
and his laughter was a moat did I wonder
where he went and what became of him,
and only lately have I been wishing
that he could have learned the bagpipes
and joined some Canterbury pilgrims
on a fourteenth century road to grace.

Hyland attempts to reedem the wonder of life precisely through the gaining of adult knowledge, a kind of modest prairie magic realism.

Hyland favours the brief poem, usually contained within the page, with a vigorous one- or two-line conclusion. He has a traditional liking for the image, and particularly for the forceful, explicit simile: "The street is like a chalice / rim

to rim unmarred by feet or wheels, / a drink the storm has poured for him" ("First Poem"). Sometimes the poem seems written for the sake of a final simile, a form of the punch line: "the hands clumsy as crabs / along the leather grips" ("He Played Golf"). The frequency of resort to the simile is a sign of the local historian at work, often as a retrospective narrator striving to recover and dramatize childhood's freshness of vision. The simile reminds us by its explicitness of the adult who is really speaking, and of the gap to be bridged:

> Nine was bedtime yet he was outside
> in the grove beside the house
> at ten running after Tippy down paths
> drenched with lilac fragrance
> beneath stars big as chandeliers.

In the first two parts of this volume ("Small Fry" and "Home Street"), the child's point of view is often expressed in the third person (the child as "he" and not "I" is seeing and feeling); this combination suggests a wider framework and an intensified sense of subjective wonder:

> And didn't an owl hoot and whoosh
> from the birch towards the moon
> when he pressed against the rough
> slats of the creaky backyard trellis?
> There he saw the pack of visitors' cars
> And Uncle Percy's red grain truck,
> the visitors there for the reason
> his mother hushed behind her hand.

Hyland is not (or not yet) a successful poet of intense personal experience, lyrically expressed. His best poetry is, like this poem, dramatic and narrative, with a refreshing, respectful objectivity.

FRANCIS ZICHY

BRINK OF LAUGHTER

J. J. STEINFELD, *The Apostate's Tattoo*. Ragweed, $8.95.

I STILL READ STORIES out of a childish longing to find out more about life and people. Reading *The Apostate's Tattoo*, I'm not sure that I found out more about either, but I did find out more about one person — J. J. Steinfeld. Some of what I found out I liked, and some I didn't like so much. The book jacket tells us that Steinfeld lives and works in Charlottetown and that he won the Norma Epstein award for imaginative writing at the University of Toronto in 1979. Also that three of the stories were published before in *Origins* and *Jewish Dialog*, and that this is Steinfeld's first book.

The twelve stories in the book are clever and inventive, and a few are brilliant. But eleven of them are not about real people, and in all twelve the social context is either thin or absent. Steinfeld is not interested in character so much as in moral and philosophical issues (maybe this is a sign of the times), and so he creates, not characters, but metaphors for his ideas.

For example, in the first story, "One of Hypermnestra's Sisters," he reverses the usual proverbial truth that the sins of the father are visited upon the sons to show, instead, how the sins of the mothers are redeemed through the grace of the daughters. In "A Television Watching Artist" he shows how advertising and marketing, when followed to a logical conclusion, lead to craziness and isolation; in "Trilliums" he deals with the injustice of death that destroys valuable graduate students and preserves their dull old professors. "Missing Limbs and Love," about an introspective legless cripple and an energetic prostitute, is an illustration of the saying that things are not what they seem, and that there is a

world out there where cripples and whores can meet in The Vagabond Cafe to discuss Camus, Anais Nin, and Henry Miller.

In "Apostate's Tattoo," the title story, Steinfeld demonstrates that even guilt and remorse cannot atone for the suffering of another, because no one else's suffering can be recreated exactly; if it isn't exact, he implies, it can't be true, and the whole exercise then becomes artificial and meaningless. Perhaps, with this story, Steinfeld is preaching what he doesn't practise. He is telling us, in a very obscure way, that real life always transcends art, and that no metaphor is large or deep enough to contain it.

And indeed, life *does* transcend art (though art can capture and arrest moments of it here and there), and therefore it is a pity to further reduce art by writing formulaic stories whose real meanings are diverted and all but lost in Steinfeld's O'Henryesque surprise endings. A good story and its characters are sufficient unto themselves, and surprise endings only serve to vulgarize a writer's work.

However, there is one real story and one real character in this collection. That character is Perlmutter, the narrator in "A Bullet for Perlmutter." Although Steinfeld almost ruins this story with a silly surprise ending, Perlmutter himself is both true and funny. He's also intelligent. He is a 59-year-old writer who has had three wives and three therapists — the latter, as he tells us, mostly for their "recreational value." His fourth novel, *Lovers in the Earth*, is a best-seller and helps him to leap "from an obscure, out-of-print academic to a major force in Canadian literature, shoulder to shoulder with Atwood and Richler." The narrator adds that he laughed hysterically when he read that comment in *The Canadian Forum*.

His book brings him letters, and among them is a letter and manuscript from a young Winnipeg housewife who tells him how his novel has inspired her and saved her from suicide. Perlmutter reflects: "I felt that I had really saved a life. How many writers — you hear Atwood and Richler — could claim that?" Perlmutter continues to correspond with the housewife, and the reality of her novel makes him begin to question his own work to the extent that he starts work on a new novel called *The Burden of Truth*. Along the way he wonders why *Lovers in the Earth*, which he considers inferior to his earlier unsuccessful books, is such a hit. "I could arrive at no adequate answers," he muses, "except that *Lovers in the Earth* was dishonest. Not a lie, not a conscious mutilation of the truth, but merely dishonest — siphoned exclusively from the head, full of calculation and cunning."

And it is that same writing from the head, that very calculation and cunning, which is also Steinfeld's problem. He is highly intelligent — there are witty and memorable sentences in all his stories — and nearly always they raise interesting philosophic issues. But with the exception of "A Bullet for Perlmutter," Steinfeld seldom confronts the issues he raises.

He frequently hints that he is dealing with the question of what it means to be a Jew in a Christian society, but he remains always hovering on the brink of some undisclosed insight. Similarly, he raises the issue of feminism and a new kind of woman, but buries his answers in predictable formulaic stories like "A Beautiful Woman." On the other hand, Steinfeld has a gift for humour, wit, and ironic social comment which is rare in our fiction, and for that reason all the more valuable. His stories show, in however embryonic a form, that he sees the absurdities of life, and understands the jokes that fate plays on almost everyone.

Perhaps he has not yet realized that his

real gift lies in humour and not in fantasy, invention, or philosophic metaphor. I hope that the young man who looks out from the photograph on the back cover of his book, with head bent slightly to one side, and a quizzical expression, will abandon philosophy (at least in fiction), and follow his muse to where it is really leading — the realm of laughter. If he does, I will be one of the first to follow him there.

MIRIAM WADDINGTON

INTELLIGENT ANGER

JAN E. CONN, *Red Shoes in the Rain.* Fiddlehead, $6.00.

DON POLSON, *Moving Through Deep Snow.* Thistledown, $8.95.

PAULETTE JILES, *Celestial Navigation.* McClelland & Stewart, $12.95.

I LIKE A POEM that makes you feel like you're in a streetfight. A struggle is on, you can smell sweat, people are getting hurt, and the poet is using whatever he has to, whatever is necessary, to make it all work. The poet is engaged, and underneath it all there is this sense of anger, this bitter irony; it may only surface in one line or in every tenth poem, but it is there and it is boiling and it wants out. The measure of a poet is how well he can manipulate this anger into a sharp or poignant beauty. Which weapons can he best utilize in order to get the job done? Anything else is parlour verse, poems about poems, ideas laid out like coffins on horizontal lines.

Jan Conn's *Red Shoes in the Rain* is her first book of poetry. She is not a heavyweight intellectual, but she persists in presenting philosophical tidbits on the ways of mankind, animals and the universe, in posing rhetorical questions, and in ending her poems with punchlines that spell out her meaning. All this makes for too much talking, be it about life in general or relationships in particular. What Conn does have is a highly original visual talent. Her best poems are like striking watercolours ("Orange Light in April," "Antheriums"), sunsets drawn in pastel. She picks up detail nicely to depict a natural scene without slipping into easy Romanticism. Often she will integrate a sensitive, personal note, and then return to the landscape as though nothing particularly special has happened. Conn is capable of real beauty, but the problem is substance; after a while even the brushstrokes become repetitive.

Don Polson shares many of Conn's weaknesses but by now he should know better. *Moving Through Deep Snow* is his sixth book of poetry, yet he seems to have learned very little from his previous forays. The talking is here replaced by prose lectures on social injustice or by pleasant parlour room thoughts garbed in a stilted diction. Childhood and an ancestral past are also subjects, but he looks back not in anger as much as with a certain wistful longing. If he could resist the tendency to trite meditations and let the poem itself take over, he might have something. The first section, on the experience of being a father, is easily the best for its humility born of wisdom: he doesn't say anything new, but he doesn't pretend he is. The too-formal diction is a repeated problem, although the poet relaxes when he allows in humour or gives some of his social misfits the opportunity to speak for themselves ("What's In a Name").

McClelland and Stewart deserves credit for the design, type, and paper of *Celestial Navigation.* Pauline Jiles deserves such attention because she is unquestionably the real thing. Several of her similes are superb ("I feel like a land above some treeline"); her use of metaphor is very imaginative ("The aurora is a piano, playing blues / in green neon"); and

many of these lines will not easily escape memory ("Texas is not my fault," "goodbyes falling / away in flakes of dead skin," or "I took a job on a / cigarette package"). She has the intelligence, the anger, the irony — all the right weapons. The first section includes a generous selection from *Waterloo Express* (1973), her first work, and here her imagination runs in every direction, sometimes to the detriment of individual poems, but always there is something happening. Sections Three, Four, and Five are more seriously flawed. In the first she does the Canadiana thing, finding a sunken ship no one else has written on; in the latter two, she too often leaves the personal concrete for a dull abstraction. Sections One, Two, and the last three parts of Six, which is written in prose, display her at her very best. She has the right idea in "Heatwave / St. Louis": "So this is life, we say, this is / not bad, give us more of this thunder."

DAVID O'ROURKE

LITTLE MAGAZINES

HILDA M. C. VANNESTE, *Northern Review, 1945-1956: a History and an Index*. Tecumseh, $7.95.

AILEEN COLLINS, *CIV/n: a Literary Magazine of the 50's*. Véhicule, n.p.

LITTLE MAGAZINES FIND themselves almost always in opposition to the established, the conventional. Often apolitical, they are nevertheless profoundly subversive, poised against the accepted norms of popular and official culture alike. They exist "underground," rarely reaching more than a limited and already sympathetic circle of readers. Indeed, wide public exposure is avoided on principle; the Little Magazine with a large readership is, by definition, no longer a Little Magazine. Most important, Little Magazines are defiantly dedicated to the "new," providing an outlet, not available in established literary journals, for younger unknown writers. Unconventional and frequently bizarre in nature, they cannot be judged by traditional standards, for little magazines are experimenting grounds, providing literature with the soil for future growth.

The Little Magazine movement in Canada is of more recent date than that which produced those famous modernist organs — *Blast*, *Poetry*, *Exile*, *Transition*, *Dial* — in the U.S. and Britain. The Forties saw its beginnings with the appearance of *Contemporary Verse* (1940-52) and then of *Preview* (1942-45) and *First Statement* (1942-45), the latter two merging to form *Northern Review* (1945-56). Although it published well into the next decade, however, *Northern Review* had evolved into something more closely resembling a national literary magazine when a new crop of Little Magazines sprang up in the 1950's. After the flagging of energy that had set in during the late 1940's, *Contact*, *CIV/n*, *Combustion*, *Moment*, and *Delta* represented a resurgence and a reaction. If *Northern Review* and its parent magazines, *Preview* and *First Statement*, were conceived in reaction to moribund literary tradition, magazines of the next decade like *Contact* and *CIV/n* reacted in turn to the increasing conservatism of *Northern Review* and its editor John Sutherland. Both these stages of development are documented in different ways by these two books.

Hilda M. C. Vanneste documents the career of *Northern Review* from the merger that produced it to the death of Sutherland when it ceased publication. This magazine's founding premise was consolidation. *Preview* and *First Statement* represented two distinct possibilities for Canadian poetry, which might be termed "cosmopolitan" and "nativist"

respectively. The "meticulous moderns," as they have been called, who founded *Preview* — including Patrick Anderson, Neufville Shaw, P. K. Page — were committed to a broadly-based modernism uncoloured by national or regional affinities. By contrast, the "lumpen intellectuals" of *First Statement* — John Sutherland, Irving Layton, Louis Dudek — took an explicitly nationalistic line, holding a rawer, more visceral conception of poetry than that espoused by the *Preview* group. In *Northern Review* both strains were to have been reconciled, but the merger actually proved to be a victory for the *First Statement* group under Sutherland. Sutherland's editorial influence continued to grow, moreover, and *Northern Review* became increasingly a vehicle for the opinions of one man.

Although Vanneste does not challenge in any radical way this familiar account of *Northern Review*'s ten-year run, in its exhaustive documentation her study is a useful addition to Canadian literary history. Drawing from published and unpublished sources, Vanneste reconstructs a detailed background to the magazine's founding, and carefully traces its various editorial permutations under Sutherland's strong-willed editorship. Indeed, one of the study's most interesting aspects is its exploration of the "role of personality" in the production, as distinct from the writing, of literature. In a passage recalling the fragmentation of *Northern Review*'s editorial board, for example, Irving Layton wryly remarks: "Then Sutherland, since he controlled the only Canadian literary magazine, was able to say that there was no Canadian poetry being published in Canada. This, of course, was true, as Mr. Sutherland was not printing any." Studies such as Vanneste's should help to provide a corrective to the sweeping and impersonal determinism characteristic of official literary history. A complete index to the contents of *Northern Review* is included at the end of the study.

Aileen Collins' reprint edition of *CIV/n* provides a nice line of continuity from the Vanneste study. Along with other Little Magazines of the 1950's, like Raymond Souster's *Contact*, *CIV/n* was attempting to pick up the torch dropped in the late 1940's. If Sutherland succeeded in making *Northern Review* a national literary magazine, *CIV/n* succeeded in remaining a Little Magazine throughout its seven issues (1953-55), including among its editorial advisers and contributors such *First Statement* alumni as Layton and Dudek.

The cryptic title, suggested by Dudek, is a Poundian codeword for civilization. Although the banner-motto heading each issue, "civilization is not a one man job," may not have been intended as an explicit rebuke, it summed up the difference between this very co-operative venture and the solitary campaign being conducted by Sutherland in *Northern Review*. In her introduction, Collins recalls "the great spirit of camaraderie which grew around *CIV/n*," and this reprint edition is as interesting for its evocation of the social context that produced *CIV/n* as for the magazine's actual contents (mainly verse and a few, rather shrill, reviews and essays). As well as reproducing *CIV/n*'s entire run — not in facsimile since with the exception of its last two issues, the magazine was mimeographed — and providing a personal introduction, Collins includes letters and photographs, and reminiscences by Dudek and Layton. An informative essay by Ken Norris evaluates *CIV/n* in the context of its period, while an index provides access to the magazine's contents. " 'Little Magazine' perhaps fifty will read, / Twenty remember (and with luck) five will learn from" — perhaps

this reprint edition will somewhat increase these odds.

JAMES MULVIHILL

SLIPPERY SUNLIGHT

ROO BORSON, *The Whole Night, Coming Home*. McClelland & Stewart, n.p.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ROO BORSON since *A Sad Device* was published? Those poems, printed in magazines and journals during the 1970's, were exciting because they revealed an ability to create a tension between striking metaphors and bare nouns and verbs. They conveyed the relationship between emotion and thought that we have come to name "metaphysical poetry." The present volume excludes these elements, concentrating rather on short realistic narrative "verse poems," and almost purple patches of description, "prose poems."

Is it simply a symptom of our times that the young like to indulge in nostalgia? It used to be the future that excited young poets. Now it would seem that there is something so obscene about the future of this planet that artists and writers are turning their backs on it and delving instead into their own pasts, as if to find an explanation for the present. Certainly this trend is evident in Canadian writing today, especially in the poetry and fiction written by women.

Roo Borson is not a native of Canada. Nevertheless, her themes are similar to those of our young writers today. The dominant images hinge on a preservation of the past, however illusory one's memories of it may be. But there is a crucial difference: whereas in Canadian poetry the landscapes are still rural, evoking wilderness, spaces, Roo Borson's new book is about America — the United States of. The title is meaningful: a city of night, of blinking lights, of cold or shrouded moons. Fog. Glimpses only of slippery sunlight as the exiled one returns after seven years to her teen-aged stronghold — California. This landscape is peopled only by ghosts. Their real existence evades the prodigal. Although she pulls out photograph after photograph, they are "stills." The live quality evoked exists in objects, things men have made to sell: motor cars, highways, high-rises:

coasting with the
lights off anyway, no sound, not another
car . . .

Coasting
the dark curves, patches of luminous fog
around scattered houselights, feeling your
way . . .

On the foggy road alone,
no sound of another car anywhere,
only the muffled city somewhere,
fifty thousand miles away, fifty thousand
miles.

These dramatically precise prose sentences have been cunningly rearranged and repeated to create music and mood. But many of the poems in the first section of the book (titled "Flying Low") are detached and platitudinous, as in "Labour":

The streetcleaning machine chugs around
a corner,
the asphalt in its wake black and wet.
The repair crew's been up since five;
this is the first break of the day.
The men lean against the big silent
machines
sipping coffee from the take-out.

Ironic? Yes, but with socially concerned implications as in the lines:

The sun edges around buildings, spilling
crates of shadow.
Daylight's better than the night. The far
stars
are deceptive, like the diamond rings in
their black velvet cases,
but the jewelry store window is bare now,
as if everything had been stolen.
At midday the shop girls will stop by on
their lunch break
and stand at the glass trying to decide
which one they'd choose if they had the
chance.

Perhaps that is what Roo Borson is now heading for? Perhaps poems such as these are diary notes taken to be developed later into serious fictional form. But whatever direction this poet may take into new fictional or dramatic forms, the problem will remain: how to leave nostalgia behind, how to relinquish one's birthright and put down roots in Canadian soil. Recently, American draft dodgers, when questioned, expressed the dichotomy: "I want to live here, but I'll always be an American citizen." This has been a world-wide literary as well as political concern. In the London of the last century Wilde, Shaw, and Yeats remained fiercely loyal Irishmen, jousting satirically against the imperialist "mother country."

Here is a prescription, then, for our landed immigrants: write a satiric novel or play dealing with the Canadian schizophrenia: whether to love Mother Brit or Father Yank. Stop the cloning and clowning and remain a critical outsider, looking in and loving it.

DOROTHY LIVESAY

ON STAGE

LEONARD E. DOUCETTE, *Theatre in French Canada: Laying the Foundations 1606-1867*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $30.00.

ANDRE DUVAL, *Place Jacques-Cartier ou Quarante ans de théâtre français à Québec*. Les Editions la Liberté, $19.95.

CANADIAN THEATRE HISTORY has emerged as a reputable discipline in English Canada only within the past decade. When the Canadian Theatre History Research Program organized the first national conference of theatre historians in 1976, a majority of Quebec scholars refused to join a proposed Canada-wide association and instead founded their own Société d'histoire du théâtre du Québec. Having extensively researched and published on theatre and drama studies since the mid-1960's, Quebec scholars saw no need for a "national" association at a time when the discipline was just beginning to be established in English Canada.

Since the founding of the Association for Canadian Theatre History in 1976,

English-Canadian theatre historians have rapidly caught up with their Quebec counterparts. The quality and thoughtful scholarly nature of much of their recent work is exemplified by Leonard E. Doucette's *Theatre in French-Canada: Laying the Foundations 1606-1867*. Doucette analyzes the evolution of theatre in New France, from Marc Lescarbot's 1606 nautical masque *Le Théâtre de Neptune*, to the development of a French-Canadian dramaturgy from 1837 to 1867. Three categories of indigenous playwriting are discussed in detail: religious-pedagogic theatre, publicly performed "social" theatre, and primarily published, unperformed political paratheatre. Doucette also thoroughly analyzes the extant documentation on theatre production in Quebec and the critical commentary on it by Quebec theatre historians. For the first time, two-and-a-half centuries of French-Canadian theatre become accessible to English Canadians in one volume.

One of the pleasures in reading this study is the rich cultural context it provides. Doucette demonstrates, for example, that the conflict between Governor Frontenac and Bishop Saint-Vallier over a planned production of *Tartuffe* in Quebec City in 1694 was not a case of colonial provincialism. Precisely the same artistic, religious, and political conflict over theatre was raging in France at the same period. Except for tours by French professional companies in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Theatre in French Canada* examines primarily sporadic amateur theatre and dramatic presentations in the Jesuit and Ursuline schools and the later *collèges classiques*. Without a local professional stage, indigenous dramatic writing was similarly amateur and intermittent. Doucette analyzes the mere two dozen French-language dramatic texts published from 1609 to the late eighteen hundreds and quotes generously from these in translation.

One of the more innovative, but also contentious, aspects of Doucette's study derives from the analysis of an equal number of dramatized dialogues and satiric sketches, most of them published in Quebec newspapers in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Doucette points to this genre of socially relevant "journalistic paratheatre," "paradramatic literature," and "armchair theatre" as one of the foundations of indigenous French-Canadian dramatic writing along with the formally more conventional works of playwrights such as Quesnel, Petitclair, Gérin-Lajoie, and Fréchette. Doucette's suggestion that some of this "paradrama" was meant to be read aloud *dramatically* at social gatherings, and that it, therefore, bears a closer resemblance to live theatre, appears hypothetical and not essential to his argument. The development of indigenous drama in English Canada in the nineteenth century is similarly based on live amateur theatre, unperformed poetic drama, and satiric political sketches widely published in the press throughout Eastern Canada. A comparison with this "paradramatic journalism," as listed in the *Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English*, would have been revealing.

Six such satiric sketches were published in 1822 and 1823 in one journal, the Montreal *Scribbler*, which is included in Doucette's bibliography. Doucette's comparison of French-Canadian dramatic writing with Charles Heavysege's 1857 poetic drama *Saul* is also problematic. A much more meaningful parallel would have been Eliza Lanesford Cushing's plays and dramatic sketches published in the Montreal *Literary Garland* from 1839 to 1845, and the published political burlesques by "Sam Scribble" performed

at the Théâtre Royal in Montreal in 1865.

That *Theatre in French Canada* elicits such comparisons with dramatic activity in English Canada attests to the comprehensive scope of its historical, artistic, and cultural analysis. One can only regret that Leonard Doucette's study concludes in the 1860's, just prior to the first flowering of indigenous professional theatre and playwriting in Quebec.

It is also unfortunate that André Duval did not pursue a similarly scholarly approach in his *Place Jacques-Cartier ou quarante ans de théâtre français à Québec 1871-1911*. Though he focuses only on Quebec City, Duval's history continues to trace the development of theatre and drama already established by *Theatre in French Canada*. Unlike Doucette, however, Duval shows little knowledge of the general history of theatre in Quebec, its wider critical and social context, or of nineteenth-century world theatre in general. His primary factual source material, for what is essentially a popular social history, is the daily paper *L'Evénement*. There are few other sources cited, no footnotes, bibliography, or index. The book's eighty illustrations are also not well integrated with the text.

Place Jacques-Cartier is nevertheless a revealing account of the long struggle to establish an indigenous professional theatre and drama in Quebec. Duval begins his yearly chronology with the Compagnie lyrique et dramatique française des Antilles, a six-member group of Parisian artists fleeing the Franco-Prussian War. They established themselves in the 300-seat Salle Jacques-Cartier, a municipal hall in the French working-class section of Quebec City, in 1871. Yet despite high professional standards and a varied repertoire of comedy, drama, operetta, vaudeville, and the occasional Canadian play, the company was forced to disband in 1877 because of lack of public support.

Duval briefly describes the hundreds of productions by professional French and American touring companies and the sporadic activity by local amateur companies beginning to create a body of Canadian plays. He provides few literary evaluations of the produced repertoire, however, or of the works emerging Quebec playwrights such as Fréchette, Félix-Gabriel Marchand, Joseph Marmette, Pamphile Le May, and Julien Daoust. Confined to his newspaper sources, Duval is unable to explain the public's vogue for melodrama and "morally uplifting" plays. Also unexplained is the major question why local professional companies were unable to establish themselves in Quebec City while similar companies in Montreal were beginning to succeed in creating a French "national" theatre during the last decade of the century. When the spacious Auditorium opened in Quebec City in 1903, its backers did not attempt to encourage local amateurs and professionals but promptly engaged the Toronto impressario Ambrose Small to ensure a steady supply of foreign touring artists.

One of these artists was Sarah Bernhardt, who finally performed at the Auditorium, in *La Dame aux Camelias*, *Angélo*, and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, during her fifth cross-Canada tour in 1905. Yet Duval's entire commentary on Bernhardt's visit centres on the Catholic Church's condemnation of the immorality of her repertoire. We find no descriptions of her acting style or its impact on audiences and critics. In November of 1911 the parish priest of Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier prophesied that the next conflagration in Saint-Roch would be of a theatre. Within the month, the Salle Jacques-Cartier was indeed consumed by flames. Duval's study unfortunately gives us only a few indications why indigenous French-Canadian theatre did not perish with it altogether. ANTON WAGNER

MARGINAL VOICES

BERNARD ASSINIWI, *Il n'y a plus d'Indiens.* Leméac, n.p.

BRIGITTE HAENTJENS et JEAN MARC DALPE, *1932, la Ville du Nickel.* Prise de Parole, n.p.

PATRICK STRARAM, *Blues clair / Quatre Quatuors en trains qu'amour advienne.* Editions du Noroît, n.p.

Le Théâtre. Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français. Univ. of Ottawa, $25.

THREE CREATIVE WORKS PUBLISHED recently prove that marginal voices are being heard on radio, television, and on the stage in French Canada. In these works, the Indians of northern Quebec, immigrant miners in northern Ontario, and an off-beat intellectual hobo have their say about themselves and the capitalist society constantly threatening to crush their personal and collective dreams.

Bernard Assiniwi has written numerous scripts for radio and television in addition to his works as a journalist, novelist, historian, and ethnographer. In *Il n'y a plus d'Indiens* he dramatizes the conflict between traditional Indian ways and political-economic realities which destroys the harmony of a tribal reservation. The plot is somewhat predictable: the old, traditionalist chief and councillors are challenged by young progressives who are willing to sacrifice their tribal heritage for short-term financial gains. The dissidents collaborate with Anglophone lumber and mining companies in exchange for payoffs and jobs. Assiniwi's play begins slowly with a lot of talk about the hardships of life on the reservation, the prejudice Indians must endure, the conflicts between tribal ways and white man's law. Melodramatic tension builds to the confrontation between the Gold Prospecting Company (backed up by the R.C.M.P.) and the tribal leaders. Progress (or capitalist greed) triumphs — another humiliating defeat for an already degraded people. The defeat is particularly bitter for Chief Fred Pezindawatch because his own son, Tommy, sided with the enemy. During the traditional New Year's Day hunt, Fred chooses to die rather than live as an anachronism. He has understood the sad truth about his people's extinction. "Il n'y a plus d'Indiens. Ils sont morts avec le temps." Despite its didacticism and clichés, Assiniwi's play is a moving statement about the slow death of the Algonquin tribe. The author creates his characters lovingly, depicts their disputes with understanding, and makes us mourn their lost way of life.

Personal and political matters intertwine again in *1932, la Ville du Nickel.* Trained as an actress in Paris, Haentjens has been working for several years in Ontario as an actress, director, and playwright. Her Franco-Ontarian collaborator, Jean Marc Dalpé is a poet as well as an actor and dramatist. *Nickel,* subtitled "une histoire d'amour sur fond de mines," was first staged by the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario in Sudbury. It is a melodramatic presentation of life, love, and death in a mining town during the 1930's. Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian immigrants mingle with French Canadians, sharing joys, sorrows, and frustrations. *Nickel* appeals to the conscience by depicting the danger, oppression, and racism faced daily by miners ruthlessly exploited by Anglophone bosses who do not hesitate to use force to crush the incipient union movement. The play also appeals to the heart by focusing on Clara, a strong-willed woman ostracized by her French-Canadian family for having married a Ukrainian. When her husband is killed in a mine accident, she finds temporary consolation in the arms of Jean-Marie, her friend's husband, but he lacks the courage needed to make her happy.

At the play's end, Clara leaves the narrow confines of Nickel to search elsewhere for fulfilment. Haentjens and Dalpé employ numerous melodramatic effects in presenting their political and sentimental messages. There are songs, celebrations, funereal scenes, confrontations between villainous bosses and union members, farcical bits and poetic love scenes. Occasionally, lyrical passages raise the play above the level of historical melodrama.

The personal search for freedom and passion undertaken by Clara at the end of *Nickel* seems to have been the lifelong enterprise of Patrick Straram, who calls himself "le bison ravi." The Parisian-born Straram has been a member of Montreal's literary avant-garde since 1959, making a name for himself as a poet, short story writer, essayist, and critic. The texts of *Quatre Quatuors en trains qu'amour advienne* were read by Straram on Radio-Canada FM's program "L'atelier des inédits" over a four-week period in 1978. For the published version, Straram has added an opening piece, "blues clair," and drawings by the Swiss-born artist Francine Simonin. The texts defy categorization. They are poetic monologues, fragmentary confessions, comments on literature, theatre, film, music, and philosophy. Straram personifies the counter-culture he celebrates: he is pro-feminist, anti-bourgeois, and anti-capitalist. His self definitions stress his marginal status: he is an "ex-centrique," a "pèlerin: étranger," a "Noir juif amérindien." His mission is to re-invent words, to speak out against the injustice and indifference of a society which suppresses passion, individuality, and personal freedom. To make life livable, he plays the lonely truth game of writing monologues. In so doing, he enriches the lives of those who hear or read his poetic variations.

The fifth volume published by the *Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada francais* is devoted to francophone theatre. The ten articles cover a wide temporal and geographical range: from Le Théâtre de Neptune (1606) to the present, from Manitoba to Acadia. They also represent varying degrees of quality and interest. Laurent Mailhot's essay on the history of Quebec theatre is a thought-provoking preface to the volume. Jean-Cléo Godin's article on Julien Daoust's comedy review *La Belle Montréalaise* offers some interesting insights on popular theatre in the early twentieth century. Two essays on the role of women in Quebec theatre, one by Lucie Robert and another by Alonzo LeBlanc, are excellent. This issue of the RHLQCF also includes Gabrielle Poulin's study of a hundred years of critical reaction to *Angéline de Montbrun* and a useful bibliography of Quebec and French Canadian literary criticism published in Canadian journals during 1980. Scholars, teachers, and students will find this volume informative and useful.

JANE MOSS

HARD & SOFT

JOHN GRAY, *Dazzled*. Irwin, $18.95.
DAVID LEWIS STEIN, *The Golden Age Hotel*. Macmillan, $19.95.

THE PUBLISHER ADVISES THAT *Dazzled* is "an outrageously funny novel." This may alert those experienced in the field of Canadian humour, with its sometimes mechanical flowers and shallow soil. Gray's novel has low comedy aplenty, and cute names and flat characters which act reductively on the story's ideas and sociological thrust — these devices are laboured and humourless. The deliberate comic turns are distinct from the novel's real distinctions, for *Dazzled* can be genuinely witty in its narrator's self-

consciously clever observations. The amusement is not so much in slapstick and jokiness, which are strained, as in the deprecatory pinpointing of cultural postures and their attendant habits of language. Situations and characters represent the recent popular culture styles which are John Gray's targets: these are epitomized in a CBC quiz show whose title, "What's the Point?", is but one version of aimlessness, and in the protagonist's nightmare of a plaza featuring the shells of products, symbolic of the emptiness of consumer culture. The story illuminates personal styles of the 1960's and 1970's, with emphasis on "psychedelic relativism." *Dazzled* is a particularly convincing evocation of paralyzed manners of expression and behaviour to which the bemused narrator, Willard, is witness.

Willard, who idles in graduate student inertia, is stung into the workforce by his wife, and begins with Men's Wear: here he encounters the slick, self-designed salesman Jake Slider and Ogden Opp, tailor and clothing-fixated poet, whose delightful verses are too rarely interspersed in the narrative. Though ironically seeking his "true self," Willard devises his selling formula: clients are garbed according to their latent television wish-fulfilment models. Moving laterally, Willard stays in a post-hippie commune whose counter-culture denizens have such names as Scrapper, Speed, Trashman, and Ethereal, their sensibilities moored in an "Aquarian time-warp." Gray has a vivid satirical grasp of lobotomized jargon which, like clothing, affects an alternate lifestyle.

Willard is drawn into Scrapper's crusade against the expansion of Nothingness and his terrorist plan to immobilize Vancouver's CBC and CTV facilities in a campaign against the erosion of human identity. Willard's now estranged wife's description, "Abbott and Costello meet Yasser Arafat," is apt. The result of this hare-brained, nicely detailed guerrilla activity is only a temporary change in regional consumer habits.

One other nicely named character is Terra Firma, an elderly counsellor to urban burn-outs who has "no faith in posterity." She is meant to be a locus of good sense in the novel's series of exaggerated identity-quests; even her cat attacks perpetrators of verbal condescension and hypocrisy. Willard's eventual recognition that he can think of others, even under her tutelage, is, however, offset by the novel's comic mode.

When he identifies the consumer society's faith in nostalgia, the newly-motivated Willard ends as proprietor of the Luxe Junk Company, "purveying the entire fashion spectrum of the twentieth century" — as he remarks, he sells yesterday's illusions and lies in "our superficial times." While the comedy of *Dazzled* may be extravagant, even preposterous, but, because Gray has a wickedly accurate ear, it is through Gray's wicked ear, considerably less than outrageous: a homily couched inside a confection.

The Golden Age Hotel is a sequence of stories, each more or less focused on a resident of Stan and Lilly Monteith's Long Island hotel for senior citizens. Lilly, who will not admit defeat in anything, is pragmatic and comforting, ministering to the complications of her oldsters' lives. Stein's themes are interrelated and repeated: disrupted family relationships, reconciliations and recognitions of common humanity, the processes of healing into a community — as Lilly reflects, "Perhaps some families do learn to love each other in the end." The characters are uniformly sunk in self-pity and isolation, but they are not just eccentrics; they have depth and warmth, often uttering sweet wise things — though few sound as elderly as we might expect.

Stan and Lilly's touching clientele is mixed. Dr. Foxe, a reserved and dignified ex-pharmacist, is saddled with a whining son who is trying to become a man, and learns that true freedom is involvement. Faygie is "the world's oldest nymphomaniac," a vulgar, hands-on ex-whore who is a life-affirming grotesque; through Lilly's good offices her estranged family's ties with her are acknowledged. Benny Longo is an ex-rabbi torn between God and woman. Stan's parasitic son Carl is a flim-flam man; too self-indulgent to succeed as a manager, he is best at fooling himself about his capacities. "The Duchess," a former psychologist, has a self-controlled clinical appraisal of her fellows. Abe Rosen, one-time radical agitator, becomes involved with his activist grandson; a wise and gallant spokesman for life, he marries the dying Duchess who "forgave herself for her years of arrogance," and they depart for a European honeymoon in a beneficent glow. Lilly's son Allan is reluctant to face the responsibilities of independence and commitment, but after Faygie's funeral service he vows, "I'm going back to do something with my life." The change of direction is virtually unbelievable, but it is characteristic of the encounters and resolutions throughout the novel — though other reversals are more apposite. Sentimental reflections and brave involvements are in pointed tension; all the older characters are ultimately noble, losing their self-absorption, actively grasping their remaining lives, no longer irremediably alone. There is almost inevitably a dreadful attraction to the Good Ship Cliché, to stereotypes of personality and their self-expression.

The cash nexus is never completely absent from many of the fractured relationships in the novel, and some members of the younger generation are dissociated and even cruel — situations which have turned their elders into refugees. But reconciliation and happiness are achieved almost uniformly in an abundance of golden auras. The persistent impression is of sentimentality, or pathos, but one associated with wry self-recognition and the human comedy proper rather than that of completely artificial syrup and heartstring-tugging: the characters have considerable credibility, even in the often familiar paces they are put through. The publisher of *The Golden Age Hotel* believes it to be "a rollicking, sprawling novel bursting with comic energy"; the description is a misrepresentation, and does a disservice to the direction of the story's quaint antiquities.

LOUIS K. MACKENDRICK

DELIVERANCE

CLIVE DOUCET, *John Coe's War*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $17.95.

CLIVE DOUCET'S PARTIAL DEDICATION of *John Coe's War* to his mother reveals more than simple filial devotion. He refers to her as one of his favourite war brides — she met the man who was to be her husband while he was serving overseas as an RCAF armourer during World War II. The war acts both as fulcrum and catalyst in this novel of a disoriented man trying, sometimes desperately, to regain an equilibrium which was unsteady to begin with.

Many of Canada's war novels were written as the result of wartime experiences which involved personality disturbances brought on by unfamiliar, frequently dangerous, and sometimes absurd situations. The imbalance experienced by the military protagonist was sometimes handled through satire as in Birney's *Turvey* or in ill-disguised polemical tracts such as Allen's *Home Made Banners* or Nablo's *The Long November*.

Canada has a larger corpus of war literature than many people realize. Just as the war provides the impetus to Vidal, Mailer, and Jones in the United States, so too did it prompt the pens of McCourt, LePan, McDougall, Vaillancourt, Allister, Richard, and many others in Canada. That none of these has attained the popular stature of the three Americans is quite beside the point.

Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, arguably our most powerful war novel in English, results on the other hand, not from an ex-serviceman's experience, but from creative spark, meticulous research, and an uncanny feeling for the past. Clive Doucet has tried to use the same elements but with limited success. In *John Coe's War*, Doucet shows considerable talent, but a talent whose limits mark him as a craftsman rather than an artist of Findley's order. He deals with promising material infrequently handled in our literature. Apart from McCourt, Allen, and Vaillancourt, not many of our writers have tackled the problem of the citizen-soldier's repatriation and readjustment to "normality." That Doucet does not entirely succeed lies partly in his failure to inveigle us. In *The Wars* the reader can smell the cordite, taste the sweat, "see the breath." Not so in *John Coe's War* where the reader is only occasionally stimulated beyond a benign half-interest.

Doucet researched his material fairly extensively in order to maintain verisimilitude and, to the ordinary reader, this may be sufficient. But the former serviceman whose memory has not begun to let him down will realize that much of the research is slipshod. At one point in the book Coe's father, living in Canada, goes to the war office. There was but one War Office and it was in England and had little or nothing to do with the Canadians (at least officially). In preparing for the court-martial of his friend Geoff Haney, Coe reads the citation that won Haney the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The date of the action is given as June 24, 1944; the place, a mile south of Pontecorvo. In fact, the fighting for the Hitler Line (including Pontecorvo) had taken place a full month earlier.

On one of several occasions during which Coe meets old army friends, the subject drifts to Douglas MacArthur's sudden departure from the U.S. military during the Korean war. In one breath Martin Fraser mentions the general's dismissal; in the next, he refers to his resignation. Harry Truman had made it very clear that he had fired the "American Caesar." On yet another occasion, in a letter to Coe, Martin Fraser in almost childish adulation writes of the exploits of Lieutenant-Colonel D. B. Drysdale of the Royal Marines. Doucet would have us believe that this particular action was fought in the area of Changchon and that Drysdale had gone to rescue a U.S. Marine Division with a group of British Marines. In fact, Drysdale's 41st Independent Commando consisted of two hundred and fifty officers and men. For this action, however, his command was expanded to include U.S. Army and Marine personnel so that it totalled almost one thousand. The fighting took place not near Changchon but in the triangle formed by the towns of Koto-Ri, Kagaru-Ri, and Yudam-Ni, and the losses suffered were more than 50 per cent, though Drysdale did accomplish his task.

Such imprecision on the author's part seriously detracts from the momentum of a good book. Why, finally, is the title British Marines capitalized, when their American counterparts are not granted the same privilege? But enough about research.

The novel, in the right hands, could have been refined and forged into some-

thing approaching art. John Coe's personality condemns him to ordinariness which largely precludes his being anything more than vaguely interesting. Nevertheless, he has to suffer through the routine yet troublesome confusions of youth. These are exacerbated by the absence of any positive paternal influence, for his father is severely hampered by his wife's authoritativeness. The almost oppressive pressures of his manipulative mother inhibit young John. His talent as a classical pianist is such that he is accepted as a candidate to Juilliard. Meanwhile he struggles very hard to gain the approval of his peers, but a strong undertow of frustration is always upsetting him. The result is that he must run to escape from a disquieting reality he refuses to face.

But the war does offer deliverance, albeit temporary. It also allows him to demonstrate, as he already had as a musician, that the ordinary man is capable of extraordinary resourcefulness when circumstances permit him to tap his own potential. He becomes a good soldier, a dependable officer who is wounded and twice decorated but returns home haunted by memories and his own sense of guilt in the court-martial and subsequent death of his best friend.

These earlier episodes are weakened by characters as stilted and predictable as those in a Hollywood "B" war movie. Haney, the young, athletic Adonis who runs afoul of military law, is abused by the army penal system, performs heroically in battle, makes a tragic mistake, and dies near the end of the war carrying to the grave a secret he and his accomplice, John Coe, hoped would never be discovered. Joe Levine, the little Jewish boy, socially disadvantaged but resilient, is born to survive. And, later when Coe returns home he encounters the denizens of the Montreal jazz world who seldom if ever assume the dimensions of individuals.

But here, as on one or two other startling occasions, Doucet approaches art. The people who inhabit his post-war Montreal music world may lack depth but his recreation of those days is exceptionally evocative. The author captures the mood of the times and carries the reader along with him so that I once again found myself sitting in the Cafe St. Michel or sharing the good sounds that abounded in Rufus Rockhead's Paradise.

His characterization occasionally shows a deftness and sensitivity which, unfortunately, sets off its shallowness in the rest of the book. His portrait of Douglas Haste, a young man of limited intelligence, very naturally engages the reader's sympathy. Our frustrations and anger are later directed at Peabody, Coe's alcoholic teaching colleague back in Canada, as he methodically goes about the business of self-destruction.

The title of the novel implies more than Coe's war with the Germans. It indicates a series of conflicts he must face before, during, and especially after the shooting war. Coe must find his balance in a world that is out of tune for him. In his quest to regain this equilibrium he marries, writes and plays music, is unfaithful to his wife, smokes dope, has children, teaches school, contracts tuberculosis, meets and reminisces with old comrades but is always pulled back towards his roots and family and never quite sheds his sense of responsibility. Because the pace of life is too much for him, he seeks out the quiet pastoral life of the country. But he must still contend with trying to understand an antagonistic son living in a fast-paced world.

After the war, life for John Coe is anti-climactic, and he is almost destroyed by his inability to adapt. There is a note of reconciliation when, in trying to locate his son, he recognizes that "he has

his own war to fight." He has come to accept the way of life of others even though it is largely beyond his comprehension. The discerning reader might recall a conversation between Coe and Haney during a lull in the fighting on the Italian front. Haney says: "It all has to fit together somehow."

GILBERT DROLET

STACKS & SCOOPS

KAREN WILKIN, ed., *Jack Bush*. McClelland & Stewart/Merritt Editions, $65.00.

A POST-PAINTERLY MODERNIST who spoke in the clichés of the baseball diamond, an accomplished draftsman who "let his drawings come out seeming more than subtly clumsy," and a Canada Council juror whose pronouncements were delivered in strings of semi-articulate banalities: "Boy!" "Okay by me!" "Swell!" "Looks good!" These are a few of the apparent contradictions that marked both the life and art of the late Jack Bush. In what is intended to be an occasional and celebratory volume, editor Karen Wilkin has brought together fifteen essays, reminiscences, and interviews that attempt to throw light upon the accomplishment of one of Canada's most considerable but problematic painters. The more helpful of Wilkin's contributors steer us skillfully through Bush's career from the early figurative works and his brief flirtation with Abstract Expressionism to the familiar succession of Sashes, Stacks, Handkerchiefs, and Scoops upon which his reputation rests today. In introductory essays Dennis Reid and Barrie Hale track Bush's formative years. Reid considers with some sensitivity the problems facing a Canadian artist in the 1930's and 1940's who wanted to break free from "those twin tyrannies of landscape and nationalism imposed by the Group of Seven." While Hale focuses more precisely upon Bush's association with Painters Eleven and the impact of critic Clement Greenberg's much discussed Toronto visit of 1957, both stress the continuity of Bush's work, the artist's progress viewed as the development of a specifically *Canadian* painter.

A broader perspective is provided by Duncan MacMillan and John Elderfield who attempt to place Bush's "autonomous abstract language" within the context of European and North American modernism. MacMillan uses Matisse, Noland, and Stella as departure points for a wide-ranging discussion of Bush's technique, especially his handling of colour and the shifting relationship of figure and ground in the later works. Elderfield's essay reassesses Bush's approach to his sources as an Old World heritage glimpsed through New World eyes. A close reading of a number of Bush's most important canvases makes a case for locating this artist's "special character" in his ability to return to modern painting something of "the freedom, eccentricity, and multiplicity of effects that it possessed before being submitted to the kind of all-overness that Pollock established as the model for postwar abstraction." Taken together with Wilkin's own study of Bush's unique iconography —the ovoids, stalks, bursts, loops, scribbles, and fat commas distinctive of his work throughout — these pieces form the high water mark of the volume.

If the essays are not always of this calibre the collection's celebratory nature is partly to blame. The partisan positions staked out by the book's contributors leave little room for a consideration of Bush's place in a world that has seen painterly painting return with a vengeance. The lack of critical perspective appears in a number of guises: in David Mirvish's flat declaration that Bush is

"the finest artist Canada has ever produced," Terry Fenton's dismissal as visual illiterates of those who do not immediately fall under Bush's spell, and Kenworth Moffett's attempt to see Matisse's *Red Studio* and *Piano Lesson* as unsuccessful exercises "fulfilled" in Bush's *Thrust* paintings of the early 1960's. Bush is not well served by such hyperbole. Perhaps, though, the book's most conspicuous shortcoming is its failure to deal head on with the question of Clement Greenberg and what some have seen as his Svengali-like influence over Bush after the mid-1950's. (Greenberg's own contribution to the volume is negligible, a two-page note reprinted from a 1980 exhibition catalogue in which we are reassured that many of Bush's pieces "never again look so bad — if they did look bad — as on first sight.") How bracing it would have been to have had a rethinking of the Greenbergian aesthetic for our "post-modern" world, or at least an intelligent rejoinder to those who see in Bush's paintings the worst excesses of the corporate lobby art championed by his mentor. Instead we are faced with a wide-eyed Wendy Brunelle who in conducting what was to be Bush's last interview (Alberta Access Television, January 1977) expresses surprise and bewilderment upon learning that "there are as many opponents of Clem Greenberg's attitudes as there are proponents." When Bush gently points out that pockets of resistance have established themselves even in western Canada, she assures him that Albertans are hardly aware enough to be opponents! "Benevolence verging on the indiscriminate" was, according to many of the volume's contributors, one of Jack Bush's most attractive personal qualities. Embraced as a critical stance it can hardly be expected to do justice to either his achievement or reputation.

JOEL H. KAPLAN

GROVE'S FEMALE PICARESQUE

FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE, *Fanny Essler*, trans. Christine Helmers. A. W. Riley and Douglas O. Spettigue, 2 vols. Oberon, $27.95.

THERE BEING NO SUBSTANTIAL evidence to the contrary, D. Spettigue's thesis that the Canadian Frederick Philip Grove is also the German Felix Paul Greve is difficult to challenge. This means that any thorough study of Grove must include as much of his German writing as we can gain access to. We are indeed fortunate to possess *The Master Mason's House*, issued almost a decade ago by Oberon, and now *Fanny Essler*, whose significance for students of the Canadian Grove cannot be overlooked. A third novel, *Der Sentimentalist* is known of, but it seems never to have been published. Beside the fact that these two novels round out Grove's career as a novelist, they make also generally available, if only in English, novels which have only been accessible in rare book collections and preciously guarded photocopies. This is unquestionably a publishing event, and Oberon is to be saluted for undertaking what could well be a risky prospect. Finally, gratitude must also be expressed to Christine Helmers, who undertook an enormous task in translating a novel which poses particular difficulties because of its naturalistic efforts to get idiosyncracies of dialect with accuracy, as well as to her collaborators, A. W. Riley and D. O. Spettigue, whose efforts on behalf of Grove and his work have been indefatigable.

Dialect is not the only problem the novel poses. As the introduction observes, Grove appears torn between the objective mode of naturalism and the intentions of psychological analysis. Although it can be argued that these represent two

apparently incompatible discourses, one might also remark that the confusion of almost incoherent detail that Grove's use of naturalism possesses is from time to time, at least, a reflection of the muddle of Fanny's interior landscape. Indeed, the precision that marks Grove's efforts to locate Fanny, particularly in Berlin, has the paradoxical effect of reminding one how lost in fact she is. When we consider, furthermore, the degree to which the novel may be autobiographical, this interweaving of discourses only adds to our understanding of how paradoxical Grove was, and how necessary art was to him as a means of shaping the paradoxical and the incoherent in order to find, as the epigraph to the translation suggests, a certain moral equilibrium.

If there is any dominant style in the text, it is, as Riley and Spettigue argue, both literary and autobiographical parody, and as *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman* it echoes and subverts a tradition that runs from Goethe to Keller and Fontane. It also echoes Grove's interest in Flaubert, notably *Madame Bovary*, with whom he was preoccupied at the time, and like that novel it corresponds to Annis Pratt's observation that women in fiction generally tend to grow down rather than up. Both echoes and subversions issue in what might be called female picaresque. It is apparent, then, that the novel engages more than one mode, not always well blended, and this is particularly evident in the clear modification of narrative voice that occurs between the first and second halves of the novel. This change may be attributed to the theme of love that governs the second part. It may also be attributed to Grove's growing awareness, even as a young writer, that the complexity of his central figure as a woman did not spring naturally from the kinds of models at his disposal, and the rifts discernible among modes and discourses in the novel are signs of the scope of his ambition and the limits of his talent.

Fanny herself is a sign of difference, not only with the rigidly patriarchal character of the world surrounding her, but also with the role models suitable for women of her class. She is a type of the New Woman, reflecting her admiration for Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, caught in a kind of arrested development, a woman who "showed some daring and grace except when she walked, for then there was something of a contradiction: a boyish awkwardness." Part of this awkwardness springs from her constantly being under scrutiny, an object of sight, and it is precisely in this regard that one can distinguish her career in the theatre from that of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister whom one could never imagine being reduced to the pure thing of a *tableau vivant* which is the final stage of her theatrical career. Fanny's fatal error, however, is to believe that to find a prince will magically transform her from object to subject. Ironically she finds her prince, but her role is to be his personal *tableau vivant*. She dies mercifully and symbolically from a fever brought on by malaria, her state of difference never satisfactorily achieving resolution.

Fortunately for the English reader the German text has been intelligently edited, breaking the often massive paragraphs into smaller units and linking shorter sentences to give the text a smoother flow. The translators admit their dissatisfaction with their ability to discriminate among dialects, which can be an almost insurmountable problem in English, but their solutions at least have the merit of being unobtrusive. In fact, the translation is in many ways an admirable achievement, and one must respect certain qualifications that assist comprehension, such as one of Fanny's stray, feverish thoughts toward the end of the novel in which she is reported to say: "Ich

wäre doch kein losgelöstes Stück . . . Ich hätte doch Familie . . . meine Mutter," and which is rendered, "I wouldn't be just a separate thing without an identity . . . I'd be part of a family . . . my mother." The flaws of the text lie rather with the editor who overlooked a number of small typographical errors, as well as a number of sentences that begin in lower case. These small errors are, however, amply compensated for by the handsome character of the volumes that use paper of excellent stock and whose end-papers contain a very clear map of contemporary Berlin. For anyone beginning to explore the German Grove, I can think of no finer way to make one's initial forays.

E. D. BLODGETT

CONFIDENTIAL WHISPERS

SANDRA GWYN, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier*. McClelland & Stewart, n.p.

WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT, in the days of Louis St. Laurent, Ottawa seemed to be governing Canada, and the heart of Ottawa was surely the Chateau cafeteria. At noon I could leave the nineteenth century behind in the Archives, and head for the basement of the Chateau Laurier to meet enthusiastic young public servants from Finance or the Prime Minister's office and hear them talk of national policies and of the men who were the policy-makers, with voices dropping to a confidential whisper if a deputy-minister happened to be at the next table. These same public servants are now the deputy-ministers, no longer young or enthusiastic — and they certainly do not lunch at the Chateau. That Ottawa no longer exists and nostalgia tells me that we are the poorer for its loss.

Sandra Gwyn has the same nostalgia for an older Ottawa. She has found the sources for her Ottawa in the Archives, where diaries and letters and social columns in newspapers allow her to eavesdrop on the private lives of viceroys and mandarins. The centre of her Ottawa is Rideau Hall, where the glitter of viceregal society brings a redeeming touch of sophistication to what would otherwise have been a raw and provincial lumbering town.

The book is shaped by its sources. The first section is built around Edmund Meredith, a prominent civil servant in Ottawa from 1865 to 1879, who recorded his frustrations with his drains and his ministers over the years, but also attended the balls and skating parties at Rideau Hall. The second section relies on the social commentary of Agnes Scott in *Saturday Night* and the Ottawa *Free Press* from 1897 to 1911. But the sources are less restricting than this suggests because Gwyn has supplemented them by a wealth of other archival collections and by a wide knowledge of relevant secondary sources. And to her sources Gwyn has brought a curiosity, an eye for revealing hints and suggestions, and a warm sympathy for the men and women who have left this archival legacy.

And yet, as a book, *Private Capital* is not easy to describe because it does not fit easily into any category. In many ways it is the book of an amateur in the traditional sense of that word. Gwyn has written a social chronicle but the criteria for selection do not conform to those of any academic discipline. Why, for example, do two of the thirty chapters take us to South Africa during the Boer War? Gwyn's frank explanation in her discussion of sources is that "having discovered [Agar] Adamson as a lively commentator on Ottawa society, it was impossible not

to follow him out to South Africa." At times this rushing from one documentary treasure-house to another resembles the path of a child in a toy-store. The use of the evidence is also questionable at times. Was Lola Powell sleeping with Lord Minto? Was Amarnd Lavergne the son of Wilfrid Laurier? John Saywell and Marc La Terreur have discussed the evidence, or rather the lack of evidence, with academic restraint, but Gwyn goes on to speculate about possible couplings. To a historian it smacks of journalism! And yet scholars will also be interested. Gwyn has used Belle Scott's scrapbooks to add to our understanding of Duncan Campbell Scott's relations with Archibald Lampman. And if there is nothing new about Lady Macdonald or Lady Aberdeen, Gwyn has at least made the information more accessible.

What the book lacks in discipline it gains in human interest. It is Ottawa without the politics. It is Ottawa without the lumber barons or the poor. There is no analysis of urban planning or of ethnic conflict. But we do get to know some of the prominent people in Ottawa society, with their fears and foibles and their affections. The reader may even feel that they still people Sparks Street and Rideau Hall and add another dimension to the Ottawa of Jeanne Sauvé and Brian Mulroney. Not many scholarly monographs have that effect.

H. BLAIR NEATBY

BALANCING & FLAPPING

SANDRA BIRDSELL, *Ladies of the House*. Turnstone, $8.95.

LEON ROOKE, *A Bolt of White Cloth*. Stoddart, $9.95.

Ladies of the House is Sandra Birdsell's second book of stories. Like its predecessor, *Night Travellers*, it deals with the often confined lives of members of the Lafreniere family in a small southern Manitoba town. Increasingly, in this book, the scene shifts to Winnipeg, following the lives of the Lafreniere girls as they grow up and have their own families, leave behind the wreckage of the flood (the dominant image of the earlier book and of the first story here), and find new kinds of wreckage and new modes of survival.

Those who know Birdsell's work will recognize in this new volume some familiar characteristics: her empathy for her characters' uncertainties — a kind of capacious tolerance for folly, squalor and struggle; her ability to lift the ordinary into significance by giving articulate form to the inchoate lives of her protagonists; her paradoxical sense of the fragility and yet the tenacity of the women she writes about; her skill in juxtaposing different temporal perspectives through the shifting consciousness of her central figures; and her feeling for the edgy vulnerability, sometimes even the misfortune, of sex. If all this sounds something like Alice Munro, the impression is valid, though Birdsell's vision, if not so penetrating nor so ironic as Munro's, is grittier and more positive. Her characters are not blessed (or cursed) with the acutely self-aware consciousness of Munro's (none of them is a *writer*); rather, they have to scurry for whatever bits of illumination they can get.

This new collection offers even more than its predecessor. Fine as *Night Travellers* is, it sometimes seemed a bit self-conscious and studied, while *Ladies of the House* is surer and more relaxed. At the core of the book is the ongoing story of Lureen, the black-haired, truly "Lafreniere" daughter, who is the main character in four of the ten stories. Her history culminates in a beautifully crafted epistolary story, "The Bird Dance," which presents the letters of Lureen and her two daughters, one a sophisticated teeny-bopper in love with a distant rock star, and the other a college girl seeking her French roots at Laval, choosing a direction for her life, and struggling with love and dependence. Lureen's husband Larry (following a familiar pattern which is established in an early story of crazy romance, departure and sentimental reunion), has left her, seemingly for the last time, though he is visiting again as the story ends. (It is a sign of Birdsell's generosity as a writer that Larry is presented sympathetically, without caricature.) Lureen is taking tentative steps into post-forty, single, adulthood, as her previously quite independent daughter moves into self-aware neediness and the ache of dependence. The bird dance of the title has a double origin and ambiguous resonance. It is first of all a paradoxical symbol taken from a friend's paintings: "trapped wingless birds becoming women locked, caught inside tubes and uterus-shaped forms beneath the ground, but still dancing and balancing the moon in the palm of their hands"; it is also a sign of bleak conformity and useless repetitive behaviour: Lureen describes a K-Tel ad with people "flapping their elbows and pecking and . . . smiling idiotically." "Balancing the moon" is what both the women and the story have to do, dramatising the start of a new, possibly repetitive cycle, but allowing too for hope.

Other stories in the book fill out what it means to be a lady of the house: a woman in her late forties loses her much older husband, and struggles with problems posed by the prospect of sexual and economic independence; a sexy cocktail waitress fantasizes about being Barbara Eden but plays it safe and, despite her new Twiggy make-up, *chooses* her big dumb husband and her matching bathroom accessories; childless Truda (the short-sighted artist daughter from *Night Travellers*), now grown to fat, leaves her banker husband and sets up house on a grimy street in the Winnipeg slums; and, finally, Mika, the main character of *Night Travellers,* returns as matriarch in the last story of all, old and reminiscent now, with her "keepsakes" and her fragmented memories not only of her children, but of the Russian town where she was born, and of a woman there who was buried while still alive — a fate which the various ladies of Birdsell's house somehow manage, miraculously, to escape.

Leon Rooke is a very different kind of writer, zanier, more exuberant, and much funnier than Birdsell (who seems to lack a strong sense of humour), but for me at least, without her ability to engage the reader, to make me *care* about character, situation, or form. Rooke is a bit of a vaudevillian, a mimic entertainer with a gift for doing voices. He catches the tone and expression of his narrator's speech, moving easily from rural farmer to comic suburban housewife to crazy lady on the bus. In his last novel, he went even further, speaking in the voice of an Elizabethan mongrel. He is well known for his skill as a reader as well, so that the vocal side of his work stands out as a major attraction.

He is also prolific. This is his seventh volume of stories in eight years, and he has published three novels during the same period. But this seems to me to

pose a problem — not in itself perhaps, but because of its present results. Of the nine stories in the current volume, only two or three seem to me worth preserving. Reading the book, I kept wondering why some tough-minded editor didn't occasionally send him back to his typewriter. Some of the stories are mere sentimental fantasy. In the final story, for example, a "dream lady" shows up at a lonely man's door and takes him to bed. End of story. There is also a feeling of imaginative fatigue, not so frequently noticeable in Rooke's earlier volumes. The basic device used in "Dream Lady" animates three of the stories: a mysterious stranger arrives and changes the routine life of the central character(s). In another of these, an unknown woman simply moves into the protagonist's house and, at the same time, his wife unaccountably disappears; our hero's name is Ripley, which I suppose is a challenge for us "to believe it or not." I didn't. On the other hand, the title story, built around the same device, works nicely — because the sense of mystery surrounding the stranger who comes giving white cloth to good and happy people is luminous, as in some fairy tales, and because that mystery is neatly balanced by the down-to-earth naiveté of the rural narrator.

The longest story in the book is also the best. It tells of a tough little girl dragging herself and her luggage through a dusty Faulknerian landscape in search of her reclusive father. Sent by her dying mother, whom she loved, but whose harshness emerges unobtrusively from the girl's reminiscences, she is suspicious and wary, watching this stranger-father from a distance, but willing to give him a chance "to prove himself." A skilful combination of objective and subjective narration keeps the child's lonely and determined dignity strongly before us, and there are no false notes. Too many of the other stories, however, fail to come off. Some seem like good ideas insufficiently worked out, others smack too much of self-imitation. Even for dedicated Rooke fans, and their number is growing, this collection is likely to prove disappointing.

ANTHONY DAWSON

PASTORAL

ANDREW V. ETTIN, *Literature and the Pastoral.* Yale Univ. Press, $22.50.

GABRIELLE POULIN, *All the Way Home,* Jane Pentland, trans. Oberon, $14.95.

THE PASTORAL ELEMENT has always had a significant place in Canadian literature, although its trappings in our writing more clearly reflect the local scene, climate, and custom than any Arcadian traditionalism. Catherine Parr Traill's comment that we have no "satyr nor wood-nymph" and that "no naiad haunts the rushy margin of our lakes" may seem to lament the lack of Classical legacy (or any kind of rooted tradition and legend), but the absence did not stop Traill and succeeding generations of writers from looking at nature, real or imagined or partly imagined, and using varying amounts of pure (and certainly, in the early days, Romantic) pictorialism to show the influence of nature on the persona of a poem or on a character — or set of characters — in a novel. From the early colonial poets and Sangster, Crawford, and Roberts on the one hand, to Callaghan and MacLennan on the other, the pastoral, in traditional or modern guise, has taught (albeit, at times, severely), refreshed, and intrigued its audience. Clearly, it is most imposing when most obvious, but, in truth, the small scenes — the passing moments in a garden, the brief solitary escape of a single character as he views a line of distant

hills or a bluff of prairie trees or senses the flowers on the evening air — have a special significance and vitality. Indeed, as a result of our writers' natural predilection to deal with what they see and know rather than to cloak it in Arcadian garb we tend either to fail to see or comment on the broad tradition of the pastoral in Western literature. We might conclude, more fashionably than realistically, that Canadian writers tediously try to assess our social condition in terms of the immediate environment, while holding with one hand a beaver by the paw and waving a maple leaf in the other. A. J. M. Smith and later writers took Canadian writing on a new course, but not, finally, away from the pastoral but back to it in a new way. Certainly, urban and technical concerns beset us, but such issues are seldom approached without reference to the perceptible impact of the natural world. Isabella Valancy Crawford's "The City Tree" makes its point as acutely and appropriately now as it did in the poet's own day.

Andrew Ettin's *Literature and the Pastoral* does not deal with the wide-ranging appearance of the pastoral element in Canadian literature. However, the book provides a sound, well organized, and thoroughly useful study of the tradition, a study which could well serve to stimulate valuable considerations of our own country's literary output. And while it might be tempting to fault Ettin for not paying due attention, given the Canadian works from which he might have drawn illuminating examples, yielding to such sentiments would be unjust and unfair. It would also be palpably chauvinistic. Rather it is wise to offer him credit — which he richly deserves — for having given us a book which can help us to think about our own work in an insightful way. Ettin observes that "one reason why the pastoral has so often been assumed to be a dead form is that its modal continuities may not be easily recognizable for what they are." He further comments that "any idyllic scene is at least the modal version of the pastoral." His achievement lies in defining the character of pastoral literature — the focus of his first chapter — and then exploring, in detail and with critical insight, its functions, its manifestations in a wide variety of work. Among his considerations are what he calls, in chapter titles, "Pastoral Insets" ("within a non-pastoral universe, as an inset within a larger frame of reference"), "Pastoral Irony," "Place and Time in the Pastoral," and "Pastoral Society and Ethics." He takes account of the notion of pastoral space, of the idea of making time stop ("nostalgia subverts the passage of time") of the association of the pastoral life "with desire and love," of the fact that the pastoral setting need not be rustic, and of the pastoral " 'common touch.' " Ettin works his way through a rather tangled vineyard with clarity of argument and lucidity of statement. Ettin's study (prefaced by a tantalizing introduction and concluded with notes, a bibliography with appropriate prefatory commentary, and an index) is a substantial scholarly and literary achievement.

A literary achievement of another sort — and one about which some of Ettin's points might well be illustrative — is Gabrielle Poulin's *All the Way Home* (first published by Alain Stanké in 1979 as *Cogne la caboche*). This is a sensitive, poignant, though somewhat narrowly focused novel about a young nun, Sister Marie Anna-des-Anges, her convent life, and her gradual and conscience-taxed return towards the secular realm (and her own secular name, Rachel Delisle), and about the nun's mother, Anna, whose thoughts centre on her ideas and desires for the religious, cloistered life. The book explores, in particular, the

spiritual tension of Sister Anna; her difficulties, her yearnings and her decision to seek the wider world — to doff the coif in reality and not simply in a dream, and seek, perhaps, the pastoral peace and human love of the life she once knew and since has dreamed of — are hers alone. Here lies the limiting of focus which the reader must sense if he is not to mistake Sister Anna's reactions to convent routine for objective statement. Her perspective, like that of her mother, is profoundly subjective. But imagination can have the strength of action, and dreams can have their own reality; the book's interest lies more in Sister Anna's developing perception of her own situation than in the specific series of events (her meetings with youthful Father Jean, or her study at the university) which provide the opportunity, in part, at least, for that growth. The effect of the whole is bitter-sweet. This is a finely crafted study of emotional and spiritual stress and the desire of the two major characters to change (in a sense, to exchange) roles; the duality of names (mother/daughter), of course, only serves to sharpen the tension.

The book relies heavily upon pastoral imagery in its depiction of both the theological and natural spheres (though this dichotomy is at best fragile as the two worlds impinge upon and infuse each other). It begins with the mother musing while apparently looking out at a quiet rural scene: "From the verandah where she sat, quietly rocking, Anna gazed unseeing at the narrow grey road that curved around a bend away in the distance before merging into the sky. If she closed her eyes . . ." It ends with Sister Anna — now Rachel — leaving the convent:

> The mother house turned its back to the rising sun. Rachel took a few steps in the shade. When she reached the steps, she was in full sunlight. Some silly sparrows were fighting in little clusters in front of her. They flew off, unhurried, when a car drove past at high speed.

Sister Anna/Rachel's last letter to her mother tells her of her departure. Her mother's acceptance of the end of her own life and her attraction to the village cemetery (a central motif) is a suggestion of eternal peace and a symbolic uniting of the pastoral entities of the rule of the Church in this life and the reality of God in that to come. Like Sister Anna/Rachel, Anna (the mother) moves not towards death but towards life, or, as the English title suggests, to what the characters see as home:

> She felt no pain, but a slight tremor warned her that something was quickening within her. It was not a child, it was not a dream, nor was it the past. It was patient, persistent, like the seeds that had begun to germinate in the soil of the garden, like the stalks that were growing longer and already putting forth above the graves, over there, their colours and scents.

What does not come in this life will surely come later, she would say; when applied to her, Rachel's little "magic song" (beginning "J'ai un beau chateau") has a particular tenderness. Throughout the narrative Poulin makes use of rural scenes and references to nature (its beauty, peace, and escape) and develops a strong contrast between the inner and outer life: between the convent and the world Sister Anna/Rachel once renounced and to which she finally returns; and within the Church between her outward, demonstrative obedience to the attitudes and rules of her Order and her own private, imaginative world which is both a source of consolation and turmoil and, ultimately, the fountainhead of her move to seek her salvation outside the walls. The pastoral, that is, informs her spiritual exercise and journey, just as it plays such a significant role — inescapably — in much of Canadian literature.

Poulin's book can and should be read for the sensitivity and challenges which it offers — and it is a telling and touching work; beyond that it can be read for the reflections it stimulates about the vigour of the Canadian pastoral tradition, a current substantially clarified by Ettin's splendid (though independent) exposition.

BRYAN N. S. GOOCH

APPARENT & REAL

DAVID HELWIG & SANDRA MARTIN, eds., *84 Best Canadian Stories*. Oberon, $12.95.

DAVID HELWIG & SANDRA MARTIN, eds., *Coming Attractions*. Oberon, $11.95.

"YOU'RE FAT, AND YOU don't play hockey, so you're no good for anything." Tom Marshall's "T," in *84 Best Canadian Stories*, describes this dismissal as "the voice of Canada passing judgement. . . . the judgement that Canadian culture, so called, had always passed." Marshall, like other writers in these two collections, is adding to the myth-making in Canada, but at the Mackenzie brothers' level, for real Canadians do not say eh! But it appears that for 1984, at least with Helwig and Martin, the major moments in short story writing in Canada emphasize a nature that is partly faked and often untrue. Readers of both these books will be asking Phyllis Webb's question: "Who can tell the apparent from the real?" The collections reveal what is apparently being done in short fiction in Canada, but I have a sense that the real writing is being published elsewhere.

Take, for example, *Coming Attractions*, presented to us with the best of intentions. For some years Oberon has offered readers a substantial sample of work by each of three new fiction writers and the press should be praised for this fixed purpose. But the choice this year is not the best. We are told that Diane Schoemperlen's work "pushes at the borderlines of the traditional story to catch an awareness . . . which probably couldn't be contained within a standard plot." Funny, "This Town" is a vignette with a bit of de Maupassant thrown in, and not on any borderline of the traditional story. I like the echoes of Schoemperlen's prose, her strong sense of the contemporary, but the form does not ring true. She ends her story, "What We Want," with the line "What we want is a change in style" and that is what I want with her work: the same edge, the same thought, but a presentation that is less obvious and stylized — a natural voice that sections of "Frogs" shows she has.

Joan Fern Shaw has some interesting insights, but her style frequently plods along; perhaps the sentence structure in "Red Sequins on Markham Street" is supposed to reflect the pace of the junk man's horse, but it does not work for me. Oh, for some sentence variety! But Michael Rawdon gives us variety in structure, and lengthy sentences that often dissolve into lack of meaning. Even his short sentences are perplexing; I wonder what "experiencing the phosphorescence of making structures" means. Rawdon's fiction has a surgical perspective that appeals, particularly in "The Bright Image" where the last paragraph tells more of the narrator than he perhaps would want us to know.

In *84 Best Canadian Stories*, Sandra Martin says that she and David Helwig "wanted stories that would expand the traditional narrative framework without sacrificing artistry or technique." What they wanted and what they got are two different things. Robin Mathews' "Florentine Letourneau," is an amusing extension of Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*, with a "traditional narrative framework," almost like Chekhov's. Mavis Gallant's

"Lena" is not only ordinary in its telling, but also sacrifices artistry. Have the critics who praise Gallant made her ignore the subtleties she once displayed? She is not getting better. A narrative based on experience shapes Gwendolyn MacEwen's "Letters to Joseph in Jerusalem" (though MacEwen will always be, for me, a much better poet than a short fiction writer) and Tom Marshall's "T," but the stories are ordinary ordinary. Something special and extraordinary is captured by Audrey Thomas in "Elevation" — as always with Thomas, a precise irony illuminates the teller, the tale, and the reader — and by Frances Itani's "Grandmother," the story that begins this selection in brilliant fashion. David Lewis Stein's "The Working Class" has its moments, and the stories by Bonnie Burnard, Elizabeth Spencer and Nora Keeling together create an insight into the social mindscape of women.

This less than outstanding collection apparently represents what short fiction is being written in Canada, but the editors seem to have a fuzzy view of their subject. Sandra Martin, in her one-page-preface to *84 Best Canadian Stories*, says that *The Tin Flute* is "that most intrinsically Canadian novel" — what does she mean by that? Both Martin and Helwig look carefully enough to present an admirable range of possibilities. But what about some of that real writing I mentioned earlier, that is being *written* in Canada (and is not merely *Canadian writing*), like that of Allan Donaldson and others in the Atlantic Provinces, or David Watmough and others on the west coast, plus many others in between who reach out to the world beyond their borders, and refuse to be "apparently" Canadian. To be a writer in Canada today is what it always meant — from Mrs. Brooke, through Jonathan Odell, Heavysege, Mrs. Ewing, and Martha Ostenso: to recognize the nature of the human, the eternity of consciousness, as it relates to the larger world of which Canada is only a part.

DONALD STEPHENS

MYTHIC-COMIC OPERA

TIMOTHY FINDLEY, *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. Penguin, n.p.

MARGARET LAURENCE CALLS Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* a "marvellously fantastic fable," and that is a fine definition of this latest text from one of our most interesting writers. But the fabular is a limited mode, and though it is certainly the proper mode by which to approach the ancient Biblical tale of The Flood, and Noah's Ark, it is also a fictional mode in which certain kinds of novelistic complexities must be smoothed over. One of the most interesting aspects of reading this book is watching the text struggle with its own given formal properties in order to express such complexities — philosophical, psychological, even theological — and sometimes succeeding. On the whole I found *Not Wanted on the Voyage* a wondrous, if terrifically dark, visionary text, but there were places where it almost managed to be something more, and I kept hoping it would be, even when I knew it could not. But this is to judge it by the highest standards; and that it demands to be so judged demonstrates just how fine a book it is.

For the author of *The Wars* and *Famous Last Words* to turn from fictional documentaries of recent history to a fictional interrogation of prehistoric legend and myth is quite a change. Findley began this book with the idea of writing a kind of animal tale about cats. It's still an animal tale of sorts, for one

of its major protagonists is Mottyl, Mrs. Noah Noyes's 20-year-old cat, almost blind and gifted with great insight. But Mrs. Noyes is another major figure, and these two, with Ham, and the enigmatic Lucy — fallen angel throwing in with humanity — and Emma, child bride for Japeth, find themselves ranged against Noah, Shem, Japeth, and Hannah, wife to Shem and something even more to Noah, the patriarch of patriarchs, and sworn obedient "single chosen of the Lord" who *will* bring the ark and its cargo through all as he has been told to, no matter what the cost in humanity and loss of wonder in the (drowned) world. Why are they ranged so against each other, these members of the same family? Because, as The Prologue puts it, "it wasn't like that." There was panic, there was dread, there was great loss: "It wasn't an excursion, it was the end of the world." And even some members of the chosen family weren't really happy with the implications of *that*.

As various critics have pointed out, Findley tends to see apocalypses in terms of fire; so The Flood would seem to represent either an anomaly or a new aspect of his vision. But, in fact, like *The Wars, Not Wanted on the Voyage* begins with a fire, and one person entering it for the sake of others — children, and animals. Mrs. Noyes is not that different from Robert Ross, and like him she belongs to the old world being destroyed, and so she is, in some ways, destroyed too. That fire, a fire of ritual sacrifice created by Noah, occurs before the launching of the ark, but it represents the end. About one third of the way through the text, Findley reinscribes the passage of fire in context, and reading it a second time we comprehend not only Mrs. Noyes's terror but her anger at all Noah and his God are doing. It is a fascinating moment.

It is partly so because much of the text to this point has read like a kind of *The Wind in the Willows*, with people. Prelapsarian Earth is, in Findley's vision, a world of discourse. All the animals speak, not only to each other (even as they go about their natural business of preying on each other), but to humans, as well. Through Mottyl's perceptions, Findley brings this natural world to life, rich in its encounters and its sensibilities. And it is full of all those wonderful figures we only know through the rumours of imaginative myth: unicorns, demons, dragons, faeries; and one of the signs of Noah's great failure of imaginative engagement with his world is his willingness to lose so many of these in service to the singular edicts of his Lord.

Indeed, although Noah (along with his God) is the major villain of Findley's version of the tale, even he is presented with some sympathy. For though he is God's Chosen One, he is also the author of his own predicament. Findley brilliantly blends the mythic and the comic opera elements of his story in his presentation of Yaweh's visit to the Noyes's, with their walled Garden of apple trees and their altar for burning sacrifices. It is a set piece of great satiric power: "The Lord God Yaweh, who was about to step into the air, was more than seven hundred years older than His friend Doctor Noyes, kneeling now in the road before Him. Whatever age this produced, it was inconceivable to Emma. To Mottyl, it was meaningless. Her Lord Creator was a walking sack of bones and hair. She also suspected, from His smell, that He was human." Indeed, though He lives in Heaven and is accompanied by angels (always excepting One Who Fell), Yaweh seems just a bit befuddled by everything, as well as somewhat too eager for revenge against those who fail to take Him seriously enough. During his attempts to entertain his old friend and Lord, Noah, a magician, does the old

trick of filling a bottle with water and so hiding the penny beneath it. Yaweh is intrigued, and in His anger at the world which has turned against Him he pronounces a new, if final, word: drowning. But, as only Mottyl and perhaps Michael Archangelis know, he puts His plan into motion only to then go off and die.

So, after building the ark, getting all the animals two-by-two or seven-by-seven on board, refusing entrance to the faeries, and establishing a pecking order in which he is Captain of all, the new word of power invested as such by the now absent Word of God, Noah finds himself in the famous Protestant predicament, which Dave Godfrey once suggested was explored in another great Canadian religious text, *Beautiful Losers*: he prays and sacrifices but receives no answer. What can he do, then? Continue to pray, and behave as if answers are forthcoming which continue to uphold the Law, which must be obeyed and cannot admit exceptions on any grounds, even human mercy and love. And the awful irony, which Findley fully exploits, is that *this* believer *is* all in the world, crying out, uselessly, to his God.

Doctor Noyes is a man of edicts, a man corrupted by power, and a hypocrite. His wife is his opposite, and so she must fight him, even though she hasn't the power to win. And so she must inevitably bear the losses and bear witness to them. But she is not alone: Ham, her "scientific" son, who asked questions of but always respected life; Emma, her daughter-in-law, who represents all the rest of humanity, left behind; and Lucy, the fallen angel who knows that Yaweh is evil, not His enemies — all join her to render an elegy for the world now lost forever. Those with no imaginations or too limited horizons, like Shem, Japeth, and the intelligent but power-hungry Hannah, join Noah, but, in this version, this does not finally count for much except losses without real understanding of what they mean.

Findley's novels have always argued that comprehension is necessary, not to prevent suffering and loss necessarily, although that would be welcome if the world permitted it, but to make truly moral choice possible. And his heroes have always *made* choices, no matter what the personal cost. His villains make choices, too, like Noah's choice of Hannah as his major support, but they refuse responsibility, as Noah does in shifting blame for every mishap onto others.

Animal tale, apocalyptic fable, black family comedy, speculative fiction, parodic deconstruction of The Bible, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* sometimes shifts its perspectives and its narrative modes too quickly, thus blurring some of the very distinctions it seeks so carefully to delineate, but its overall impact derives, as in so many of Findley's fictions, from its elegiac power, its visionary lamentation for a world lost through human greed and lack of caring. As Lucy intimates, we are still on the voyage Noah began, and his attitude towards the living Earth is still the one controlling most of the world. Fables tend to have morals, but few present theirs with as much energy and imaginative power as does *Not Wanted on the Voyage*.

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

ONDAATJE

MICHAEL ONDAATJE, *Secular Love*. Coach House, $8.95.

LESLIE MUNDWILER, *Michael Ondaatje: Word, Image, Imagination*. Talonbooks, n.p.

Seeing you
I want no other life
and turn around
to the sky
and everywhere below
jungle, wave of heat
secular love

MICHAEL ONDAATJE IS A POET who delights in testing and contesting the secular. He probes the conditions of temporal, visible, profane, earthly existence — since there is "no other life" — in order to discover the "jungle" that underlies them. The wilderness of human experience is timeless, invisible and wonderful, if not holy. It is the precious inner reality "sleeping like the rumour of pearl / in the embrace of oyster" and associated variously with unconsciousness, the body, imagination, wisdom, madness, death, and love. Frequently his poems culminate in what the romantic tradition calls "spots of time" or "epiphanies," those rare moments of transcendent illumination. In Ondaatje's case, however, the visions are usually immanent, lying within secular reality, and the romantic impulse is disciplined by irony:

> now in
> this brilliant darkness where
> grass has lost its colour and it's all
> fucking Yeats and moonlight, he knows
> this colourless grass is making his bare feet
> green
> for it is the hour of magic

The tension between modern skepticism and romantic enthusiasm produces a self-conscious poetry, fond of paradoxes, violent metaphors and oxymorons; full of literary echoes of, in this book, Lorca, Cervantes, Rilke, Berryman, Stevens, and Neruda; and always threatening to turn into a portrait of the artist. Everything becomes a token of the poet's imaginative power. Every action becomes a ritual for invoking that power. In *Secular Love* we see Ondaatje as lover, solitary, father, friend, and sentimental traveller. He is drawn to horizons, oceans, windows, lightning, moonlight, and "the stark places of the earth," because they provide access to "the unknown magic."

These poems are more restrained and diffident than those in earlier volumes. They are seldom as intense, dense or heroic, because they lack a commanding presence like Billy the Kid or Buddy Bolden. But if Ondaatje seems slightly older and tamer, he still displays a fascination with violence, the sudden pain that marks the pleasure and horror of our physical being: "these giant scratches / of pain / the markings of / some perfect animal." We again find his love of popular American culture (movies, bars, jazz, celebrities) at once vulgar and eloquent, commercial and mythical. We find his talent for combining striking diction, imagery and rhythm:

> During a full moon
> outcrops of rock shine
> skunks spray abstract into the air
> cows burp as if practising
> the name of Francis Ponge.

There are four sequences of poems. In the first, a drunk anti-hero of the imagination looks through a glass darkly (the claude glass) as he seeks lucidity in confusion. The emphasis falls on the purgatorial untidiness of life rather than on the illumination it permits. His "sudden journeying" toward the "absolute clarity" of self-knowledge is too vague to be convincing, but the encounter between his alcoholic stupor and the hard, factual world of nature ("the slow stupid career of beans") is striking. The second poem, "Tin Roof" (published first in 1982), presents Ondaatje secluded in Hawaii, attended by his love and muse: "seraph or bitch / flutters at your heart." Through recurring images — cabin, sleeve, gecko, heart, sea, cliff, radio — he weaves together short lyrics in which he meditates on love and art, and tries to commune with the wisdom of the "wild sea and her civilization / the League of the Divine Wind / and her traditions of death." This sequence is the most coherent and impressive in the collection. It gradually assembles its images until the final appeal to Rilke (with its ridiculous pun on Rainier beer), whose sublime example

inspires and warns Ondaatje. "Rock Bottom" and "Skin Boat" are companion pieces. Both are concerned with love, but in the first Ondaatje portrays himself as rejected and dejected. He writes of fragmentation, failure, the battle of the sexes and gradually finding a new love. In the second he is more optimistic as he celebrates friendship and fellowship in "an alphabet / whose motive was perfect desire." These sequences are more miscellaneous than the earlier poems; however, they are united by an autobiographical line never made explicit but suggesting a tentative pattern of development from loss to union and reunion.

Leslie Mundwiler would undoubtedly reject as bathetic my account of Ondaatje's anti-romantic romanticism, because he is concerned with a different crisis of the imagination. In fact he is only secondarily concerned with Ondaatje and primarily with a more ambitious project, namely a phenomenological critique of the imagination. In part he is guided by Dennis Lee's *Savage Fields*, from which he parts company when its analysis grows too theological. Unlike Lee, however, he does not write clearly, his account is erratic, and he rarely uses his theory to illuminate Ondaatje's poetry. Ondaatje is merely the occasion for Mundwiler's aesthetic. In his view the great villain is scientific ideology, which represses imagination by exalting reason and its authoritarian, instrumental control of "truth" and "objective reality." This ideology is institutionalized in science, politics and literary studies, and Mundwiler presents himself as an intellectual rebel who dares to propose "a revaluation of ideological habits which permeate our cultural life." Lee's ambition was as great, but he was more modest. The hero for Mundwiler is the imagination, understood, not as a vapid ideal, but as a bodily, gestural, political "complex life process, encompassing the things we normally tag *consciousness, thinking, reason, intuition* and *feeling* as well as dream states."

Several romantic accounts treat the imagination as the complex life of the mind or as reason in its most exalted guise, a view Mundwiler ignores by using Schiller as the exemplar of romanticism. But Mundwiler must resist the tendency of his argument to be reabsorbed by romantic theory and its detested idealism, as was the case with Owen Barfield or Elizabeth Sewell. Accordingly he attempts an elaborate phenomenological-political-historical critique of the imagination. This is the heart of his book, but unfortunately it is so short and hurried that it dispenses with Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and R. G. Collingwood (treated as a phenomenologist) in a few paragraphs, before turning briefly to its chief guide, Merleau-Ponty. My point is not that Mundwiler is a bad philosopher — a point I cannot judge — but that he cannot provide a clear or convincing account so quickly. He can only offer a series of tags, phrases, and quotations which are of little use in proposing a coherent theory or in explicating Ondaatje's work. The poetry receives surprisingly little attention, and only *Billy the Kid* is judged favourably.

Despite Mundwiler's desire for philosophical consistency, his approach is eclectic and so fragmentary that he makes a host of promises he fails to keep. Subjects are introduced (reception theory, social mediation, myth, "the epistemic or truth-value of the imaginative construction of meaning," "the intersubjectivity of language as gesture") only to be abandoned after a few words. Mundwiler commits the very errors he condemns. He mocks academics as naive slaves of an ideology they misunderstand, but his own tone is scornful and patronizing, his judgement of specific poems is arbitrary, and his approach is very much within academic tradition. He displays the weak-

nesses of dogmatism (inflexibility, moralizing) but not its strengths (rigour, theoretical consistency). When he occasionally invokes the literary and philosophical values he favours, his vocabulary grows suspiciously romantic. He speaks of "universality," "liberating imaginative experience," "a purely experienced, unambiguous core to his existence," and "salvation in love and lust." As a result his book is rarely convincing as literary theory or useful as a study of Ondaatje's work.

JON KERTZER

FABLES ET FANTASMES

MARIE JOSE THERIAULT, *Les Demoiselles de Numidie*. Boréal Express, $12.95.

JACQUES NADEAU, *Le Fruit noir*. Editions La Liberté, n.p.

L'ECRITURE DES *Demoiselles de Numidie* allie de façon très réussie une stimulante aventure narrative au déploiement d'une poésie imagée à la langue somptueuse, recherchée, tantôt sensuelle, tantôt éthérée. Cette recherche poétique va jusqu'à inclure deux chapitres écrits dans une imitation chatoyante et séduisante du moyen français.

Le lecteur aura deviné que *Les Demoiselles de Numidie* lui fera faire la navette entre deux époques différentes, les années 1950 et une époque "sept fois septante années" plus tôt. La narration est tantôt à la troisième personne, tantôt à la première — et celle-ci correspond à deux "je" différents: le capitaine Giusti, qui écrit une longue lettre introspective à sa fille d'une part, et de l'autre, la voix d'un vaisseau — fantôme qui raconte, en moyen français, sa propre autobiographie! Dans les deux cas la présentation — de la lettre comme de l'autobiographie — est coupée en deux pour occuper deux chapitres différents et séparés l'un de l'autre dans le roman, d'où une diversité narrative qui stimule l'intérêt; diversité qui se retrouve aux niveaux typographique (la lettre du capitaine étant en italiques), des personnages (le sinistre, gros, obsédé sexuel Culić faisant contraste avec la belle, la diaphane passagère Serena) et du vocabulaire (le langage ordurier de Culić s'oppose à la poésie qui se déploie ailleurs).

Histoire captivante de désir et d'amour, de vie, de mort et de magie, ce roman appartient au genre merveilleux, selon les définitions de Todorov. En novembre 1956, un cargo, le *Maria Teresa G* commence la traversée de l'Atlantique. Au début tout se passe normalement, malgré la présence de l'obsédé sexuel Culić (nom dont la première lettre se coiffe d'étranges ailes, étrangeté qui aide à susciter une ambiance propice au jaillissement du merveilleux). Ayant épuisé les ressources charnelles de la terre ferme, Culić recherche sur mer un bateau-bordel légendaire! Cette impression d' "inquiétante étrangeté" (Freud) est d'abord tenue à distance grâce à un personnage ayant les pieds bien sur terre, tout marin qu'il soit (le capitaine Giusti), et à un autre, apparemment terne à souhait (le lieutenant Fabiani). Mais il y a aussi la belle Serena Klein Todd dont le nom sera, vers la fin, traduit explicitement par "sereine petite mort." Sans doute la plupart des lecteurs saisiront-ils d'emblée la signification du nom; tous seront sensibles à l'intensification de l'ambiance d'inquiétante étrangeté que provoquent ce personnage et sa fillette un tantinet perverse, puisque Serena envoûtera toujours plus Giusti et Fabiani.

C'est que tout commença en réalité au quinzième siècle (en fait l'époque en question est située une fois il y a "sept fois septante" années; et ailleurs il y a "quatre fois cent années," comme nous l'explique le voilier vénérien lui-même, le bateau-bordel *Demoiselles de Numidie*. En ce temps-là, une grève sexuelle fut

organisée par des femmes opposées à ce que leurs hommes bien-aimés ne cessent de mourir en tentant de domestiquer la mer. Cette grève des femmes fut donc conçue par amour des hommes. Suite au déclenchement de la grève, les prostituées locales décidèrent de faire construire un magnifique bordel flottant, voilier de toute beauté, pour profiter de cette clientèle de marins en manque. L'immense partouze à bord, qui suivit le lancement du *Demoiselles de Numidie* le priva de marins prêts à le gouverner lors de la tempête qui surgit pour le couler. Ses occupants se retrouvent au fond des eaux, non point morts mais accueillis par les habitants du royaume sous-marin, et pour se découvrir dôtés de pouvoirs surnaturels et de vie éternelle. A court d'hommes néanmoins, les femmes du lupanar coulé, entreprenantes dans tant de sens, décident de continuer à parcourir les mers comme autant de sirènes du sexe afin de leurrer les équipages à bord pour les emporter ensuite au fond de l'eau, compagnons aptes à combler leurs appétits charnels. A l'étrange, on le voit, succède le merveilleux. On l'aura deviné, le *Maria Teresa G* sera la prochaine "victime" de la nef nymphomane. Le lien entre les deux navires (le *Maria Teresa G* et les *Demoiselles de Numidie*) comme des deux mondes (celui du réel et des vivants, celui des morts pourtant vifs et du merveilleux) c'est Serena Klein Todd, morte-vivante envoyée par les demoiselles de Numidie à bord du *Maria Teresa G* afin d'induire tout équipage en perdition (ou salut?). Et voilà proposé une explication (merveilleuse) de ces bateaux qu'on trouverait dans le "Triangle des Bermudes," indemnes mais mysterieusement abandonnés par leurs équipages.

La signification de ce conte merveilleux va bien plus loin, ce que laisse deviner, en exergue, un passage de D'Annunzio: "ce fut un voyage bref et pourtant/immense, où ils franchirent les vertigineux/espaces qu'ils avaient au-dedans d'eux-mêmes" (passage extrait du *Feu*; *Les Demoiselles de Numidie* offre d'ailleurs une poésie du feu autant que de l'eau). Le sens se structure autour d'une problématique des rapports hommes-femmes, du désir et de l'amour, de la mort et de l'éternité, ainsi que de la magie et de l'inconnu.

Etrange fable que ce *Demoiselles de Numidie*: quelle signification faut-il attacher au fait que des feministes amoureuses des hommes (qui, eux, préfèrent les explorations maritimes, donc: l'expansion, l'aventure, la guerre) échouent en essayant de sauver ceux-ci en leur refusant le sexe; tandis que des prostituées décidées à exploiter les hommes, meurent pour connaître la vie éternelle et réussir à se soumettre, par et pour le sexe, les hommes, à jamais? Fable aux fantasmes d'une passionnante polyvalence, conte merveilleux et sinistre, à l'écriture souvent éblouissante, *Les Demoiselles de Numidie* est une séduisante réussite (qui évoque à certains égards *Les Fous de Bassan*).

Le Fruit noir de Jacques Nadeau reste proche d'un modèle indéniable, *L'Etranger* d'A. Camus. Il semble s'agir d'une réécriture délibérée, d'un "remake." L'entreprise relève du défi, voire du risque, tant *L'Etranger* a connu d'imitations. Comme son illustre devancier, *Le Fruit noir* comporte deux parties. Dans la première, le narrateur raconte à la première personne sa vie d'aide-infirmier. Les souffrances des personnes âgées, très malades, ou impotentes, sont évoquées d'émouvante façon et débouchent sur le problème contemporain de l'euthanasie: le narrateur tue d'un coup de carabine un jeune paralysé, qui a exprimé son désir de ne pas subir une vie diminuée, mais qui ne peut mettre fin lui-même à ses jours. Si l'écriture (qui emploie le passé composé dans la narration) et cer-

tains personnages (la petite amie) et situations rappellent fort *L'Etranger*, c'est néanmoins dans cette première partie que *Le Fruit noir* s'écarte le plus de son modèle pour poser un problème authentique et contemporain. Cette originalité se montre par la façon de chaque héros (Meurseault, dans *L'Etranger*, et le narrateur du *Fruit noir*) de réagir envers le coup de feu qu'il tire et qui divise sa vie et son récit en deux, un avant et un après: là où Meurseault dit sous un soleil de plomb, "J'ai compris que *j'avais détruit l'équilibre du jour*, le silence exceptionnel d'une plage où j'avais été heureux," le narrateur du *Fruit noir* dit: "Et quand j'ai tiré, la nuit tombait, et j'ai pensé que *je rétablissais l'ordre des choses*."

La deuxième partie du *Fruit noir* ressemble trop, pour moi, à celle de l'*Etranger*: mêmes avocat, procureur, juge, témoins pour et contre, prêtre, cellule, visite de l'amie, solitude. Il reste intéressant de constater qu'un jeune Québécois de 1983 a trouvé que c'était à partir et en fonction de *L'Etranger* que sa sensibilité pouvait s'exprimer. Comme *Les Demoiselles de Numidie*, *Le Fruit noir* diverge d'avec maints romans québécois des années 1960 et 1970: ni dans l'un ni dans l'autre ne sent-on (malgré quelques allusions) une présence de la thématique nationale (le cadre géographique du *Fruit noir* est passablement québécois, mais le récit n'insiste pas là-dessus). Ces romans québécois se tournent résolument et sans complexe vers des problématiques universelles. De même, pour différente que soit la langue de l'un et de l'autre, il s'agit de deux manifestations du français international — à une exception significative près qui est l'emploi systématique, dans *Le Fruit noir*, d' "avoir" comme auxiliaire de "passer" non transitif, là où on attendrait "être." Ce livre me semble néanmoins apte à intéresser un marché en croissance, celui des élèves du niveau secondaire (immersion ou non) au Canada anglophone; il suffirait à leurs professeurs de signaler cette construction comme une variante utilisée par certains francophones nord-américains.

NEIL B. BISHOP

*** J. M. S. CARELESS, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History*. James Lorimer/National Museums, $26.95. A combination of carefully documented history and attractive photo album, this books shows how the development of a city was also the development of political, social, and cultural patterns which shaped the whole of anglophone Canada. Sensitively imagining the original site of the city, Careless proceeds by discussing architecture as well as civic politics, early feminism as well as economic power. The analysis of shifting class structures in the nineteenth century is concise and often quietly ironic. Goldwin Smith is seen as part of the "leaven in the upper ranks provided by a young intelligentsia" (ca.1875), but Careless is quick to point out that the urban elite would not accommodate intelligence without entrepreneurial success. And though poets have little place in this Toronto — Crawford's or Lampman's periods of residence are not mentioned — the city's more general cultural life is a prominent subject. A clear narrative line gives coherence to a wide range of topics.

L.R.

**** SALLY GIBSON, *More Than an Island*. Irwin, $29.95. This history of the Toronto Island is about territory fought over and claimed (successively by Mohawks, Americans, and island-dwellers in conflict with urban bureaucracy). It is about the Wards of Ward's Island, the Hanlans of Hanlan's Point; about tugs-of-war, ice-boating, duck-shooting, ferryboats, cottagers, and murder. It's about the "soul" of a city and the plans and dreams that embrace but never contain it. It's fascinating urban history absorbingly illustrated by document, maps, and pictures of real people doing real things — and (even when the adventure bogs down in the tugs-of-war of contemporary politics) it's wonderfully written.

W.N.

opinions and notes

THE RETURN JOURNEY IN ITALIAN-CANADIAN LITERATURE

IN THE PREFACE TO *Roman Candles*, the first Italian-Canadian anthology, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco explained:

> In 1974 I returned to Italy for the first time in twenty-odd years. I went, biased against a legacy that had made growing up in North America a difficult but not impossible chore (or so I thought). I went out of curiosity, and came back to Canada conscious of the fact that I'd been a man without a country for most of my life. And I became bitter at the thought that most people carry on day after day deeply aware that they do so on the land upon which they were born. It became clear to me that they had something immediately and emotionally at stake with their environment. And that phenomenon was something I had had to construct at every effort to feel relevant in an English country.

These words are testimony to the profound effect that the return trip to Italy had on Di Cicco's life and writing. His stay in Italy made him aware of the duality of the Italian-Canadian experience. It made him conscious of himself as a Canadian, but as a Canadian with a difference. This discovery of his inner state was possible because Di Cicco could see himself from the outside perspective, the Italian perspective from the country of his birth. Di Cicco's silence over Italy was broken.

Immigrant writing demonstrates the close interweaving of history and literature. In the novels, stories, and poems that we consider here, the autobiographical element is always just below the surface of the text, the image, symbol, metaphor, dialogue, and characterization. This is all the more evident in the structure of the return journey. This narrative structure is as ancient as The Bible and Homer's *Odyssey*. The manner in which Italian-Canadian writers have adopted this structure gives their works both universal appeal and a particular North American significance.

Recent history shows that the effects of Di Cicco's trip were also felt by many of his colleagues, since one of the results was his decision to edit *Roman Candles* in 1978. With this anthology a number of Italian-Canadian writers across Canada were made aware of each other's existence; and through it they found they were writing about shared experiences of immigration and ethnicity. A social history of the 1970's would demonstrate that return trips to Italy have been taken by many immigrants and their children. Writers who took part in this odyssey as part of their education — Mary di Michele, Frank Paci, Caterina Edwards, Filippo Salvatore, and others — testify to feelings, first of confusion, and later of self-recognition as a result of these acts of reverse migration.

In an interview Mary di Michele explains her experience of the immigrant duality as a result of her first return trip to Italy:

> I made only one trip in 1972. I spent the summer there with my whole family. Because of my very intense and detailed childhood memories my body remembered things that I did not consciously remember. When we were in my mother's village I asked my mother about things that had changed and she would say, "How can you remember that?" . . . At times I feel confused about my identity. I grew up in Canada but my 1972 trip brought out this confusion. My Italian identity started to come out more and more. By the end of the summer I started to dream in Italian.[1]

In di Michele's dreams the rational Eng-

lish Canadian mind meets the emotional Italian soul, a conflict that is the basis for the poetic dialogues of *Mimosa and Other Poems*. In this collection the personae of Marta, Lucia, and Vito explore various points of view and feelings of the ethnic duality, of belonging in Italy, or in Canada, or in both. In a similar manner Frank Paci recalls his 1972 trip to Italy in his first novel, *The Italians*, and in subsequent comments on his motivation for writing about his Italian background.

The most significant effects of the return journey experience, then, are revealed in the literary works themselves. The return journey recurs so often that it can be described not just as a major theme but as an obsession in the Italian-Canadian imagination. We will look at three novels that use this structure: Maria Ardizzi's *Made in Italy*, Frank Paci's *Black Madonna*, and Caterina Edwards' *The Lion's Mouth*.

Before we consider these three narratives, a brief review of other stories and poems will set the literary context and indicate how widespread the theme is and how powerful the obsession. In 1974 Dino Minni published a short story called "Roots," in which the Italian immigrant, Berto Donati, returns after many years in Canada to his hometown in Italy because he feels compelled to rediscover himself there.

> The boy had remained behind of course — a smaller Berto forever in Villa. This idea (ridiculous as it seems) no longer surprises me, but mornings shock me. Not for the first time . . . And I know I have to go back for the boy. Carla, the Canadian, does not understand this.[2]

The trip that Berto takes enables him to come to terms with the choice he made many years earlier to leave his parents and go to Canada. The story ends with Berto abandoning the nostalgic dream of an idyllic life along the Mediterranean in favour of his life and work back in Canada.

In 1983 Minni once more used the structure of the return trip, in a story called "El Dorado." The schizophrenic Canadian, Rocky Sebastian, is drawn back to the ancestral town in Italy in order to learn about his grandfather and father. Before he can settle down to normal life in Canada, Rocky must understand his past. The story ends with Rocky wondering if his grandfather's El Dorado was not to be found in the hometown of Sebastiano in Italy rather than in Canada.[3] This romantic view of Italy is the reverse of that in Minni's 1974 story. It is interesting to note that Rocky is Canadian-born and thus removed from the first-hand experiences of immigration. While Rocky realizes that Italy is not for him, he is nonetheless sad that his grandfather was compelled to leave.

Before the publication of *Mimosa and Other Poems*, di Michele devoted several poems to her Italian visit of 1972. Her love poems on Venice are marked by the paradoxes that she sees with Canadian eyes. The return journey brought out the conflict between two worlds: the Italy of her parents and the Canada of her education. In the poem, "How to kill your father," di Michele explores the clash between traditional Italian values and the new North American ones:

> You are alone on the highway to the sun.
> Your north american education
> has taught you how to kill a father,
> but you are walking down an Italian
> way, so you will surrender
> and visit him in the hospital
> where you will be accused
> of wishing his death
> in wanting a life
> for yourself.[4]

In the 1979 edition of the *Selected Poems* of Alexandre Amprimoz there are a number of poems devoted to the author's return trip to Rome, his birth-

place. In the symmetrical poem, "Roman Return," the ancient monuments welcome the writer home. In 1983 Amprimoz published a short story called "You are a Bastard Mr. Death," in which the hero rushes back to Rome to his ailing grandmother, only to discover her cold body sitting in the kitchen in *rigor mortis*.[5] In this recurring theme of the return trip Amprimoz makes us aware that some return home to meet death.

In his collection, *The Tough Romance* (1979), Di Cicco devotes a number of poems to his Italian trip. We are reminded of dead grandfathers, dead brothers, and the war in his elegiac poem, "Donna Italiana," as well as in "Momento d'Italia," "Toronto-Arezzo," and in "A Man Called Beppino." Why is death so much a part of the immigrant journey? The answer may lie in ancient Mediterranean customs that link any form of departure with death. In remote Italian villages emigrants were once sent off with funeral-like rituals. Upon leaving, these people were no longer considered part of the community; in effect, they were dead to their families and friends.[6]

Italian-Canadian novelists seem compelled to deal with the question of the return journey. In Frank Paci's *The Father*, going back to Italy is an underlying problem with Oreste Mancuso before his accidental death. Joe Valtoni dies in Canada without ever returning to Italy in Maria Ardizzi's *Il Sapore Agro della Mia Terra*, while Sara retraces her steps to the old country only to find that she has lost Don Fabiano, the man she loved. The return journey and death are directly explored in Ardizzi's first novel, *Made in Italy*. We meet Nora Moratti, an old woman who has been toughened by her immigrant experiences in Canada. From her state of retirement Nora reviews how her past life went wrong. After Nora and her husband, Vanni, came to Canada, their marriage began to deteriorate. Vanni, in devoting himself totally to his work, neglected Nora and the children. In time they no longer communicated with one another. Like Margaret Laurence's Hagar Shipley, Nora is too proud to deal with the problems of her family. The children grew up Canadian and no longer talked to or visited the parents. This family disintegration reaches the ultimate point of physical separation: death. The two sons meet untimely deaths one by one, and the father dies ironically.

In 1966 Vanni's great success in business brings him to make a trip to Italy, and he visits his hometown in order to show off his money. While there he dies suddenly. The statement here is part of the old peasant morality; Vanni ends his life not in the affluence he achieved in Canada but in the poverty of his old village. Nora must return to Italy for the first and only time in order to make the funeral arrangements. Speaking to Vanni's body for the last time she says dispassionately:

> You came back here to die . . . Who would have believed it? I, on the other hand, could never come back here to die . . . and not because I don't want to. It's simply that between me and this place the cord has been cut . . . I recognize this place but it doesn't recognize me . . . My places have remained unchanged only in my imagination, and I can possess them only with the imagination . . . Do you want to know something? I no longer own a real place. I no longer belong anywhere . . . and I belong everywhere. . . .[7]

Despite her feelings of exile in Canada and of alienation from modern society, Nora realizes that she cannot return to Italy. She no longer belongs there, because the Italy of her past no longer exists.

Nora Moratti is not obsessed with the desire to return to Italy, even for a visit. This old woman lives in her imagination

rather than in harsh reality. As she relives her youth and courtship her vivid memory brings back every detail with an intensity that overshadows the reality. While this imaginative escape allows Nora to cope with the difficulties of her immigration, it also takes her away from those around her. Nora withdraws more and more into her ideal world. By the end of the novel this imaginative state becomes an actual one as Nora is physically paralyzed by strokes. She ceases to exist except in her mind, a silent observer of the world around her. In a sense she is physically dead. For both Nora and Vanni the dark journey back to Italy leads to death. Their self-chosen silence now becomes oblivion.

In this novel Ardizzi has tapped Biblical parables of the rich man, ancient myths, and old superstitions about emigration from Italy in order to make forceful moral statements about the narrowness of much immigrant life in Canada. Because of its social criticism, its attacks on the illusions of immigrants and their children, *Made in Italy* has received a mixed response from readers. Ardizzi is critical of certain immigrant behaviour and states of mind. Vanni represents the migrant worker mentality; he comes to Canada not to a new life but in order to work and make money. Despite his success in Canada it is never really his new country. Vanni goes back home to Italy to die. This pattern was followed by the early Italian sojourners in North America, but after one hundred years Italians must recognize that they have roots in the new world, too.

Nora realizes that Vanni's approach is an illusion; nevertheless, she has her own mental trap: the cosmopolitan mentality. Nora says that she can live and be at home anywhere in the world. This idealism is an escape mechanism, a way of avoiding addressing the real problems of her daily life. Because of her ambivalence toward Canada Nora fails to make a commitment to her new life and thus misses the opportunity to enrich herself, her husband, and her children. Paralysis is a fitting symbol for the end of this Italian-Canadian novel.

In Frank Paci's enigmatic novel, *Black Madonna* (1982), the return journey to Italy is also combined with the idea of death, but the death involves a rebirth. The story deals with a widowed Italian mother, Assunta Barone, and her relationship with her son Joey and her daughter Marie. The novel opens with the funeral of the father, an event which brings to a climax the disparity that exists between Italian mother and Canadian children. In acts of mourning for her dead husband, Assunta reverts to ancient customs, even cutting off all her hair. Marie and Joey are at a loss to know how to deal with their silent, brooding mother.

One of the paradoxes of Paci's *Black Madonna* is that the main character, Assunta, remains an unknown person although the focus of considerable attention. We always see Assunta from the outside, through the eyes of either Joey or Marie. We are never permitted inside the complex mind of this mother. Since she represents that silent first generation of immigrants, Assunta speaks no English and is not very verbal in Italian. Within the story itself, Assunta remains alienated from others. Adamo originally married her by proxy, not having previously met her. He accepted her peculiar old-fashioned ways but never understood her. To her children she remains a puzzle to the end.

Upon coming to Canada Assunta recognized and accepted her state of exile as an Italian woman. She wrote letters to her sister back home, talked about returning to Italy, but remained dedicated to her family. Paradoxically by accepting her exile Assunta also ac-

cepted her new country. It will be much more difficult for her Canadian children to achieve Assunta's simple balance between old and new worlds. Adamo's death destroyed this fragile equilibrium. In the character of Assunta the author has interwoven that sense of fate that pervades many immigrants of the older generation; action transcends the temporal realm. After Adamo's death Assunta is left without an intermediary to Canadian society, and begins to talk about returning to Italy. She tells her son, "You send me back to Italia. I want to die in Italia." Assunta talks to friends about going back to Italy. The parish priest, Father Sarlo, has also requested that he be transferred back to Italy in order to retire in his native village.

Joey and Marie misunderstand their mother and take literally her talk about returning to Italy. In an insensitive moment Marie tells her brother that Assunta belongs back in Italy because she has never adjusted to life in Canada. Joey sells the house his father built and considers sending his mother back to her sister Pia in the Marche region. Assunta is shocked that Joey has sold the house. Two weeks later Joey finds her body near the railway tracks. Assunta does not go back to Italy to live or to die.

After their mother's funeral, Joey and Marie receive a phone call from their mother's sister, Zia Pia, who invites them to come to Italy. Zia Pia wants Joey to come and live with her. Cugina Marisa invites Marie to her wedding. This direct contact with Zia Pia begins a chain of events. Joey and Marie are surprised to find that their Italian relatives know so much about them and care so much about their welfare. Their dead mother had kept regular contact with her sister and family. This link must not be broken now. The sad irony is that Marie and Joey only begin to appreciate their Italian roots after their father and mother are gone.

Through her suffering Marie develops more sympathy with her mother's values and behaviour. The epiphany in Marie's delayed Italian education occurs when she is eventually able to open her mother's old trousseau trunk for the first time. The supposedly locked trunk is a symbol of her mother's past, Marie's heritage:

> As she was going through the photos of her grandparents and various relatives she saw the kind of people she came from. Hardy men with grizzly sun-bleached faces and high cheekbones. Stout and black-draped women hunched and hardened by toil. People of the earth. Peasants who worked all their lives trying to eke an existence from the soil. It was hard to believe their blood flowed through her veins.

A recurring motif in immigrant Italian writing is the notion that dead ancestors are more real than living relatives. In a mystical effort to learn what the black madonna means, Marie puts on her dead mother's black dress, which she finds in the trunk. Marie discovers her physical resemblance to her mother. Only by being Italian, it seems, can you have the experiential base for understanding what being Italian means. Marie gradually and painfully learns this lesson.

Paci's *Black Madonna* ends with Marie making her pilgrimage to Italy to meet Zia Pia and her family and to see the hilly, rocky land of her origins. Assunta Barone returns to Italy in the person of her daughter; this Italian immigrant lives on in the Canadian woman wearing the black dress from the old trousseau trunk. The trip to Italy is a manifestation of the family ties between Canada and the old country. Joey and Marie must now seek a new accommodation between *la via vecchia e la via nuova*. The final pages carry the anticipation of weddings: Marisa's wedding in Italy and Joey's wedding in Canada.

From death and the return journey Paci gives us a novel of regeneration and new hope for this Italian-Canadian family.

Maria Ardizzi and Frank Paci tell the stories of two old women and their tormented states as immigrants in a strange land. Caterina Edwards' novel, *The Lion's Mouth* (1982), deals with the spiritual quest of a young woman as she struggles with the problems of her Canadian education and her Italian connections. Bianca emigrated to Canada with her parents in the 1950's. While she grew up in the Canadian West she regularly spent summers in Italy because her Venetian mother wanted her to retain her Italian identity: links with language, culture, and family. The central focus of Bianca's life is a profound awareness of the two separate worlds that constitute her experience. Bianca tries to explain this trauma to her Venetian cousin Marco:

> For my life was split into two seemingly inimical halves, not only between the time before and after, but through all my growing years: Italy in summer, Canada in winter. Italy was enclosure, cocooning, the comfort of a secure place among the cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents. There was always a surfeit of noise, of concern, of advice.

In contrast to this warm womb of civilization, Bianca's first memories of Canada are nightmares from the wilderness, hostile and barren:

> Rock and tree, tree and rock. No houses, no people for hundreds of miles. The villages and the towns where the train did stop seemed ill-proportioned, perched upon the land rather than rising from it. The only change came in the giving way to prairie — a land to my untrained eye still more desolate. Leaving Venice, though I was with Mamma and Papa, I felt stripped of family, of friends, of familiar walls and buildings, of proper landscape. I was exposed, alone in the nothingness.

Bianca must come to terms with these two worlds of her experience, these two parts of herself. Because she spent her life repeatedly returning to Italy, Bianca epitomizes the Italian-Canadian duality as it is manifested in the obsession to look back to Italy. In Bianca's case this schizophrenia is compounded by her relationship with her Venetian cousin, Marco. In the course of the narrative Marco comes to represent Venice, Bianca's inner city, in contrast to the external Canadian city. Bianca must grapple with her infatuation with Marco and Venice on the one hand, and her sense of belonging in Canada with its space and wilderness on the other.

In some ways *The Lion's Mouth* is a tale of two cities: Venice floating on the blue Adriatic, and Edmonton floating on the green prairie. Bianca's many trips to Venice do not contribute to her sense of identity; rather they aggravate her confusion. The only way that Bianca can begin to resolve her dilemma is through the creative act of writing. The novel is about Bianca writing Marco's story. In the course of her life Bianca has attempted to write this story several times but failed. The novel is the final effort to write about the immigrant experience. In this ultimate act Bianca recreates her story and constructs another world in the work. The novel is an imaginative return trip to Bianca's Venice. In this way this Canadian heroine can learn about Venice, about Marco, and most of all about herself. Above the confusion of Italian and English words Bianca hears her own voice.

In Venice Marco has little understanding of this Canadian cousin who has adjusted to the sense of the wilderness. By the end of the novel Bianca realizes that Marco will never appreciate her dual experience as an Italian and a Canadian:

> I was never of any importance to you. If I could touch you as you did me. If I could help you now when you need help, when you need. But I am here and you there.

> You are a Venetian. How can you not feel the exhaustion, the decay of the world? My kiss — hopeful and Canadian — could never awaken you from your sleep of negativism.
> . . .
> With me, it is always stories. And in the end it is all I can offer you — your story. I recreate your infancy, your childhood, trying to understand. I imagine the bombings, the operation. I look out through your eyes. I become you. I make the story, the book.
> Still. Still. I cannot write it in Italian, and you do not read English. I will never touch you at all.

It was necessary, nevertheless, for Bianca to make the imaginative return trip to Venice, for only in this way could she begin to reconcile her life in Canada with her dream of Venice. Bianca's approach is a creative one, as she explains to Marco in the final pages:

> Why have I spent my winter telling your story? I needed to exorcise my dream of Venice. I needed to rid myself of the ache of longing that I have carried for so long. And you — you are the grain of sand that began the pearl that is my dream.

History and literature share a common ground in the realm of the imagination. While nostaglia may be a factor among many immigrants who make the return journey to the old country, in Italian-Canadian writing this desire goes beyond an old memory of ethnic origins. The recurrence of this pattern in prose and poetry suggests that it is an obsession in the Italian-Canadian imagination. In Ardizzi's *Made in Italy* the dark journey becomes the escape of death. Both education and pilgrimage are the goals of the return visit in Paci's *Black Madonna*. To this spiritual dimension *The Lion's Mouth* adds that of the artistic act of creation itself. The return journey, in literature and in fact, has permitted Italian-Canadians to deal with the various aspects and conflicts of the Canadian duality. They can accept Canada without rejecting Italy; they can value their Canadian experience without forgetting their Italian roots. A sense of a real past has aided these people to approach their personal, family, and social problems with greater openness.

In 1982 the Italian-Québécois playwright, Marco Micone, published the powerful drama, *Gens du Silence*, which deals with the condition of Italian immigrants in Quebec. One of the central problems in this play is the language of expression and all that it represents. These Italian-Canadians must choose between the use of French, English, or Italian. But they have a fourth choice, the language of silence. Micone calls the Italians, "Les gens du silence . . . dont la seule culture c'est celle du silence."[8]

In the past this has been true of Italians not only in Quebec but also in other parts of Canada. But the generation of the silent ones, the Noras and Assuntas, who expressed their alienation through non-expression, has passed. The younger generation is now able to articulate the immigrant experience, and writers, academics, and historians are beginning to record this new phase in Italian-Canadian history. This is a sign that an Italian-Canadian identity is a real state of being. The Canadian novelist Robert Kroetsch explains the importance of writing about one's background in this way: "In a sense, we haven't got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real."[9] This has been the function of Italian-Canadian writers — to make us real.

NOTES

1 "An immigrant daughter and a female writer: Mary di Michele interviewed," *Vice Versa: Magazine Transculturel*, 1, nos. 5-6 (juin-juillet, 1984), p. 21.

2 C. D. Minni, "Roots," in *The Search for Identity*, ed. J. Foley (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 106-7.

3 C. D. Minni, "El Dorado," *Queen's Quarterly*, 89 (Winter 1982), p. 829.

[4] Mary di Michele, *Bread and Chocolate* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1980), p. 36.

[5] Alexandre L. Amprimoz, "You are a bastard Mr. Death," *Quarry*, 32, no. 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 50-52.

[6] See Alexandre L. Amprimoz and Sante Viselli, "Death Between Two Cultures: Italian-Canadian Poetry," in *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (Montreal: Guernica, 1985).

[7] Maria Ardizzi, *Made in Italy* (Toronto: Toma, 1982), p. 125. The English translation is mine. The other novels quoted in the article are F. G. Paci, *Black Madonna* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1982) and Caterina Edwards, *The Lion's Mouth* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1982).

[8] Marco Micone, *Gens du silence* (Montreal: Québec/Amérique, 1982), pp. 96-98. Translated as *Voiceless People* (Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1984).

[9] Robert Kroetsch, "A Conversation with Margaret Laurence," in *Creation*, ed. Robert Kroetsch (Toronto: New Press, 1970), p. 63.

JOSEPH PIVATO

CANADIANS AND THE CATACOMBS

DURING THEIR VISITS TO ROME, Canadian Victorians often made a special point of exploring the subterranean labyrinths of the catacombs. Scarcely known during the Middle Ages, these early Christian burial places were only actively investigated from the sixteenth century onwards when, under the impact of the Reformation, interest in Christian antiquity revived. Reformers and counter-reformers alike used the inscriptions, frescoes, and graffiti to support their position, either to prove that a significant break had occurred from the teachings of the early Church, or to suggest that — on the contrary — Christian dogma had developed in an uninterrupted continuum. A theory of *disciplina arcani*, or "hidden teachings," developed to explain the absence, in the inscriptions and illustrations, of elements needed to formulate a coherent doctrine. Nineteenth-century theologians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, often exploited the "message" of the catacombs for similarly contradictory purposes, because they felt that their faith had entered an era of crisis comparable to that of the Reformation.

English- and French-Canadians not only echoed the religious concerns of their mother-countries, but discussed them with the passion of messianists. Canadian responses to the early church reflect the battles between ultramontanists and Protestants at home; moreover, they are assertions that the purity of early Christianity had been revived in the colonies. In keeping with the spirit of the nineteenth century, explorations of the catacombs were now conducted systematically, scientifically. Under the patronage of Pius IX, the Jesuit Guiseppe Marchi and Giovanni Battista de Rossi studied old church calendars and documents concerning the catacombs, locating directions and maps, whose frequently astounding accuracy originated because most of the graves and inscriptions had at that time been left undisturbed. The marble slabs marking many of the tombs were scanned for information on persons and places, and the martyrs' legends reread for any historical information they might contain. The material thus located was sufficient to reconstruct, with some certainty, the original state of the catacombs, and to provide nineteenth-century travellers with the kind of useful antiquarian knowledge a typical Victorian tourist craved. Armed with Anna Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1852-61) he would indulge himself in the gothic gloom, Christian memories, and historical associations of the catacombs. Both sensational and instructive they were a Victorian tourist's heaven.[1]

They were also heaven for a novelist who in keeping with the intellectual climate of the time was determined to both delight and instruct his audience. James De Mille, following a grand tour of Europe in 1850 and 1851 with his brother Elisha Budd de Mill (*sic*), used Italian settings in many of his books, focusing on the catacombs and early Christianity in *The Martyr of the Catacombs: A Tale of Ancient Rome* (187-?) and *Helena's Household: A Tale of Rome in the First Century* (1880), the American publisher of *The Martyr* having taken care to include diagrams, illustrations, and samples of the crude lettering of some of the inscriptions. De Mille celebrates the catacombs as an allegory of triumphant Christianity, their darkness proof that spiritual radiance does not necessarily shine in the light of day. The primitive pictures seem an expression of a childlike faith, purer than the realistic adornments on the walls of a Roman villa, adornments that were felt to be the elegant decorations of an inner void. To de Mille, the misspellings in the inscriptions indicated that Christianity was a democratic movement, open "to the poor and lowly."[2] Although he was an Anglican when he completed *Helena's Household*, his Baptist background colours his interpretation of the early church: "One would never suspect from reading De Mille that the early Church was, in fact, Eucharist-oriented. For him, it is a scripture-oriented community."[3]

While, in describing the catacombs, De Mille's thrust is generally against the ceremonial excesses of the High Church and the materialism of nineteenth-century life, William Withrow, editor of the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, attacked *his* particular foe more aggressively. In *The Catacombs of Rome, and Their Testimony Relative to Primitive Christianity* (1877), in essays on "Early Christian Art and Symbolism" and "Christian Life and Character as Read in the Catacombs" in the *Canadian Monthly and National Review*, and in his highly successful novel *Valeria, the Martyr of the Catacombs; a Tale of Early Christian Life in Rome* (1882),[4] Withrow — besides providing his readers with a host of facts about art history — refers to the catacombs as visible proof that the Roman Catholic church had sinned against its humble origins and sealed its corruption with the dogma of papal infallibility: "Could the simple bishops of the primitive ages behold the more than regal state and oriental pomp in which, surrounded by armed halberdiers, amid the blare of martial music and thunder of the guns of St. Angelo, their successor of today rides in his golden chariot from his stately palace to the majestic fame of St. Peter — the grandest temple in the world — they would find it difficult to perceive therein any resemblance to their own humble and often persecuted estate, or to the pure and spiritual religion of the meek and lowly Nazarene."[5] Withrow's books, used as guide-books by fellow Methodists like Hugh Johnston and William Morley Punshon,[6] but — considering their large publication figures — possibly also by Canadian, American, and British tourists at large, consolidated anti-papal sentiment during an era when the Roman Catholic church was gaining ground in the ultramontanist and Oxford movements. One is, then, somewhat surprised to learn that Withrow not only compiled the materials for *The Catacombs of Rome* with the generous help of "the Archbishop of the Catholic Church of Toronto, the Very Rev. Dr. Lynch," but also received "a grateful letter from a priest of the Roman Catholic Church saying that he had used *The Catacombs of Rome* as his printed guide in his visit to that impressive refuge and burial place of the early Christians."[7]

Canadian Protestants shuddered — or, in any case, were told to shudder — at the sensuous beauty of Rome's baroque churches, but their indignation was boundless when exposed to the realism of Pompeii's frescoes. The Reverend Moses Harvey, writing in *The Maritime Monthly* in 1874, noted with some satisfaction that "the [pagan] deities are mere fossils now embedded in buried creeds."[8] Harvey, much concerned with the nature of progress in an age confronted with the excavated remains of fallen great nations, assured himself and his reader that such decline meant the rise of healthier nations, and that Anglo-Saxon Protestantism was destined to be the fittest survivor. The clumsy etchings of the catacombs were the first signs — or so he thought — of a manly religion about to dethrone effeminate heathenism. Displays of Pompeiian courts at the 1851 Great Exhibition and its successor, the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, while enchanting in their beauty, seemed monuments of decadence among the accumulated evidence of Christian industry. Ironically, the martyrs of the catacombs were not exempt from ambiguously sensuous treatment. A Canadian visitor to the 1867 Exposition universelle in Paris might have admired Alexandre-Jean-Joseph Falguière's languorous *Tarcisius, Christian Martyr*, inspired by the chapter "The Viaticum" in Cardinal Wiseman's 1854 novel *Fabiola, or, The Church of the Catacombs*.

Fabiola also influenced Judge Adolphe-Basile Routhier's two novels about early Christianity, *Le Centurion* (1908) and *Paulina: roman des temps apostoliques* (1918), the first of which was translated into Italian, Hungarian, and Spanish. Although neither speaks of the catacombs specifically, their intention and approach illustrate well the attraction these caves held for French-Canadians. Always suspicious of the novel, Routhier — a prolific author of *récits de voyage*, literary polemics, political tracts, and speeches — blames even Cardinal Wiseman for relying too strongly on plot and suspense, and instead presents aggressively didactic and anti-realist narratives apparently meant, in their starkness, to duplicate the virtues of the early church. For its history and reliques — as the Abbé Bruchési pointed out in the *Revu canadienne* in 1882 — seemed a precious book for French-Canadians in their efforts to establish a Catholic empire on the shores of the St. Lawrence, ready to serve as a bulwark against Protestantism and liberalism in North America, even determined to act as defenders of Roman Catholicism in Europe. Not accidentally did Québec parishes adopt the names of saints of the catacombs: ten called themselves Ste. Cécile, four Ste. Agnès, and four Ste. Philomène to remind themselves that they were "chrétiens assiégés dans un monde hostile"[9] and that their situation echoed that of the early Christians engulfed by pagan Rome. Louis Veuillot (Parisian ultramontanist journalist and editor of *L'Univers*), a man admired, almost sanctified by Québec conservatives, divided the world into light and dark forces in his books *Le Parfum de Rome* (1861) and *Les Odeurs de Paris* (1866). Similarly, Henri Cimon, author of a widely distributed travel-book entitled *Aux vieux pays* (1907),[10] speaks of two ancient Romes, "la Rome paienne avec ses monuments vides et froids comme la pierre du tombeau, la Rome chrétienne avec ses reliques des saints et la parfum des vertus qui s'en exhale."[11] Jules-Paul Tardivel, in his *Notes de voyage* (1890), pursues Veuillot's olfactory metaphor to absurdity when he claims that the stench of revolution is forever drowned in "la bonne odeur que le sang des martyrs et les vertus des saints y ont déposé."[12] In Tardivel, my argument comes full circle;

responding to such Protestants as Withrow who, in the catacombs, found proof of the Church's deviance from its origins, he thunders, "Je ne sais pas comment un protestant de bonne foi peut visiter les catacombes sans se convertir aussitôt; car il a sous les yeux la preuve matérielle que l'Eglise n'a pas changé."[13]

Not all Canadian travellers were, however, as earnest as these. Sara Jeannette Duncan, in *A Voyage of Consolation* (1898), gently mocks the touristic vogue of the catacombs by presenting an irreverent description of some of the frescoes through the eyes of her heroine, Mamie Wick: "I pointed him [Jonah] out on the wall, in two shades of brown, a good deal faded, being precipitated into the jaws of a green whale with paws and horns and a smile, also a curled body and a three-forked tail. The wicked deed had two accomplices only, who had apparently stopped rowing to do it. Underneath was a companion sketch of the restitution of Jonah, in perfect order, by the whale, which had, nevertheless, grown considerably stouter in the interval, while an amiable stranger reclined in an arbor, with his hand under his head, and looked on."[14] Duncan's comic view points toward a parodic strain in Canadian literature often submerged in the high moral tone of her contemporaries; she questions Victorian self-assurance in the achievements of the nineteenth-century through laughter: " 'Can you tell them apart? . . . the Christians and the Pagans?' " asks one inquisitive visitor of the guide. " 'Yes,' replied that holy man, 'by the measurements of the jaw-bone. The Christians, you see, were always lecturing the other fellows, so their jaw-bones grew to an awful size. Some of 'em are simply parliamentary'."[15]

NOTES

1 Cf. Ludwig Hertling and Engelbert Kirschbaum, *The Roman Catacombs and their Martyrs* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960).

2 James De Mille, *The Martyr of the Catacombs: A Tale of Ancient Rome* (New York: Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati: Cranston & Curts, 187-?), p. 77.

3 Douglas E. MacLeod, "A Critical Biography of James de Mille," M.A. Thesis (Dalhousie, 1968), p. 49.

4 Cf. the notice in the *Canadian Magazine*, 8 (1896/97), p. 193: "The success of W. H. Withrow's *Valeria, the Martyr of the Catacombs; a Tale of Early Christian Life in Rome*, is indicated by the fact that a fifth Canadian edition of three thousand copies has just been printed. It has also been republished in London and New York."

5 W. H. Withrow, *The Catacombs of Rome, and Their Testimony Relative to Primitive Christianity* (New York: Nelson and Philips, 1877), p. 552.

6 Cf. Hugh Johnston, *Toward the Sunrise: Being Sketches of Travel in Europe and the East, To Which is Added a Memorial Sketch of the Reverend William Morley Punshon* (Toronto: Briggs, 1881).

7 Lorne Pierce, ed., *The Chronicle of a Century (1829-1929): The Record of One Hundred Years of Progress in the Publishing Concerns of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational Churches in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, n.d.), p. 107.

8 Moses Harvey, "Pompeii," *Maritime Monthly*, 3 (1874), p. 46.

9 Pierre Savard, "Les Noms de paroisse au Québec pendant trois siècles," in P. S., *Aspects du catholicisme canadien-français au dix-neuvième siècle* (Montréal: Fides, 1980), p. 165.

10 Cf. Pierre Savard, "Voyageurs canadiens-français dans l'Allemagne de Bismarck et de Guillaume II," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien* 3, no. 1 (1983), pp. 54-64.

11 Henri Cimon, *Aux vieux pays: impressions et souvenirs*, nouvelle édition (Chicoutimi: Delisle, 1907), p. 152.

12 Jules-Paul Tardivel, *Notes de voyage* (Montréal: Sénécal, 1890), p. 334.

13 Ibid., p. 349.

14 Sara Jeannette Duncan, *A Voyage of Consolation: Being in the Nature of a Sequel*

to Experiences of An American Girl in London (New York: Appleton, 1898), p. 177.

[15] Ibid., p. 170.

EVA-MARIE KROLLER

A LOST CANADIAN WORK

JAMES BENSON NABLO's *The Long November* (1946) has dropped out of sight and ought not to have done so. It is an important post-Second World War novel, both as a war book and as a retrospective novel of the Canadian Depression. From the point of view of the protagonist, fighting with the Canadian army in the Italian campaign, it portrays Joe Mack's young manhood through the 1930's. Nablo treats the psychology of survivalism during the entire Depression in Canada (although his hero goes back and forth across the border, between Toronto and Detroit and Chicago, frequently), culminating in a particular war experience. The novel conforms to the rogue tradition, following its hero through his social as well as geographical ups and downs. After a career as a bootlegger, and utter destitution (down and out in nightmare North American cities), the protagonist discovers a gold mine. He becomes president of the gold mine company, but is caught in a highly ambiguous operation, smacking of embezzlement, and is given the alternative of going to jail or, since the war has begun, enlisting in the Canadian army. In this way Nablo's cynical, unpatriotic antihero gets into the war.

There is some sentimental self-pity in the novel — young love between the protagonist and his sweetheart is constantly thwarted — but, such notations aside, what is particularly interesting in lengthening perspective is Nablo's presentation of the Depression as only a more subtle kind of warfare than World War II. Or, to put it another way, war is merely the more explicit or explosive form that the fight for life takes.

In the depths of the Depression Joe Mack leads an ignominious vagrant existence, coming at length to Chicago, where Nablo provides us with a description of what it was like to be sleeping in flop houses or with whores to keep warm and getting one's mess of crawling food from a soup line. A little later there is a similar soup line in Toronto — only six months before the war is declared. Nablo wants to remind us about how long the Depression lasted, especially in Canada, and how keenly it continued to be felt. There is one mitigation in his portrayal, one particular refuge. "I spotted you for a new hand right off," somebody says to Joe Mack.

> "How?"
>
> "By your clothes; they're yours, ain't they?"
>
> "What's left of them — I'm out of socks right now."
>
> "Why don't cha make the Sally for some?"
>
> "What's the 'Sally'? . . . "
>
> "The home-away-from-home . . . the Salvation Army."
>
> Those magic words! Just knowing the name meant I lived and meant I pulled out of the hole. Don't ever let anyone tell you they aren't a divinely guided organization. They are where God works in this world, if he works here at all. . . . Don't walk by the tambourine, brother; kick through with some dough because you may eat from it before you're done.[1]

The Salvation Army was not the butt of any kind of jocularity whatsoever. In Nablo's novel, as fondly as in countless American works of the period, the Salvation Army was important to the Depression theme of human fellowship, of camaraderie in the bleakest of times:

> Yes, Joe, you've a lot to thank those people for. It's a debt, but not one you can pay back. Could you pay back Jake Levin-

> sky for taking you from the Sally Ann? All Jake would say is "Nuts, Joe, give it to some guy that's down. . . . Pass it along."

But, on the other side of the human experience, Nablo portrays people as somewhat contemptible, even or especially in times of crisis, and the struggle within his hero is how to come to terms — how to feel fellowship — with them. There is the possibility that one can't. Nablo provides book-long dark insights into human nature; he reflects a Puritanic sense of human depravity that one finds in a host of Canadian authors more persistently and insistently than in American:

> Why bring any more kids into the world? It's all still here. Every last thing that makes poverty and disease and war. Nothing has changed, and maybe nothing ever will. These things come from hate, and man still carries the hate in his heart, and just so long as he does there'll be war, and disease, and poverty. There'll be whores, too. There'll be a pay off with someone to pay, and someone to collect.

This view is in fact derived from and also certified by the gangster experience in the hero's past. Still, he struggles between a heart-felt sense of camaraderie and contempt. At one point the hero approaches an ideal resolution of his conflict. As company president, he wants to sell the stock in his mine company to ordinary people. He wants workers to become owners. But they won't do it. Either they are afraid to do it or they suspect him. In particular, certain unions he approaches won't come along with him. So he is balked. He turns rancorous: "their little minds . . . they brought their hates, the only luxuries small minds can afford, and they never question where these came from or how old they are."

Little people can be romanticized of course: recall Chaplin's tramp, or the "little man" in *The Gold Rush*. Nablo, in romantic reaction (even to Chaplin), spends some time in de-sentimentalizing this little man and adds a certain fascistic edge to the contempt that replaces idolization or confidence. That brings us back to the bootlegger interlude, where the hero had felt a sort of pride and superiority in being a gangster and not somebody taking relief. Thus the instinct of fascism, at a deep psychic level, appears as frustrated socialism, in the sense of a turned-off faith in the people. Fascists evolve from those socialists who discover that they are really superior to the people that they wanted to be a part of, people who are not worthy of them; their alternative role then is a kind of superior or superman role that they can assume either as gangsters or political leaders (or both). Deep in Nablo's protagonist you can feel this psycho-political struggle keenly, between grateful fellowship or identity with the little man and profound contempt for him.

All these impulses and forces come to dramatic focus in the present wartime situation, or framework, of the novel. Joe Mack finds himself in a town in Italy toward the end of the war, where he is wounded but knows, sitting in a rubbled room, that a German gun emplacement is still operating at the end of the street and is going to blow apart the first Canadian tank that comes around that corner. The tank men, of course, don't know it. But Joe knows it. He is, in fact, sitting there wounded, thinking about all his life in the 1930's, and mulling over those things he holds in contempt. As a fully grown cynical realist, he is not interested in being a patriotic hero. That is the least and last thing he would be, since he has learned mainly and even exclusively to look out for himself: "So I'm yellow . . . okay, call it anything you want. I've seen this sweet democracy functioning. I've seen those bread lines we're fighting to preserve." And at another point he is thrown back on his basic self-centred-

ness, no matter what: "Do you want Italy, Adolf? Or Europe, Adolf? Or the whole god-damned world, Adolf? Take it and welcome. I, Joe Mack, . . . give it to you . . . "

The crisis, then, treats the struggle between an exquisite sense of self and a larger communal or social responsibility. As it is resolved, Joe Mack (or Mac Joe, son of (G.I.) Joe?) goes after the gun emplacement, risking his life again. He does so successfully — not simply because he is a hero, after all, but because the whole positive side of his soul is victor over his negative and contemptuous impulses.

What he comes to conclude is that the whole war in Italy is symbolic or allegorical. Remember that that campaign did not turn out the way the Allied armies expected it to after North Africa and Sicily, which were relatively easy or at least swift battles. The Germans maintained a continuous and strong resistance up the Appenine Mountains, and what the Allies hoped would be rapid triumph turned out to be a slow and extremely difficult process. But, of course, Allied armies ultimately won. The point dawns on the no-longer-young or callow hero that a determined society can indeed win — but not quickly. The forces of justice may really triumph, only not as youth wants the victory. That is the thing about young people, the main thing: impatience. Often because of impatience, they simply give up their ideals. Don't do that, Nablo says. Don't give up ideals, but know their realization is going to be slow. So, as the slow victory eventuates in Italy, Nablo's hero comes to the conclusion that social justice (in Canada, the United States or anywhere in the world) will also come to pass. Social and economic justice will triumph over the forces of oppression and long standing ideals over inner contempt, precisely as the Allies win over the fascist armies. We must keep faith with one another in the historical and psychological fight — thus the Salvation "Army" is well integrated in Nablo's novel — and not allow the forces of either demoralization or alienating contempt to rule our maturing souls.

There is, then, a skilful convergence of theme and structure in *The Long November*. It manages to become a fully felt work, even passionate at times. It is cannily organized and furnishes a moving and honest perspective of both the Depression and its culmination in war. It is also a quite individualized novel — especially when it probes the interconnections of personal and political consciousness. For these reasons the book is significant and, I think, durable if we give it the second chance it deserves, on both sides of the border.

NOTE

[1] James Benson Nablo, *The Long November* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1946), p. 56. Subsequent references are to this edition.

JESSE BIER

GILBERT LA ROCQUE

GILBERT LA ROCQUE died in Montréal on November 26, 1984, one day after he had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage at his native city's Salon du Livre. He was forty-one years old, the editor and publishing director of Québec/Amérique, and the author of six novels and one play. His last novel, *Le passager*, had just been published.

As a younger man La Rocque held a number of jobs, including those of a sheet-metal worker, a banker, and a clerk in the city hall of Montreal North. In the 1970's, however, when he was writing and publishing his first novels, he became progressively more involved in

the Québec publishing industry, until in 1978 he joined the newly-established Québec/Amérique. There, in what he called his role as "confessor" and "stepfather," he read manuscripts and advised their authors on how they could be improved. He also helped develop an impressive publication list for Québec/Amérique that included works by and about Québec authors. Fiction by Gérard Bessette, La Rocque's friend and mentor, looms most prominently on this list, but Bessette's novels and short stories stand beside such translations as Jack Kerouac's *Tristessa* and Alice Munro's *La Danse des ombres* and *Pour qui te prends-tu?*. Under La Rocque's influence, then, Québec/Amérique was striving to establish, in some measure at least, a Canadian/continental context for contemporary Québec literature.

La Rocque's own first novel, *Le nombril*, was published in 1970. It was followed by the novels *Corridors* (1971), *Après la boue* (1972), *and Serge d'entre les morts* (1976), and a play, *Le refuge* (1979), that combines characters, actions, themes, and images from these novels. In 1980 *Les masques*, another novel, was published, and in 1984 *Le passager. Serge d'entre les morts* achieved some fame because it was the novel studied by Omer Marin's students in Gérard Bessette's *Le semestre* (1976); in 1982 *Les masques* won both the prize in literature given by the *Journal de Montréal* and the Prix Canada-Suisse; and *Le passager* gained quick notoriety as a possible roman à clé, because its plot involves a writer/editor's confrontation with a journalist at a Montréal cocktail party celebrating a literary prize.

As in *Le passager*, there is an apparently autobiographical element in much of La Rocque's work. Jérome, the chief character of *Le nombril*, is a clerk; Clément, the chief character of *Corridors*, a banker. The two later novels each have as their chief character a novelist. Although the information is presented unobtrusively, in all the novels the reader also learns a good deal about the surface realities of Montreal life, especially about the houses and apartments and the offices and factories of the mechanics and secretaries, *chômeurs*, clerks and even minor revolutionaries created by La Rocque's fertile imagination.

The real interests of La Rocque's fiction, however — and the reasons, one suspects, why writers like Bessette, Munro, and William Faulkner were among his favourites — lie in its psychology and style. Cruelty, death, disease, and violence in the form of abortion, alcoholism, beating, cancer, car accidents, drowning — particularly drowning — and shooting are constant themes in La Rocque's novels, as are sex and madness. Several of his main characters, including Bernard Pion, the writer in *Le passager*, end up in a mental hospital. All are haunted by memories of their family and their childhood that produce nightmares in which such incarnations as rats and women as hags appear. Images of cages, coffins, corridors, sickbeds, hospital rooms, and houses as tombs abound, as do the colours of red and black. These themes, motifs, and images reflect the sufferings of people who feel trapped by a destiny imposed on them by a heredity and environment that they are unable to forget but cannot accept. Yet these "pions" (pawns) in the stream of life emerge before the reader in evocations that are both terrible and humorous, sordidly real and magically contrived.

La Rocque's works are certainly not easy, and his message about the masks by which we live is not particularly pleasant. He has not been and probably will never be a popular writer either in Québec or elsewhere. But the energy and fascination of his characters and the style in which they are presented will challenge critics

of contemporary literature to interpret, and to reflect very seriously upon, the implications of these urban gothics.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

ON THE VERGE

*** RONALD WARDHAUGH, *The Canadian Experience*. New Star Books, $17.95; pa. $9.95. This book — an analysis of the politics of language and ethnicity, a politics of usage and of recognition — begins with the presumption that a loosely comprehended English nationalism and a highly articulate French nationalism in Canada share a "stiff-necked conservatism" which enables the two groups to complain about each other's unbendingness more willingly than to recognize their own. Against this background, Wardhaugh writes a statistical and polemical account of multilingual presence and multicultural character in the country, tracing through census figures the number of speakers who actively retain their mother-tongue, and acknowledging the close survival power of particular groups: the Italian and Jewish communities in Montreal, for example. He drafts several useful phrases ("Anglo-conformism," "residual discrimination"), and he brings his most passionate words to bear on the plight of native language speakers. Their experience shows "how disorder is Canada's linguistic and ethnic house, how unwilling Canadians are in general to tidy up the mess, indeed, how that very mess is really what identifies us to others as Canadians." A rigid tidiness would introduce still other problems, of course. Wardhaugh's ultimate faith in a "consensual style" declares his dream of nation-building (as opposed to simple survival); while to other ears this sounds altogether numbingly like nation-building by committee, it nonetheless constitutes a first step in addressing a clear disparity.

W.N.

** Islands Protection Society, comp., *Islands at the Edge: Preserving the Queen Charlotte Islands Wilderness*. Douglas and McIntyre/Univ. of Washington, $29.95. The Queen Charlotte Islands are a unique ecological preserve untouched by the last ice age. Their story, according to this book, links a prolific nature to the culture of the Haida, "a combination of tension, expectancy and compression." These seven essays on the Charlottes' complex ecosystem are compelling when they stay with this story: the decades of compression which can create eagles' nests weighing as much as a thousand kilograms; the dynamic tension of a single tree's drawing from the ground up to a hundred gallons of water in a day, then returning the water and life-sustaining oxygen to the air; the expectancy of poetry in the names of the plants on the alpine heath: yellow heather, black crowberry, partridge foot, and dwarf blueberries. Against the richness it celebrates, the book's own frequent hyperbole often seems tedious. It is difficult to argue with the *concern* of these writers, but the relentless emphasis on the enormity of impending eclogical disaster does diminish their convincingness. Elsewhere in the book, especially in Bill Reid's eloquent introduction, we glimpse how the power of fiction itself has shaped our Western exploration of the garden, and what a gap yawns between the conception of whale in *Moby Dick* and that in the Haida story. When this book recognizes the power of story-telling, it moves the reader to commitment; when it ignores the rhetoric of fiction, it drifts from its most profound objective.

L.R.

** *Contemporary Canadian Photography*, Hurtig, n.p.; foreword by Hugh MacLennan, intro. by Martha Langford. A selection of 45 years' worth of still shots from the National Film Board's Photographic Division, this book provides a history of the division (Langford), a documentary glimpse of a once stable way of life (MacLennan), and a simple record of a variety of photographic techniques. There's a Patterson landscape, a Karsh portrait, a Tata portrait, a set of Cohen freeze-frames. There's a witty set-up of a hockey player in Hatshepsut's Temple, and a neatly contrived lesson in "objects" — flame, woman, flower — labelled "ABLAZE, ABJECT, ABLOOM." At the heart of the book are some wonderful narrative moments of ordinary life, caught by the lens of perception: a boy running his finger along a museum glass, oblivious to the stuffed lions inside the case; eight deaf children with their ears to a piano top, listening for vibration; an old adolescent with a look on his face, a cross around his neck, and a Playboy bunny tattooed to his chest. But the quality is uneven: too often one turns the page too readily.

W.N.

** LEONARD LUTWACK, *The Role of Place in Literature*. Syracuse Univ. Press, $24.95. "No class of imagery is so ubiquitous and versatile as place imagery." In demonstrating this claim Lutwack overcrowds the rooms of his book, but sketches a helpful topography of a subject which has had special prominence in Canadian criticism. Lutwack establishes early the position that "fidelity to geographical realism" cannot possibly stand as a literary principle, yet when he goes on to protest readers' obsessions with mimetic aspects of place he seems distinctly antique: post-structuralist theories of language, and reader-response theory, would surely have refined and illuminated this subject, particularly since the title of the chapter in question is "A *Rhetoric* of Place." In examining place in American literature (Canadian literature is represented only by a brief reference to Atwood's *Surfacing*, although Lowry's Mexico merits a paragraph), Lutwack catalogues the symbolic possibilities of garden, wilderness, and eldorado. Often giving only a sentence or two to each work discussed, the author is clearly aiming at a mythic study, explaining how these ideas fit "in the imaginative life of Americans." The preference for the distant prospect, a definition of place so broad (even extending to placelessness) it implies the identity of Dos Passos, Milton, and Shaw, and a tendency to mutually exclusive dichotomies, often make the book more repetitive than illuminating. What the book does very well, however, is the survey, drawing on the broad range of thinkers and writers (from different eras), of how attitudes to place are affected by, or reveal general intellectual movements. In providing a sense of the fabric of cultural notions about space, region, landscape, or geographical determinism, this book provides useful background to students of Canadian culture.

L.R.

*** PATRICK BRODE, *Sir John Beverley Robinson: Bone and Sinew of the Compact*. Osgoode Society/Univ. of Toronto Press, $14.95. Biography, which showed a distinctly deflationary tendency after Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, is beginning, now there are not many heroes left in need of diminishing, to undertake the rehabilitation of some of our traditional villains. One of the prime villains of Canadian liberal historiography was John Beverley Robinson, the leading native-born Tory in Upper Canada, and a man hated by the reformers of his time as first a prosecutor and then a judge of rebels inspired by democratic principles whom he guided unerringly to the gallows. He was a man of rigid principles and uncannily perfect looks: as one of his most bitter political enemies admitted: "His features were classically and singularly beautiful, his countenance was luminous with intelligence and animation." That luminous countenance, sensitively rendered by an early Victorian lithographer, looks at one with a troubled pride from the frontispiece of Patrick Brode's new biography. Brode denies any inflationary or deflationary intent, and claims to treat Robinson "simply as a child of his time," shaped by his Loyalist inheritance, devoted to English institutions, and distrustful of American democratic tendencies. His aristocratic — or at least oligarchical — ambitions were unrealizable in a North American setting, and it was through his endeavours to sustain them against the flow of change that he became typed as a villain in the accepted story of Canada's progression from colonialism to independence. Brode has, I think, been helped by writing as a lawyer; he sees the limitations within which the legalistically minded Robinson felt he was obliged to work. But he does not lose the man in the politician or the jurist, and Robinson emerges as a vain, often troubled individual, not basically dishonest, less attractive perhaps in personality than in person, but shaped and hardened by the public role in which — not without his consent — history cast him.

G.W.

*** PIERRE GUILLAUME, JEAN-MICHEL LACROIX, and PIERRE SPRIET, eds., *Canada et Canadiens*. Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 70 f. This book is one of the tangible signs of French scholarly and pedagogical attention to Canada. Essentially an introductory textbook, it is designed not as a popularization of Canada but as an embodiment of current French perceptions of Canadian social realities. There are chapters on history and the difficulties of identity, couched in terms of the "ambiguity of origins"; on geography, both physical and human; on the nation's individual economic structure; on the "flexible federation" that constitutes its political structure; and on ethnic diversity, literature (in both official languages), theatre, and the media. The authors' literary categories offer (despite a number of misprints in the literary chapters) some fresh contexts for contemporary writers; the statistics on urbanization and media ownership offer a solemn, objective counterfoil to the myths of winter, savagery,

and dream. The political reality (André Siegfried is alluded to throughout) remains that of stubborn independence — "son existence est un paradoxe politique" — which makes the culture, say the editors, fascinating. The book may well become a standard European textbook. But one of the political ironies it cannot have foreseen is that it should appear — and demonstrate the active strength of Canadian Studies in Bordeaux — at precisely the time Canada was shutting down its Bordeaux Consulate and so closing one of its most culturally effective entryways into European academe.

W.N.

*** EDWARD CAVELL, *Sometimes a Great Nation: a Photo Album of Canada 1850-1925*. Altitude, $49.95. This is a wonderful collection of 191 photographs from archives all across the country. Many are Notman studio photographs; others are formal portraits of Indians and dancing girls, politicians and financiers; still others — the most interesting — are candid glimpses of people at work and play (snow features repeatedly in these pictures), or slightly less candid shots of people positioned by their prize possessions (new car, carving, fireman's hat, marrows). There are pictures of the Cariboo Road, Arctic floes, the railway, and the Ku Klux Klan. Of less interest, however, are the captions and the introduction, which tendentiously dismiss contemporary culture, reveal little enjoyment or irony, and rehearse familiar (and by now, outgrown, nineteenth century) claims for national identity.

W.N.

**** DALE C. THOMPSON, *Jean Lesage and the Quiet Revolution*. Macmillan, $34.95. GRAHAM FRASER, *René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power*. Macmillan, $29.95. These two books, appearing in the same year from the same publisher, complement each other in subject matter, though their approaches are strikingly different. Lesage and Lévesque began as associates in the Liberal government of Québec that in 1960 ended the long rule of the Union Nationale and the heritage of Duplessis in Québec. Later they became political enemies when Lévesque moved on to separatism and the Parti Québecois was founded, and in retrospect they seem to represent the polar attitudes among people in their province — the longing to grow independently balanced by the fear of isolation. Dale C. Thompson's *Jean Lesage* has been ten years in the making and is an important book without being a very interesting one to anybody but political scientists. As a biography it is impeded by a dense central core taking up almost two thirds of the text and discussing in detail the policies of the Liberal government which occupied only six years of Lesage's life. At the same time, Lesage was hardly good material for a biographer; behind the political persona he seems to have been a dull, ordinary man, and perhaps it is his subject's lack of idiosyncratic humanity that makes Thompson's book seem as heavy as a tombstone in the reading. There is nothing dull about René Lévesque. He is a gift to biographers as well as journalists, and Graham Fraser fits into both categories. He has written an odd mixture of a book, much of it in the tiny paragraphs favoured by newspaper editors and in the breathless tone that goes with them, but a great deal of *René Lévesque* is thoughtful and deliberate. But the mélange fits Lévesque, whose histrionics are largely those of the crack journalist rather than of the politician, and whose political persona and the public fate that accompanies it are inextricably mingled with the idionsyncratic nature that makes him one of the few Canadian politicians who are likeable as persons and into whose struggles one enters with sympathy if not with agreement. The sympathy as well as the criticism are there in Fraser's account, and though he does not evade the political history, and tells us as much as we need to know about the Parti Québecois in power, he never loses sight of the strange and fascinating man at the centre of the web.

G.W.

NOTES

We continue to receive extremely attractive books for the young and the very young. Particularly delightful is a simply set collection of French songs, *Passe-Partout: chansons et comptines* (Gouvernement du Québec, $5.95), published in a colourful and amusingly illustrated spiral-bound format which will sit nicely on the piano. Manitoba's energetic French-language house, Les Editions du Blé, has also published two books for children: Madeline Laroche's historical fantasy *Le château du soleil* ($12.00), and, for younger readers, Louise Filteau's *La quête de Mathusalem* ($10.00), with enchanting, delicate illustrations by Andrée Filteau. By contrast, the illustrations (originally watercolours), in Jan Wallace's *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance* (Groundwood, $10.95) seem banal, and not quite free enough for the story of Chin Chiang's dream of dancing in the dragon's dance. Of Sean O'Huigin's two recent books for children, the sustained grotesqueries of *The Dinner Party* (Black Moss, n.p.) are much less welcoming than *Blink* (Black Moss, n.p.) which uses some elements of concrete poetry to play with stereo-optics (and with the right-brain/left brain split?).

Fitzhenry and Whiteside has produced a "Canadian Families" series which attempts to introduce elementary school students to the differences of living in Montreal, Ottawa, the Cariboo, the Prairie, and Acadia ($3.95 each). This series is too earnestly educational (complete with trivial questions to "think about") to hold a grade-3er's attention more than two minutes. On the other hand, the same publisher's series "The Canadians," for an older audience, is effectively illustrated with photographs, and introduces young readers to the interesting biographies of *J. Armand Bombardier* by Carole Precious, and *John McRae* by John Bassett (both $4.95). No Raymond Souster poem is likely ever to have the reputation of McRae's "In Flanders Fields," but Souster's *Flight of the Roller Coaster: Poems for Young Readers* (Oberon, $9.95) has a generously spacious format which should make room for the young readers' imagination to play with the ordinary imagery in some of the poet's best-known nature studies and street-stories.

L.R.

Particularly notable, among recent collected and selecteds, is *Veiled Countries/Lives* (Véhicule, $9.95), the collected poems of Marie-Claire Blais, published as *Pays voilés/Existences* in 1964. Michael Harris's translations are quite carefully literal, but in Véhicule's bilingual format, with translation and French source text on facing pages, Harris's approach works well simply by making us more alert readers of the original poems. Oberon continues its tribute to Raymond Souster with *Collected Poems 1977-83* ($14.95), incorporating *Hanging In* (1975) and *Going the Distance* (1983) in which Souster's slack talkiness takes a welcome turn into prose poems and extended narratives more appropriate to his style than his attempts at terse aphorisms.

Editions de l'Hexagone has launched a new series of inexpensive pocketbooks, Collection Typo, with a reprint of Gilles Hénault, *Signaux pour les voyants: Poèmes 1941-62* ($5.95), a Governor General's Award winner in 1972. Hénault writes forcefully in both word-playing lyric and prose poem, often moving fluently from one to the other in a few lines: "nuage neige nuit / le mot naître gèle dans la bouche / l'homme gît l'âme à vif sous l'opacité des jours." A similar project is Stoddart/General's Spectrum Poetry Series, which has recently reissued (with a few omissions) Gwendolyn MacEwen's *Magic Animals* ($6.95) the poet's first Selected — originally published in 1974. I re-read MacEwen while teaching Audrey Thomas' *Mrs. Blood*; inevitably, I repeatedly noticed the attention to eating and the consumable body in the poet's work: she continues to "revisit the bright buffet in a kind of dream / and pile her tired plate / with primeval things." If we were to take MacEwen's as representative of women's poetry in the 1960's, and Mary di Michele's anthology *Anything is Possible: A Selection of Eleven Women Poets* (Mosaic, n.p.) as representative of women's poetry in the 1980's — a ridiculous but useful simplification — we would conclude that the poets have left the bright buffet and the dream, for tired plates and elemental things. The prosaic narratives and catalogues of objects have the virtue of making available what we can't find in MacEwen, the muted mirth of Susan Glickman, the haunting groping of Libby Scheier's "A Poem About Rape," the restrained questioning of language in Lorna Crozier's "This is a Love Poem without Restraint."

Mosaic Press has also recently published a selection from R. A. D. Ford, *Needle in the Eye* (n.p.), including twenty new poems and

an Introduction by Ralph Gustafson. Ford's trimeter and tetrameter quatrains recall a now generally unfashionable poetry which antedates MacEwen and the eleven women poets, yet Ford's abstractions and half-rhymes remind of the merits of a modernist tradition that defines "the texture of our conscience." The modernist's more generalized landscape and more symmetrical verbal design is also prominent in Charles Bruce's *The Mulgrave Road* (Pottersfield, n.p.) a selection of his poetry published under the title of the volume which won the Governor General's Award in 1952. Recently a student of mine introduced a discussion of Bruce's poetry by reading excerpts from the poems and from *The Channel Shore* and asking if we could tell the difference. It's in that spirit that I'm pleased to see the poems back in print: the book provides a means to discover the poetry in a neglected novel, the human landscapes in an earnest poetry.

Ken Mitchell Country (Coteau, $4.95) attempts to put the humorous prairie picaro on the drugstore racks with bright cover and large typeface. The collection contains the funniest short stories, the quickly dating *Meadowlark Connection*, and bits of Mitchell's extensive dramatic writing, which deserves to be better known. *Views from the North: An Anthology of Travel Writing* (Descant/Porcupine's Quill, $9.95) is an attempt to debunk the myth of Canadian insularity by showing contemporary writers responding to the world. What we find, as in most travel writing perhaps, is less the world out there, than the world inside the writer: P. K. Page's surprise at her growing disillusionment with the work of Neimeyer, the leading contemporary Brazilian architect; Sam Solecki glimpsing in a jesting remark by his father that he is reading Poland as a novel.

L.R.

Among new reference books, *Canada & the World* (Prentice-Hall, $29.95) is a clear set of diagrammatic maps of Canada's physical, economic, and human geography, cartographically tracing historical changes (in urbanization, for example) and charting statistical comparisons with the rest of the world. *Children's Literature Review*, vol. 8 (Gale, $74.00) includes a 33-page compendium of critical comments on Lucy Maud Montgomery, and *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, vol. 32 (Gale, $85.00) contains a less useful selection of excerpts on Brian Moore, largely to do with *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* and *Cold Heaven*.

From Oxford comes a collection of different kinds of compendia: the hardy and valuable "Companions" series. Newly published are revised editions of the Companions to *Music* (ed. Michael Kennedy, $29.95) and *English Literature* (ed. Margaret Drabble, £15.00). A paperback *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* by John Simpson has also appeared ($5.95), and all belong on the Home Reference Shelf of anyone interested in words. Simpson's dictionary is arranged both by key words (leading out to proverbs) and by proverbs themselves (illustrated by a range of literary texts that use them, from Menander to Joyce). Kennedy's is a guide to musical terms, movements, compositions, composers, and performers with over 11,000 entries in all, many in this new edition concerned with contemporary music: there are entries on Willan, Schafer, Forrester (though the biographical data leaves Schafer at Simon Fraser in 1965 and omits Forrester's important role in the Canada Council). Drabble's book is more problematic in selection, however valuable it continues to be in content: there are plot lines, character and title identifications, mini-definitions of literary terms ("alexandrine," for example), articles on censorship and copyright laws, and biographies of greater and lesser lengths. But who is "English" and what is "English literature"? There are entries on Turgenev and Bret Harte as well as on Eliot and Elizabeth the First. Closer to home, there are entries on Naipaul, Walcott, White, Achebe, and Tagore — but not a sign of Canadians: Hegel but not Hébert, Kate Chopin but not Callaghan, Marco Polo but not Alice Munro, despite her nomination for the Booker Prize. Curious.

More narrative and pictorial in character are the several books which portray histories of fad and fashion: Aileen Riberro's *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe* (Batsford, $29.95), which advises that human wig hair cost £1 a pound at the time, or Diana de Marly's *Fashion for Men* (Batsford, $39.95), which is fascinating in its comments on mediaeval custom (Tuscan law in the fourteenth century forbade striped and checked clothes, it seems, because "the rulers disliked optical fashion"). Unfortunately the latter book degenerates into precious newspaper fashion advice by the time it gets to the twentieth century. Edwinna von Baeyer has written *Rhetoric and Roses*, an introductory guide to the history of Canadian gardening (Fitzhenry

& Whiteside, $29.95); she takes account of company and school gardens, of horticultural writing and plant breeding. The book contains a number of illustrations, but the total effect is flat — the style burdened by its passive voice. The *Canadian Patriotic Post Card Handbook 1904-1914*, by W. L. Gutzman (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $9.95) is primarily a price guide for collectors, but it's also a pictorial delight. The (full-colour) postcards (an art form that began in Canada in 1870) offer an adventure in political taste; the browser might also reflect moodily on what the more banal of current postcards will say about our culture to future generations. *Ice Palaces*, by Fred Anderes and Ann Agranoff (Macmillan, $22.95) is a more spectacular production all round: handsomely designed, complete with photographs, architectural plans, postcards, and much more, the book not only tells a history of ice-palace-making (from Russia in the eighteenth century to Montreal, St. Paul, and Sapporo) but also probes the character of Carnaval in Quebec and its imaginative response to ice and cold as a medium and an environment for art.

Rodney Cotterill's *The Cambridge Guide to the Material World* (n.p), is the latest in a valuable (informed layman's) series on the workings of science and technology; it examines the properties of all kinds of terrestrial substances, from plants and animals, to metal and carbon and glass, to water and polymers and minerals and ceramics. Most instructively, the author reflects on the character of certain structures: the crystal, the cell, the forms of bonding that shape the states of matter. From such distinctions do metaphors grow. Cotterill's stock-in-trade is analogy, yet his book repeatedly draws distinctions between forms of material "order" and forms of material "chaos." It's a distinction that coincidentally bears upon an understanding of ice. Though there is a specificity of formula for water, there is "a residual entropy in ice" — the "choice" that frees the hydrogen bonding from "unique specification" (i.e., allows either the one hydrogen atom or the other to bond with the oxygen atom) is what produces the "open structure" of ice, allowing it to float, while other solids sink. It is not Cotterill's intent to inform the study of literature by such explanations (though he draws repeatedly on literary allusion), but he nonetheless does so. Language is a material structure, too, at least in part — and susceptible to systems of creative (and interpretive) arrangement, fracture, and closure.

From the Department of Energy, Mines & Resources ($60.00) comes another kind of reference book on a topic I personally find fascinating; it is called *Airphoto Interpretation and the Canadian Landscape*, and has been prepared by J. D. Mollard and J. R. Janes. I find the subject intrinsically interesting, but I find the book valuable for three quite specific reasons beyond that. First of all, it provides a wealth of technical data concerning the art and science of photographic interpretation, and on the determination of land use and landform configuration. There are special sections on the "reading" of badlands topography, glaciated regions, meteorite craters, avalanches, deltas, river ice, and permafrost terrain, for example — all keyed to sample photographs and amply illustrated by diagrams and maps as well: this is primarily a book for the specialist. It is also a book about seeing: what do trees look like from above and how are they distinguishable from each other? what data does radar imagery supply? infrared and satellite photography? what can photographs tell us about the history of the land on which we live? In fact, while indirectly probing the raw material of metaphor, the photographs repeatedly supply evidence of natural change. But the *system* of aerial photography supplies evidence for Canadian social change as well. A co-ordinated programme of photographing the country began in the 1920's, developed rapidly during World War II, and acquired technological sophistication in the decades following 1945. What emerged as a military reaction to the fact that national borders were uncharted, unvisited, and unknown, later turned into a technique for assessing, using (and preserving) the land's resources. Like the system of rail that linked political units in the country, and the system of radio that linked regional voices, the system of photography is one of the national arts of communication.

W.N.

LAST PAGE

For centuries, Italy has given the world writers who have reshaped the way we think of the world: Virgil, Horace, Marcus Aurelius, Petrarch, Dante, the masters of *commedia del'arte*, Manzoni. Politics and romance figure largely — the romance of the one and the politics of the other, especially — and twentieth-century Italian writers have taken such

motifs and turned them to their own century's causes. Silone, Moravia, Giuseppe di Lampedusa: they have probed the demands of work, the pressures of deprivation, the implications of the continuing existence of a decayed gentitlity — sought the reasons for violence, the roots of order, the virtues of nobility and enlightenment, and contrived to convey these enquiries by means of narrative and metaphor. And for their part, Croce and Pirandello have sought by word and sign to explain the overlapping reaches of history and the fantastic imagination.

Two recent contemporary writers to extend this tradition are Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco, whose novels and stories have now been substantially translated into English by William Weaver. I say "extend the tradition" because, between them, Eco and Calvino address both the nature of society and the nature of the language by which we express our understanding of society; they are concerned with the simple parallels between social/artistic order/disorder, and also with the literary effects of disjunction (as in the survival of pastoral through a violent age, the presence of gentility in an age of industrial levelling, the persistence of pattern in an age of uncertainty and disintegration). Calvino's world is that of the tale-teller, fascinated at once by the comedy and pathos of tales and by his own skill at narration. Eco's is more diffuse: he writes both as a conscious narrator of a historical mystery (a truth-telling lie, a set of signs) and as a skilled theoretical semiotician, fascinated by the very nature of metaphor and by the various kinds of invitation a skilfully arranged text can offer to an active reader.

Calvino's world engages me least. *Difficult Loves* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, $10.95) is one collection of his stories, *Marcovaldo, or The Seasons in the City* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, $9.95) another. I prefer the latter. An arrangement of some twenty vignettes in a running sequence — "ribbon stories," one nineteenth-century writer called the form — the book takes the title character through a succession of seasons and in the process reiterates his power to fasten on difference all the while his life repeats its cyclical drudgery. Spurred on by his glimpses of nature, the labourer Marcovaldo manages to persist in living, though constantly he is beset by poverty, city grime, and the demands of his family. In sketch upon sketch, Calvino traces the cycles of discovery that serve as markers of time and reward: for Marcovaldo, who observes (absorbs) the passion of the wolf for the hare and the snap of the wolf that bites only the wind; for others in his city, for whom even the mailboxes sometimes "bloom"; and for the reader, who is asked finally to face the fact of tale-telling and draw a connection between the winter snow (on which the hare and wolf run through their paces) and the author's page of words. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, $9.95) takes up at greater length this metafictional pursuit. The novel has its fans, but I am not one of them. Those who like it applaud the game-playing, the spirited way in which the author tells the reader to get into the text itself, participate in devising the tale, and resolve the suspense of how it can be told. I found myself wishing the author would get on with it. The joy of comedy dissipates in such an atmosphere.

But Eco: Eco is something else. It is a long time since I've read a novel as thoroughly absorbing as *The Name of the Rose* (Academic Press, $21.95). It's part mystery, part history, part social parable, and all metafiction: a narrative that is at once conscious of the effect of its own form — "Naturally, a manuscript," intones the epigraph — and able to sweep the reader into the intrigues and aspirations of a world remarkably like our own. Set in a fourteenth-century Italian monastery, the book indirectly invites anyone who hasn't done so to read Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*, that extraordinary discovery of the twentieth century through a record of fourteenth-century movements and events: Ultramontanism, the Plague, Franciscan rivalries with princely politics and an absent Pope, the rise of Jewish capitalism, the seeds of German Protestantism, the spread of English Individualism. All of these run as threads through *The Names of the Rose*. But as a *story*, the book is about a Holmsian English monk (ex-Inquisitor) who is asked to the monastery to solve a series of bizarre murders. There are enough suspects and motives to keep everyone guessing: poisons in the kitchen, greed in the church, infidelities in the cloisters, stories in the chapter house, and a maze in the library. There are characters to dislike, characters to admire, and a host of characters to change our minds about. Everything hinges on knowledge — on the possibility of uncovering the murder and sorting out the "facts," on the authority of books, on the wisdom of sharing arguments that run counter to doctrine (the mysterious missing 2nd volume of Aristotle's *Poetics*, for ex-

ample), on the responsibility of educating people to govern themselves wisely, and on the authority of *this* book, *this* manuscript, *this* story, *this* set of signs that so readily inveigles the reader into patterns of responding. Implicitly, Eco asks us to perceive in these fourteenth-century arguments (about the validity of words and the Word) a guide to the ideas and attitudes we have inherited through history and that so bedevil the current day. But quite explicitly, he asks for something else as well, for a deliberate reflection on the nature of signs (symbols, clues), the meaning we attach to them, and the reasons why we do so. At the heart of such reflection lie the mysteries of belief and prejudice both sacred and secular, mysteries that perpetually confound our actions, mysteries which in Eco's hands become the goad to intellectual enquiry and the very fabric of art.

In *The Role of the Reader* (Indiana University Press, $22.50; paper $10.95), a collection of nine "Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts," Eco takes up this intellectual challenge and tries to chart some of the conclusions he comes to. It is not a book for the lay reader; it's as dense with theoretical jargon and almost arcane formula as his novel is rich with incident and character. But it is equally rewarding to the persistent reader, more for its insights than for its categorical formulae and diagrams (which obfuscate the obvious as often as they clarify the complex). In his discussion of theoretical principle — and of particular texts, from *Superman* and Ian Fleming to Eugène Sue and Alphonse Allais — Eco strikes into science and music for analogues, seeking to explain the changing formal contracts between creator and responder. Einstein meets Bohr: Bach's fugues meet Boulez's serial compositions. Eco's point is to make us think about the differences between "open" texts (those that invite multiple conclusions or present multiple clues to conclusion — *The Name of the Rose* does both) and "closed" ones (those that hide the author's involvement in creating the text, and limit the reader's conclusions). Clearly Eco is on the side of "openness"; in the final sentences he addresses the reader directly — even sternly — advising the need to read more closely than he, and to find more both in literature and in theory. The result, says the book jacket, is "erudite and stimulating." This time the jacket writer is right.

W.N.

ample), on the responsibility of educating people to govern themselves wisely, and on the authority of *this* book, *this* manuscript, *this* story, *this* set of signs that so readily inveigles the reader into patterns of responding. Implicitly, Eco asks us to perceive in these fourteenth-century arguments (about the validity of words and the Word) a guide to the ideas and attitudes we have inherited through history and that so bedevil the current day. But quite explicitly, he asks for something else as well, for a deliberate reflection on the nature of signs (symbols, clues), the meaning we attach to them, and the reasons why we do so. At the heart of such reflection lie the mysteries of belief and prejudice both sacred and secular, mysteries that perpetually confound our actions, mysteries which in Eco's hands become the goad to intellectual enquiry and the very fabric of art.

In *The Role of the Reader* (Indiana University Press, $22.50; paper $10.95), a collection of nine "Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts," Eco takes up this intellectual challenge and tries to chart some of the conclusions he comes to. It is not a book for the lay reader; it's as dense with theoretical jargon and almost arcane formula as his novel is rich with incident and character. But it is equally rewarding to the persistent reader, more for its insights than for its categorical formulae and diagrams (which obfuscate the obvious as often as they clarify the complex). In his discussion of theoretical principle — and of particular texts, from *Superman* and Ian Fleming to Eugène Sue and Alphonse Allais — Eco strikes into science and music for analogues, seeking to explain the changing formal contracts between creator and responder. Einstein meets Bohr: Bach's fugues meet Boulez's serial compositions. Eco's point is to make us think about the differences between "open" texts (those that invite multiple conclusions or present multiple clues to conclusion — *The Name of the Rose* does both) and "closed" ones (those that hide the author's involvement in creating the text, and limit the reader's conclusions). Clearly Eco is on the side of "openness"; in the final sentences he addresses the reader directly — even sternly — advising the need to read more closely than he, and to find more both in literature and in theory. The result, says the book jacket, is "erudite and stimulating." This time the jacket writer is right.

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